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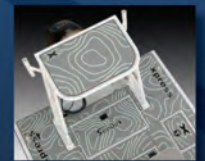
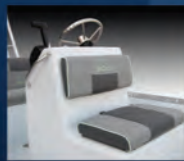


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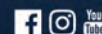
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THE BETTER



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ROCK ON!



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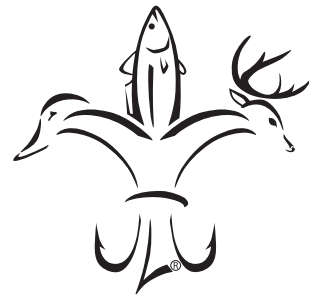
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Rod "Capt. Ponytail" Thomas loves to fish the jetties outside South Carolina's Winyah Bay for big redbfish, especially during the summer. Photo by Brian Cope.



# Carolina SPORTSMAN

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

*Dan Kibler*

# SC DEER HARVEST IS STABLE

## DECREASE FROM 2018 TO 2019 IS 1%; BUCKS MAKE UP 51.8% OF TOTAL

**H**unters in South Carolina reported killing more than 193,000 deer during the 2019-20 season, a 1-percent decrease over the previous season.



Spartanburg County was one of the leading counties in South Carolina's 2019-20 deer harvest; Brian Caldwell dropped this Spartanburg County 8-pointer with a Henry .44 Mag last Dec. 20. It scored 125%.

The S.C. Department of Natural Resources released the results of the 2019 Deer Hunter Survey in late May. It showed a statewide harvest of 193,073 deer, with 51.8% being bucks and 48.2% being does. That's down only very slightly from the 2018-19 season, when hunters took 194,986 deer.

This past season was the third in South Carolina's "all deer" tagging system and statewide limit on antlered deer. The buck harvest has risen only 9% since before tagging requirements, while doe harvests have risen 18%. "Prior to the tagging program, increases in harvest were normally the result of increases in the buck harvest or a more equal increase in buck and doe harvests," said Charles Ruth, SCDNR's big-game project leader. "This disproportionate

harvest may be indicative of the new buck limit having the desired effect of decreasing pressure on bucks. It will likely take a few years for this to become clearer."

The annual harvest fell from the all-time high in 2002 through the 2015 season, with the drop blamed on habitat change, 20 years of aggressive antlerless harvest and the impact of coyotes on fawn survival.

SCDNR's data indicated that 80% of the deer harvested statewide were taken with rifles, with archery equipment (traditional bows and crossbows) taking 8.3%, shotguns 93% and muzzleloaders 1.7%.

The top counties in terms of total harvest were Orangeburg (9,310), Colleton (7,725), Williamsburg (7,600), Spartanburg (7,360) and Laurens (6,256).

In terms of harvest per unit area, Spartanburg County was tops with 17.7 deer killed per square mile, followed by Anderson (17.1), Bamberg (15.8), Laurens (12.6) and Beaufort (12.3).

The Deer Hunter Survey also indicated decreases in the number of wild hogs and coyotes taken last season, with the coyote harvest down 9%, continuing a decline over several years, and the hog harvest down 20%.

"Hog numbers — and thus harvest — can vary substantially from year to year due to bottomland flooding during the fall and winter farrowing season, which can cause mortality in piglets (and some adults), as well as increasing vulnerability to hunters as hogs move to higher ground," Ruth said. "The dramatic decrease in harvest is likely related to these factors, as bottomland flooding was relatively widespread due to tropical systems in 2018 and the resulting record hog harvest that year." ■

# NC YOUNGSTER TAGS RARE, SILVER-PHASE BEARDED HEN

The turkey that 10-year-old Ethan Steinbicker of Chapel Hill, N.C., killed on April 21 in Alamance County was the second of his hunting career, and he's not likely to take one to match it, no matter how long he hunts.

Steinbicker, a fourth-grader at Woods Charter School in Chapel Hill, killed a smoke-phase turkey. A unique bird with striking, white-silver plumage — but not an albino — it is about a 1-in-100 occurrence caused by a recessive genetic trait.

But throw another 1-in-50 chance in there — his turkey was also a bearded hen — and you've got a mighty unusual bird: 1-in-5,000 if the math works out.

The younger Steinbicker shot the bird a couple of days after it appeared in photos from a trail-camera that his father, Eric Steinbicker, had set up. They thought the bird was a jake, an immature male turkey, because of the red coloration of its head, and because when they zoomed in on the trail-camera photo, they could see a small beard, perhaps an inch long, protruding from the feathers on its chest.

The Steinbickers walked a food plot near where the trail-camera photo was taken and came up with a smoky, white feather, so they set up a ground blind inside some cedar trees and slipped out to hunt at around 5 p.m.

"Around 7, we were about to leave, and I did a few yelps on a glass call," Eric Steinbicker said. "We immediately heard a bird behind us. It was a very strange sound: kind of like a cross between a duck, a turkey and a chicken. We looked at each other like, 'What in the world could make that noise?' It kept vocalizing and getting closer."

Ethan Steinbicker said the turkey sounded "like it was trying to gobble but couldn't."

But the bird was coming in the opposite direction from where the Steinbickers were set up to shoot. Eric Steinbicker left his son in the blind, ran about 100 yards to his left and called again,



Ethan Steinbicker, 10, of Chapel Hill, N.C., killed this rare, silver-phase bearded hen in Alamance County.

hoping it would head in that direction, and when the turkey responded, he ran back to the blind.

"It worked," Eric Steinbicker said. "The turkey headed toward the last call I made; we could hear it approaching us about 30 yards away. My son saw the bird. He had to get out of his chair to shoot off my knee to get a shot. He said, 'Ready?' and I told him to shoot 'when you're ready.' He shot, and it collapsed."

Only then did the Steinbickers find out exactly what they had.

"We thought it was a jake when we shot it," Ethan Steinbicker said. "But it didn't have any spurs."

The inch-long beard was clearly there, but the spurs weren't — not even bumps — and when they took it to Craig Hall, a taxidermist in Mebane, N.C., he agreed that it was a hen. ■

## BASS RESCHEDULES 2 EVENTS FOR SC RESERVOIRS

Officials at BASS have announced a new schedule of events to replace those postponed or cancelled this spring because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and South Carolina is on the schedule twice.

The Santee Cooper lakes, Marion and Moultrie, will be the site of a Bassmaster Elite Series tournament now scheduled for Oct. 8-13. Lake Hartwell will be the site of a Bassmaster Open Eastern Division tournament scheduled for Sept. 23-25.

BASS has emphasized that it will heed each state's mandates on crowd sizes and public spaces as well as monitor federal

guidelines to ensure both competition and fan activities can resume safely.

Three Elite Series events and two Bassmaster Opens tournaments originally scheduled between March and May were initially postponed. An alternate date for the tournament originally planned on Texas's Sabine River could not be identified, prompting an official reschedule of that event for Spring 2021. Instead, the Elite Series will compete on Cayuga Lake in Union Springs, N.Y.

"When originally setting up the schedule, BASS took into account the times of year when each fishery would be at its best,"

said Trip Weldon, the tournament director for BASS. "The revisions, while challenging, should present excellent catch opportunities for our field."

The Bassmaster Elite Series got underway on Alabama's Lake Eufala on June 10-13. The Cayuga Lake event will be July 14-17, followed by a July 23-26 tournament on New York's St. Lawrence River, July 30-Aug. 2 on New York's Lake Champlain, Aug. 20-23 on Michigan's Lake St. Clair, Oct. 16-19 on Tennessee's Chickamauga Lake, and the Bassmaster Texas Fest on Nov. 5-8 on Lake Fork. ■

# NCCFRG GOES TO COURT OVER SHRIMP TRAWLS

## SAYS DUMPING BY-CATCH VIOLATES CLEAN WATER ACT

**A** North Carolina conservation group has filed a notice that it intends to sue the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, N.C. Department of Environmental Quality and the owners of prominent shrimp boats over violations to the Clean Water Act caused by unfettered shrimping in North Carolina's coastal waters.

Attorneys for the N.C. Coastal Fisheries Reform Group sent a Notice of Claim on May 18 to the NCDMF, NCDEQ and Jonathan Brent Fulcher, the registered agent for Gaston LLC, owner of the New Bern-based shrimping vessel *Micah Bell*, of their intent to file suit on the grounds that by-catch discards from shrimp boats pollute North Carolina's waters in violation of the Clean Waters Act, and that shrimp-trawling gear causes damage to the bottom of estuaries along the coast, destroying habitat and causing sediments and pollutants to be suspended in the water, also in violation of the Clean Waters Act.

A Notice of Claim is a legal filing notifying parties involved of an upcoming legal action. Typically, it is filed 60 days before the actual suit, giving parties the opportunity to correct their behavior or prove they are not guilty of the assertions.

Joe Albea of Winterville, N.C., spokesman for the NCCFRG, said frustration over repeated attempts to address the problem forced his group's hand.

"We have tried every remedy possible to start reform talks with both the executive and legislative branches of North Carolina, and we were outright dismissed or completely ignored. They had their chance to discuss the issues," Albea said. "We are going to take legal action against the state of North Carolina in federal court, and we intend to name leaders in the North Carolina commercial fishing industry as co-defendants, too.

"Look, the timing of this is crucial. We're coming up on yet

The North Carolina Coastal Fisheries Reform Group has sued the state and commercial-fishing interests, alleging that shrimp trawling violates the Clean Water Act.



another shrimping season. Are we going to allow our coastal resource to be abused another year? We say no, because we are desperately trying to preserve the resource for recreational and commercial fishing alike."

James L. Conner II, NCCFRG's legal council, said that the annual disposal of millions of dead fish — by-catch from shrimping activities — into the Pamlico Sound violates the Clean Water Act, and that the practice has been "allowed and encouraged" by the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission and the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries.

"We tried to talk with the politicians, yet they ignored us," said Robert Crone of NCCFRG. "But if they ignore our Notice of Claim, we will take it to the courts, and this egregious, large-scale dumping of by-catch will be exposed for all to witness. And the citizens of North Carolina will not like what they see. That's going to be hard to ignore."

Patricia Smith, a spokesman for the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, said, "We have received the Notice of Intent, and we are reviewing it." ■

---

## CCA-SC'S STAR TOURNAMENT OPENS JULY 1

The Coastal Conservation Association-South Carolina will open its third annual STAR tournament on July 1, with anglers getting 101 days to try and catch a tagged redfish and win a boat.

The tournament, open to CCA-SC members, will award two Sea Hunt BX 22 boats, rigged with 150hp Yamaha outboards, on

Wesco trailers — the package is valued at \$43,000 — to the first two fishermen entered in the tournament to catch a tagged redfish.

The tournament runs from July 1 through Oct. 14.

CCA-SC officials have caught, tagged and released 60 redfish from Little River to

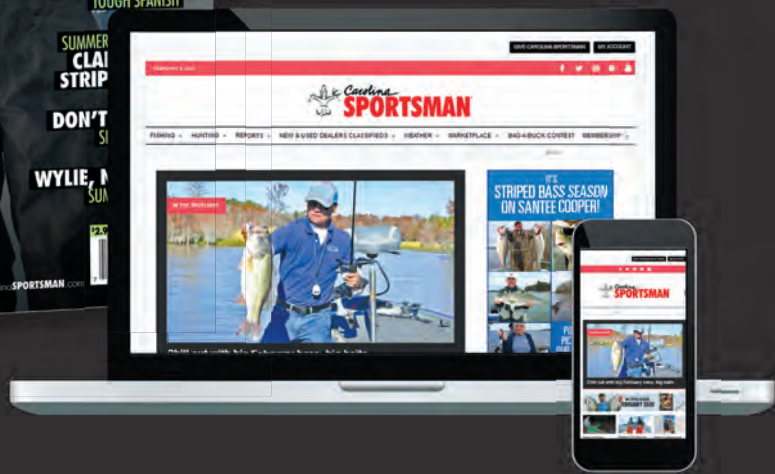
Hilton Head and everywhere in-between. During the first two CCA-SC STAR tournaments, anglers have caught a tagged redfish but were unable to claim the prize because they were not registered for the tournament.

To register for the tournament, visit [www.ccasouthcarolina.com](http://www.ccasouthcarolina.com). ■

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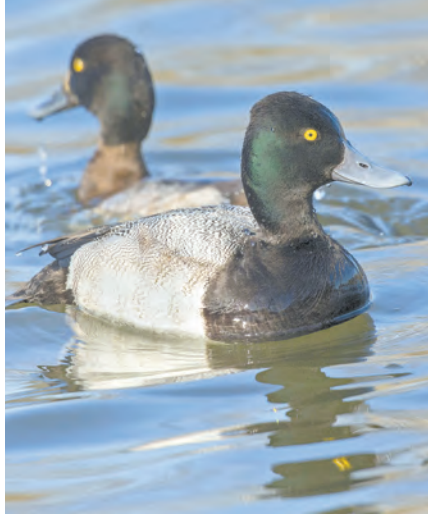
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The daily bag limit on scaup, aka bluebills, will be one for those parts of the open season through Jan. 7, and two per day from Jan. 8 to the end of the season.



## NC SETS SEASONS ON DUCKS, OTHER MIGRATORY BIRDS

**N**orth Carolina announced 2020-21 dates for waterfowl and other migratory birds seasons in early May, but the biggest announcement might have been something that won't take effect until next year.

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission announced that for the 2021-22 season, it will divide the state into two duck hunting zones — Coastal and Inland — with I-95 as the boundary. Up to three season segments will be allowed in each zone, and season dates in each zone can change annually.

Federal waterfowl hunting frameworks require the zones to remain in place through the 2025-26 season. Dates will be set at the Commission's meeting in April 2021.

