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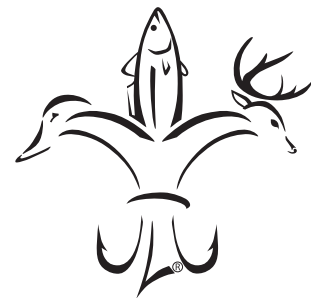
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May is one of the best months for catching good numbers of bass, and some big ones, in the Carolinas — as long as you understand what's driving them to feed after the spawn.



Carolina SPORTSMAN

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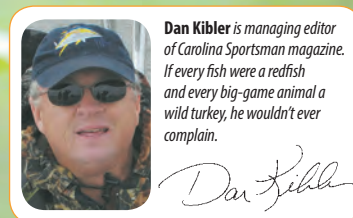
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Outdoor UPDATE

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.

Dan Kibler

Brian Carroll

SOCIAL DISTANCING? NO SWEAT! TURN TO HUNTING AND FISHING IN THE ERA OF THE CORONAVIRUS

Social distancing has been a big deal for about two months since the coronavirus sneaked into our lives like a turkey gobbler slipping in from the blind side without making a sound, then giving an alarm putt when he gets inside of 10 yards.

The neat thing is, there's probably nothing better in terms of social distancing than the two things most outdoorsmen like to do: hunt and fish.

Unless I'm calling a turkey for someone else, the last thing I want invading my space in the woods or fields is another hunter. Six feet? How about 600 yards? Stay that far away and you're probably not going to spook the

big buck that's on his way to my stand or bump the gobbler that's coming toward me in as straight a line as a carpenter can draw.

Ditto fishing. When trout season opened in North Carolina in early April, I didn't want to share the big plunge pool I found with anybody. Let me drift a nymph across the bottom or cast across it with a Panther Martin without having to worry about crossing lines with anybody. And as anybody knows, when you share an 18-foot bass boat with somebody else, if he's on the front casting deck and you're on the rear casting deck, that's at least a 10-foot spacing. Traipsing around the banks of a golf course pond, spinning rod in hand and Senko tied on, rigged wacky style, I'm good, as long as you're a

good pitching wedge down the bank from me.

I can't imagine two sports that are easily done with no onlookers than hunting and fishing. My boss told me the other day he has been seeing an awful lot of people out fishing by themselves, or out fishing with what he took to be a family member: father-and-son, husband-and-wife. This really underlines the old adage: two's company, three's a crowd.

Hopefully, as May approaches, there's a light at the end of the tunnel as far as Covid-19 is concerned. Some of the people we rely on the most in our favorite pursuit haven't exactly had a great 10 weeks: tackle shop owners and fishing guides. When the time comes — and it's safe again — we need to get back in their businesses and boats. I have a cottage rented and a date with a speckled trout or two on North Carolina's Outer Banks in mid-July. I hope we're in the clear by then and I can buy shrimp to float under a cork.

As far as May goes, some of us have another week of turkey season left, which is why outdoor writer Jeff Burleson explores the advantages of hunting after lunchtime. He also writes about cobia, an annual visitor to our waters who dares us to test him by casting a lure in his direction. Terry Madewell takes time out from killing his annual limit of turkeys to revisit tactics that catch crappie once their spawn is done. Phillip Gentry offers up some tips for catching sheepshead at the coast, and he and Brian Cope examine the vagaries of targeting post-spawn largemouth bass. Cope says May is a great month to catch good numbers of fish. Gentry hashes out details of what he calls the "fry guarder bite."

May's got plenty for outdoorsmen across the Carolinas. It may be all we have to enjoy for a while. ■



Stephen Flock Jr., of Greer, S.C., caught this 10-pound bass in a community lake in South Carolina's Upstate in early March. The fish hit a Z-Man TRD CrawZ in bloodworm color on a 1/10-ounce Finesse BulletZ weedless jighead.



BIG SC GOBBLER SPORTS 11 BEARDS FOR 60 INCHES

Mark Shirey of Norway, S.C., killed a 20-pound gobbler on May 24 that sported 11 beards totalling more than 60 inches.

Mark Shirey of Norway, S.C., has been turkey hunting his whole life, but he'd never killed a gobbler with multiple beards until March 24 of this season. While hunting with his wife in Colleton County, he killed a whopper of a gobbler that had 11 beards.

"I'm still just blown away by the whole thing. I never would have expected to kill a bird like that," Shirey said. "I was actually trying to help my wife kill a turkey because she's so limited on time with the kids and all. And it was definitely not a text-book hunt."

The Shirey family started "Team Terror" a few years ago; they sometimes video their hunts. Shirey said he was glad he didn't have the camera there to distract him the morning he killed his big bird.

"It's just something we started for fun" he said. "We like to video our hunts, but sometimes it just doesn't work out. I'm glad I didn't have the camera because I'm not sure I would have killed this bird if I'd been trying to capture the hunt on video."

After doing some limited scouting the previous weekend that did not show much promise, Shirey and his wife, Jordan, headed to a field around 3 p.m. It had rained earlier in the day, and when they arrived, some turkeys were already in the clearing, but when Shirey called to them, they didn't acknowledge him.

"When those turkeys left, we tried to get something started with some other ones we heard, but that didn't work out either," he said.

Settling in for the long haul, Shirey put his back to the field, ensuring that no turkey could sneak up behind them unnoticed.

"In that spot, we've had them sneak up through the woods behind us in the past, so I was making sure that didn't happen," he said. "Jordan was facing the field, and after a while, I had a turkey reply to my call. Then I saw three turkeys; they were sneaking up through the woods. I could tell two were jakes, but I thought I saw a long beard on (the other) one."



11 BEARDS >

GOVERNOR CLOSES SC'S PUBLIC RAMPS

Gov. Henry McMaster issued a proclamation on March 30 closing all of South Carolina's public boat ramps, landings and access points to rivers, lakes and waterways, as well as public beach access areas, because of the Covid-19 virus.

McMasters's order does not apply to residents possessing a valid commercial fishing license with regards to their activities.

It also does not impact the rights of private property owners living on beaches, lakes, rivers, or waterways in any way.

"This is unfortunate for those who chose to responsibly follow the instructions of our public health officials, but it is a necessary action to prevent the spread of this dangerous virus," McManus said.

11 BEARDS >

"I tried to get Jordan to turn around so she could shoot it, but she was worried the movement would scare them away. She said she'd rather me shoot it."

The two jakes split away from the bigger turkey, which picked up the pace and quickly cut the distance between them. It didn't strut, didn't gobble and didn't bow up like many gobblers do; it just came in quickly. At 30 yards, Shirey pulled the trigger on his Remington 870, sending the load of 12-gauge No. 5 shot from his 3½-inch shell. The turkey dropped.

"I was sure I had seen a long beard, but right away, I second guessed myself. 'Did I just shoot a jake?' and when I picked it up and saw the spurs, I thought, 'Oh man.'"

The ¾-inch spurs didn't impress Shirey, but as his wife took a closer look at the bird, she got excited. Then Shirey saw what she was looking at: 11 beards.

The gobbler turkey sported 11 beards that combined for more than 60 inches in length: 10 inches, 7 inches, 7 inches, 5¾ inches, 5½ inches, 5½ inches, 4¾ inches, 4¾ inches, 4¾ inches, 4¼ inches and 1½ inches. The turkey weighed about 20 pounds.

Shirey will have the turkey officially scored by a local NWTF local official. His rough estimate puts the score at 155. This should land the turkey in South Carolina's top five in the NWTF records. ■

— Brian Cope



Mark Shirey with his 11 bearded, 20-pound gobbler.



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THE FRY-GUARDER BITE

■ By Phillip Gentry

EVEN PRO BASS FISHERMEN SOMETIMES STRUGGLE TO CATCH POST-SPAWN BASS. BUT ONE PATTERN MIGHT GET YOU OVER THE HUMP.



Phillip Gentry

Post-spawn bass fishing can be some of the most challenging.

The big sows that were hungry and attacked everything in sight a couple of weeks ago are weary and frazzled from the bedding and spawning process.

Depending on where you live in the Carolinas, the typical seasonal progression is to go from prespawn fishing to bed fishing and then to a pattern that takes advantage of the shad or herring spawn. But what about those years when weather patterns or water patterns put some distance between bedding bass and spawning herring?

According to bass pro Matt Arey from Shelby, N.C., you might be able to find enough decent-sized bass by looking for both male and female fish that are protecting their offspring.

He refers to this tactic as the “fry guarder bite.” “Sooner or later, this pattern will apply everywhere on lakes across both Carolinas; it just depends on the timing of that (particular) lake,” Arey said. “There are a few signs, but you have to look for them.”

The first tell-tale sign is easing up into a shallow cove and seeing empty beds. If the water is clear enough, it looks like a ghost town. The party is over, and there’s nothing left but the mess.

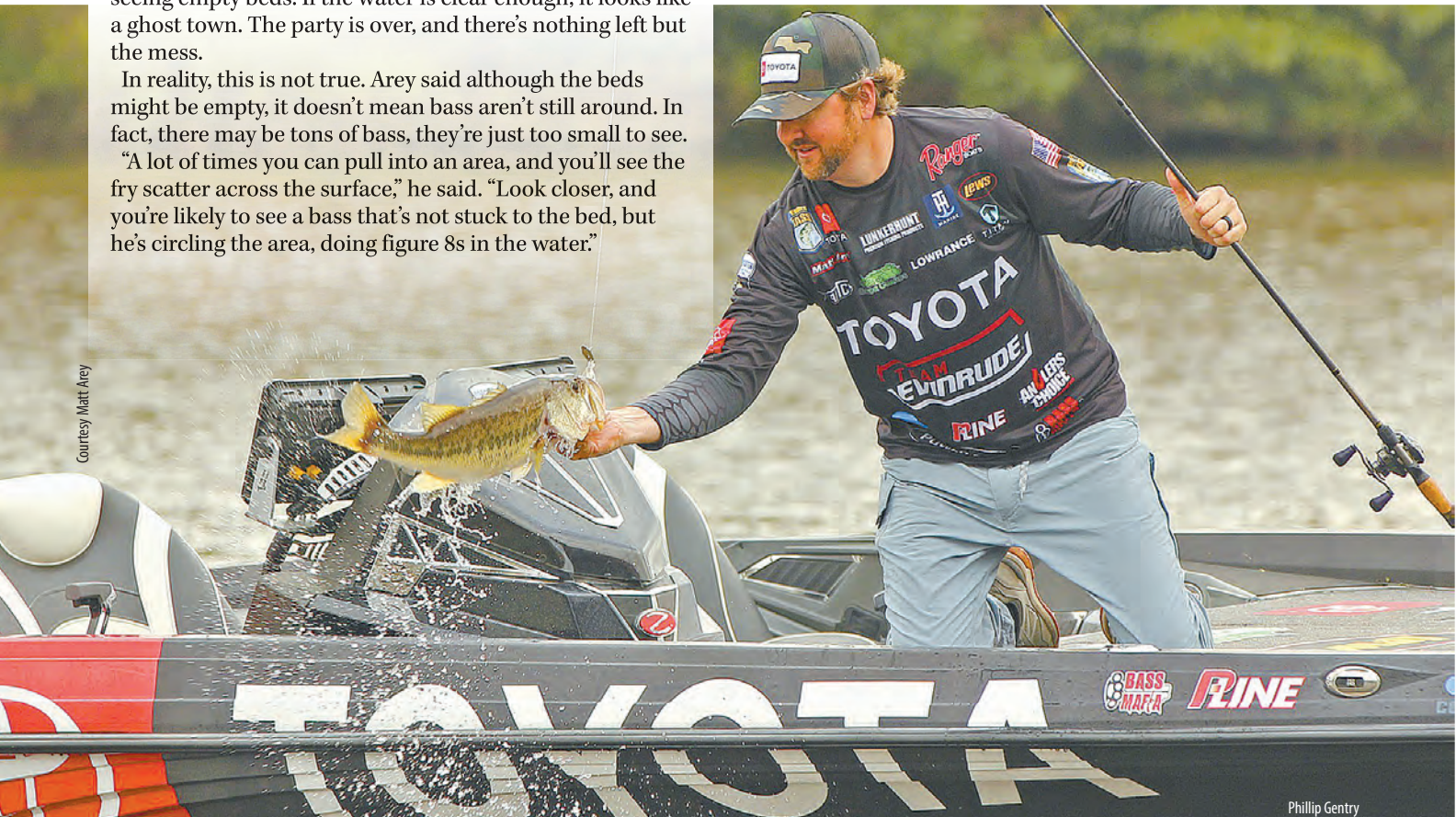
In reality, this is not true. Arey said although the beds might be empty, it doesn’t mean bass aren’t still around. In fact, there may be tons of bass, they’re just too small to see. “A lot of times you can pull into an area, and you’ll see the fry scatter across the surface,” he said. “Look closer, and you’re likely to see a bass that’s not stuck to the bed, but he’s circling the area, doing figure 8s in the water.”

Those figure 8 swimming patterns are two-fold. The first is a shepherd’s instinctive attempt to keep the fry corralled up. The second is a territorial sweep to keep predators out.

“In the Carolinas, seeing fry guarders is a sure sign the spawn is over,” Arey said. “Our lakes are not like some other locations where you have multiple waves of spawning. Here, when they’re done, it’s over.”

Although other environmental conditions may dictate, Arey generally sees bass guarding fry by May 1. Contrary to popular belief, it’s not just males guarding the young, either. Arey has caught plenty of hefty females that stuck around to tend to the young.

Weights are generally down after the spawn, but don’t make the mistake of thinking that only buck bass are left to guard the young.