For the 2020-21 seasons, dove and duck hunters will have seasons split in three parts, duck hunters will have different bag limits for scaup, depending on the part of the season, and the number of permits available for tundra swans will be reduced by about 220.

Duck seasons will be Oct. 7-10, Nov. 7-28 and Dec. 19-Jan. 30, 2021, with a six-bird daily bag limit that includes a number of limits on individual species. The change is that the limit on scaup, aka bluebills, will be one daily during the October and November seasons, plus Dec. 19-Jan. 7. From Jan. 8 to the end of the season, the daily bag limit will be two. The season for sea ducks will be Nov. 23-Jan. 30, 2021, the early teal season east of US 17 will be Sept. 12-30, and special youth waterfowl days will be Feb. 6 and 13, 2021.

Dove seasons will run Sept. 5-Oct. 10, Nov. 14-20 and Dec. 12-Jan. 30, 2021. The daily bag

limit will be 15. Hunting will begin 30 minutes before sunrise and will end at sunset.

Goose hunters will get a statewide season on resident Canada geese from Sept. 1-30, with a daily bag limit of 15. In areas west of US 17, shooting hours will be extended to 30 minutes past sunset, with unplugged guns and electronic calls legal. Later seasons will be Oct. 7-17, Nov. 7-28 and Dec. 19-Feb. 13, 2021, on Canadas in the resident population zone, with a 5-bird daily bag limit. Hunting in the Northeast Zone is by permit only from Jan. 15-30, 2021, with a one-bird limit.

Brant geese can be hunted during the third segment of the general duck season, Dec. 19-Jan. 30, 2021, with a one-bird daily bag limit. Snow geese can be hunted Oct. 13-Feb. 13, 2021 with a bag limit of 25 birds per day, and during the special, permit-only conservation order season, Feb. 15-March 31, 2021, there is no bag limit, shooting hours extend to 30 minutes after sunset, with unplugged guns and electronic calls legal.

Tundra swans can be hunting by permit only from Nov. 7-Jan. 30, 2021. Permits allocated to North Carolina have been reduced from 6,115 to 4,895.

The season on woodcock will be Dec. 10-Jan. 30, 2021, with a 3-bird daily bag limit. Common snipe can be hunted Oct. 27-Feb. 27, 2021, with a bag limit of eight per day. Rails can be hunted Sept. 1-Nov. 20. Bag limits are 15 per day for king and clapper rails, gallinules and moorhens, and 25 for Virginia and sora rails. ■

## NCWRC: RELEASE TAGGED NORMAN HYBRIDS

**T**he N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission is asking anglers fishing on Lake Norman to release any blue-tagged hybrid bass they catch.

Anglers can easily identify these fish. Look for a blue tag in the dorsal area (the top of the fish near the spines) and a thin antenna protruding from the side of the body. They are part of a study of hybrid striped bass, also known as Bodie bass.

Biologists recently began to track the fish's movements throughout the reservoir, particularly in the late summer months, when water temperatures are high and dissolved-oxygen levels in certain areas of the reservoir are low.

Anglers should release these fish immediately. Since 2016, the Commission has been studying harvest of hybrid striped bass at Lake Norman. Hybrids in that study were implanted with an orange tag. Anglers collecting fish with orange tags are still advised to remove that tag and call the phone number on the tag. ■

## SC ADDS CREEL, LENGTH LIMITS FOR TRIPLETAIL, SPADEFISH

South Carolina has recently added and changed size and creel limits to help protect two popular saltwater species:

tripletail and spadefish.

The state legislature has passed regulations placing both creel limits and minimum-size limits for both species. Under the new laws, anglers may keep 10 spadefish per day (or 30 per boat), with a 14-inch minimum-size limit. The creel limit for spadefish was previously 20 fish per person per day, with no minimum size limit.

Anglers may keep three tripletail per day

(or nine per boat), provided those fish are at least 18 inches in total length. No previous limits existed for tripletail in South Carolina waters.

The legislation establishing and changing the regulations was originally introduced in 2019 in the S.C. Senate, where it received unanimous support before being passed by the S.C. House and signed into law by Gov. Henry McMaster earlier this year. ■

**WHEN SUMMER HEAT WARMS THE WATER, ROCK JETTIES THAT LINE THE ENTRANCE TO COASTAL INLETS BECOME HAVENS FOR BAITFISH AND PREDATORS OF ALL KINDS. HERE'S HOW TO SET UP FOR SUCCESS. ■ By Jeff Burleson**

# ROCK ON!



Jeff Burleson

# THE CAROLINAS OFFER EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR A LONG LIST OF SALTWATER FISH SPECIES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

The seemingly endless myriad of creeks and shallow estuaries painted along the eastern front provides the perfect feeding grounds for every member of the food chain, from mud minnows, pinfish and creek shrimp on the low end to the gator trout, snaggle-toothed sheepshead and lunker reds on the top end.

But as the sun's rays pelt down 14 hours a day and water temperatures soar along the shallow front, a once-perfect scenario becomes less than ideal for larger gamefish, and cooler water becomes attractive along the oceanic fringe. And the rock jetties that line a number of inlets provide just the right pieces to the puzzle and become new feeding grounds for many of these fish.


No doubt, the water gets hot all over the place, but the vastness of the ocean moderates temperatures and can provide relative refuge for many marine creatures. Scattered inlets are ideal places for fish to feed, and inlets armored with rock jet-

ties provide everything a predator can ask for. Jetties provide a surface for barnacles, oysters and marsh mussels to grow and perfect places for shrimp and small fish to hide. But predators find these areas quite useful, and they can make a living eating breakfast, lunch, dinner and plenty of late-night snacks.

Jordan Pate of Carolina Guide Service fishes just about every type of marine terrain around Georgetown, S.C., throughout the year. When the water heats up, the jetties lining the entrance to Winyah Bay become two of his prime destinations.

"I rely on jetty fishing in the hottest part of the summer, particularly when the water temps get really hot in the creeks," said Pate (843-814-7900). "You can literally catch every type of inshore gamefish at the jetties, as well as your apex predators, like kings, tarpon, cobia and sharks. I like to fish the jetties because you never know what you're going to catch."

The Winyah Bay jetties are some of the

 Rock jetties around the entrance to inlets will concentrate forage and gamefish during the summer as incoming ocean water cools things off.

Jeff Burleson



## THE CAROLINAS' JETTIED INLETS

largest and longest jetties along the entire Eastern Seaboard, easily extending more than a mile into the ocean. They play an important role in armoring the entrance to the bay, where four river systems converge and empty into the Atlantic. Currents can be strong and sometimes unpredictable at the jetties, but there are tons of places to safely set up and find feeding fish. Tides and currents play a major role on boat placement.

"I find places along the rocks where I can fish comfortably while avoiding a dangerous situation," Pate said.

Luckily, target species will be available on both sides of the jetty for most of their length. Pate will typically target flounder, sheepshead, black drum and redfish, which prefer the cooler waters around the jetties, and a wide-open menu of forage foods will be available in summer. He will use live bait and artificials throughout the year, but for the mixed bag of predators, live bait is hard to beat around the jetty rocks.

"Reds, trout and flounder will gobble up a live shrimp or small fish without hesitation," he said. "I like to float them on an adjustable float around the jetty rocks."

In addition to the rocks themselves, the sea floor around the jetties is littered with unfriendly objects to snag and cut off rigs. Adjustable floats allow anglers to dangle live baits just above the structure in just the right position. Speckled trout, redfish and flounder will come off the bottom as soon as they see one of these free meals dangling on the dinner table.

Visibility is an important factor while fishing the jetties, and



the water will be clearer at some times more than others during summer.

"Different tides favor different species at times, but in general, fish tend to bite better in the cleaner water, particularly, flounder and trout, which rely on their eyesight to locate prey," Pate said. "A rising tide pushes clean water into the rocks and makes fishing better."



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**S**heepshead also feed by sight, and cleaner water provides a better opportunity for these fish. Pate will catch sheepshead on live shrimp under a float or will toss live fiddler crabs into the rocks on jigheads or light Carolina rigs.

The falling tide can also be a good time to catch fish at the jetties, because the outgoing current exposes the rocks and confines bait and predators in smaller areas. The outgoing current will also flush more food out of the estuaries, so lower water can be productive around jetties.

“Whether you are fishing the rising or the falling tide, fish bite better in the cleaner water,” he said.

Pate will patrol both sides of the jetties, choosing to fish places with cleaner water first, and he’ll keep moving until he finds a productive spot. Currents, tides and water clarity change frequently throughout a day, and the best places to find fish will also change. Pate recommends staying mobile, using your trolling motor to move around looking for a consistent bite.

“Trout, flounder, redfish and sheepshead shift around from one set of rocks to another to take advantage of the conditions. We have to do that too,” he said.

Summer can be a challenging time for inshore anglers, but it doesn’t have to be, because the jetties provide an excellent feeding ground for inshore species such as flounder, trout, redfish, and sheepshead. Cool water, abundant food, and ample cover is the perfect combination. Making the choice to fish the jetties in the summertime can be a real winner for anglers in the Carolinas. Make the right choice and put fish on the table. ■



**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.

**⚡** Flounder often lie on the sea floor at the margin where jetty rocks give way to the normal, sandy bottom.

# APEX PREDATORS LIKE JETTIES, TOO

Jetties that line the entrance to inlets are prime spots to target trout, redfish, sheepshead and flounder in the summer, but there is always something out there that is bigger, too.

Even though redfish and trout are predators, they can easily be prey, too, and especially around jetties. Bigger predators flourish there during summer, that can make an interesting day if you have a bait full of live menhaden.

Apex predators such as king mackerel, tarpon, cobia and sharks love to camp out in and around jetties because the food is practically endless. Jordan Pate of Carolina Guide Service spends many summer days fishing the jetties at the entrance to Winyah Bay, downstream from Georgetown, S.C. On most summer days, Pate will aim for an inshore slam — reds, trout, flounder — but he will quickly shift gears when a group of silver kings shows up on his radar. Targeting a 100-pound tarpon is a favorite summer option, and the jetties are a perfect place to find these beasts.

“Our tarpon generally arrive in July and (are) available until the early fall,” Pate said. “The jetties can be an ideal place for tarpon because of all of the available bait in this area.”

Beyond tarpon, the jetties are frequently visited by big sharks, cobia, and king mackerel, and for the same reasons.

“The jetties are full of bait and feeding opportunities for these apex predators. We have fun floating or slow-trolling live menhaden at the jetties because you never know what is going to take it down. It could be a cobia, king mackerel, tarpon or a 200-pound shark,” he said.

While Pate fishes all tides at the jetties, he prefers falling water for these big guys.

“The falling tide can often be better for kings, tarpon and



Jordan Pate

⚡ Big predators like king mackerel will often feed off the end of rock jetties, around current or tide lines, when the falling tide pulls plenty of food onto their plates.

the big sharks because of the steady stream of bait coming out of the inlet,” said Pate, who will fish along the rocks, the current seams and the tidelines at the ends of the jetties, too. ■

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Rom Whitaker IV

## SIGHT-CASTING REDS turns on in shallow Hatteras Inlet waters

**J**uly fishing along North Carolina's Cape Hatteras is subject to be just as hot as the weather. Schools of red drum, ranging from pups to bulls, will be patrolling the flats on the sound side of Hatteras Inlet, where anglers can sight-cast to the aggressive bait chasers.

But that's not all; an unseasonably late arrival of cobia will be available to make a July double feature.

"In July, the drum will be a couple of miles inside Hatteras Inlet where they've found their home for the summer," said guide Rom Whitaker IV. "I'm searching in mainly 2 to 6 feet of water because I can't see them in the deeper water of the sound. They spend a lot of time deeper, but when they want to feed, the whole school will get up on the flat. They usually spend a couple hours a day there."

Whitaker, who runs Sound Bound Charters (252-305-5229), does his searching from the tower of his center console. The bronze color of the school is usually a giveaway, but they can also be spotted pushing water in a V-shape or busting mullet. Whitaker will move to intercept the school, switch off his outboard and drifts into casting range.

"I like to get about 60 yards from them," Whitaker said. "That puts

Big reds spend a few hours each day cruising shallow flats in Pamlico Sound behind Hatteras Island before retreating to deeper holes.

me in position to at least cast to the middle of the school. If they are really cooperative, I'll use a popping cork with a gold Johnson Silver Minnow from ¾-ounce to 1½-ounce, depending on the size of the fish. I also like soft plastics like a Z-Man paddletail in chartreuse or electric chicken. Put it on a ¼-to ⅝-ounce jighead or bucktail."

Although reds can certainly be aggressive in adverse conditions, cloudy, windy days as well as low-light times like early morning and late evening make sight-fishing difficult. This is when anglers can be happy that lingering cool temperatures have delayed the arrival of cobia.

Whitaker predicts that cobia will be available in July in the deep sloughs inside Hatteras Inlet during tidal exchanges. He will anchor up and fan-cast a 4-rod spread of super-fresh menhaden chunks fished on 8/0 circle hooks pinned to the bottom by a 3- to 6-ounce sinker, depending on the current strength. Because of a cobia's size and power, he spools up with 50- to 80-pound braid and a 40- to 60-pound fluorocarbon leader. Anglers casting to reds will use a similar leader but can downsize to 30-pound line to get more casting distance. ■

— Dusty Wilson



By Phillip Gentry

# Sizzlin' Summer CRAPPIE

**IF YOU THINK CRAPPIE FISHING IS STRICTLY A SPRINGTIME DEAL, THINK AGAIN. HERE'S HOW TO LOAD UP ON SLABS IN THE HEAT OF THE SUMMER.**

Courtesy Derek Fulton

# During March and April, *everyone is a crappie expert.*

Fishing boats galore can be found on Carolina lakes when these tasty panfish are moving shallow or hanging out around every tree and bush next to the bank.

But what about when the summer crowds take over the lake? When the jet-skiers and pontooners and wake boarders take over, crappie tend to seek shelter just like anglers, only in different places.

Derek Fulton of Grovetown, Ga., is a retired U.S. Army veteran who spends as much time as possible chasing crappie on his home lake, Clarks Hill, on the South Carolina/Georgia border. Fulton said summer means it's time to search out submerged, standing timber in deep water.

Fulton said locating standing timber on the edge of a main creek or river channel is a great way to find some big, summer crappie. In fact, he searches for individual crappie by scanning the drop-off sides of the timber with his Garmin Panoptics sonar unit. The unit reads areas in front of the boat, and by moving the transducer head back and forth from a distance of 60 feet, Fulton can target solitary slab crappie.

"Once I zoom in on one, I'll stay back about 20 feet and cast to them," he said. "You find out real quick with the Garmin unit how easy the big fish spook."

Fulton's casting setup is a 7-foot ultralight rod and reel spooled with 4-pound Mr. Crappie camo line. He will attach



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a 1/6-ounce jighead paired with a curlytail or paddletail grub and watch the bait on the screen as it falls toward the fish, then engages the reel and starts reeling.

"I love it when I see that fish come up," he said. "If he starts rising to meet the bait, you'll catch him."

After he's caught the loners, he may opt to go search for other big fish or locate a tighter school of fish.

"When you see a whole school holding tight to timber, you can get right on top of them," he said. "In fact, they won't move much in the summer; they're sorta sluggish."



Phillip Gentry

**In** this scenario, Fulton will position his boat above the school and then lower a tiny, ¼s-ounce jighead paired with a FishStalker slabtail jig to the fish. To get the bait down quickly and maintain feel at depths of 15 feet, he'll attach a No. 3 split shot about 8 inches above the jig.

"I might be in 30 feet of water, but I'm watching those fish on the screen, and I can see the bait descending to the fish and see how they react to it," he said. "I make whatever changes I need to, but that's a good way to fill a limit in a hurry."

On many clear lakes, like Lake Wylie on the North Carolina/South Carolina border southwest of Charlotte, N.C, crappie movements may be more vertical than horizontal as the seasons change.

Pro angler Mike Parrott said that a particular segment of Wylie crappie takes up year-round residence around larger residential and commercial boat docks.

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Stokes McClellan said trolling in areas where you have not marked baitfish is likely to be a waste of time.

"Everything these fish need can be found around these big docks: depth, food and cover," he said, "I think these fish even spawn under these docks. All they have to do is move from shallower to deeper as the weather dictates."

In order to target crappie that hide under the boats and floats that make up a large boat dock, Parrott uses a dock shooting rod to shoot a tiny jig under the docks.

"It takes a bit of practice," Parrott said. "You bend the rod over and hold the jig between your thumb and forefinger under the reel. Release the jig and simultaneously release the line, which sling-shots the bait forward, parallel to the water, causing it to skip up under the boat or dock or whatever you're shooting at."

Summer on Wylie means a very light bite, so Parrott uses 4-pound test and a ¼-ounce jig. Allowing the jig to free-fall after letting fly, Parrott intently watches the line for the slightest tick, movement or simply piling up on the surface, indicating a fish has inhaled the jig.

"Crappie don't move around much in ultra-warm water," he said, "so if I don't get a bite at one stall, I can move over to the next stall and it may be covered up with fish."

The middle of summer will find Stokes McClellan of



Phillip Gentry

Trolling crankbaits works well for targeting white crappie, which tend to favor larger baits fished in open water.

Huntersville, N.C., fishing the same way he does nearly year-round: long-line trolling. The difference between his spring and summer tactics is the depth he fishes.

“I usually need to get to at least 15 feet, and instead of a shallow flat, I’m going to troll over deep-water ledges and around the mouths of major creeks,” he said.

One caveat to what McClellan trolls behind his boat is what species of crappie swims under it.

“Many of our North Carolina lakes have white crappie, places like Jordan and High Rock, and these are good lakes to troll crankbaits in,” he said. “Other lakes in South Carolina, like Wateree and Greenwood, have black crappie, so I stick to trolling jigs in those lakes.”

McClellan long-lines crappie jigs using as many as 14 rods of a variety of lengths to space the lines around the stern of his boat. He uses 4-pound test, which allows his to reduce drag and get deeper with a 1/8- or 3/16-ounce jighead. He pairs these heads with either a 3-inch Charlie Brewer grub or a 2 1/8-inch paddle-tail. His average trolling speed is about 1.0 mph.

“Crappie usually want a bigger bait in the summer, which is why I use Bandit 300 series crankbaits or the bigger Bobby Garland Stroll’R and Charlie Brewer grubs,” he said.

McClellan doesn’t troll anywhere for either species of crappie until he marks scattered pods of baitfish on his sonar unit.

“If you don’t mark bait first — the scattered kind, not layered up in big schools — then you’re wasting your time,” he said. “You can troll 2 miles



Phillip Gentry

of channel edge, and then you start catching fish because you crossed into some good bait. I go to the bait first and usually find fish there.” ■



Phillip Gentry of Waterloo, S.C., is host of “The Outdoor Show,” a weekly radio podcast that can be seen at [www.pgandboatgirl.com](http://www.pgandboatgirl.com).

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Crappie fishermen are dropping down to 4-pound mono for dock-shooting, long-line trolling and vertical jigging.

# What's up with 4-POUND LINE?

Russ Bailey, the host of Brushpile Fishing TV, has been shooting docks for many years, and up until last year, he always used 6-pound line. That ended when he started using high-vis 4-pound line.

Bailey has several reasons for using lighter line when shooting docks. He found he could shoot a jig further, and he discovered the line really jumps when the crappie takes the jig.

"Dock shooting is all about seeing the bite," he said. "If you wait 'til you feel it, you'll miss a lot of fish, so that 4-pound high-vis line makes a big difference in seeing bites."

Bailey said he's even started using the lighter stuff in other crappie-fishing situations.

"A lot of guys long-line troll with 4-pound test because the smaller-diameter line provides less resistance," he said. "Guys are even using it to vertical-jig in open water where crappie may be sluggish or in clear water."

Bailey's personal line choice is Gamma — he said a lot of guides



and pros have their own favorites — but

using 4-pound test is consistent across the board.

"It's just one of those little adjustments that I make in my crappie fishing, the more I fish with guys and see what they're doing. For me, the jump down to 4 pound was a big deal," he said. ■

Courtesy mrcrappie.com

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Whitey Outlaw pulls plenty of nice crappie from grass beds in the swampy area of Lake Marion's Low Falls.



Brian Cope

## LOW FALLS' GRASS holds plenty of Lake Marion summer slabs

The Low Falls area lies in the upper reaches of Santee Cooper's upper lake. It's one of the swampier sections of Lake Marion, and it's full of surface weeds among the flooded cypress forest. But no matter how hot it is in summer, limits of crappie await anglers just under those weed beds.

Many give up fishing for crappie during the summer, but pro angler Whitey Outlaw of St. Matthews, S.C., has been catching crappie here on 100-degree days for decades.

"These weed beds are the key to catching crappie in hot weather, and I don't mean probing around the edges of the weeds. We catch them right in the middle of the thickest grass beds on the lake," he said.

Outlaw, co-host of *Father and Son Outdoors TV*, parks his boat on top of weed beds so thick that you could just about walk across them. And with a tiny jig, he entices bites through small openings in the grass. He said this is not the time to add a live minnow to your jig.

"Fishing like this, a live minnow is going to swim around and tangle you in the weeds," he said. "You want a small jighead like a 1/16-ounce jig and a soft-plastic crappie jig that's small in length and diameter. Then, you just find a little hole in all the grass and lower your lure in there. You'll catch plenty of crappie like this, no matter how hot it gets."

On some days, Outlaw said anglers can limit out (20 fish) on the first weed bed they fish, but he chooses not to do this, even when the bite is hot enough.

"I like to move around," he said. "I'll catch a handful on one bed and move to another. That helps me keep track of what areas are holding fish. And you'll catch them on all kinds of weed beds. Some are

just thick with lily pads. Others are full of hyacinth and duckweed. I like to see the different areas they're in."

Outlaw uses a 12-foot B 'n' M telescopic crappie pole and 6-pound Slime Line monofilament. This gives him the ability to reach every section of a weed bed and the strength to heft a slab out of those weeds. And when it comes to jigs, he said the most important thing is to keep them small and have plenty of color choices on hand. "Fishing grass beds is a color game, and what works best one day might not work at all the next," Outlaw said. "It can even change from hour to hour. If the bite slows down, you don't want to upsize your lure. That's when it's time to change colors. You take a 1/16-ounce jighead with a handful of different colored bodies to a weed bed in the summer, and you'll take some fish home. All you have to do is slow down and fish patiently." ■

— Brian Cope

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**SALTWATER**

**STATE COASTAL WATERS REGULATIONS (0 - 3 miles)**

<b>FISH SPECIES</b>	<b>Minimum Lengths</b>	<b>Creel Limit</b> (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 ( <a href="http://www.nmfspermits.com">http://www.nmfspermits.com</a> )	
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](http://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**

<b>FISH Species</b> (Inland waters)	<b>Minimum Size Limit</b>	<b>Creel Limit</b> (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](http://www.ncwildlife.org)

% Striped bass creel limits and size minimums vary by lake. See NCWRC regulations digest or [www.ncwildlife.org](http://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 giggers restricted to 4 fish per day per trip, 15-inch size minimum.

**SALTWATER**

**STATE COASTAL WATERS REGULATIONS (0 - 3 miles)**

<b>FISH SPECIES</b>	<b>Minimum Lengths</b>	<b>Creel Limit</b> (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 ( <a href="http://www.nmfspermits.com">http://www.nmfspermits.com</a> )	
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](http://hmspermits.noaa.gov). # Check with the SAFMC at [www.safmc.net](http://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**

<b>FISH Species</b> (Inland waters)	<b>Minimum Size Limit</b>	<b>Creel Limit</b> (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](http://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.



# A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

■ By Craig Holt

**THE FLOW OF THE CAPE FEAR RIVER GIVES INSHORE WATERS AROUND IT NEW LIFE DURING THE HEAT OF THE SUMMER. HERE'S HOW A RETIRED GUIDE CATCHES REDFISH AND SPECKLED TROUT.**

Craig Holt

# With its energy-sapping heat, July along North Carolina's coast isn't the best time to fish for inshore species.

Blistering sunlight heats shallow, inside waters and reduces areas where some gamefish species were plentiful only months earlier — with a notable exception.

Areas of the coast around inlets receive doses of cool seawater twice a day during tide changes. Nearby shallow habitats get refreshing baths of this water, activating the fishing.

The bigger the inlet, the more water that flows through it, spreading rising tides onto nearby flats, marshes and creeks and moving pods of baitfish past hungry gamefish. When the tide turns, baitfish are pulled toward the ocean.

The area of North Carolina where this phenomenon affects the most water is the lower end of the Cape Fear River and the inlet where it connects to the Atlantic Ocean. Millions of gallons of moving water enhance baitfish movements and activate gamefish's feeding instincts.

The Shallotte, Lockwood Folly, New and White Oak rivers empty directly into the Atlantic, and several other rivers empty into sounds behind barrier islands. But they're all mere creeks compared to the Cape Fear's 1½-mile-wide maw between Oak Island and Bald Head Island.

Just inshore of the river's mouth, thousands of marsh, islands and tidal-creek acres, plus the Intracoastal Waterway, spread across the landscape.

Butch Foster, 69, was a guide who, until recently, fished the lower Cape Fear after a long career fishing offshore. He retired early this past May.

"One thing that's hard to admit is you've passed the prime of your life, and it's time to retire from the work you've spent the best years of your life," said Foster, a Lexington, N.C., native who spent his formative years in a local textile mill, usually vacationing in the Southport/Oak Island area with his wife, Barbara, and son, Chris. They loved to chase groupers, snappers, beeliners, grunts and other bottomfish, and they trolled for king and Spanish mackerel.

When Foster, a master machinist, invented and patented a knitting machine part, royalties financed a move to Southport and a new life. He bought a 34-foot Chris Craft, christened it the *Yeah, Right* and began to take friends offshore fishing. Later, tourists paid him to find boatloads of bottomfish.

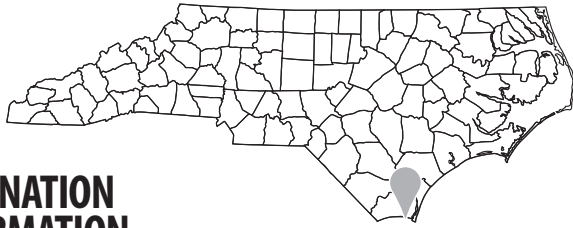
However, when reliable help became scarce and fuel prices skyrocketed, Foster parked his big boat after 21 years, bought a 23-foot bay boat and guided for red drum, spotted seatrout and flounder. He especially liked to guide fathers, mothers, sons and daughters.

"I like introducing young people to fishing," he said. "It's a hobby they can do their entire lives; the scenery is beautiful, and it's better to be outdoors than inside, I believe."



Butch Foster nets a red drum reeled to the boat by Concord's Keaton Galagan, 7, as his father, Steve, lifts the rod.

Craig Holt



## DESTINATION INFORMATION

Southport/Oak Island

**HOW TO GET THERE** — The areas around the mouth of the Cape Fear River are best accessed from Southport and Oak Island on the west and Fort Fisher on the east. All three have public ramps.