Courtesy Matt Arey

Phillip Gentry

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When practicing for a tournament, he may not even try to catch fry guardians, but he likes knowing they are there. He said scouting is important, and he likes knowing the whereabouts of a couple of areas that are rich in post-spawn life. He may not see the fish he's after, but he likes knowing the stage is set.

He approaches fry-guarders in a manner similar to bedding fish. He has a three-prong, four-bait rotation that he uses to catch these fish.

He starts off throwing a topwater lure, either a popper or a prop bait. He stays well back and makes long casts to the areas he's scouted in practice. He may or may not get a bite on the topwater bait, but he often gets a reaction.

"Bream are the No. 1 predator of bass fry, so you want to match the hatch with your baits," he said. "If I don't catch the bass on topwater, I'll switch over to a swimbait and roll that just under the surface."

If he still hasn't connected, he's going to make a decision: either come back later and try again or get out the spinning rod. His fourth bait is a wacky rigged plastic worm that he uses

to chase the fry, attempting to agitate the guardian.

"Bear in mind, I'm not going to spend all day on one fish," he said. "It's very similar to bed-fishing in that I'll know if I can catch that fish in the first 5 minutes. If I do feel I can catch it, and the fish is big enough to be worth the effort, I might commit 15 minutes."

Speaking of size, Arey said by the time he's made a few casts, he's generally gotten some reaction. He's seen the fish, and the fish has seen him and both know the game is afoot.

"Some days, a fry guardian bite is all you've got. You need to capitalize on them while you can," he said. "Generally, the overall weights of all the bass are going to be down, but if you can't find any spawning fish, and the local shad or herring bite hasn't started up good yet, this may be the best way to catch the fish you can catch on a given day." ■

After a few casts, an aggressive bass may show itself. Then it's time to decide if this fish is catchable or not.



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.



MATT AREY'S 'FRY-GUARDER' ARSENAL

After a few days on a lake, bass pro Matt Arey can tell in which stage of the spawn bass are on most lakes in the Carolinas. If that includes targeting bass who are guarding fry in the general bedding area, he's going to rig four rods with four different baits.

- **The No. 1 rod** is for a topwater bait. Arey's first choice is a Lunkerhunt Impact Crush Popper, a 2½-inch, ⅓-ounce surface bait. His go to colors are Silverside and Sassy. He fishes the bait on 12-pound P-Line copolymer. He prefers it to fluorocarbon because he likes the line to float when he's throwing a topwater bait. His rod is a 7-foot, medium-action Lew's Custom Pro baitcaster that is paired with a Lew's Hyper Mag reel with a 7:1 retrieve ratio.

He's going to make long casts and work the bait back to the boat using a walk-the dog retrieve.

- **Setup No. 2** includes the same rod, reel and line combo, except that he'll tie on a Brian's Bees Prop Bee, a bait made in North Carolina by Brian Huskins. It's a balsa with flat sides that has the general look of a bluegill.

Arey fishes this bait with a series of twitches and pops to imitate a bluegill eating bass fry.

- **The third rod** is a 7-foot-6 heavy action Lew's Custom Pro baitcaster, paired with the same Lew's reel, this time spooled with 20-pound P-Line fluorocarbon and tied to a Lunkerhunt Fetch swimbait, a 4½-inch model rigged with a 6/0 Gamakatsu Superline hook. Neither the bait or the hook is weighted. Preferred colors are greenback and bluegill.

Arey uses a simple, slow and steady retrieve, allowing it to roll just under the surface.

- **The fourth rod** is a medium-action, Lew's Custom Pro spinning rod that's paired with a Lew's Custom Pro Speed Spin spinning reel spooled with 10-pound P-Line PCB braid. He ties in a 2-foot leader of 10-pound fluorocarbon and uses a Lunkerhunt Lunkerstick, a worm that's rigged wacky style on a Gamakatsu Superline 3/0 hook. Arey pitches this into the fry school and chases the fish with the lure. His favorite color is watermelon red. ■



BASS Elite pro Matt Arey has four baits and three strategies he uses for targeting fry guarding bass. Above, Brian's Bees Prop Bee, and below, clockwise from top left: Lunkerhunt Impact Crush Popper, Lunkerhunt Fetch swimbait, Lunkerhunt Lunkerstick.



Courtesy Matt Arey

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THE SPAWN IS ALMOST GONE IN MOST AREAS OF THE CAROLINAS, AND MAY DAWNS ON PLENTY OF HUNGRY FISH JUST WAITING FOR A BAIT TO CROSS THEIR PATHS.

■ By Brian Cope

MAY: A NUMBERS MONTH **FOR BASS**

In the Carolinas, bass fishing in May is a treat to which many anglers look forward.

It's the first month with typically stable weather, which goes a long way in making it a great month for catching bass.

Bass pro Bradford Beavers of Summerville, S.C., said it's the weather in May to which he and many others look forward.

"The big rains, the long strings of windy days and the huge temperature swings are usually gone by May," he said. "And the stable weather patterns really help to make the fish more predictable than they have been in months. May is one of the better bass fishing months of the year."

Most bass in the Carolinas are either finished spawning or just finishing up their spawning efforts. That leaves a lot of fish hungry and worn out. Eating becomes their No. 1 goal as they recover from the physical toll they've undergone the past few months.

"Even in some of South Carolina's Upstate lakes and a few of the North Carolina lakes, I'd say 80% or better of the fish are finishing up the spawn," he said. "You'll still catch a few late-spawners, but for the most part, the majority of bass in the Carolinas are recovering from the spawn."

"The fish are looking to feed to recover from the spawn, and no matter where you are in the Carolinas this month, there's either going to be a shad spawn, a bream spawn or a blueback herring spawn," he said.

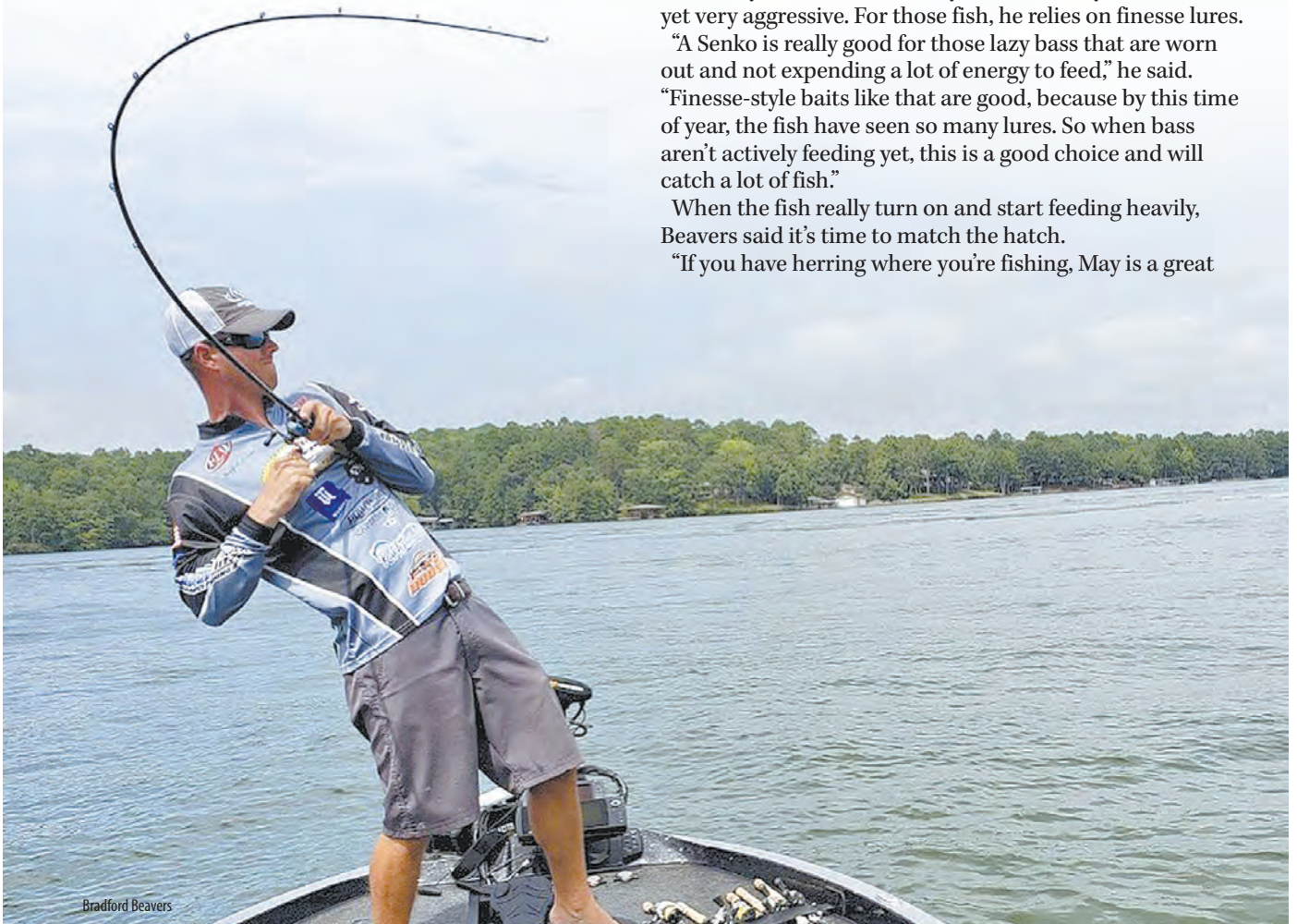
To take advantage of these factors, Beavers likes to fish close to the areas where bass spawned and close to where the forage fish are beginning their spawning cycles. No matter what lure he's using, he likes to stick with color patterns that mimic shad, bream or herring — depending on the dominant forage in the body of water he's fishing.

But early in the month, many bass are ready to eat, but not yet very aggressive. For those fish, he relies on finesse lures.

"A Senko is really good for those lazy bass that are worn out and not expending a lot of energy to feed," he said. "Finesse-style baits like that are good, because by this time of year, the fish have seen so many lures. So when bass aren't actively feeding yet, this is a good choice and will catch a lot of fish."

When the fish really turn on and start feeding heavily, Beavers said it's time to match the hatch.

"If you have herring where you're fishing, May is a great



Bradford Beavers

Bradford Beavers said most of his efforts in May are targeting post-spawn bass that have recovered and are ready to feed again. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Beavers loves fishing on blueback herring lakes this time of year, when he can catch plenty of fish in open water with topwater lures.



Bradford Beavers

time to fish topwater lures. In shad-based lakes, I throw spinnerbaits and also topwater lures. And in lakes with lots of bluegill, I throw a lot of topwater frogs around vegetation,” he said.

For herring and shad lakes, no matter what lure he is throwing, it will be silver, chrome, white or a combination of those colors. On bluegill lakes, he likes to throw black frogs or poppers in any bluegill colors.

One thing Beavers does not concern himself with is moon phase. While it as an important factor through April, he said it’s just not the case in May, except for the few late-spawning bass.

“After April, I just don’t concern myself with it,” he said.” There might be something to it when it comes to the late spawners on the full moon in May, but for the most part, I just don’t pay attention to it. May is just a good all-around time to fish, and it’s mainly because the fish are feeding up to recover from the spawn.”



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MAY: BASS NUMBERS MONTH

Don't stray far from coves and pockets where bass spawned. The post-spawn fish won't have moved very far away.



Beavers said May is a really good month for numbers of fish, but it's not the best month for big bass. But he said the chance of catching one of those late spawners, coupled with the numbers of fish anglers can expect, makes it one of his favorite months.

"If you catch a 20-pound stringer in May, that same stringer would have probably weighed 26 pounds in February," he said. "But they've spawned out now, so they aren't as big. January through March is probably the best time for catching big bass, but May is a time to catch big numbers of bass and still have a shot at a late spawner that might be the biggest bass that some anglers have ever caught."

Beavers said May is not a month to waste time in unproductive spots. With so many hungry fish on the prowl, he said covering ground is key.

"This time of year, it's obvious where the fish have been spawning. So I'll throw a lure in that general area, work it around whatever cover is there," he said. "And I'll make sure to cover the area the fish should be. If I don't get bit, I'll move on to another area. Like if I'm fishing around cypress trees, I'll make a cast at the base of one, work the lure long enough to give a fish a shot at it, then go to the next tree. I'll spend two minutes on a cypress tree this time of year, but I'm not going to spend 20 minutes on a tree." ■



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

LURE CHOICES

Bass pro Bradford Beavers breaks down his lure choices for May into three categories, depending on the main forage of the body of water he's fishing.

"If it's a blueback herring lake, I walk the dog with Spooks. If it's a shad lake, I'll throw a combination of walk-the-dog



Zara Spook



Senko

lures, spinnerbaits, and topwater popping lures," he said. "On a bluegill lake, especially one with grass or other surface vegetation, I'll have a topwater frog on one rod and a Senko on the other."

When using topwater frogs, Beavers likes the BOOYAH Pad Crasher.

"It's an inexpensive frog, so you can really stock up on them, but I also like it because they don't fill up with water like most other frogs do," he said.

When fishing Senkos, Beavers said anglers should just let the lure sink, give it a couple of twitches, then reel it in and move on if you don't get bit.

"Senkos are really good this time of year, but you have to work them slowly, but in a quick manner," he said. "I make a cast, let it sink, give it two or three twitches, then reel it in. There's no reason to waste time working it all the way back to the boat. Let it sink and do its thing right where the fish should be, then move on."

"May is a really good month for bass. It's a month that you want to be on the water as often as possible because the bass are feeding and the weather is usually cooperative." ■



Booyah Pad Crasher

TOPWATER TERRORS



BRONZEYE FROG

SIZE: 60mm - 1/2oz, 65mm - 5/8oz

ACTION: WALKING

HOOKS: GAMAKATSU EWG DOUBLE

BRONZEYE POPPER

SIZE: 50mm - 1/4oz, 60mm - 1/2oz

ACTION: POPPING & SOUND

HOOKS: GAMAKATSU EWG DOUBLE

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LUNKER LINES

David Fritts

In the Carolinas, May is as good a bass-fishing month as there is, because you can catch fish doing so many things with so many baits.



BASS FISHERMEN SHOULD LOVE MAY

BASS ARE HUNGRY, AND YOU CAN CATCH THEM IN PLENTY OF PLACES, ON PLENTY OF BAITS

Who doesn't love bass-fishing in May? I don't know anyone, because May is such a great month to fish in the Carolinas. It's a month when you can catch 'em just about anyway you want to; you have some late-spawning fish, and you have fished that have already finished spawning and are feeding again. The end of May and the first of June is one of my favorite times to fish.

The first thing to understand is that bass in different parts of a big lake will be in different stages. Maybe in the upper end of a lake, where they spawn first, they've finished spawning and have already moved out, are ganged up and starting to feed. That's every different from down the lake, where they spawn a couple of weeks later. The first fish you

catch after the spawn are bucks, because the female fish get a little sickly for a while before they get hungry again. The fish hang out shallow for a little while, chasing bait, until they get hungry about two weeks after the spawn.

When they start feeding again, that's when topwater fishing can be real good and when a jerkbait can be very effective. You're looking for fish in 7 to 10 feet of water that are still feeding over their heads, looking up.

WHERE AND WHEN

What you need to figure out is what the fish are doing in different places on the lakes you're fishing, and then figure out where you need to go to catch the really good ones. This is really the only month you get to make that choice. If you like

to sight-fish for bedding fish, you'll go to the lower end of the lake and the backs of those creeks, places they spawn the latest. If you want fish that have recovered from the spawn and moved out, you're going to go to the upper end of the lake and figure out a pattern up there.

In some of our more southern lakes, fish may spawn in April and already be out on structure in May. In some of the lakes along the Virginia line — Buggs Island and Gaston — you have them spawning as late as the end of May and the first



David Fritts is a 63-year-old pro bass fisherman from Lexington, N.C. He won the 1993 Bassmasters Classic championship and the 1997 FLW Tour Championship, and he was the 1994 BASS Angler of the Year. He is sponsored by Ranger boats, Evinrude outboards, Lew's, Minnkota, Lowrance and Berkley.

of June, and the end of June they really get good. I've always said that July 4 is the best time of the year to catch 'em at Bugs Island.

The topwater bite can be walking-type baits like a Zara Spook, some old-time baits like Boy Howdy and Devil's Horse. The Senko-type bait that Berkley makes, the General, that can be real good. Nowadays, swimbaits are really good.

What I want to do is find the fish that are a little more aggressive, and that's usually the ones that have recovered from the spawn and moved out. What makes it exceptional is that the fish are starting to get ganged up. You were catching one here and one there, and now, all of the sudden, you're catching five or six on one spot. I don't want to rely on the topwater bite, unless I'm on a lake with blueback herring.

May is a mid-range month, with fish anywhere from 0 to 10 feet deep. They'll start moving out to 7 to 10 feet, and by the first of June, they might be around 15 feet. They'll all be finished with the spawn and feeding, hitting topwaters, plastics or crankbaits. This is a perfect time for a shallow- or medium-running crankbait like my Berkley Frittsides.

BASS ON THE MOVE

Another thing to understand that the fish can move and move fast. You have to have an open mind. I've been in tournaments when I started catching fish one way, and by the end of the tournament, I ended up doing something else. I fished one on Kentucky Lake one time when I caught them 10 feet deep the first day, but you could tell they were moving deeper, and by the third day, they were on deep structure. I just went and fished and caught 'em that way.

Normally, I'm looking for fish that are out on flats. They haven't gotten on the deeper breaks yet, and they're hold-

ing on some kind of structure. One of my favorite ways to fish in May is to locate some stumps in about 8 feet of water on a flat; those are the kinds of places where bass will stage on their way out.

Now, one factor can change everything, and that's blueback herring. All of the Savannah River lakes in South Carolina have them, and some of our lakes in North Carolina have them. They spawn a couple of weeks after the bass spawn, usually on long, flat points. Blow-throughs, islands with a little shallow spot on one side, roadbeds — they're all places where bluebacks will spawn. Bluebacks will really turn on the topwater bite on a lake when fish are ready to

do something else on a lake that just has shad for baitfish.

You have to fish topwaters, jerkbaits, stuff like that, and you have to fish them shallow, because the bass will be looking up — that's where the food is. You don't throw baits that are digging the bottom when you have a herring spawn, because the bass will be concentrating on them. Once the blueback spawn is over, the bass will back off onto those places where you expect them to go after the recover from the spawn. ■

SANTEE STRINGER >

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- LIGHT WEIGHT

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SHIMANO

SANTEE STRINGER

Terry Madewell

Guide Brett Mitchell said that topwater action for bass can be tremendous on the Santee Cooper lakes in May.

STAY ON TOP OF MAY BASS

SANTEE'S SHAD SPAWN KICKS OFF A GREAT MONTH FOR SURFACE LURES

Terry Madewell

Fishing is wide open on the Santee Cooper lakes in May, including explosive topwater fishing wide-open for frisky largemouth bass.

Fishing is excellent for crappie, bream, stripers and catfish, but May consistently offers some of best topwater bass action of the year.

Guide Brett Mitchell said May offers anglers the opportunity to catch bass from dawn to dusk by fishing on multiple topwater lures.

SPAWNING SHAD

"Without a doubt, my favorite May fishing pattern is early morning topwater fishing around the spawning shad schools," Mitchell said. "When I can get on this situation, it's 'golden' in terms of potential largemouth bass action.

"The shad are spawning around weedy cover in shallow water and around shallow shoreline areas in general, and the schools are usually moving. This baitfish

spawning frenzy is super attractive to bass, including big bass, and they're ready to eat. And when I say eat, I mean it's serious chow time."

Mitchell (803-379-7029), who guides out of Black's Camp and fishes both Lake Marion and Lake Moultrie, said the shad bite usually only lasts for a couple of hours, and then it's over until the next morning. But this two-hour baitfish pattern can provide incredible action.

"I typically begin using a Heddon Zara Spook or the smaller Puppy version," he said. "The walk-the-dog action creates exciting bites and if the bite is aggressive enough, I'll use the large bait. But if the fish are even a bit finicky, I'll run the smaller lure. I keep up with the shad and stay on the move as they move."

If the shad spawn action slows in one spot he'll quickly move to other areas where he's recently had success. This pattern occurs throughout both lakes, but only in select spots, so finding and

staying on top of these productive areas is a key.

"I'll work the shad pattern as long as it holds, but usually by 8:30 in the morning, it's over, and I'll have to wait until tomorrow to do it again," he said. "But it's not the end of productive topwater fishing on Santee Cooper in May."

TOPWATER CHOICES

Mitchell said May is the one month when he feels he can effectively fish topwater lures throughout the day, and success often comes using a diverse array of lures.

"This may surprise some fishermen, but I've tracked it, and using topwater lures



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.

does not diminish the potential to catch huge bass during May; it enhances your opportunity,” he said. “Using a variety of lures including non-topwater lures may produce more bites on a given day, but I’ve found by sticking with surface lures, I’ll catch more big fish than on any other pattern during May.”

After the early morning shad bite ends, Mitchell continues to work weedy shorelines, stump flats, edges of depressions with trees or woody cover on the shallow rim — and most any natural cover and vegetation in the lake.

“One favorite lure for this is a good buzzbait,” he said. “I can cover a lot of water with the buzzbait; it’s an ideal searching lure and extremely attractive to bass. Poppers are also excellent lures.”

Mitchell is a big fan of the Booyah Frog and fishes that lure with confidence throughout the day. It’s effective around grass beds and also around cypress trees.

“I’ll often use different lures, such as the Tiny or Baby Torpedos, when (the) bite seems to be just a tad finicky,” he said. “I also love a Devil’s Horse, a long-time productive bait, because it just annoys the heck out of bass, to the point they simply have to attack. The Devil’s Horse is a great bait for big fish and exciting action.”

Floating worms are just one of many great options for taking big bass on topwater lures in May.



Terry Madewell

OLDIES BUT GOODIES

Mitchell said a few of the old, oft-forgotten lures from his youth are still excellent topwater tools when used in the right situations.

“When I was younger, I was limited in how many lures I had, but the Devil’s Horse, broke-back Rebel, Jitterbug and a floating worm were my total arsenal of topwater lures,” he said. “They were highly effective then and still are.”

He said a Jitterbug is more for open water and over stumps flats, around blowdowns and over the top of underwater cover, but it’s lethal. A floating worm can be worked right through a maze of limbs in downed trees, reaching areas otherwise difficult to fish without snagging.

Mitchell said the key is to match the right lure to the right cover and stay tuned in to what the bass want on a given day, or time of day.

“Fishing topwater lures at Santee Cooper during May is about as good as bass fishing can get,” he said. ■

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SALTWATER

STATE COASTAL WATERS REGULATIONS (0 - 3 miles)

FISH SPECIES	Minimum Lengths	Creel Limit (per person)
Greater amberjack	28" FL	1/day
Blue marlin	99" LJFL	1/vessel/trip
White marlin	66" LJFL	1/vessel/trip
Sailfish	63" LJFL	1/day
Sharks	%	%
Cobia	36"	1/day+
Bluefish	none	& 3/day 5/day
Red drum (channel bass, puppy drum)	18" min., 27" max.	1/day
Black drum	14" min., 25" max.	10/day
Flounder	Closed	Closed
Dolphin (mahi-mahi)	none	10/day
Groupers (black and gag)	24" TL	1/day
Red, scamp, yellowfin, yellowmouth	20" TL	3/day
Speckled hind/Warsaw Grouper	closed	closed
Wahoo	none	2/day
Red porgy (aka silver snapper, pinky)	14" TL	3/day
King mackerel	24" FL	3/day
Spanish mackerel	12" FL	15/day
Sea bass (north of Hatteras)	12.5" TL	15/day
Sea bass (south of Hatteras)	13" TL	7/day
Yellowfin/Bigeye tuna	27" CFL	3/day
Bluefin tuna	Contact NMFS (http://www.nmfspermits.com)	
Spotted sea trout (speckled)	14"	4/day
Weakfish (gray trout)	12" TL	1/day
Snappers: Gray (mangrove), yellowtail, queen, cubera, dog, mahogany, schoolmaster	12" TL	10/day in federal waters
Sheepshead	10"	10/day
Red snapper	closed	closed
Mutton snapper	16" TL (federal waters)	10/day
Vermillion snapper	12" TL	5/day
Striped bass ^	28"-35" TL max (ocean)	1/day
Hickory shad	None	10/day
American shad	closed	closed

^ see NCWRC/NCDMF regs for inshore Management Area limits. % Contact NMFS Highly Migratory Species, 888-872-8862, visit hmspermits.noaa.gov. % 5 bluefish per day for recreational anglers on for-hire or charter vessels; 3 bluefish per day otherwise. +May 1-31, no more than 2 per day per vessel, except for-hire, 4 per vessel per day.

FRESHWATER

FISH Species (Inland waters)	Minimum Size Limit	Creel Limit (per day)
Crappie +	None +	None +
Largemouth, smallmouth, spotted bass +	14" (2-fish exception)	5
Channel catfish	No restrictions	None
Blue/Flathead catfish	No restrictions	None
Striped bass, hybrid (Bodie) %	20"	4 %
Sauger	15"	8
White bass	None	25
Walleye#	None	8
Muskellunge	42"	1
Kokanee salmon	None	7
Red drum	18" min., 27" max.	1
American and hickory shad	None	10 (1 American shad)
Spotted sea trout	14" min.	4
Flounder	Closed	Closed

TL=Total Length; LJFL=Lower jaw to middle of fork in tail; FL=Fork Length (tip of snout to middle of fork in tail); CFL=Curved Fork Length (measure of a line tracing contour of body from tip of upper jaw to fork of the tail)

+ See specific lake exceptions in NCWRC regulations digest or www.ncwildlife.org

% Striped bass creel limits and size minimums vary by lake. See NCWRC regulations digest or www.ncwildlife.org.

Lake James, minimum size is 15 inches. Lake Gaston, minimum size is 18 inches, creel limit 5.

@ Hook-and-line and flounder jiggers restricted to 4 fish per day per trip, 15-inch size minimum.

SALTWATER

STATE COASTAL WATERS REGULATIONS (0 - 3 miles)

FISH SPECIES	Minimum Lengths	Creel Limit (per person)
Greater amberjack	28" FL	1/day
Blue marlin	99" LJFL	1/day
White marlin	66" LJFL	1/day
Sailfish	63" LJFL	1/day
Sharks	%	%
Cobia	36" FL	1/day&
Bluefish	None	15/day
Black drum	14" minimum 27" maximum TL	5/day
Redfish (red drum, channel bass)	15" minimum 23" maximum TL	2/day
Flounder (state waters)	14" TL	10/day
Groupers (black and gag)	24" TL	1/day
Red, scamp, yellowfin, yellowmouth	20" TL	3/day
Speckled hind/Warsaw grouper	closed	closed
Red porgy (aka silver snapper, pinky)	14" TL	3/day#
King mackerel	24" FL	3/day
Spanish mackerel	12" FL	15/day
Sheepshead	14"	10/day (30 per boat)
Spadefish	None	20/day (agg. grouper)
Black sea bass	13"	7/day
Dolphin	20" FL	10/day (60 per boat)
Yellowfin tuna	27" CFL	3/day
Bluefin/Bigeye tuna	Contact NMFS (http://www.nmfspermits.com)	
Tarpon	77" FL	1/day
Spotted sea trout (speckled)	14"	10/day
Weakfish (gray trout)	12"	1/day
Wahoo	None	2/day
Gray, yellowtail, queen, cubera, dog, mahogany, schoolmaster snapper	12" TL	10/day#
Red snapper	closed	closed
Mutton snapper	16" TL (federal waters)	10/day
Vermillion snapper	12" TL	5/day

% For shark seasons, bag and size limits, contact NMFS Highly Migratory Species Division, 888-872-8862 or hmspermits.noaa.gov. # Check with the SAFMC at www.safmc.net or 843-571-4366. & Cobia, 1 per person per day up to 6 per boat. Closed May 1-31 south of Jeremy Inlet, 1 per person, up to 3 per boat, after June 1 south of Jeremy Inlet. # No more than 6 redfish per boat.