**WHEN TO GO** — Fishing can be great June through October.

**BEST TECHNIQUES** — Use light-action spinning tackle spooled with 10-pound braid, with 12- to 30-inch fluorocarbon leaders. Topwaters like Super Spook Jrs., Skitter Walks and Top Pups are productive, as are shallow-diving and suspending lures. Try to limit lures to 3½ inches.

**FISHING INFO/GUIDES** — Jeff & Christian Wolfe, Seahawk Inshore Fishing Charters, 910-619-9580, [www.seahawkinshore-fishingcharters.com](http://www.seahawkinshore-fishingcharters.com); Tommy Rickman, Southport Angler Outfitters, 910-264-7722, [www.fishsouthport.com](http://www.fishsouthport.com). See also Guides & Charters in Classifieds.

**ACCOMMODATIONS** — Cape Fear Convention and Visitors Bureau, 877-406-2356, [www.cape-fear.us](http://www.cape-fear.us).

**MAPS** — Sealake Fishing Guides, 800-411-0185, [www.the-goodspots.com](http://www.the-goodspots.com); Capt Segull's Nautical Charts, 888-473-4855, [www.captainsegullcharts.com](http://www.captainsegullcharts.com).

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**A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT**

**F**oster's Southport home was near waters he'd fished for years. "It's not like I was unfamiliar with backwaters around here," he said. "When I was offshore fishing and we had bad weather, I'd take (clients) to backwater."

He believes falling tides are best for skinny-water fishing.

"I think specks and reds orient toward current, but rising tides open up too much territory in the marshes and scatter fish, making them harder to find," he said. "Falling tides pull baitfish out of the grass and move them down the sides of creeks and marsh islands. Specks and reds orient along marsh-island and creek edges.

"Once you locate fish, it's pretty easy. It's not unusual to find a stretch of productive shoreline, anchor, use a trolling motor or drift and cover a lot of territory."

Last July, Foster outfitted Steve Galagan of Concord, N.C., and his 7-year-old son, Keaton, to catch speckled trout and red-

Here are some of Butch Foster's favorite seatrout and red drum lures for summer at inside waters near Southport.

fish. He had a baitwell filled with several dozen finger mullet for his novice clients.

For such anglers, his setup includes 6-foot Penn Fierce II rods with 20-pound monofilament and 4 feet of leader below floating corks. For artificial lures, he likes 7½-foot, medium-light graphite Fenwick spinning rods for longer casts and IRT 300 spinning reels spooled with 12-pound Pro Speck Chrome mono to throw green, ¼-ounce Betts Halo Shad, 4-inch Gulp soft-plastic Fluke-style baits and curlytail grubs. ■



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

Craig Holt

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# AN OLD PRO'S TOP SPOTS

One of Butch Foster's favorite shallow-water areas for spotted seatrout and redfish includes the marsh and creeks of the Elizabeth River at Oak Island's eastern edge, near the Cape Fear River.

"I like to let new clients drift finger mullet on floats near the edges of marsh islands during falling tides," he said. "More skilled people can use soft-plastic (lures); both catch red drum.

"Across the Cape Fear River at Bald Head Island, I fish the shorelines of Bald Head, Cape and Cedar creeks."

North of Bald Head Island, huge bays hold specks, red drum, black drum and sheepshead but are accessible mostly to shallow-draft boats and veteran guides who know sand bars, channels and when and how to get in and leave. Rapidly falling tides have grounded numerous unwary captains.

This area may be accessed a public boat ramp at Federal Point at the southern tip of US 421 near the Fort Fisher Ferry terminal. Because a rock jetty lines the river channel, boaters only can access First Bay (aka The Basin), Second Bay and Buzzard's Bay from the Federal Point boat ramp, plus Zeke's Island, No Name Island and North Island. Cedar Creek offers an entrance to these

A marsh island in the Elizabeth River gave up this nice speckled trout for Keaton Galagan of Concord, N.C.



Craig Hoff

bays from the river's side north of the Bald Head.

Isolated oyster beds in bays, near points, islands and marsh banks are prime trout spots.

For an hour or so after first light, anglers often find large trout at the jetty rocks by casting topwater lures such as Skitter Walks, Super Spook Js., MirrOlure Top Pups, She Pups, 808 (black, gold, orange) MirrOlures, MirrOminnows and MirroDines.

The Lockwood Folly River at the western end of Oak Island also has many marsh-edge areas that hold trout. ■

## SPECKLED TRUTH >



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## SPECKLED TRUTH

Chris Bush

Different jighead styles work better with different styles of soft-plastic baits in different fishing situations.



Christopher Bush

# JIGHEADS 101: HOW TO PICK THE BEST

SITUATIONS DICTATE WHICH STYLE OF LEADHEAD, SOFT-PLASTIC BAITS MATCH UP BEST

**O**ne of the most-versatile and effective ways to catch speckled trout is with a soft plastic and jighead pairing.

Seamlessly transcending the range of experience levels, they allow anglers to target fish both shallow and deep.

With all kinds of different jigheads saturating the market, it's worth spending some discussing their capabilities. Keep in mind, there are no absolutes in fishing. Exploring different brands and styles is what makes targeting big trout so much fun.

## ROUND, ASPIRIN

Admittedly, these are probably the most-popular styles, and for good reason. Most lure manufacturers produce a 3½-inch soft-plastic swimbait that pairs perfectly with these styles of jigheads.

I mostly use either of these when fishing deeper water — 5 feet or more — or areas with heavier tide or wind, and I

always pair them with some “boot” tail style softplastic. Since all of the weight is on the front of the soft plastic, it allows the bait to go up and down in the water column. Also, the weight of the jighead displaces a fair amount of water, allowing the boot tail to kick while ascending/descending.

**Jigheads preferred:** Deathgrip, Golden Eye, H&H, 10 Mile

**Soft plastics preferred:** Matrix Shad, Egret Wedgetails, DOA Cal Shad, MirrOlure Marsh Minnow Jr.

## MUSHROOM STYLE

The NED Rig is a complete fish-catching deal, and the unique, stand-up feature these jigheads gives small, finesse baits drives fish of all sizes crazy. Designed to rest nose-down on the bottom, your soft plastic stands straight up. This technique is exceptionally effective in clear sky, clear water, calm situations when fish are particularly finicky.

**Jigheads preferred:** Owner Blockhead (⅓-ounce) and ZMan NedLockZ (⅓-ounce). Go up and down in weight as needed based on depth, tide and wind.

**Soft plastics preferred:** ZMan Finesse TRD, ZMan Trick ShotZ, ZMan HogZ and Cajun Lures T-NED

## ARROW STYLE

Designed as a modified, stand-up jighead, arrow-style heads are typically more slender than most. As a result, these compliment jerk shad-style baits perfectly since they enable a more erratic action. I typically like to throw an ⅓-ounce or lighter head over shallow grass, and they work extremely well in cloudy,



Chris Bush is an Air Force officer and a licensed charter captain, husband and father. He spends his time targeting big speckled trout and sharing knowledge on his website, Speckled Truth.

clear water situations in 4 feet of water or less. I normally prefer the 1/0 or 2/0 size hook, and since these are paired with 5-inch or larger plastics, castability normally isn't an issue.

By going as light as possible with your jighead, you're allowing the weight of the soft plastic to keep pace with the descent of the jighead. In other words, your offering will descend in a more horizontal fashion instead of straight up and down.

**Jigheads preferred:** Texas Custom Lures' Jay Watkins Series Jigheads, Saltwater Assassin Pro Elite, Mirrolure Push On & Pro Series, Norton Lures GFX

**Soft plastics preferred:** Down South Lures (Southern Shad and Super Model), MirrOlure Provoker, KWiggler BTS, Gambler 6-inch FlapN Shad, Norton Sand Eel, Big Bite Baits Jerk Minnow, Mann's 6-inch Hard Nose Jerkshad

## DOMESTYLE

Dome-style jigheads are incredibly versatile and work in any situation, and they pair well with most soft-plastic brands and sizes. However, I specifically

use them on smaller, darter-style baits. The shape of the head, combined with the shape of the soft plastic allows your offering to descend through the water column very quickly. This means you can reduce the weight of your offering as much as possible given the wind and tide and allow the slower descent to the bottom. Also, the contour of the jighead paired with the bait allows it to move in an erratic action, typically drawing strikes from bigger fish.

**Jighead preferred:** Yellowmouth Baits (1/8- or 1/16-ounce)

**Soft plastics preferred:** Capt Lanes Ghostminnow, Pure Flats Lil' Slick, MirrOlure Lil John, Cajun Lures T-John, Norton Lures Sand Eel Jr, Deadly Dudley Jr.

As you can see, there are many jigheads on the market, and they range in size, style and shape. My goal for you to start thinking about the different things you can do by just changing your jighead. ■



Christopher Bush

The author unhooks a big speckled trout caught on a jighead and soft-plastic bait.

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# NEW RIVER, NEW TIP

## Fish oyster-highway reefs for specks

**A** new, positive fishing factor has emerged for New River anglers this year. “Ten oyster-highway reef sections are in place and already attracting fish,” said guide Ricky Kellum of Jacksonville, N.C. “I’ve already caught fish at them, and they should be good for topwater bites in July.”

Spotted seatrout will hold in the usual places in the river, plus the man-made oyster reefs, part of an “oyster-highway” project supported by a number of conservation organizations. When the reefs are all in line, the oyster highway will be 38 miles long. Oyster rocks and young oysters have been placed intermittently along the route. Many gamefish are attracted to oyster reefs.

“Right now, each of the 10 places are about the size of a basketball court and marked,” Kellum said. “But you need to fish topwater lures or popping corks to keep them above the oysters in wire cages or you’ll hang lures that run too deep.”

His favorite July topwater trout lure is a pink Skitter Walk Jr. “Zara Spook Jrs. also will catch specks, but a Spook scatters fish when you throw on top of them,” he said. “The light-weight Skitter Walk doesn’t make as much of a splash. If (it’s) calm, and the water is slick, I’ll throw the Skitter Walk. If the water’s rough, I’ll throw the (Spook) because fish can see and hear it better.

“You need to sit out at least 20 feet from the oyster reefs. You can throw lures or popping-cork rigs over them, then work across them. Red drum love live shrimp, too.”

The New River’s shoals and points also will be gathering places for trout because shrimp start showing up in good numbers.

Kellum’s artificial-lures tackle includes a 7-foot, Star Plasma II medium-light rod and a Stradic 2500 spinning reel spooled with 10-pound braid and 2 feet of 25-pound mono leader.

When summer is in full bloom and the guide takes less-experienced anglers, he’ll switch to a tried-and-true live bait: shrimp. And he may try spots with normal bottoms, not oyster reefs, that have produced big specks in the past.

“The best outfit for people who don’t cast lures well or haven’t learned yet to work them is float-fishing with a slip-cork rig,” he said. “That carries me through the summer with family charters.”

He likes to find relatively deep, 8 to 10 feet, channels with moving current, particularly during falling tides.

“Trout hang out near the bottom of channels and wait for shrimp to come by,” Kellum said. “I fish places where I know the depth, so I set the bobber-stopper to put the shrimp 2 feet off the bottom. The shrimp might be 2 feet off the bottom of a 10-foot hole. Most of the time, trout can’t resist it.”

Using live-shrimp, Kellum’s clients regularly land citation trout and sometimes other species such as red drum, bluefish and even Spanish mackerel. ■

— Craig Holt



Guide Ricky Kellum targets speckled trout around reefs along the New River’s oyster highway.

Craig Holt

**S**panish mackerel are one of the most-prominent and most-popular fish off the coast of the Carolinas. One of the smaller members of the mackerel family, they are a coastal pelagic fish, primarily found in the ocean from just beyond the surf out a few miles, and they have a pleasant, mild flavor.

They sometimes follow baitfish inside inlets and are caught in larger sounds and rivers. North Carolina manages them with a daily creel limit of 15, and on many days, that limit comes quickly.

Spanish mackerel are usually feeding and easy to catch, which helps boost their popularity. However, there are times they develop a piscatorial version of lockjaw and don't even look at baits and lures they usually attack with abandon.

So how do you bring dinner home when Spanish aren't cooperating, when speaking their language is tough? Here goes....

Once the water warms into the 80s, Spanish typically feed hard and with abandon early in the morning and late in the afternoon. During the middle of the day, they may be seen chasing small silverside minnows on the surface. When they are chasing the small silversides, they often appear allergic to the same lures that caught them earlier. A very general suggestion for when this happens is to go smaller and retrieve faster.

v

# TIPS FOR TOUGH SPANISH

**WHEN THE LITTLE MACKEREL  
DON'T WANT TO BITE, HERE  
ARE TIPS FROM THREE OF  
NORTH CAROLINA'S BEST FOR  
LOADING THE COOLER.**

■ By Jerry Dilsaver



Jerry Dilsaver

# THE PRIMARY DIFFERENCE

between the baitfish that Spanish mackerels prefer early or late and during the middle of the day is size.

Silversides are much smaller, and Spanish seem to key in on smaller baits in the brighter light. They will readily show you what they are feeding on by regurgitating their most-recent meal on the deck of the boat or in the fish box. Once a fisherman sees the size of their preferred meal, they should match it as best they can.

Noah Lynk of Noah's Ark Charters in Harkers Island, N.C., uses a Mackerel Duster rig he developed — a commercial version is now produced by Clarkspoon ([www.clarkspoon.com](http://www.clarkspoon.com)). This pairs a 1/8-ounce silver head, a mylar duster about 18 to 24 inches in front of a No. 00 Clarkspoon on a tandem rig. Lynk uses a 2/0 silver hook and various colors for the dusters, with primarily silver Clarkspoons.