FRESHWATER

FISH Species (Inland waters)	Minimum Size Limit	Creel Limit (per day)
Crappie/Panfish +	None	30 bream (15 red-breast), 20 crappie
Largemouth, smallmouth, spotted, redeye, bass%	none largemouth 12" smallmouth	5 lg/sm/r, 15 spots
Channel catfish	No restrictions	None
Blue catfish	No restrictions=	None=
Flathead catfish	No restrictions	None
Striped bass or hybrid bass	Varies by location&%	Varies by location&%
Mountain Trout	+	5
White bass	None	10 (except Sav. River)
Walleye and sauger+	None	8

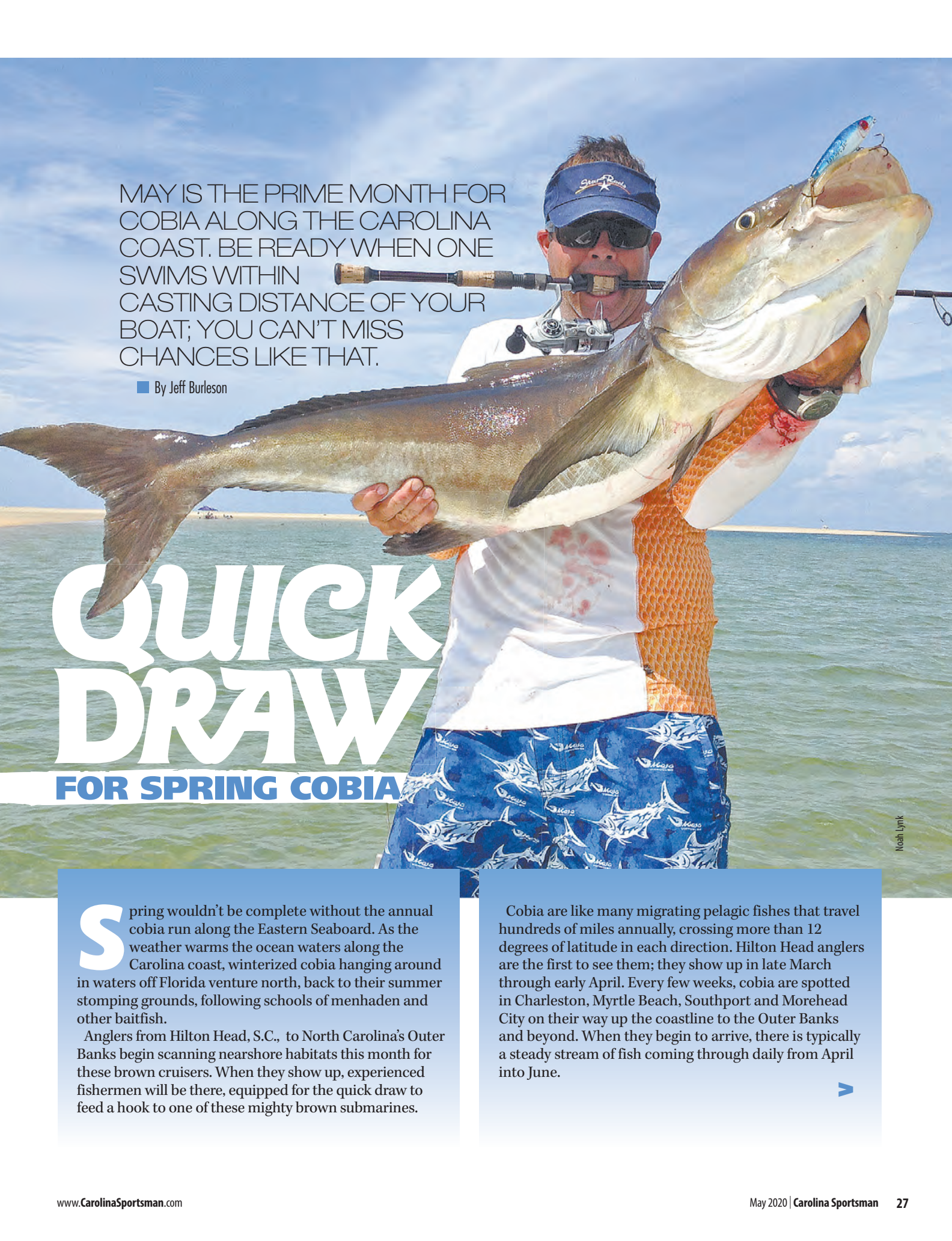
TL=Total Length; LJFL=Lower jaw to middle of fork in tail; FL=Fork Length (tip of snout to middle of fork in tail); CFL=Curved Fork Length (measure of a line tracing contour of body from tip of upper jaw to fork of the tail).

+ See specific lake and river exceptions in SCNDR's Regulations Digest

= In the Santee Cooper system, only two over 32 inches with daily possession limit of 25 fish. In Congaree/Wateree rivers, no possession limit.

% For lake-specific regulations, see the SCNDR's Regulations Digest or visit www.dnr.sc.gov. Keeper season in the Santee Cooper system is Oct. 1-June 15.

& In Lake Russell and its tributaries, the daily creel limit is two fish, only one of which may be more than 34 inches long.



MAY IS THE PRIME MONTH FOR COBIA ALONG THE CAROLINA COAST. BE READY WHEN ONE SWIMS WITHIN CASTING DISTANCE OF YOUR BOAT; YOU CAN'T MISS CHANCES LIKE THAT.

■ By Jeff Burleson

QUICK DRAW

FOR SPRING COBIA

Spring wouldn't be complete without the annual cobia run along the Eastern Seaboard. As the weather warms the ocean waters along the Carolina coast, winterized cobia hanging around in waters off Florida venture north, back to their summer stomping grounds, following schools of menhaden and other baitfish.

Anglers from Hilton Head, S.C., to North Carolina's Outer Banks begin scanning nearshore habitats this month for these brown cruisers. When they show up, experienced fishermen will be there, equipped for the quick draw to feed a hook to one of these mighty brown submarines.

Cobia are like many migrating pelagic fishes that travel hundreds of miles annually, crossing more than 12 degrees of latitude in each direction. Hilton Head anglers are the first to see them; they show up in late March through early April. Every few weeks, cobia are spotted in Charleston, Myrtle Beach, Southport and Morehead City on their way up the coastline to the Outer Banks and beyond. When they begin to arrive, there is typically a steady stream of fish coming through daily from April into June.



Noah Lynk

IN CHARLESTON, S.C., guide Ben Powers begins to see cobia in his waters in April.

“Cobia start to trickle in in the middle of April, typically, depending on water temperature, moon phases and bait availability,” said Powers (843-475-9660). “May is our best cobia month, though. It is hot and heavy in May.”

Powers begins looking for cobia in April, but first, he pays close attention to message boards and online reports out of Jacksonville, Fla., and Savannah, Ga.

“I pay attention to the reports along the east coast. You can track them as they work their way up the coast,” he said.

When the arrival of the first fleet of cobia is imminent, Powers prepares the battle gear on his boat to make sure he has the flavor of the day. Cobia are voracious predators and will eat just about anything with a fin, but at times, they can be selective about what baits or lures they’ll eat.

“It’s important to be ready for them at all times,” he said.

“Cobia can be very picky or eat anything you toss at them. They often want one specific bait, like a soft eel, bucktail, big swimbait or just a live, swimming menhaden,” he said.

Powers rigs four rods and feels like his choices are enough to tempt a cobia into taking the plunge.

“I rig up four rods to cover the entire water column,” he said. “I use a 3- to 4-ounce bucktail to get to the bottom quick; a 7- to 8-inch swimbait on a ¾-ounce jighead to cover the mid-column, a Shimano Orca Popper or eel for

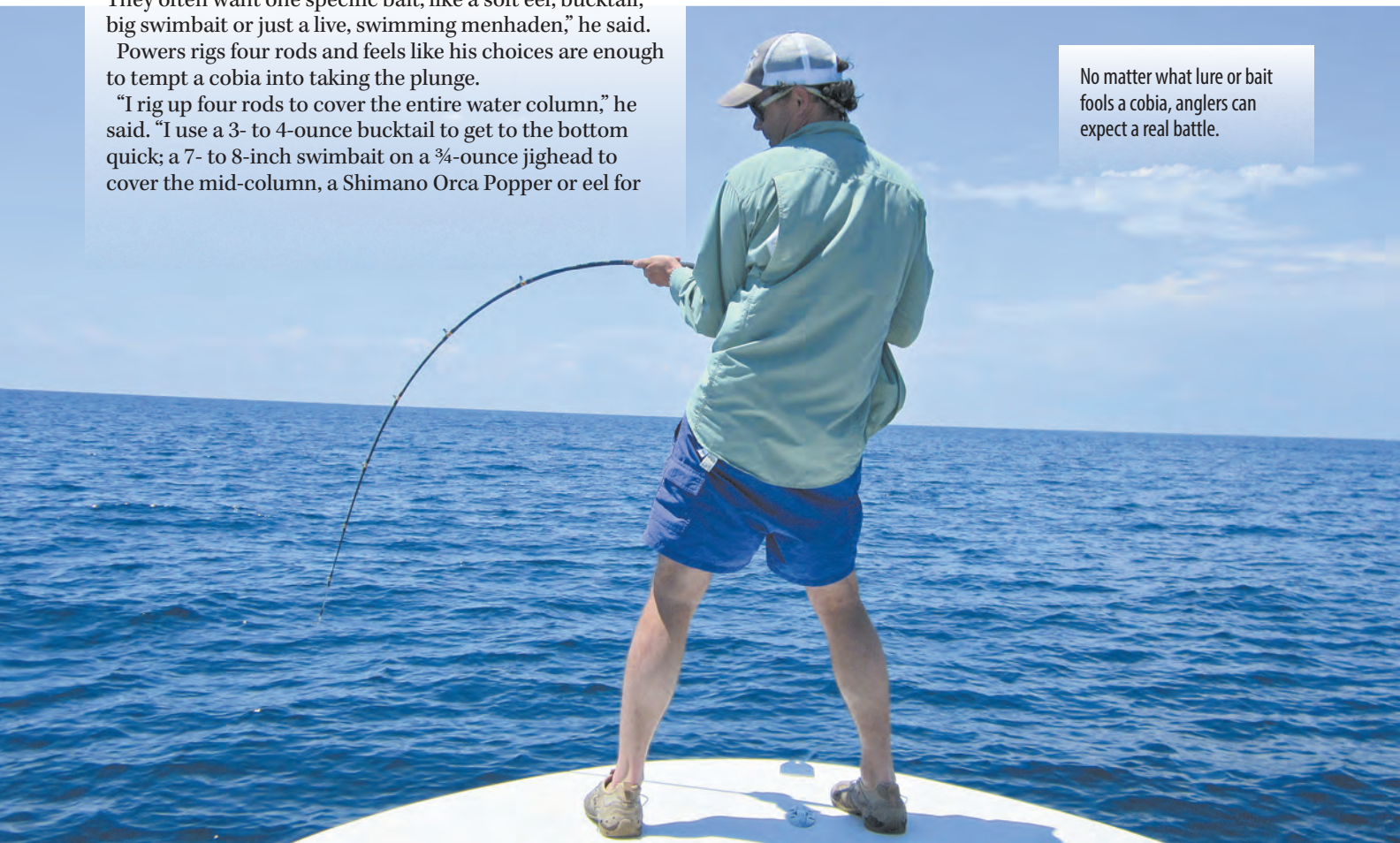
the surface, and a live menhaden on a 5/0 to 6/0 circle hook tied with an FG knot on a 10-foot fluorocarbon leader,” he said.

Live bait is something Powers will rarely be without during the spring cobia run. He always nets fresh bait on his way out to ensure that he has some fresh, swimming options in his arsenal. Live bait is something generally triggers a quick response from a floating cobia, but these artificial options can be super deadly when these fish are looking for something a little different and need a little enticement.

“It’s critical to have all four rod setups at your fingertips when you leave the dock, because you will not have time to tie on something different when you pull up on a fish or when the fish is refusing a bait or lure,” he said. “They will also disappear just as fast as you initially spotted them, and you have to be ready.”



No matter what lure or bait fools a cobia, anglers can expect a real battle.



South Carolina anglers fishing south of Jeremy Inlet can't keep cobia from May 1-31.

CAROLINA COBIA REGS



Jeff Burleson

South Carolina and North Carolina manage cobia in state waters with different creel and size limits.

South Carolina allows a single fish per day — and six fish per boat — with a 36-inch size minimum, except in that area south of Jeremy Inlet, a relatively small inlet that divides the Edisto Island beach in half. No cobia may be kept south of Jeremy Inlet from May 1-May 31, and after June 1, anglers are allowed one fish per day, up to three per boat.

From May 1-31, North Carolina allows fishermen on private boats to keep one cobia per day and two per vessel per day, with a 36-inch size minimum. After June 1, vessels are limited to one fish per day.

On charterboats, anglers can keep one cobia per day, with a four-per-day vessel limit.

Both states measure cobia from the nose to the forks of the tail.

— Dan Kibler

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Cobia are highly mobile this time of year and can appear or vanish in plain sight. Cobia are top-level predators and are attracted to places where feeding is easy. In May, they will find nearshore areas abundant with baitfish. They use the immediate coastline as a navigational pathway, stopping along the way to feed before migrating further north.

The entire Carolina coastline offers cobia with plenty of nearshore feeding options, including the many inlets and structures available.

“Cobia will typically hang around deeper channels around some sort of structure or current edge,” said Powers, who fishes a wide variety of habitat types; his search rarely ends up short during May. “The first place I look are around the channel markers. These fish will float on the leeward side of these cans.”

If channel markers aren't holding any fish, he will head out the nearest inlet and hit the tide line a couple miles off the beach.

“Where the brown and green waters meet, you get a tide line, and it will have baitfish suspended around the dead

marsh grass and other floating debris,” he said. “We look for big, brown bats floating on the clear side. These tide lines can be excellent places to find cobia this time of year all up and down the coast.”

Lastly, Powers will target livebottom and nearshore reefs, which hold plenty of baitfish; they're buffet lines to migrating cobia. When other places fail, the nearshore livebottom will often produce a solid opportunity for a hookup.

Cobia season gets cranked up in April and typically peaks in North Carolina and South Carolina waters during May. Every day can be different; the prime place one day may be cold the next. Successful anglers are accustomed to this type of sporadic action and understand that moving around from one spot to the next to find fish is the name of the game. But a quick draw is also a critical tool to have in the toolbox.

“You need multiple options rigged up and ready to throw. Being prepared for every opportunity is key to catching a cobia or watching them swim off,” he said. ■



Don't target cobia without some fresh bait; often, it is the ticket to a hookup.



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

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Quick draw for spring cobia

Cobia are not boat-shy; they often follow boats or hide under them for the shade, and they're often willing to look over any bait that's cast their way.

COBIA LIKE COMPANY

Cobia are one of the most-coveted spring fishing opportunities along the south Atlantic coast, from their strenuous battles to their exquisite flesh, and many anglers hit the water at the first sign of their arrival. In turn, most anglers expect plenty of company in places that typically attract these migratory fishes. But these fish also like company — from other cobia and from anglers' boats.

One of a cobia's most-unique features is a general lack of fear. They are not as spooky as many other gamefish — redfish, trout and king mackerel come to mind — in fact, cobia are well known to swim right up alongside the boat.

Furthermore, cobia arrive in Carolina waters in relatively small packs, in different locations. Guide Ben Powers is accustomed to these brown submarines pulling right up next to his boat.

"Cobia are drawn to structure and anything that provides them with cover — like your boat," he said. "It's one large structure on the surface. They will come check you out, and you can sometimes pitch a bait or lure right to them and hook up instantly."

Cobia typically ride high in the water column and can be easily seen in the clear water along the oceanfront, so anglers have the opportunity to pitch baits to them.

Powers also encourages cobia anglers to keep fishing after a fish



Ben Powers

is boated.

"These fish are traveling in groups, even if you can't see them all. On average, there are six to eight together. Even if you only see one or only catch one, stay put because there are typically more around floating deeper in the water column you can't see," he said. ■

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With finesse fishing becoming a significant part of a bass angler's arsenal, light jigheads and weights and small worms are taking up a bigger percentage of tackle boxes everywhere.

Techniques like the Ned Rig and Neko Rig have sent anglers scrambling for their spinning tackle and light line, and now, Gamakatsu has jigheads on the market they'd love to see those anglers tying on.

Gamakatsu recently debuted three new jigheads: Finesse, Finesse Offset and Bottom Knocker Offset, in packs of four.

The Finesse jighead has a spring keeper to hold the bait securely against the flat side of the head. It features a No. 1 hook and is available in 1/16-, 3/32- and 1/8-ounce sizes.

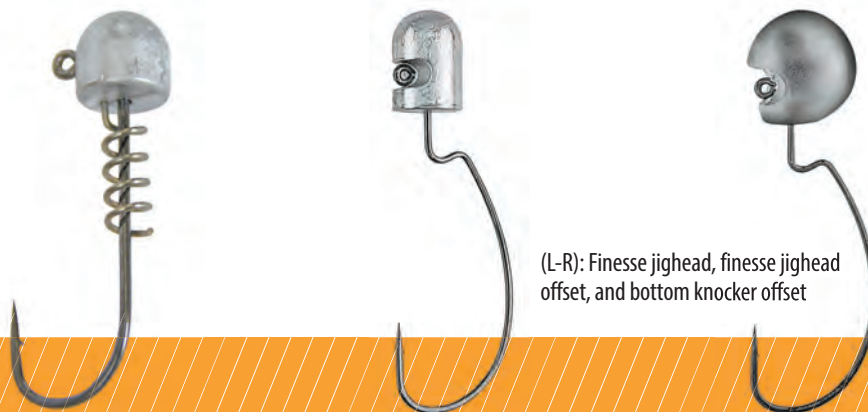
The Finesse Offset jighead has an offset eye countersunk into the jighead and a Z-shaped bend that helps with Texas-rigging soft plastics. It features a 1/0 hook and is available in 1/16-, 3/32-, 3/16- and 1/8-ounce sizes.

The Bottom Knocker Offset is a

deep-water version of a finesse jighead with a hybrid football/round style head and recessed eye. It comes in 3/8-, 1/2-, 5/8- and 3/4- ounce sizes with a 1/0 hook.

MSRP: \$5.98 to \$6.66.

For more info, visit: www.Gamakatsu.com.



(L-R): Finesse jighead, finesse jighead offset, and bottom knocker offset



William Terry

Afternoon *delights*

DON'T GIVE UP WHEN YOU DON'T DROP A GOBBLER OFF THE ROOST OR LATER IN THE MORNING. THOSE HOURS BETWEEN LUNCHTIME AND ROOST TIME CAN BE VERY PRODUCTIVE.

■ By Jeff Burleson

Turkey season is open for 10 more days for South Carolina's Upstate and nine more days in all of North Carolina, two states that are home to **flourishing populations of eastern wild turkeys.**

On a typical hunting day, most hunters will rarely miss first light to slip into the woods after a bearded prize. But many hunters call it quits when the lunch bell rings. It's no surprise that a much-higher proportion of turkeys is taken in the morning, but afternoon hunts can produce results for the hunter with a few tricks in his vest.

Unlike deer, turkeys have downtime under the stars at night. Deer can feed, breed and move all day and night, and quite often, they will move more at night, especially as the season progresses into late fall and early winter. Turkeys are biologically different in that they must do their eating, courting, breeding and frolicking during daylight hours. While morning hunts can be more predictable for most hunters, turkeys will take full advantage of the entire day.

One hunter who fully understands turkeys and hunting all day is William Terry of Fort Mill, S.C., the owner of Legacy Game Calls, who has been chasing turkeys for 35 years in 10 states and two countries. He said hunters should never give up on afternoon hunts when morning hunts don't go their way.

"We take plenty of turkeys in the afternoons," said Terry (803-416-2424). "Some turkeys become well educated throughout the season, and it takes a full day to get them to come in."

Terry fashions his strategy based on what stage turkeys are in the breeding season and how much a farm has been pressured by other hunters.

"Early in the breeding season, when plenty of hens are available and hunting pressure is low, we will stay mobile and work the farm looking for a gobbler alone. If you get one to gobbler after 2 p.m., you will kill nine out of 10 of those birds," he said.

But later in the breeding season and/or when birds are more pressured than others, hunters face a far different scenario.

"We take a more passive approach in the afternoons later in the season and when the birds are pressured by hunters," he said.

In preparation for laying and setting on

eggs, hens will be feeding as much as possible in places with the most available foods and where danger is limited. Green fields are the perfect scenario; there's plenty of food and good protection. Fields provide both herbaceous vegetation for consumption, and the green growth can be a rich bed for insects. Because of their 270-degree vision, open fields can be the safest places around for turkeys any time of year.

If his farm of the day has fields, Terry will set up along the field edges in the afternoon.

"Any time you have fields, they are good places to set up in the afternoons. I always make sure to set up on the end of the field towards where they will be heading to roost for the evening," he said.



Turkeys may travel for several miles during the day but will always return to their roost trees in the evenings. Know where birds roost, and nearby areas can be a hot bed as the day presses on towards nightfall.

As a general rule, most turkeys will be less vocal in the afternoon. They communicate vocally in the afternoons, it's just typically not as dramatic as in the morning unless a gobbler gets jazzed up and coerced into a soapbox shouting contest. But hens are less vocal in the afternoons, and hunters need to follow suit since they are trying to imitate the hen.

"In the afternoons, I set up near the roost areas in fields or in the woods along fresh sign, and I make calls soft and subtle. It's a good time to get an old bird to come in, but you got to use a lot of soft clucks and purrs," he said.



When turkeys have been pressured, keep your afternoon calling to a minimum and be ready for toms to come in silently.



Jeff Burlison



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Terry keeps a full assortment of calls in his turkey vest, but these days, the No. 1 call in his mouth is the Lone Hen 3 diaphragm because of its versatility.

“I make every kind of call there is, and I use them all at some point, but I like to run the Lone Hen 3 because it is the best of both worlds as far as I am concerned,” he said. “It has a batwing cut for purring and soft calling in the afternoon, or you can cut hard with some volume it in the morning.”

Turkeys travel in groups of anywhere from a pair of birds to large congregations for safety, and turkeys are typically very social as well. The major exception is gobblers; they will venture off in small bachelor groups or can be solitary, looking for receptive hens. Gobblers will travel throughout the day, bouncing between groups of hens here and there. Afternoon hunts can be productive for pulling in a gobbler near roosting habitat with soft-calling techniques.

During the spring, it’s not unusual to see turkeys in fields or open woodlands from sun-up to sundown, eating the entire time. As long as they are erect, they are picking at the ground eating grain, bugs or something containing



Donna Brookshire

Look for gobblers to be in open areas after lunch; they’ll forage on insects and seeds, and they want to be seen by any passing hen.

calories. Gobblers will be either feeding or blown up in a full strut, trying to get consummate a love affair. While many hunters avoid afternoon hunts, they should never be left out of the game plan because the birds will be there taking advantage of every hour of daylight. ■



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

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Jeff Burleson

Over the years, turkey hunting has evolved, with every kind of call, decoy and device now being used. Certain gear is a necessity for some hunters and overkill for others. Many hunters refrain from using props and exquisite calling tactics. Many stick to the basics to lure in trophies, but sometimes, the right decoy can make a sketchy hunting opportunity a slam dunk.

William Terry of Legacy Game Calls sweet-talks long-bearded gobblers just about every day of the South Carolina season and often in other states as well. He said the right type of decoy can provide just what is needed in certain situations.

"In the afternoons, I like to hunt fields, and I will almost always use a decoy and only a strutting gobbler," Terry said. "A strutting gobbler is the baddest thing you will ever use in your life."

A strutting gobbler is a clear indication for an incoming gobbler that a hen is close by and probably receptive for breeding.

"When they come into the field and see it, you will know in the first minute what they are going to do," he said. "Very rarely do I have a turkey walk away. Ninety-nine percent of the time, they will come to it in a dead run."

Terry is a firm believer of strutting gobbler decoys, but he will only use them in open fields, and mostly in mid-day and the afternoons. In the woods, he prefers not to use any decoys, depending on bringing birds in strictly by call and avoiding anything that may stop the birds on the final approach.

"You will have more turkeys come to a strutting gobbler than anything else," he said. ■

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Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



Cyril Gullledge

Cyril Gullledge of Matthews, N.C., killed these two 11-point bucks in Union County, N.C., on the morning of Nov. 18, 2019.



Jeff Stewart

Jeff Stewart got this nice 9-point buck while bowhunting in Lancaster County, S.C., last season.



Kaitlyn Vernon

Kaitlyn Vernon, 14, of Madison, N.C., killed this nice 6-point buck last Nov. 20, hunting with her father.



Landon Johnson, Jeff Johnson, Johnny Floyd

Landon Johnson, Jeff Johnson, Johnny Floyd and Brad Johnson (not in photo) of Nichols, S.C., took these ducks at the Ashpole Hunt Club.



Jason Durham

Hunting with his girlfriend, Haleigh Wright, Jason Durham killed this 23-pound tom near Whisett, N.C., last season.



Baylor Frogge

Baylor Frogge, 4, caught this largemouth bass-white perch "double" on North Carolina's Lake James in Jul y2019.

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Crappies are among the most-heavily fished species in the Carolinas before and during the spawn, but when the fat-fish-in-skinny-water adventure ends, many anglers move on to other species.

But the action on post-spawn crappie can rival any other time in terms of productivity, and catches still include plenty of slab crappie.

Jeff Manning of Gastonia, N.C., is a highly successful pro catfish angler, but his passion for crappie fishing runs deep, and targeting post-spawn papermouths is among his top favorite fishing fortes.

“When the crappie spawn ends, the crappie action doesn’t stop; it changes direction and shifts gears,” Manning said. “Anglers with a good plan can follow these panfish through the post-spawn and enjoy outstanding fishing.

“The basic premise is that crappies are moving from

spawning areas back to deeper water during the post-spawn,” Manning said. “I’ve learned versatility in tactics is the key to consistently catching fish during post-spawn.”

Manning said long-line trolling, vertical fishing by tight-lining and using slip floats, anchoring and casting, shooting docks and fishing at night under the lights are all tactics for post-spawn crappie.

“Post-spawn crappies are quite predictable,” Manning said. “Although the big females have spawned, we still catch big fish — minus the poked-out belly full of eggs.”