"I like to fish mackerel dusters on the surface with no weights," said Lynk ([www.noahsarkfishingcharters.com](http://www.noahsarkfishingcharters.com)). "They skip along the surface like fleeing baitfish, and I believe that helps excite the Spanish and produces reaction strikes. Sometimes, Spanish hit the duster and sometimes the Clarkspoon — and occasionally both.

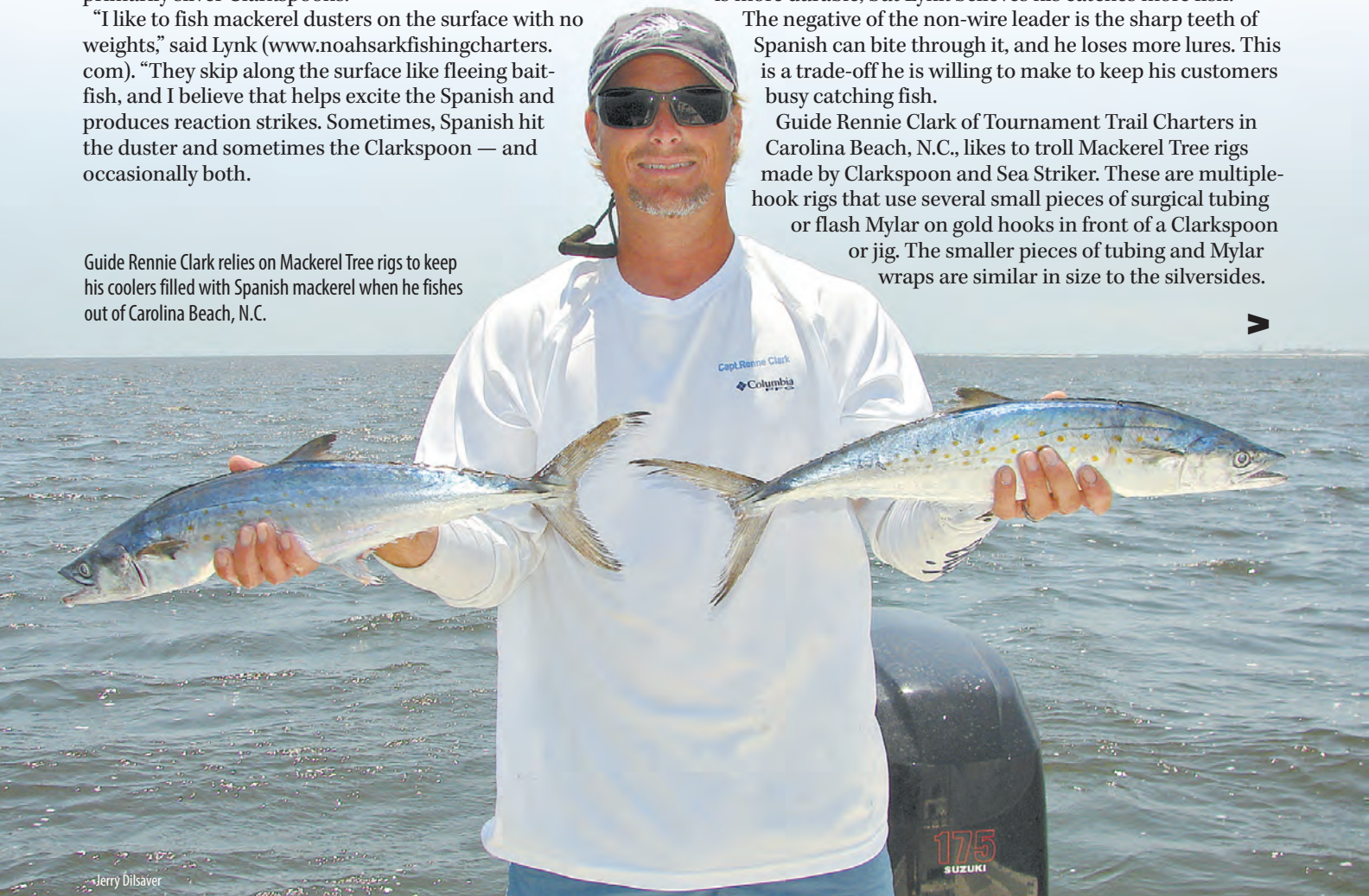
Guide Rennie Clark relies on Mackerel Tree rigs to keep his coolers filled with Spanish mackerel when he fishes out of Carolina Beach, N.C.

"I often also troll a mackerel duster or two below the surface behind small planers or trolling sinkers," Lynk said. "Occasionally, these will outfish the surface lines, but most of the time, the surface lines catch the great majority of the fish. A great thing about fishing these rigs on the surface with no weight is they can be trolled on lighter outfits, and the fisherman get to fight the fish, not a planer or sinker. It really is a lot more fun."

Lynk said the biggest difference between his personal rig and the version made by Clarkspoon is that his is made using 20- to 30-pound fluorocarbon or mono leader, and the production rig uses 45-pound coated, stranded wire. The production rig is more durable, but Lynk believes his catches more fish.

The negative of the non-wire leader is the sharp teeth of Spanish can bite through it, and he loses more lures. This is a trade-off he is willing to make to keep his customers busy catching fish.

Guide Rennie Clark of Tournament Trail Charters in Carolina Beach, N.C., likes to troll Mackerel Tree rigs made by Clarkspoon and Sea Striker. These are multiple-hook rigs that use several small pieces of surgical tubing or flash Mylar on gold hooks in front of a Clarkspoon or jig. The smaller pieces of tubing and Mylar wraps are similar in size to the silversides.



Jerry Dilsaver



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“I like the Mackerel Tree rigs at any time,” said Clark (www.CaptRen.com). “They catch fish early in the day when Spanish are hitting larger baits and still work when they begin chasing smaller baits. There is a larger lure behind them for when a larger fish, looking for a larger bait, swims up. It’s a good mixture, and I troll them both on the surface and below it.”

The late Pete Allred of Pete’s Tackle in Morehead City, N.C., often gave impromptu Spanish mackerel seminars to inquisitive fishermen in his shop. He heralded trolling speck rigs as the simplest way for beginning fishermen to catch Spanish mackerel when they were feeding on the smaller baitfish and ignoring the usual lures. Speck rigs are simply a pair of bucktails tied on a mono leader, and they encompass a variety of sizes from about 1/16- up to 1/4-ounce.

Lighter bucktails are small, and they get larger as they get heavier. This makes it easy to match the size of the baitfish the Spanish are eating on any particular day. Allred suggested having and trolling several sizes of speck rigs until it was clear that the Spanish preferred a certain size that day. He also suggested mixing sizes on the same rig to see if there was a preference that day.

Allred trolled his speck rigs well behind the boat; this works for any lure when Spanish are being finicky. The extra distance moves them away from the noise of the motor, and there are days Spanish can be very noise-shy. The longer line also uses the belly of the line dragging in the water to help hold the surface lures in the water and prevents them from skipping and jumping wildly.

Allred used to say that Spanish mackerel were also very tuned to feeding at the speed of the baitfish, and trolling too slowly was often as big a culprit in smaller catches as anything else. Spanish usually feed at a faster pace, and he suggested beginning at around 6 knots, then speeding up if they continued not to bite. Many times small lures trolled very quickly are just the ticket for catching lure-shy Spanish. Allred would often laugh when someone asked if this wasn’t too quick and respond that you wouldn’t outrun them if they wanted the lure.

Lynk, Clark and Allred cautioned that it was important to troll around a school of feeding Spanish, not across or through

Guide Noah Lynk of Harkers Island, N.C. catches plenty of Spanish on top with a Mackerel Duster rig.



Jerry Dilsaver

them. The continual turn will pull the lures into the edge of the school and not spook them. Once spooked, they may dive and stop feeding. Running across or through the school will usually cause them to dive, and they may move and may not return to the surface.

Allred had another tip for when Spanish were spread throughout an area, rather than schooled. He said to troll through the area, making a series of 90-degree right and left turns. The turns change the speeds of the lures a little, and you can often see if it will help to speed up or slow down a little. When turning, the lures on the inside of the turn slow down, as they don’t have to cover as much water. The lures on the outside speed up to cover more distance. Allred said to match the speeds of the lines that were catching more.

These tips should help provide supper when the Spanish macks get finicky during the heat of summer. It isn’t expensive to give this a try and see for yourself. The proof is when your fish box fills while others remain frustrated. ■



Jerry Dilsaver, a former SKA national champion and USAA Angler of the Year, is a full-time freelance writer based out of Oak Island, N.C.



Jerry Dilsaver

# SPEAK FLUENT SPANISH

The ravenous nature of Spanish mackerel make them a popular nearshore fish along the coast of both Carolinas.

Spanish mackerel, *Scomberomorus maculatus*, are visitors to the coasts of both Carolinas from spring through fall. They arrive off South Carolina's Lowcountry sometimes as early as late March and spread to North Carolina's Outer Banks by early May. Once there, they stay into the fall before beginning to migrate back to Florida sometime in October.

They are a primary target of many fishermen, and their general willingness to bite has made them a favorite to introduce young fishermen to trolling in the ocean.

Spanish mackerel are much smaller than their popular cousins, king mackerel, averaging 1 to 3 pounds. North Carolina offers an outstanding catch citation for Spanish mackerel 6 pounds or heavier. The world and North Carolina state record is a 13-pound fish caught off Ocracoke, N.C. in 1987 by Robert Cranton. South Carolina's state-record fish weighed 11 pounds and was caught off Myrtle Beach in 1983 by W. Deas, Jr.

According to Dr. Charles Manooch in his book, *Fishes of the Southeastern United States*, Spanish mackerel are fast growing and may reach 12 to 15 inches in their first year. The minimum size for Spanish mackerel is 12 inches fork length (tip of the nose to the middle of the fork in the tail). Both sexes are capable of spawning by their second year, and the population has remained stable since a downturn in the mid- to late 1980s.

Spanish mackerel are considered excellent table fare. They are easily filleted, and even smaller Spanish produce a pair of fillets that can be tastily prepared by grilling, frying, baking, broiling and steaming. Their flesh is light gray and contains the Omega 3 fatty acids complex that helps produce good cholesterol and lower bad cholesterol. ■



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sizes: 8½, 10 and 12 inches, so you can match it to the size of your camp stove or fire.

Better yet, it comes with a 3½-inch, high-rise lip on the front of the pan to make it easier to flip those pancakes, get those eggs just right or even splurge for some campfire stir fry after a day in the woods or on the lake.

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allowing plenty of room between bolt handle and scope for easier cycling of rounds from the detachable, five-round magazine. The receiver will accept bigger scopes and lower rings.

The rifle is available in two different barrel lengths, with 16½-inch and a 24-inch versions.

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George Beckwith

# THE By Brian Cope HOTTER, THE BETTER

STRIPERS AND HYBRIDS IN THE UPPER END OF CLARKS HILL LAKE REALLY TURN ON AS SUMMER APPROACHES AND THE COOL WATERS RUSHING OUT OF RUSSELL DAM GET THEIR JUICES FLOWING.

# IT'S SUMMER, AND IT'S HOT — FOR ANGLERS AND FISH.

## AND THAT'S WHY CLARKS HILL LAKE IS THE PLACE TO BE FOR STRIPER FISHING.

It's a hotspot because of — and in spite of — the heat of summer. That's especially true for anglers fishing near the base of the Lake Russell Dam.

As the water temperature climbs across 71,100-acre Clarks Hill, aka Thurmond Lake, temperatures are also climbing for area businesses and residences, prompting the need for more energy to run air conditioners. This leads to more power generation at the dam, which is achieved by pulling more water through the turbines, drawing the cooler waters from Lake Russell's depths into the upper end of Clarks Hill.

Almost every day from early summer through the fall, water is released through the dam, starting in the early afternoon and lasting through sundown. Striped bass and hybrid bass flock to the cooler water, chasing baitfish. Schools of these predators smack the surface relentlessly for several minutes at a time, disappearing back into deeper water when they've had their fill.

As quickly as one school disappears, another shows itself, slashing the surface. With trolling motors or outboards, depending on how far away the next school pops up, anglers race to get within casting distance. Walk-the-dog type surface



### CLARKS HILL STRIPER/HYBRID REGULATIONS

Striped bass and hybrid bass on Clarks Hill Lake, aka Lake Thurmond, are managed with a 10-fish daily creel limit. Only three fish per day longer than 26 inches may be kept.

Brian Cope



Not all summer stripers at Clarks Hill are schoolies; Dean Williams shows off a really nice specimen.

Brian Cope

lures are deadly on these fish. They can't resist them, and it's a thrilling way to hook them.

These fish range in size from a couple of pounds well up into double figures. Jason Wolfe of Wolfe's Guide Service said this time of year, this is one of his favorite places to fish. He spends much of the year guiding for catfish on several lakes and rivers, and he does some striper guiding on the Wateree River in the early spring, but he said the Clarks Hill summer bite is special.

"This is some of the most-exciting fishing you'll find, and the thing about Clarks Hill this time of year is, the bite is really consistent," Wolfe said. "We've all had days where we thought we'd kill the fish, only to be let down by the action. But I'm always confident here that we'll have a good day."

Wolfe said the July heat can slow the bite down on many lakes, but at Clarks Hill, that heat actually helps the fishing.

"The stripers and hybrids are going to find the coolest water they can, and at Clarks Hill, that means the base of the Lake Russell dam, every afternoon," he said.

Anglers don't need to be within casting distance of the dam. As long as they can see the dam, Wolfe said, they'll find plenty of fish on top.

"Once they open those wheels at the dam, the water cools down considerably," he said. "It doesn't take long to cool the water, and as much as they release, it cools it off for quite a distance. That helps, because it means a lot of boats can fish here without it getting crowded. You might have a boat or two within earshot of you from time to time, but for the most part, you'll see numerous boats all spread out, working lots of different schools. There's plenty of water here, and plenty of fish."



## DESTINATION INFORMATION

**HOW TO GET THERE** — Clarks Hill is the easternmost reservoir on the Savannah River system, just downstream from Lake Russell, with McCormick, S.C., a good jumping-off point at mid-lake. Plenty of boat ramps serve the lake. A few include a small ramp with ample parking near Mt. Carmel at the base of the Lake Russell Dam off of Russell Dam Overlook Rd. and SC 81, ramps at Hickory Knob State Park off SR S 33-7, Leroy's Ferry Recreation Area off of FS563A and the Mt. Carmel Boat Ramp off of SR S 33-168.

**WHEN TO GO** — The topwater bite for Clarks Hill stripers and hybrids is strongest from early summer through mid-fall. Some of the best fishing days occur on the hottest days.

**BEST TECHNIQUES** — Topwater lures with a walk-the-dog action are great choices. Heavy duty buzzbaits are also good. Most stripers and hybrids will be feeding on the surface, so topwater lures work very well. Anglers also have success with Rat-L-Traps retrieved quickly to keep them near the surface, and large swim-baits are effective at times. Medium-heavy rods are good choices, and baitcasting reels spooled with 15 to 20-pound test line are standard.

**FISHING INFO/GUIDES** — Jason Wolfe, Wolfe's Guide Service, 803-487-3690. William Sasser, Sasser Guide Service, 706-589-5468. Tony Shepherd, Little River Guide Service, 706-210-3474. See also Guides & Charters in Classifieds.

**ACCOMMODATIONS** — Hickory Knob State Park, McCormick, S.C., 864-391-2450. Caravel Place, McCormick, S.C., 832-865-2180. Holiday Inn Express, N. Augusta, S.C., 803-341-9505.

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Brian Cope

Walk-the-dog topwaters, swimbaits and lipless crankbaits are all productive when Clarks Hill stripers school at the surface.

**W**olfe's strategy is simple. He likes to arrive in the early afternoon, get his boat within sight of the dam, then find a place to sit tight until he sees schooling action.

"They usually quit running water out of the dam around 6 p.m., so if I can get there around 2, maybe even earlier, I know I'll have some good action," he said. "You don't need to show up at 6 a.m. though. At that time, the stripers are spread out all over the lake because it's cool, and they're not generating power at the dam yet. You want to be there at the hottest part of the day. That's when the dam starts operating, and that's when the stripers move to that part of the lake."

When a school starts busting the surface outside of casting distance, Wolfe will head in their direction, either with his trolling motor or his outboard.

"When they come up and start feeding on top, it can last up to 10 minutes or longer each time," he said. "So if you can get within casting range to them within a couple of minutes, make a move."

Wolfe said that when moving toward an active school, he makes sure to stay out of their way. Once he's close enough to make a cast, he stops. And he definitely doesn't want to approach a school head-on.

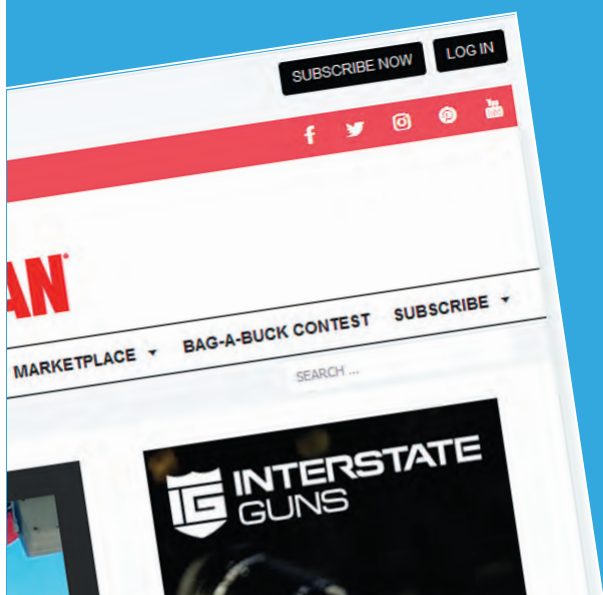
"Once you're within casting range, you just cast your lure and work it back," he said. "Sometimes, you'll get hit multiple times on the same retrieve before you hook up. Other times, your lure will get snatched before you turn your reel handle. This is really exciting fishing. It's not at all uncommon for everyone in the boat to be hooked up at the same time. That often happens multiple times on each trip."

Wolfe likes walk-the-dog type lures. He said it's always a good idea to have different sizes and different models; each one offers a slightly different look to the fish. What works best on one day may not work the best the next day.

"A lot of different companies make some really good ones. I usually have the most luck with lures that have at least a little bit of chartreuse or other bright color," he said. "Heddon Zara Spooks are top notch and are offered in the most patterns with that color in them. Rapala Skitter Walks are good, and the MirrOLure She Dog also has good action and comes in great colors. I like to have several different ones to use throughout each trip. And it never hurts to have some in other colors," he said. ■



**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.



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# Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



**Logan Kirby**

Logan Kirby with a nice bass caught in a fishing tournament last summer in North Carolina.



**Travis Shelton**

Travis Shelton from Cana, Va., caught and released this nice flounder at Oak Island, N.C., last fall. The fish hit a Trout Trick.



**Scott Brown**

Scott Brown of Asheboro, N.C., caught this 64.15-pound blue catfish from Badin Lake on Dec. 13, 2019.



**Brent Meche**

Brent Meche of Fort Mill, S.C., killed this 5-point, 120-pound buck on Dec. 16, 2019, on public land in Chester County.

## GOT PHOTOS? WE WANT 'EM

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**Mike Glasgow**

Mike Glasgow tagged this nice, tall 8-point buck last Nov. 23 in Orange County, N.C.



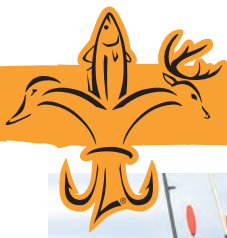
**Harvey Oxendine**

Harvey Oxendine killed this 8-point, 205-pound buck last Nov. 8 on the Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge.



**Wyatt Vaughn**

Wyatt Vaughn from Tamassee S.C., was in on some great duck hunting in Oconee County near Westminster, S.C.



# Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



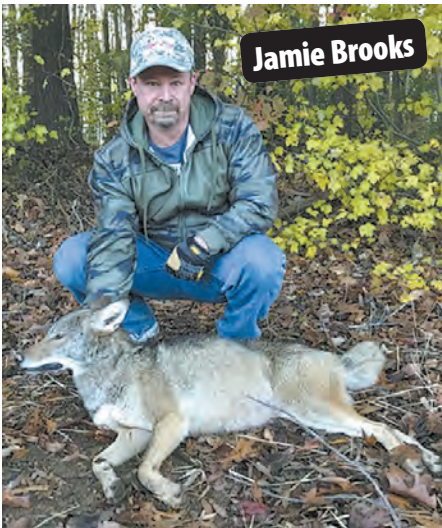
**Chasity Rose**

Chasity Rose of Williamston, S.C., shows off her first big blue catfish out of the Santee Cooper lakes. The fish, which weighed 46 pounds, was caught out of Hills Landing.



**Wade Estes**

Wade Estes, 19, from Statesville, N.C., took this beautiful buck on Nov. 17, 2019



**Jamie Brooks**

Jamie Brooks of Chatham County, N.C., bagged this coyote in November 2019.



**Mattie Howard**

Mattie Howard of Yanceyville, N.C., started 2020 off with a nice catch of stripers from Kerr Lake.



**Kayo Auge**

Kayo Auge, 10, from Maysville, N.C., caught his biggest catfish while fishing for bass on Lake Norman.



**Mike Smith**

Mike Smith dropped this 7-point, 195-pound buck last Nov. 13 near Pageland, S.C.



**Aidan Uronis**

Aidan Uronis, 11, caught this red drum fishing with Josh Uronis last Sept. 28 near Oriental, N.C.



**Dan Failor**

Dan Failor of Richlands, N.C., caught and released this citation-sized speckled trout last fall in the New River.



**Dale Combs**

Dale Combs caught this two big slab crappie out of North Carolina's Eno River on March 20.



**Clay Spaulding**

Clay Spaulding fought this big shark close to North Carolina's Frying Pan Tower for 3 hours before landing it on Jan. 29.



**Jackson Smith**

Jackson Smith, 7, caught this nice speckled trout in North Carolina's Pamlico Sound.



**Brian Caldwell**

Brian Caldwell killed this 125-inch, 161-pound buck with a .44 Henry rifle on Dec. 19, 2019, in Spartanburg County.



**Ben Gibson**

Ben Gibson, 14, from Holly Springs, N.C., bagged this 8-point buck last fall in Orange County. It was his first deer.



**Lori, J.D. Shaddock**

Lori and J.D. Shaddock of Oak Island, N.C., caught slot reds and a black drum fishing with Butch Foster of Yeah Right Charters.



**Eric Mills**

Eric Mills tagged the 8-point buck, with velvet still hanging on one antler, in Union County, N.C., last Nov. 22.

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



## DON'T FORGET SHALLOW BASS

MOST JULY FISH ARE DEEP, BUT SKINNY WATER IS STILL A GOOD SPOT TO SEARCH FOR BASS

**J**uly is a month when most bass fishermen in the Carolinas think about catching fish in deeper water, and there's a good reason for that.

A lot of bass are going to be deep in July, in about all of our lakes, because it will be hot, the water temperature will be high, and most of the baitfish — the threadfin and gizzard shad and herring — are going to be deep. The only exception will be when we have some unusual weather, maybe a tropical storm that dumps a lot of rain on us and muddies and cools the water.

I'm definitely going to be fishing deep, but one thing I won't forget is to give the shallows a look. More about that later.

When July arrives, I'm usually fishing on the main lake, or at least a main creek — big, open-water situations. I'm going to be looking for cover. Some of our lakes

have some pondweed or moss on the bottom, and if there's no vegetation, I'll be looking for stumps and brush piles and cane piles. If I find a good place like the intersection of a creek and the main lake, I'm going to look for rocks, hard bottom areas. They don't have to be big rocks or boulders, just some rocks that fish can relate to.

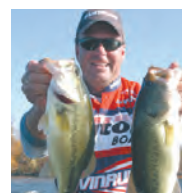
I like to start looking before I start fishing. I'll search and look and find anything that looks good on my Humminbird side-imaging and down-imaging electronics. If I see something I like, I'll make a way-point and target the place.

### START CRANKING


I like to start out with a Rapala DT-16 crankbait and fish all around that area. A crankbait is a really good search bait when you're fishing deep — you can cover a lot of water, and a lot of times,

you can get a reaction strike and get them started. Sometimes, you have to use a couple of different baits to trigger that first bite, but usually in July, if you find one fish offshore, there will be more with him. If you catch one, you can expect to catch some more.

When I put the crankbait rod down, I'll always have a Mop jig tied on to try, and I'll fish a 6-inch Senko on a Texas rig with a ½- or ¾-ounce weight. I might even fish a Senko on a big Spot Remover jig, ¾- or ½-ounce. The key is getting that first bite. One day, you might get it on a DT-16, but the next day, it might be a jig



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



The presence of bluegill in shallow water will draw the attention of plenty of largemouth bass, even in a hot month like July. Apparently, food trumps comfort.

Eric Engbretsen

and the next a Senko. Once you get it, it can be a big day.

In July, I'm usually fishing in water that's anywhere from 15 to 25 feet deep, depending on the lake. One big thing that plays a big part in it is water clarity. The clearer the water get, the deeper you're going to be looking for structure.

Now, about shallow water. Don't forget about it. Don't ignore it, just because all the signs point to deep water. You can always find some bass in shallow water. Back when we used to find Bassmaster Classics in late July, even though a lot of fish were caught deep, there were always some guys who could find shallow fish.

## PANFISH CENTRAL

You know that most of the baitfish are offshore, but what you forget is that bass love to eat panfish, and plenty of bluegill and shellcrackers are in shallow

water. They're probably spawning in July, especially around the full moon, so pay attention. If you have a chance to fish the three or four days on either side of the full moon, find some bream beds and fish for bass around them, because plenty of bass will be hanging around, trying to pick off bream coming and going. Even if you're fishing and it's not close to the full moon, check out the bream beds anyway.

Another thing that happens in July on a lot of our lakes is a mayfly hatch. When there's a good hatch going, fish of all kinds are going to come a long way to feed on those big insects that are falling onto the surface of the water. They will definitely bring big largemouths up out of deep water for the feast.

## FISH GOOD WATER

If fish aren't biting offshore, and you

don't find the bream or mayflies, you can still look shallow for bass. You might have some localized runoff after a rain; that water will be cooler and hold more oxygen, and that will attract bass because of the water quality. A lot of guys look up in the upper end of lakes, the river ends, because there's current and oxygen, but I think it can get crowded up there. I'd rather look in the back ends of the big, live creeks down by the dam. If you find a live creek, with good water coming in, those will be good places to look for shallow bass. Some of those big creeks on that end of the lakes actually fish like small lakes, so it's just like going up the river on a smaller lake.

So start out deep this month, but don't forget that there might be enough fish in shallow water to make for a really good trip. ■

## GREENER PASTURES

Jeff Burleson

A well-placed and maintained trail camera can give hunters and land-managers an idea about the scope and quality of their herd and the travel patterns of local whitetails.



Jeff Burleson

# SHUTTERBUG TIME

TRAIL CAMERAS CAN GIVE YOU INSIGHTS FOR THE FALL

**P**reseason surveillance can provide hunters with an endless amount of information to help make the upcoming season a success. From buck inventory and movement patterns to trespasser identification and food-plot surveillance, trail cameras are an important part of unraveling the big picture. Few hunters these days operate without a series of trail cameras.