**LONG-LINE
TROLLING >**

SLABS AFTER THE SPAWN

DON'T PUT UP YOUR 12-FOOT RODS AND THOSE 1/32-OUNCE JIGS JUST BECAUSE CRAPPIE HAVE FINISHED SPAWNING. FISH ARE STILL OUT THERE AND STILL HUNGRY — MAYBE JUST NOT QUITE AS FAT.

■ By Terry Madewell

LONG-LINE TROLLING

Manning said his first option is long-line trolling, a highly productive method that many anglers utilize in prespawn.

“Many don’t utilize it as much in post-spawn as they do in prespawn, yet it’s highly effective,” he said. “We’re targeting the fish as they retreat from the shallows but have not reached their hot-weather summer destinations. They’re on the move and potentially found in multiple areas, and these patterns change quickly, more so than during prespawn. To be successful, fishermen must also be quick to adapt.”

Since not all crappie spawn at the same time, he’ll also begin long-line trolling for post-spawn fish as the spawn fades.

“The bigger, sow crappies don’t linger long in the shallow spawning areas,” he said. “They move in, spawn and leave. I’ll target flats near the spawning site, particularly flats where I mark forage and that has cover that attracts crappies.”

Manning said during post-spawn, crappie congregate on flats more in a general area rather than compacted in small, isolated schools.

“Hundreds of crappies may be on a single flat, but concentrated in a general area within a similar depth pattern,” he said. “Thus, pulling multiple jigs with different-size jigs and assorted colors allows me to cover a broad area of the lake.

“I keep changing areas, speed and depths fished along with lure sizes and colors until I find the pattern of the day. Then, I focus my efforts on those specific parameters. It’s crucial to cover a lot of territory on some days, but when I determine the right pattern, the fish-catching can be fast and furious.”

START IN THE BACK

Manning’s basic pattern of crappie hunting in the immediate post-spawn is to begin trolling in the back of the creeks, very near the spawning sites. As the water temperature warms, fish move further down the creeks to progressively deeper water.

“On some days, I’ll change my pattern and go all the way to the back of the creeks again to target late-spawners just moving out,” he said.

Manning said crappie will also get into “cover mode” during post-spawn, and he may troll over a brush pile or sunken tree and have multiple hookups.

“If this occurs, I’ll look at the cover closely with my down-scan graph, and if it lights up like a Christmas tree, with the ‘lights’ being lots of crappie, I’ll anchor so the boat sits right on top of the cover.”

VERTICAL SLIP-FLOATS

He will first fish vertical tight-lines and a slip-float rig to better manage his depth control. When they do congregate like this on a specific target, limits are possible from a single stop.

“I’ll carry the extra fishing rigs during post-spawn because of this scenario,” he said. “When I find crappie locked on cover, vertical-fishing live minnows or small jigs is highly effective. I can also cast and retrieve jigs using light tackle from an anchored position.

Manning said he prefers slip floats when fishing vertically



Terry Madewell

because once he determines the strike zone, he sets the float to keep the bait at that depth, usually just above the woody cover.

“This reduces snags and lost fish when fishing brush or sunken treetops,” he said.

Shooting docks is another post-spawn tactic he uses, especially docks that are deeper than others. Simply ease the boat up to the docks and slingshot the jig back under the docks.

“Light line and a sensitive-tipped rod are crucial, because the bite is often just a little ‘tick,” he said. “Multiple crappies may congregate in this type spot especially on sunny days because of the shade effect.”

UNDER THE LIGHTS >

Tight-lining and fishing vertically under a slip cork are two productive ways to target crappie after the spawn ends and they head to deeper water.



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UNDER THE LIGHTS

Finally, one of his real crappie-fishing loves is to fish at night under lights.

“This is a prime post-spawn tactic because I use lights to draw the crappie to my position,” he said. “My favorite targets are points that drop into deep water, the ledge of a channel and along at the base of a hump.

Manning said it’s not necessary to anchor over wooden cover; the light attracts batfish and crappie. He prefers to set up just before dark, and a solid anchor setup is crucial. That keeps him on target, and boat wakes or wind won’t knock him out of position.

“Years ago, I used white lights, but now I use green lights, specifically Illumisea Aquatic Lights, because they’re bright and rugged,” he said. “I’ll place the light a couple feet under the water, and I’ll fish from 3 feet deep down to just off the bottom until I determine a depth pattern.”

He also fishes lighted slip floats near the edge of the circle of light from the powerful LED light, because that’s a prime spot for slabs.

“Most of the rigs I fish are down-lines with 8-pound test, a 1/0 wire hook with a No. 3 split-shot about 8 inches above the hook,” he said. “But the lighted floats I’ll cast out to cover the



When fishing at night with lights, anglers can watch multiple rigs, raising the chances of catching fish.

Terry Madewell

area where the ring of light from my lights end. On some nights, that seems to be the hotspot for slabs. I generally use minnows at night, but small jigs will work.”

Manning said fishing under the lights can be fast-paced, and he often limits and is heading home in two or three hours.

It’s time for great post-spawn crappie action and with and multiple techniques that produce great results pick a favorite or two and snag a limit of slabs. ■



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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When Jeff Manning slow-trolls eight to 10 baits, he can fill a stringer in no time if he stumbles onto a big wad of crappie.

LONG-LINE TROLLING SETUP

Jeff Manning's basic trolling setup is to fish eight long-line rigs, sometimes 10 if he has someone fishing with him. He'll generally alternate jig sizes between 1/8- and 1/6-ounce, so at any speed he's constantly checking two different depths, and he continuously experiments with colors.

He'll place two rigs about 60 feet straight out of the back of the boat with 1/6-ounce jigs and two more straight behind on each side loaded with 1/8-ounce jigs. Other rigs will fan out on each side of the boat at increasing angles from at about 45 and 90 degrees, with each rod longer than the previous to ensure good spacing of lures to cover more water and allow him the ability to maneuver the boat.

"With this 8-rig setup, I can adequately watch rods, reel fish, make course corrections and maneuver the boat in turns without snagging lures," he said.

Manning uses either 6- or 8-pound test, depending on the basic depth of the crappie. The 8-pound test runs shallower than 6-pound test.

"I also don't troll the jigs too far behind the boat, because if you put them back too far, the 'line drag' pulls them up higher, making it harder to determine the strike zone," he said. "And depth control is crucial to success.

"I make frequent turns when hunting crappies, not only to fish a different area, but when turning the inside and outside rigs will travel at different speeds and depths. If I catch crappies on the outside rigs in a turn, I know they are traveling faster and shallower than the other rigs, so I can adjust my speed. Conversely if the inside rigs catch fish and others don't in a turn, I know they are traveling slower and running deeper."

Boat speed is a key and he'll usually start at 0.7 miles per hour but varies speed up and down between 0.5 and 1.0 mph. ■



Terry Madewell

HUNTING/FISHING SCRAPBOOK >

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Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



Charles Kane

Charles Kane, who works at Wilson Marine in Newberry, S.C., shows off a nice bowkill from the 2019 season.



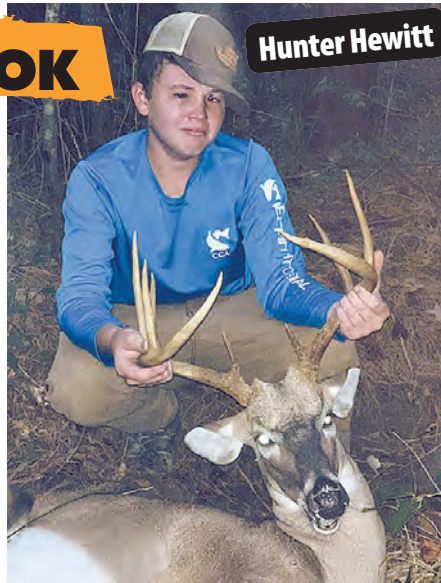
Wayne Austin

Wayne Austin killed this 22-pound gobbler, which sported an 11-inch beard, in Anson County, N.C., on May 4, 2019.



Sarah Gibson, Phillip McBride

Sarah Gibson and Phillip McBride of Matthews, N.C., dropped the hammer on this tom on the last day of the 2019 season.



Hunter Hewitt

Hunter Hewitt, 14, from Currie, N.C., killed his first big buck, this 9-pointer, on Oct. 5, 2019.



Tristan Marion

Tristan Marion took this 9-point, 190-pound buck in Johnston County, N.C., on Nov. 9, 2019.

GOT PHOTOS? WE WANT 'EM

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Avery Cannon

Avery Cannon killed this 8-point buck near Whitmire, S.C., on Oct. 29, 2019.



Ronnie Boykin

Ronnie Boykin of Wilson, N.C., caught this 49-inch bull redfish on Oct. 3, 2019, from North Carolina's Neuse River.

■ By Phillip Gentry

**BACK INSHORE AFTER
THEIR OCEAN SPAWN,
SHEEPSHEAD OFFER
ANGLERS A TASTY
CHALLENGE.**

Michael Waller



TENDING SPRING SHEEPSHEAD

SHEEPSHEAD are special to Michael Waller,

Sheepshead are notorious bait stealers but can be foiled by suspending your bait just off the bottom and using a short leader and sharp hooks.

who runs Saltfisher Charters out of Kiawah Island, S.C. So special that he acknowledges that they're his favorite target species, and that he fishes for them year-round.

Waller acknowledges a sheepshead's reputation as a bait stealer, but he said that doesn't make them hard to catch if you keep things simple. By the first of May, he said, sheepshead abound throughout inshore areas after moving back from the ocean, where they spawned through the late winter and early spring. He looks for them around any type of structure he can find with sufficient water depth.

"A lot of people overlook laydown trees, but those are some great places to catch sheepshead," he said. "Others are docks, rocks, bridge pilings — anywhere that oysters can grow, you're likely to find sheepshead."

Waller (843-343-7538) said sheepshead are definitely schooling fish, so where you find one, you're likely to find more. Unlike most schooling fish, however, he finds all sizes mixed together. He might catch a small one on one drop and a large one on the next, although, like most fish, true trophy fish do tend to be more isolated.

One of the things Waller likes about inshore sheepshead fishing is that they are not boat shy.

"When boats are in the area, the disturbance simply moves them tighter to the structure, which is what you want," he said. "If you're fishing around bigger ships — cargo ships and all — they'll actually start feeding when the ships bang up against the docks or rocky areas, often knocking barnacles in the water. That's just chumming for them."

Waller prefers to fish the two hours on either side of low tide but admits that sheepshead will bite at any stage of the tide — as long as the water is moving. He positions his boat so that his clients can fish straight down from the middle of the boat, whether they are fishing a dock, a rock pile or next to a laydown tree.

"I can position the boat with my i-Pilot trolling motor," he said. "There's no need to tie up to anything or drop anchor; just face the boat into the current, hit the spot-lock button and drop lines straight down."

Waller's tackle for sheepshead consists of a 7-foot Shimano Teramar spinning rod paired with a Shimano reel and 20-pound braid. He rigs an egg sinker at the end of the braid and put a 3- to 6-inch leader of 30-pound mono. He uses No. 1 Owner mosquito hooks.

"The short leader pays off because the fish don't have much room to move with the bait before you feel resistance on the line," he said. "This is also the reason I prefer braid over mono — there is no stretch, and you instantly feel anything on the line."



Waller instructs his clients to hook a single fiddler crab, inserting the point of the hook through the crab's abdomen until it barely pierces the top of the shell. The rig is then lowered to the bottom and reeled up slightly so that the weight is suspended about 6 inches off the bottom.

Too often, he said, anglers lose fish because they lower the rod tip before setting the hook. He tells his clients to keep the rod tip pointed at the water while fishing and lift it quickly, straight up, on the hookset.

"Probably the biggest mistake I see when people are fishing for sheepshead is when they feel the fish bite, they drop the rod tip before setting the hook," he said. "That takes the pressure off the line, and the fish will have sucked the good out of the bite and get off. Simply snap your wrist upward when you feel anything on the line."

Waller admits fishermen are still going to miss a lot of bites and use a lot of bait. He said a pint of fiddler crabs per person is usually ample for a 4- to 6-hour trip, unless they get into pinfish territory.

Waller gives each likely fishing spot 15 minutes to produce, then it's on to the next one.



Michael Waller

"A sheepshead will crush the body of the crab," Waller said. "You look at the bait, and it's got a smashed head. Pinfish will bite off the legs first. When you're getting a lot of bites and they're missing legs, it's time to pull up and go somewhere else."

Waller has learned which places hold sheepshead and which don't. For fishermen who are new to an area or new to sheepshead, he said to give each likely location about 15 minutes to produce before leaving.

"Find an area with between 5 and 15 feet of water (and) make sure there's some kind of structure that will draw the fish to that location," he said. "The more oyster- and barnacle-encrusted, the better, then put your baits down and see what happens," he said. "If you don't get a bite or catch a sheepshead within 15 minutes, go on to the next spot. Keep it simple." ■



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

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TAGGING SHEEP

Michael Waller mandates catch-and-release for his guide-service clients, but that doesn't mean they don't go home with anything. In fact, a day's fishing with Waller frequently results in clients earning a t-shirt, cap, visor, or other reward from the S.C. Department of Natural Resources' fish-tagging program.

The goal of the tagging program is to improve recreational anglers' recognition and understanding of how their actions impact marine resource conservation and management. Since its inception in 1974, nearly 9,000 participants have tagged and released more than 134,000 marine finfish. Marine finfish species are identified for tag-and-release based on their importance both recreationally and commercially to South Carolina and the South Atlantic region.

"Capt. John Ward, who also runs charters

Tagging of gamefish species by anglers has helped biologists and anglers better understand the movements and growth rates of fish like this sheepshead.

for Kiawah Island, and myself are usually atop of the list each year for the number of fish tagged in the program," said Waller. "Last year alone, we each tagged somewhere in the number of 1,500 fish."

Sheepshead regulations have settled at their current levels after several years of adjusting control from federal to state authority. Returned tags assist biologists with understanding the growth rates and migrational patterns of numerous offshore and inshore species, including sheepshead.

"I've been involved with the state tagging program for several year, and those studies have shown that sheepshead don't stay on the reefs all winter," he said. "In fact, they move in and out over the course of the winter, and some even stay out there through the summer. These fish seem to move in and out a lot more than people realize."



Courtesy Michael Waller

South Carolina manages sheepshead with a 10-fish daily creel limit and 30-fish aggregate boat limit, plus a 14-inch, total length minimum.

In North Carolina waters, the daily creel limit is 10 per day, with a 10-inch size minimum. ■

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Phillip Gentry

Anglers may not find the numbers of trout they've become accustomed to in the fall, but bigger sizes are the norm in May.



Photos by Phillip Gentry

SAMPLE SPAWNING SPECKS

FOR YOUR SANITY, PADDLE OUT TO SOME GREAT TROUT FISHING IN MAY

With most of the world practicing social distancing, what better way to remove yourself from the crowds than by launching a kayak into any of the vast acreage of salt marsh that lines the Carolinas' coast and paddling after some speckled trout?

From early April through mid-May, some of the biggest trout of the year will be looking for the best spawning grounds, and knowing what the fish are looking for is the first step in finding them.

No. 1 on the paddling angler's list should be clear water. Trout prefer clean, moving water, so if you combine the two, your success rate is going to be a lot better than just working any point or shell rake you see.

Kayakers won't be able to locate the numbers of fish they do during the fall, because trout will spread out more this time of year — in order to take advantage of suitable spawning grounds.

LIVE BAIT'S EDGE

To increase your odds of success, kayak anglers targeting both big females and the larger number of smaller males that will also be in residence in creeks, bays, and marshes should try using both live and artificial baits. It's hard to beat shrimp, either live or imitation, for pre-spawn and spawning speckled trout.

Once you have settled on a likely ambush spot with clear, moving water, cast either upstream of ambush points and drift or float the bait downcurrent to the trout.

One benefit of live bait is that it imparts fish-attracting action, even if that action is just being something to eat and drifting past an oyster rake. Roe-laden females are known for being ravenous eaters, and like many expectant females, they develop cravings.

If you find that speckled trout get finicky, drop back to your artificial bait game. Then, it's a matter of finding that color combination that satisfies that craving.

GRASS BANKS

Spawning specks tend to hold right up against grass banks this time of year, particularly the males who spend more time fertilizing eggs than the females do laying them. On the other hand, females may be in the same vicinity, but in a little deeper water. To target both genders of fish, keeps several rods rigged and ready utilizing either vertical storage in the tankwell area of the kayak or laid horizontally in the front of the boat. ■

**BEST TROUT LIVE BAITS,
BEST BETS, NEW GEAR >**



Obtaining and holding live baits takes some planning before a kayak outing, but baits like this live shrimp fished under a slip cork can pay big dividends.



Phillip Gentry of Taylors, S.C., is a veteran outdoor writer who chases just about anything that walks, runs, hops or swims.

BEST TROUT LIVE BAITS

Nowhere is it written that an angler fishing from a kayak is required to fish entirely with artificial baits. Many anglers prefer artificials, simply because it's easier to transport a tackle box full of soft plastics or hard baits than to fool with acquiring and keeping live bait for a kayak trip.

This time of year, it's easy enough to net enough bait for a day's fishing or buy bait and keep it alive in a trolling bucket tethered to the kayak's side. With bait moving back into the estuaries, here's your pick of the top baits to tempt big specks.

- **Shrimp.** The best thing you can do with a live shrimp is fish it under a popping cork. Trout absolutely love it, making live shrimp the No. 1 trout bait.

- **Mud Minnows.** Trout eat more shrimp during their early stages and rely more on fish as they attain larger size. Mud minnows are the next food in that progression and are readily attainable from bait shops or with minnow traps. They will also

live a long time in a bait bucket requiring little special care.

- **Finger mullet.** Small mullet fit the bill, especially later in the spring, before and during mullet migrations. Finger mullet are frequently seen wading along the edges of grasslines on low tides, making them perfect target for trout to ambush.

- **Pogies.** Pogies are small menhaden; they require specialized care in an aerated bait tank to survive, which puts them further down the kayak angler's list. They're frail and don't last long on a hook, and they don't put off a lot of action, but they are better than cotton candy on a stick when targeting big trout.

- **Small croaker, whiting, pinfish.** Any of these fish up to about 6 inches are prime bait for big, gator trout. Check regulations in your state for croaker or whiting; South Carolina has a daily combined limit for croaker, whiting and spot. North Carolina doesn't manage croaker or whiting with limits. ■

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BEST BETS

NORTH CAROLINA

WHAT — Speckled trout

WHERE — New River

HOW — Fish either live or artificial shrimp under a slip-cork rig fish in channels near bridges on a falling tide.

LAUNCH — Jacksonville Landing, Southwest Creek Boat Ramp and Gottschalk Marina are all popular launch sites

INSIDER TIP — A rubber landing net comes in handy for speckled trout, which have delicate mouths.

SOUTH CAROLINA

WHAT — Speckled trout

WHERE — Charleston Harbor and rivers and creeks that feed it.

HOW — Look for trout to be holding close to marsh grass in areas of clear, moving water.

LAUNCH — Four of the most popular kayak launches are located in Charleston County — Remley's Point, Shem Creek in Mount Pleasant, Wappoo Cut in West Ashley, and Paradise Landing near Awendaw.

INSIDER TIP — Check prevailing winds and tides before deciding where to launch to take advantage of the most clear water areas.

SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY

continued



Z-MAN TROUT TRICK

For more than 30 years, Z-Man Fishing Products has prided itself on bringing technology to anglers, from silicone skirts in the 1980s to cutting-edge soft plastics and ChatterBait bladed jigs in the past decade. are among the world's premier fresh- and saltwater baits, positioning the company as one of the fastest-growing lure brands in the nation.

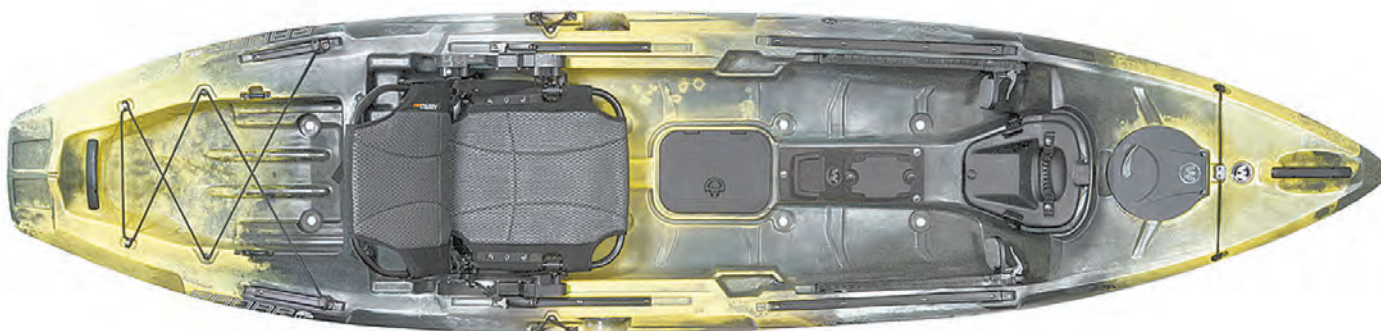
One of Z-Man's most-popular saltwater baits, made in its 10X ElaZtech material that resists nicks, cuts and tears better than other soft baits, is the TroutTrick. Developed and popularized by Bob Sanders, a saltwater guide and former bass pro, the

TroutTrick is absolutely deadly not just on spotted seatrout, but also redfish, flounder, stripers, bass, and more! To fish the Trout-Trick, simply give the rod two sharp twitches, then allow the bait to fall vertically to the bottom on a semi-slack line.

The 5-inch TroutTrick pairs perfectly with Z-Man's Trout Eye jigheads and comes in a variety of colors.

MSRP is \$5.99 for a pack of 6.

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Wilderness System is introducing the Radar series, its first tri-powered kayak with paddle, power and pedal capabilities. In addition to a flat platform for standing and freedom of movement, the Radar boasts state-of-the-art outfitting including expansive SlideTrax™ rails, a multitude of storage opportunities, and scupper options to deploy the Helix MD™ Motor Drive, the Helix PD™ Pedal Drive* and even multiple electronics options including down-imaging, side-scanning or both. When utilizing the Helix PD™, a built-in steering control system affords easy navigation and hands-free fishing, while the AirPro MAX complements the package with optimized positioning.

The center hatch storage bin helps to store and organize small items within reach, custom-made for the Radar 115. Featuring a compression-molded foam material that's flexible enough to fit with ease, yet rigid enough to hold items securely. The soft

foam is also noise dampening, so you don't spook fish while grabbing gear.

Experienced kayak anglers understand the advantages of remaining undetected. The Wilderness Systems Silent Traction Kit makes your kayak even more capable of sneaking up on your favorite fish by reducing the noise transmitted through the water caused by incidental contact with the hull by paddles, poles, pliers and other fishing necessities. Simply place the self-adhering custom cut Silent Traction pads in their proper locations and put the odds in your favor.

MSRP is \$1359.

Available at wildernesssystems.com

**COOKING ON
THE WILD SIDE >**

COOKING ON THE WILD SIDE

Jerry Dilsaver



BLACKENED TURKEY HAND PIES

CELEBRATE TURKEY SEASON WITH THIS SIMPLE RECIPE



Jerry Dilsaver

Our world began changing in late February and was pretty much upside down by the middle of March. We hadn't gotten to a shelter-in-place order when it was time to get this recipe together, but the grocery stores had been plundered, and the selection was nothing like we are used to as we prepared to prepare the fruits of spring turkey season.

In many ways, sportsmen are the originators of social distancing. No one wants a bunch of people close by when they're hunting or fishing, and that's good, because May is prime time for hunting and fishing in the Carolinas.

Authorities are telling us there are no plans to shut down our outdoors pursuits, and that makes May the perfect time to share a recipe for that turkey you fooled with your great calling and woodsmanship.

In staying with the times, an appropriate recipe would be simple enough that most, if not all, of the ingredients could be found in the fridge, pantry or freezer — making a trip to the store unnecessary. Most folks will find this a good time to use that can or frozen pack of mixed vegetables. The ingredient most will have to shop for is the bread, and if someone has their own pie crust recipe,

it should work fine.

Hunters certainly may prepare this recipe with a turkey from this year, but should keep in mind it works well with a breast or some wings and legs they found under something in the freezer.

The plan is to return to a fishing recipe next month, probably something from the coast. Hopefully, the quarantines created by the coronavirus will be eased by then, and we'll have something to be prepared with the catch of the day. If that isn't the case, we'll feature something you might have in the freezer and continue from there. In the meantime, stay safe, stay well and enjoy! ■

BLACKENED TURKEY HAND PIES

The simplicity of this recipe has made it one of my favorites over many years. It probably also helps that it tastes good. This is the simplest version I can bring it to, and this was done to make it as simple as possible. Hopefully you will not need anything from the store while staying at home during the corona virus pandemic.

The turkey for this can be almost any part, as long as it can be removed from the bone. I began making this as a way to use parts of the breast, plus legs and wings. Just about everyone has a bag of turkey pieces that fits this description, and they are the last to be used, so dig that bag out of the freezer and get ready to turn it in to something good.

The blackened seasoning is added after the turkey is cut into roughly bite-sized pieces. I use Chef Paul Prudhomme's Blackened Redfish Magic blend, like I do on most fish. This is one of those things you can't take away if you use too much, so be careful. I don't want it as thick as when actually blackening something, but I am using it as a salt/pepper/spice seasoning.

This light blackening is best done in a cast-iron pan, which distributes the heat well; I use a deep pan so I don't have to be as careful stirring. The little bit of olive oil helps prevent scorching the butter. As this is not an actual blackening, it is done over medium to medium-high heat and does not make the cloud of smoke that accompanies most blackened preparations.

I shake a little more of the blackened seasoning on the vegetables while warming them. A bit of butter helps the seasoning bind to the vegetables and helps keeps them from scorching. My personal preference is to add a little fresh ground pepper after adding the soup and reintroducing the turkey, but I caution that it

reacts with the blackened seasoning and can get spicy quickly. If you are preparing this for folks with mild palates, this might be best left out; let them add it to their personal tastes once its on their plate. I find there is enough salt in the blackened seasoning and don't add any, but everyone's tastes may be different.

There is a little difference in the tubes of crescent rolls and dough. This works fine with the store brands, but the name-brand doughs seem to be a little flakier. Making this using crescent rolls seems to make it more of a fun dish, where the pies can be picked up and eaten much like regular bread. Using crescent dough sheets allows for making larger pies that hold more of the turkey/vegetable/soup filling and serve as the featured entrée for a more formal meal. I prepared it both ways for this as that was what I had for crescent dough.

I like this recipe, as it is easy, versatile and tasty. In addition, it works well using pieces of turkey that aren't perfect. There are only a few minutes of prep, and odds are you might have everything needed already in the fridge, freezer and pantry. That makes it especially nice for these trying times. ■

INGREDIENTS:

8 to 12 ounces of boneless turkey
1 bag frozen mixed vegetables (You may substitute 1 drained can of mixed vegetables)
1 can cream of chicken soup
2 cans refrigerated crescent dough sheets or crescent rolls
½ stick of butter
1 tbsp olive oil
Blackened seasoning
Salt and pepper to taste
Parchment paper to line shallow baking pan.