For many hunters and outdoorsman, the summer season is beach, lake or river time. While there is nothing more refreshing than taking a dip into the local watering hole after a long day at work, the middle of summer is prime time to prepare for deer season. It may seem like an eternity away around July 4, but mid-August will arrive quickly for South Carolina hunters and in North Carolina, archery season begins not too long after Labor Day.

Hunters should take advantage of any available time and collect as much preseason camera footage as possible to improve their fall experience. Trail cameras can provide endless data on food plots, trails, agriculture fields, mineral licks, main trail crossings, water holes and more.

## COLLECTING INFO

Trail cameras can provide valuable data year-round. While the approach of the season draws most users, the preseason will provide excellent herd and dietary data. Seasonal food preferences and travel patterns will help hunters understand deer habits in the offseason and where to be when harvest time arrives.

Deer rely on a variety of natural foods, and they will migrate seasonally to take advantage of them, as well as water sources. Camera surveillance will show usage of natural feeding areas, warm-

season food plots and seasonal agriculture crops. By July in the agriculture belt, fields of peanuts and soybeans are primary feeding zones for deer. Both does and bucks congregate within these grocery stores in summer prior to the breeding season.

Summer water holes are often omitted as a place of interest for deer, but they are critical for deer and other wildlife. Deer must thermoregulate, and water consumption is one of the only methods they can regulate their body temperature — other than panting.



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

## SPY ON THE WATER

Heat can take its toll on furbearing animals, and water sources remain a critical component to their survival, especially in the summer. In places with limited water supplies, deer and other wildlife will take refuge near these water holes on a daily basis, and that makes them a perfect place for a trail camera.

Whitetails are social animals, with a social hierarchy that takes year-round for individual deer to understand their place in the herd. Subordinate bucks, 1½- and 2½-year-olds, often traveling with a group of older, more-mature bucks. Camera surveillance can target bachelor groups as early as June, but data is usually better received toward the end of summer, and July is a prime time to gather information. Photo documentation of these bucks allows hunters and wildlife managers to identify individual deer for developing harvest goals.

An aggressive summer surveillance program can allow managers to catalog more than 80% of the resident bucks on their property. Without the super-charged hormones that flow in male and female deer during the mating season, deer are more likely to maintain a daily routine during the summer, and deer/camera interception is more likely. Rich food sources bring even the biggest of bucks out of hiding, especially when hunting pressure is absent.

## CAMERA ROTATION

Cameras should also be moved around every week or two to capture and inventory as many deer as possible. Alternatively, purchasing additional cameras is also a valid option due to the increasing value and low cost of cameras in today's marketplace.

If new cameras aren't in the budget or if your camera inventory is sufficient, they will need to be dusted off and checked to make sure they work before setting them up for a long season of use. All cameras should be tested to make sure they are triggering and taking clear photos. There is nothing worse than setting out cameras, coming back to check them and realizing a camera wasn't functioning. Every photo taken can be a critical component to any surveillance system.

Securing cameras can also be a problem, especially on older models. Straps and bungees often dry rot or become stretched over time and will require replacement, but the real killer can be battery power. Old batteries most likely need to be replaced with fresh ones. For the best results, lithium batteries should be used in order to gain full, season-long usage.

The Carolinas' sweltering summers keep the deer woods vacant of travelers and wanderers. Cameras can be a great way to determine the who, why, and when just before the season begins. Deer will be more habitual in their daily routines than at any other time of the year. Eating, sleeping and drinking are a deer's concern in late summer. Monitoring deer patterns with cameras can be easy before the breeding season begins. ■

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## STICKS AND STRINGS

Sammy Romano

The Genesis bow can put any member of the family, including small children, into the sport of archery relatively inexpensively.

# A NEW GENESIS FOR BEGINNERS

### GET THE KIDS AND MOM STARTED WITH THIS GREAT BOW PACKAGE



Sammy Romano

In these trying times of the Covid-19 pandemic, the world as we know it has changed. Social distancing is the new norm, and team sports are having their seasons cancelled.

If there is any silver lining, perhaps it is that our youth have “unplugged” from their electronic devices and are spending more time outdoors. Much like golf, archery is a sport in which you can compete against yourself by seeking to improve. It also helps youths build self-esteem, because they aren’t comparing themselves to others, but rather seeking to better their own shooting.

There is something about watching the flight of an arrow that is hard to explain, and I’ve met very few people who aren’t captivated by it. With many, if not all, schools and summer camps closed, archery can be an affordable, enjoyable source of entertainment for kids as well as an entire family.

A unique and affordable way to begin archery is the Genesis bow. This bow is unique in that it will fit all members of most families without any adjustment required. As long as all members of a family have the same eye dominance (right-eyed or left-eyed), they can share one bow, because rather than having substantial let-off, the Genesis uses its cam as a force multiplier, thus providing additional thrust to the arrow.

At its maximum draw weight of 20 pounds, the Genesis shoots with the power of a 35-pound recurve. The draw cycle and shot is similar to a recurve without the issues of limb twist and warping. This is a great way for a beginning archer to get into the sport with a reasonably priced, low-maintenance setup; with prices starting at only \$170, the Genesis is well within most consumer budgets.

## BOW SPECS

The Genesis bow has an axle-to-axle length of 35½ inches and weighs 3½ pounds. It offers a draw-length range of 15 to 30 inches and has an adjustable draw weight of 10 to 20 pounds. This makes it the ideal bow for an archer of nearly any size. For younger, smaller archers, the Genesis-mini is an option. With a shorter axle length of only 29½ inches and weighing only 2 pounds, its adjustable draw weight of 6 to 12 pounds and draw length range of 14 to 25 inches is ideal for small children. A third option is the Gen-X, a hunting capable

bow that offers even more room to grow in the sport with a draw length range of 21 to 30 inches and adjustable draw weight from 25 to 40 pounds. All of these bows are available as bow only or with accessory kits.

The Genesis bow is the standard bow for the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP), 4H archery programs, the church-based Centershot archery program, and many more. Arrows for Genesis bows are manufactured by Easton, made of aluminum and are reasonably priced at less than \$6 each. Many target manufacturers are producing special NASP targets for Genesis bows, also affordable at less than \$50 retail.

## NOT A BIG INVESTMENT

Now more than ever, the Genesis bow makes sense. For less than \$300, it will provide hours of quality, healthy entertainment for the family while still maintaining social distancing practices. It can also provide some sanity for parents who are out of options for kids’ activities. With a proper backstop, a bow can be shot in far more settings than a firearm — in many cases even the backyard.

Genesis bows are available at many retailers across the nation, as well as online at [www.genesisbow.com](http://www.genesisbow.com). As always, I recommend purchasing your Genesis from an archery shop for the best results. A pro shop will help to determine eye dominance and proper bow size, as well as instruction on both correct form and safety. This will help to ensure success, thereby increasing the desire to shoot more often.

Unlike many hobbies which quickly fall by the wayside, I find kids will shoot archery tirelessly for hours on end. Not only does this great sport build self-confidence and self-esteem, it provides physical activity that is sadly much needed amongst today’s youth who are all too often addicted to “screen time.”

Check out a Genesis bow today and get them out shooting. ■



Sammy Romano is a lifelong hunter who has worked in the archery industry for more than 25 years. His expertise includes compounds and crossbows. He can be reached at [samboka31@aol.com](mailto:samboka31@aol.com).

## COOKING ON THE WILD SIDE

Jerry Dilsaver

# GOOD MAHI CEVICHE

TRY THIS COOL TREAT AFTER A GOOD DAY AT SEA



Cut a Mahi fillet in ½-inch cubes before mixing with vegetables and fruit juices for ceviche. **INSET:** Sectioning the lime will make it easier to squeeze and produce more juice.

Jerry Dilsaver

**N**o one can deny this has been an unusual year. Our personal, professional and piscatorial lives have been jammed up and reshaped as we come to grips with the COVID-19 virus and adapt to living with it.

Personally and professionally, many things are still in a mess. Thankfully, fishing has only been interrupted in a couple of ways and has generally been considered a good activity.

Most nutritionists agree that eating a diet containing a lot of fresh fish is good for us. Mahi mahi is a fish most folks welcome to their table, and this is a way to prepare it as fresh as possible. This is good anytime, but is at its absolute best when prepared the evening after the Mahi is caught. Ceviche isn't cooked over a fire but relies on the acids in lime juice to prepare it for eating. It isn't sashimi but is only "cooked" a little more.

Mahi usually arrive off the coast of the Carolinas in mid- to late April, with numbers growing through May. Many of these are larger fish, with some smaller ones following through the summer. By July, the water inshore of the Gulf Stream has warmed to almost match it, and many Mahi have left those waters to follow baitfish closer to shore.

Mahi mahi are the fastest-growing offshore pelagic species. In the wild, they don't have an unlimited food supply, but they are almost always feeding and that makes them a favorite of fishermen. Mahi often get wrapped up in feeding on schools of baitfish and occasionally even follow them to within sight of shore. A couple have even wandered close enough to be caught by pier fishermen and that gives them another check in the column of why fishermen like them.

The third positive check for mahi is they have big fillets of mild flavored meat that appeal to all but the most picky eater. Mahi fillets are delicious grilled, baked, broiled, fried and this recipe kicks that good flavor up a notch or two without adding heat.

It's summer and Mahi are here, so put on your sun screen, wear a buff, put a mask under that if you feel the need, but find some time to get out and catch a cooler full. Their highly acrobatic antics when hooked will keep even the most attention deficit fisherman busy and laughing. They'll provide many delicious meals over the coming weeks. Try this ceviché recipe early on, because you'll want to use it again — probably several times. ■

# MAHI GOOD CEVICHE

According to Wikipedia, ceviché, aka cebiché, seviché, or sebi-ché, is a Latin American seafood dish thought to have originated in Peru. It is made from fresh, raw fish cured in fresh citrus juices, commonly lemon or lime, and spiced with aji, chili peppers or other seasonings, including chopped onions, salt, and coriander. Because ceviché is eaten only with the curing of the citric acids and not cooked with heat, it must be prepared and served fresh.

There isn't an exact date, but the international dish of ceviché is believed to have reached the United States in the 1980s and quickly become popular. There are many varieties of ceviché that range from mild to wild depending on the country of origin. This is a middle-of-the-road version that has a little spice but is mild enough to be enjoyed by all but those with the mildest palate. As with many recipes featured here, it can easily be warmed up a notch or three by adding more chillies.

Mahi mahi, aka dolphin, is the fish featured in this recipe, but it works well with almost any fish. I chose Mahi, as it is a favorite with many fishermen and diners, and with the fish moving closer to shore in summer, they are within the range of many fishermen. Mahi is also readily available at the fish market should you not have the boat, time or equipment to catch your own.

Any fish destined to become ceviché or sashimi should be buried in ice immediately when caught so it cools quickly and has no opportunity to deteriorate. Absolutely, the quicker a fish is cooled makes it better. The difference is remarkable.

Fillets should be skinned, and most diners will appreciate trimming out any remaining red meat. Don't let the fillet warm while making the ceviché marinade. Either make the marinade first or cover the fillet in ice. Finished ceviché should be kept cold until ready to serve. I prefer surrounding the bowl in ice and serving it with the bowl placed in a larger, ice-filled bowl to keep it coolest.

The most-tedious part of preparing ceviche is squeezing the

limes for fresh juice, but it's the only way to do it. Prepared lime juices lose something in the bottling process and don't do the job as well.

I was recently introduced to a new way to get juice from limes and lemons, and it works. Instead of cutting the lime into halves and squeezing, I cut the edges off the lime in four sections, which gives those sections and a rectangular core. The pieces are squeezed, and the core is twisted. I find this easier on my fingers, especially when squeezing the approximately 15 limes it requires to get the 1½ cup of juice. It yields more juice per lime and requires fewer limes than the conventional method.

The orange juice is used to cancel a little of the tart from the limes and sweetens the final mixture. If you find it too tart, add a little more orange juice. I have friends who add a touch of sugar, but I don't think that's necessary.

While it's a simple process, some prep time is involved. Get the fish "cooking" first and take your time getting the other ingredients ready. Most folks enjoy it and hopefully, you will too. ■

## INGREDIENTS:

- 1 pound fresh, skinless Mahi mahi fillet
- 1 medium sweet onion
- 2 medium-large tomatoes (about 1 pound)
- 1 large or 2 small ripe avocados
- 1½ cups fresh lime juice (approximately 15 limes)
- 3 tbsp fresh orange juice
- 1 or 2 fresh jalapenos (to personal taste)
- ½ cup chopped, pitted green olives
- ½ cup chopped cilantro and a few leaves for garnish
- 2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Chips and crackers

## PREPARATION:

Squeeze approximately 15 limes to get the 1½ cups of fresh lime juice. Chop the onion into approximately ½-inch pieces. Slice the mahi fillet into approximately ½-inch pieces. Mix the mahi, onions and lime juice in a stainless steel or glass bowl. You must use enough juice to completely cover the fish.

Cover the bowl and refrigerate it for approximately 4 hours. The mahi should no longer look raw, but allowing it to "cook" too long will make it taste tart. After "cooking," drain the mahi and onions in a colander, shaking lightly. The fish can be prepared ahead of time and refrigerated up to a day.

### Preparing the veggies.

Chop the tomatoes into ½-inch pieces. Remove the seeds and finely chop the jalapenos: one for mild palates and two for more robust palates. Chop the cilantro and save a few full leaves for garnish. Squeeze oranges for juice. Use a large bowl and mix the tomatoes, peppers, cilantro, olives and olive oil. Salt and pepper the mahi (to taste) and combine the fish into the bowl. Stir in the orange juice. Peel, pit and dice the avocados into approximate ½-inch pieces. Do not chop the avocado until ready to mix it in shortly before serving. Stir in the avocado last, taking care to not crush it. Allow to chill for 30 minutes to an hour if time allows.