Jerry Dilsaver

PREPARATION:

Chop the turkey into bite-size pieces. Season the turkey (to taste) with blackened seasoning. Heat ¼ stick butter and 1 tablespoon olive oil in deep frying pan.

Sear the turkey pieces in the frying pan and remove. Add a little butter and sauté the vegetables in the frying pan. Add the cream of chicken soup and stir well while warming. An option is to add a little fresh, ground black pepper at this point. Stir the turkey pieces into the soup and vegetables.

Line the baking pan with a sheet of parchment paper. Open the crescent dough sheets or rolls. With sheets, cut the sheet in half and place both pieces on the parchment paper. With rolls, place half the triangles on the parchment paper.

Place a dollop of the turkey/vegetable/soup mixture on the dough. A third of a cup is approximately correct for the sheets and an eighth of a cup is about right for the rolls. Fold over the sheet or add a second triangle to cover the turkey/

vegetable/soup mixture and seal the edges. You can seal the edges by pinching or pressing with the tines of a fork.

Bake at the heat and time specified on the dough package. This one was 12 to 15 minutes at 350 degrees. Watch closely near the end and let the dough turn a golden brown, but be careful not to scorch it. Lift each pie with a spatula and serve immediately.

A lettuce wedge or green salad is a nice start to this meal, and chocolate pudding makes an excellent dessert. ■



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



Sportsman FISHING HOTSPOTS

Black drum can be caught around any kind of inshore structure this month near Little River, including jetty rocks, oysters and wooden cover.

BLACK IS BACK AT LITTLE RIVER

Tom Cushman

'Accidental' targets show up in many anglers' catches; here's how to target them

Black drum bite all year in the Little River, S.C., area along the North Carolina-South Carolina border, but May is when more people begin catching them — possibly because more people start fishing once the warm weather patterns arrive.

One thing's for sure, the black drum bite is on this time of year.

Tom Cushman of Capt. Cushman's Calmwater Charters said black drum are sometimes the saving grace on May trips when other species can be fickle. A lot of anglers catch black drum "by accident" while targeting other species, but Cushman said anglers can effectively target black drum. He said they should keep two things in mind.

"No. 1, black drum will stick much tighter to structure than most other fish," he said. "And No. 2, these fish feed almost exclusively on the bottom."

Cushman said black drum are not especially picky about what they eat. Shrimp, small crabs, small mud minnows

and pieces of cut bait all work. Anglers sometimes catch them on artificial lures, but Cushman said if you're targeting black drum, it's best to stick with the real thing.

"In May, you can find them in about any depth in the Little River area," Cushman said. "They stay in deep holes throughout the winter, but this time of year, they can be shallow. You just want to look for structure, whether that's boat docks, oyster rocks, downed trees or tree limbs like you'll find in a lot of the smaller creeks here, concrete walls — these are all good spots to find black drum."

One of the most-obvious places, Cushman said, is the jetties, where a shrimp fished on the bottom can produce a black drum on almost every cast when an angler finds a school of these fish.

Cushman (843-997-5850) said while redfish and speckled trout usually bite better when the tide is moving in either direction, that's not always the case with black drum.

"They are a good species to target when the tide isn't moving at all. Black drum don't rely on any certain tide sequence," he said. "Some days, they'll bite better on certain tides, but some days it doesn't seem to matter at all. So these fish are always an option, and (they) can help fill the time in between tide shifts."

Cushman said it's always a good idea for anglers to take note of many factors when catching any fish. But he said that's especially true when hooking black drum.

"If you catch a black drum right next to a tree limb on an oyster bottom that's just out of the current, look for other areas very similar to that one for more black drum," he said. "These fish can change habits from day to day. So when you catch one, the rest of them will be in similar places. And when you catch one, don't think it's the only one there. These fish are often in schools, so look for more to be there." ■

— Brian Cope

BIG RED DRUM BEAT

Huge fish are moving across Cape Lookout

May is a transitional fishing month along North Carolina's beaches, including the Crystal Coast. "We're venturing from spring — March and April — into summer fishing," said Capt. Bryan Goodwin of Beaufort's Native Guide Service. "We get a lot of migration in the spring with a trout run and early drum coming back."

The key to finding almost all gamefish is finding baitfish, and May is no different, according to Goodwin (252-725-3961). Large schools of menhaden head west when water temperatures change. Other popular spring gamefish targets include king and Spanish mackerel, bluefish and cobia.

"Most of the adult reds still will be in the ocean in May, but they move closer to shore," Goodwin said. "We had a relatively mild winter, but water temperature doesn't trigger the menhaden migration per se; it's the change in temperature. They migrate about the same time every year."

Adult redfish may weigh from 20 to 60 pounds. Many depart offshore structures to follow menhaden. The largest reds, usually females, spawn from August through October around inlet channels and in Pamlico Sound.

Goodwin fishes around Cape Lookout, on either side of the shoals that extend 19 miles from Beaufort Inlet. Two sloughs on



Captain Bryan Goodwin targets large red drum in nearshore waters close to Cape Lookout in May.

Brian Goodwin

either side of Shark Island and two near the Knuckle Buoy are routes for menhaden pushed through by tides and winds. Redfish gather to feed voraciously at these shoal cuts.

Not a lot of people fish the shoals because wind and waves make it chancy, but on calm days, Goodwin sight-casts artificial lures — 4- to 6-inch, black/silver swimbaits or bucktails — reds in clear water.

"It's difficult, challenging fishing, and you can fish only a small percentage of days at the shoals," he said.

"I look for menhaden on the surface or with side-scan sonar," said Goodwin, who uses a variety of spinning reels on 6-foot rods.

"I lighten up my tackle a bit, but it's basically the same tackle I use for cobia," he said. "(The rods) are similar to fishing with a popping cork — with slightly heavier line (20- to 40-pound test) and 2- to 3-ounce lures. I don't change out factory hooks. Curly-tails make the bucktails a little longer and may attract a cobia." ■

— Craig Holt



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

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

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

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

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		POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL	VALUE	MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT	
Fri 1						58	1:30 pm	7:01 pm - 10:11 pm	2:53 am	6:26 am - 9:48 am	☀
Sat 2						51	2:39 pm	8:03 pm - 10:55 pm	3:34 am	7:26 am - 10:36 am	☀
Sun 3						49	3:48 pm	9:06 pm - 11:38 pm	4:11 am	8:28 am - 11:20 am	☀
Mon 4						57	4:59 pm	10:08 pm - 12:20 am	4:46 am	9:31 am - 12:03 pm	☀
Tue 5						67	6:10 pm	11:13 pm - Midnight	5:20 am	10:33 am - 12:45 pm	☀ Perigee
Wed 6						74	7:23 pm	Midnight - 1:01 am	5:56 am	11:38 am - 1:26 pm	☀
Thu 7						75	8:35 pm	12:18 am - 1:46 am	6:34 am	12:43 pm - 2:11 pm	☀ FULL
Fri 8						62	9:47 pm	1:23 am - 2:35 am	7:16 am	1:48 pm - 3:00 pm	☀
Sat 9						50	10:54 pm	2:26 am - 3:28 am	8:03 am	2:51 pm - 3:53 pm	☀
Sun 10						37	11:56 pm	3:30 am - 4:22 am	8:55 am	3:55 pm - 4:47 pm	☀
Mon 11						31	12:49 am	4:28 am - 5:20 am	9:52 am	4:53 pm - 5:45 pm	☀ LOW
Tue 12						31	1:35 am	5:21 am - 6:17 am	10:51 am	5:46 pm - 6:42 pm	☀
Wed 13						36	2:14 am	6:10 am - 7:12 am	11:51 am	6:35 pm - 7:37 pm	☀
Thu 14						46	2:48 am	6:54 am - 8:06 am	12:51 pm	7:19 pm - 8:31 pm	☀ HALF
Fri 15						37	3:18 am	7:32 am - 8:58 am	1:48 pm	7:57 pm - 9:23 pm	☀
Sat 16						35	3:46 am	8:07 am - 9:49 am	2:44 pm	8:32 pm - 10:14 pm	☀
Sun 17						36	4:12 am	8:40 am - 10:38 am	3:39 pm	9:05 pm - 11:03 pm	☀
Mon 18						38	4:39 am	9:12 am - 11:28 am	4:34 pm	9:37 pm - 11:53 pm	☀ Apogee
Tue 19						50	5:06 am	9:44 am - 12:16 pm	5:29 pm	10:09 pm - 12:41 am	☀
Wed 20						62	5:36 am	10:19 am - 1:05 pm	6:25 pm	10:44 pm - 1:30 am	☀
Thu 21						76	6:09 am	10:55 am - 1:57 pm	7:23 pm	11:20 pm - 2:22 am	☀
Fri 22						84	6:46 am	11:34 am - 2:50 pm	8:22 pm	11:59 pm - Midnight	☀ NEW
Sat 23						77	7:29 am	12:18 pm - 3:44 pm	9:21 pm	Midnight - 3:15 am	☀
Sun 24						70	8:19 am	1:07 pm - 4:39 pm	10:20 pm	12:43 am - 4:09 am	☀
Mon 25						61	9:15 am	1:59 pm - 5:35 pm	11:16 pm	1:32 am - 5:04 am	☀ HIGH
Tue 26						57	10:16 am	2:56 pm - 6:28 pm	12:07 am	2:24 am - 6:00 am	☀
Wed 27						57	11:21 am	3:55 pm - 7:21 pm	12:53 am	3:21 am - 6:53 am	☀
Thu 28						61	12:28 pm	4:55 pm - 8:07 pm	1:34 am	4:20 am - 7:46 am	☀
Fri 29						69	1:35 pm	5:54 pm - 8:54 pm	2:11 am	5:20 am - 8:32 am	☀ HALF
Sat 30						57	2:43 pm	6:55 pm - 9:35 pm	2:46 am	6:19 am - 9:19 am	☀
Sun 31						50		7:56 pm - 10:14 pm		7:20 am - 10:00 am	☀

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Brian Carroll

SHAD, BREAM SPAWN put Lake Wylie bass into a feeding frenzy

Lake Wylie, on the border between North Carolina and South Carolina, southwest of Charlotte and north of Rock Hill, offers some of the best bass fishing this month in either state — because of two, much smaller fish.

Chris Nichols of Carolina Angler Guide Service said that shad and bream will both spawn on 13,400-acre Lake Wylie, typically at either end of the month. And the move of those fish to the shallows will trigger great bass bites.

"If you're talking about bass fishing, you have a couple of things going," said Nichols (704-860-7951). "The shad spawn early in the month, and the bream will spawn on the first full moon in May.

"A lot of shad will spawn early in the morning in shallow water, along rip-rap banks or red-clay points," he said. "Because you've got a lot of shad in shallow water, there will be a lot of bass up shallow, feeding on shad, and you have an outstanding topwater bite from first light for about two hours.

"Baits like Pop-Rs and Whopper Ploppers, maybe even a big bait like a Zara Spook, will catch fish. A Spook will be better in open water; you can work a Pop-R up against a rip-rap bank better. If they won't quite come up to the top and hit a topwater bait, you can throw a swimbait over those points — something white, shad or translucent, a lot more subtle — or even a willow-leaf spinnerbait."

Big topwater plugs are great weapons when Lake Wylie bass are feeding on spawning shad and bream this month.

The shad spawn is usually done by mid-May. Typically, when the full moon falls later in the month, the bass will turn from shad to bream. This year, there could be some overlap with a May 7 full moon if the water is warm enough, or the big push may come with the June 5 full moon.

"In every sheltered cove on Lake Wylie, you will have some bream beds; you can basically just ride around from cove to cove and be able to see them," Nichols said. "If you have side-imaging on your depth finder, there are a lot of beds off the bank, in 3, 4 or 5 feet of water. You can't see them visually, but side-imaging allows you to see all of them.

"Fishing around bream beds for bass is a good, seasonal pattern. You can catch some nice bass, 3 to 5 pounds. A lot of times, by the end of May you have a lot of fish moving offshore, but a lot of the bigger ones will stay shallow for the bream spawn. Just about every bream bed you find will have one to three bass in the vicinity.

"You need to fish a topwater with a very erratic action; you have to make it look like a bream struggling." ■

— Dan Kibler

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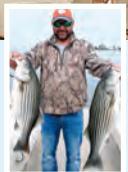
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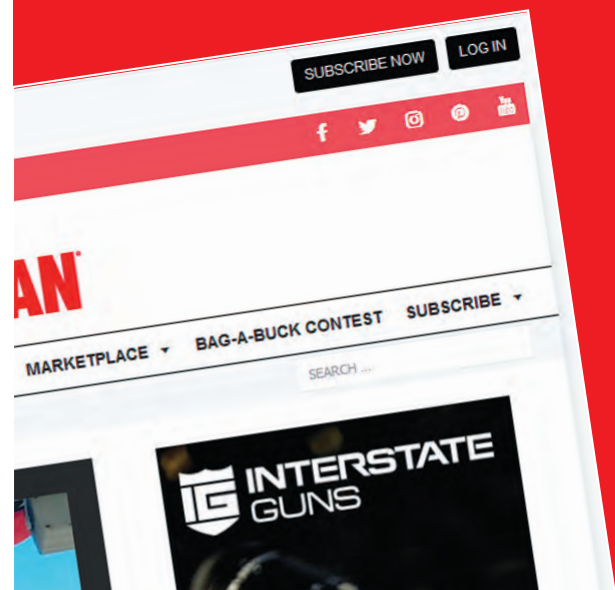


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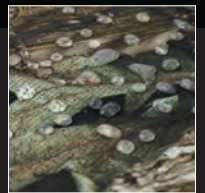
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