Jerry Dilsaver

Garnish with a few cilantro leaves before serving.

The ideal serving for ceviché is in a glass or stainless steel bowl that is resting inside another larger bowl filled with ice. This keeps it cool and fresh. ■



**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](mailto:captainjerry@captainjerry.com).

## SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY

Phillip Gentry

Over half the battle of catching bonnet-head sharks is finding remote flats and creeks away from summer boat traffic.



# TARGETING BABY JAWS

## BONNETHEAD SHARKS ARE A FUN SUMMER SPECIES

Phillip Gentry

**S**ight-casting is probably one of the most-exciting ways to fish. It's very similar to stalking deer or jump-shooting ducks, except getting within range with a fishing rod in hand is not even half the battle. Putting the bait in the fish's path AND getting him to eat it is when the excitement really starts.

Try that sitting in a kayak within spitting distance of a 3-foot shark, and you've just set the stage for a kinder, gentler version of shark fishing.

The summer heat can put a damper on fishing for other inshore species, but for bonnethead sharks, the hotter it gets, the better they bite. Bonnetheads are unique among southern shark species; unlike most sharks, they ply extremely shallow, inshore waters. This makes them easier to spot when fishing shallow bays and backwaters, particularly those with a lot of exposed oyster shell at low tide, where the fish hunt for shrimp, crabs, and small baitfish.

### PUT A BONNET ON IT

Bonnetheads like to hug the bank in remote reaches of shallow, tidal creeks when searching for food. Mistakenly called "tailing" by anglers unfamiliar with the species is actually the bonnet-head moving its head back and forth,

using sensory organs embedded in its bonnet-shaped head, to detect food.

The problem with sight-fishing for bonnetheads is once you have located one working in the shallows, it often spooks before the angler can paddle within casting distance. This problem is solved by using live bait to tempt them, particularly a piece of quartered blue crab. Even after the fish has sounded, it most likely hasn't gone far, and the smell of fresh cut crab usually guarantees the fish will circle back.

### SURROUND A SHARK

A good strategy when approaching the last-known location of a bonnethead is to have two rods rigged and ready. Quickly stake down in the shallow water and cast one bait ahead and one behind of where you marked the fish.

A good outfit to use when targeting bonnetheads from a kayak is 20-pound spinning tackle spooled with 20-pound braid. A bait rig consisting of a 4/0 to 5/0 circle hook connected to a 3-foot section of at least 40-pound wire leader is recommended. A 2- to 3-ounce, no-roll sinker — depending on the prevailing current and tide — is threaded on just above where the main line joins the leader.

Bonnets have small teeth that are capable of cutting regular fishing line, but it's

their rough skin, particularly the tail, which is used to provide a drag-ripping initial run, that often snaps inferior fishing tackle.

### TARGET LOW TIDE

The best bonnethead tides are 2 hours before and after low tide, when the sharks and the bait they're hunting are more exposed. During other parts of the cycle, or in areas of little tidal movement, kayak anglers can have success anchoring up with a stake-out pole and fan-casting baits into deep holes or inter-sections in tidal creeks.

One final note: bonnetheads don't tolerate much boat traffic when they're in the shallows, so the furthest, most-remote areas, those almost inaccessible to powerboats, often hold the greatest fishing potential.

While that might present a problem for powerboaters, it's even more reason to get out and try fishing for bonnethead sharks from a kayak. ■



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

## BEST BAITS FOR BONNETHEADS

**A** fresh piece of chunked blue crab is one of the top baits for tempting bonnethead sharks. The beauty of using them for bait is that crabs are not that hard to find or catch once you're out in the water.

One way to enhance the appeal of blue crabs as bait is to chunk them, that is, cut them and partially clean them to produce scent while still saving enough bait to stay on a hook and attract fish.

The following steps will walk you through the process.

- Using a heavy bladed knife and cutting board or adequate backstop, place the blade on top of the crab and divide the carapace in half, creating equal portions.

- Remove the carapace from the half crab to go on the hook. Some anglers prefer to remove the carapace before cutting the bait, but the bait will keep longer with the carapace on and is generally easier to remove when cut.

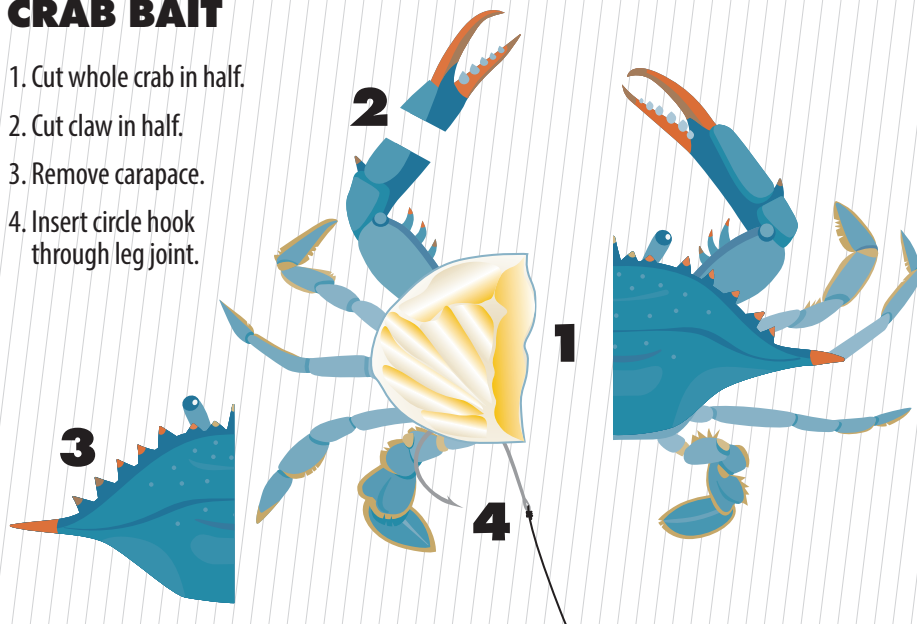
- Cut the claw off just past the pivot point of the pincer. This step has nothing to do with disarming the bait, which is dead anyway. It exposes additional meat to generate more scent.

- Insert the hook into the body cavity and exit through the leg joint. Make sure to expose the barb so the bait come off the hook in current.

Smaller baits can be created by cutting the chunk in half, effectively quartering the crab. Removing the legs from quartered bait can be done to reduce the size of the bait. A quartered crab with the legs removed makes excellent bait for other saltwater fish, especially large sheepshead. ■

### PREPARING A CHUNKER CRAB BAIT

1. Cut whole crab in half.
2. Cut claw in half.
3. Remove carapace.
4. Insert circle hook through leg joint.



Phillip Gentry



Probably the most docile of the shark species, bonnetheads still put up a tremendous fight on medium tackle.

## BEST BETS

### NORTH CAROLINA

**WHAT** — Bonnethead, sand, and Atlantic sharpnose sharks.

**WHERE** — Shallotte Inlet and Shallotte River, behind Ocean Isle and Holden Beach.

**HOW** — The deeper waters of Shallotte Inlet and the flats and bars in and around Shallotte River are a good place to look for bonnetheads searching for blue crabs.

**LAUNCH** — Brick Landing Road boating access, Devane Rd. SW, Shallotte.

**INSIDER TIP** — Other shark species will also ply the cuts and creeks in this area, but may more readily bite cut menhaden or mullet over blue crab.

### SOUTH CAROLINA

**WHAT** — Bonnethead sharks.

**WHERE** — Bulls Bay, between Charleston and Georgetown.

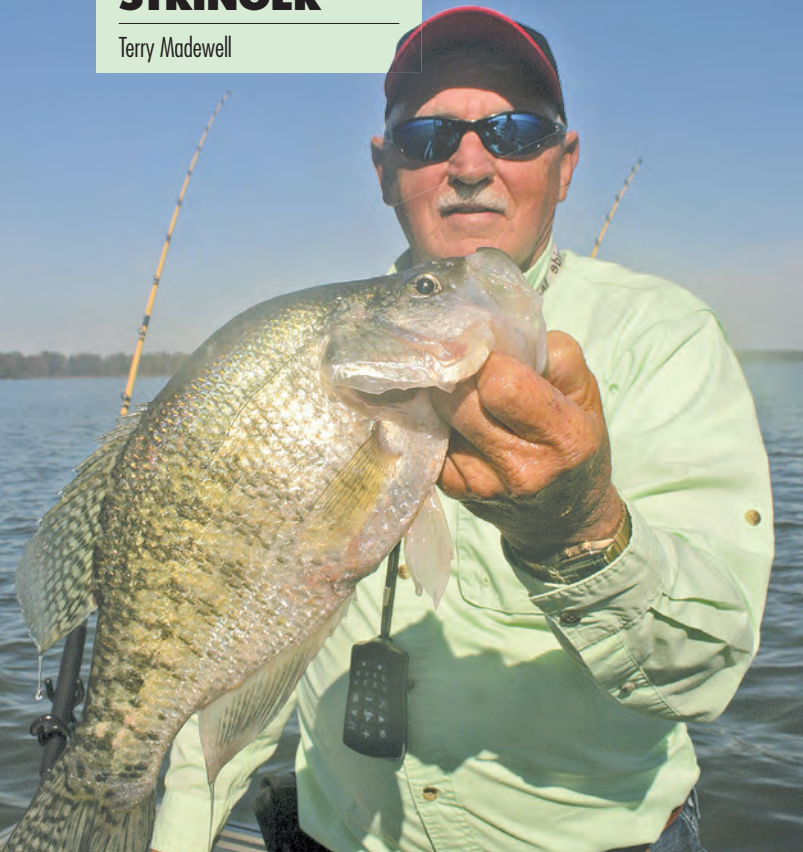
**HOW** — Stake out one of the many creek intersections on the perimeter of Bull's Bay on in incoming tide.

**LAUNCH** — Garris Public Boat Landing, SC S-10-1170, Awendaw.

**INSIDER TIP** — Resist the urge to use commercially made wire rigs and make your own wire leaders from a roll of 40-pound leader material. Bonnetheads are stronger fighters than they might appear and can easily break commercially made pre-packaged products.

## SANTEE STRINGER

Terry Madewell



# SANTEE SUMMER: KNOW THE TARGET

SHALLOW OR DEEP? DEPENDS ON THE SPECIES

**M**ost fish in the Santee Cooper lakes are solidly entrenched into summer fishing patterns by July, but contrary to what some may think, that's not a bad thing. Summer patterns are often predictable if you understand the requirements of the species you're targeting.

And it's certainly not all about deep water. Plenty of excellent fishing occurs in reasonably shallow water if you're looking for the right species in the right places.

Summer bass fishing is still a shallow-water situation on both Lake Marion and Lake Moultrie, but savvy anglers have learned to target the combination of slightly deeper water and thick cover, especially during mid-day.

Most bass guides work shallow flats with scattered woody or weedy cover early and late in the day, using Chatterbaits, spinnerbaits and noisy topwater lures to attract feeding fish. But after a brief flurry of action in the

morning, guide Inky Davis said a more methodical approach works best.

"Most of the bass in both lakes will be holding on or near shallow-water cover, but in some sections of the lake, some of the best shallow-water cover can be far from the shoreline," Davis said. "I fish the upper end of Lake Marion a lot during mid-summer, and some areas between Jack's Creek and Pack's Landing have outstanding bass fishing far from the shoreline.

Davis (803-478-7289) also said working shoreline cover — trees, weeds, stumps and logs in shallow water — can also be excellent.

## SHALLOW AND DEEP

"My primary targets are usually 3 to 6 feet deep but are near deeper water often 7 to 10 feet deep," he said. "This combination of cover near deep water is a key to consistent summer action. And while the most-consistent time for huge fish is

earlier in the year, we still catch plenty of big bass during the summer."

"Watch for forage fish activity on the flats at first light for clues as to where the bass are holding," he said. "Bass are going to be near a good food source, so when I'm out at dawn, I'll check these areas and if I don't see forage, I'll make a quick move or two until I find it."

## DEEP SLABS

Crappie fishing during the summer is primarily a deep-water affair, and most fish are caught on natural cover in deep water or around man-made fish attractors consisting of sunken brush around drops and humps.



**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.

Terry Madewell

**OPPOSITE:** Guide Dave Hilton (left) catches summer slabs in deep water; the Diversion Canal has good current and holds lots of summer cats.

Dave Hilton, a long-time crappie guide, said the heat can be harsh, but it does keep the crappies in fairly predictable patterns. "Summer crappie fishing for me is all about working deep brush using live minnows, usually in the 15- to 25-foot range," Hilton said. "Plus, I'm mobile in terms of where I fish, and I try to not get locked into simply fishing the same type places every day. Crappies are going to move around as the forage moves, so when I'm graphing a specific underwater brush pile target, I'm looking for crappie, and baitfish."

Hilton (843-870-4734) prefers tight-lining minnows with long poles, and he said getting the exact depth right, and continuing to fish the right depth, is the difference to catching limits of crappie or just enough for supper.

## MOVING-WATER CATFISH

Catfish action can be outstanding during August, and the Diversion Canal is an excellent place to find blues, flatheads and channel catfish.

The key to this fishing is the current flow through the 7-mile canal, because current attracts forage that catfish prefer.

Kevin Davis, owner of Blacks Camp, said daytime fishing in

the canal is typically done by drifting with the current flow.

"For the most fish, it's best to use a rod about 6- to 7-feet long, and use a heavy sinker, often 2 ounces or more, to get the bait to the bottom," he said. "Using a heavy weight enables fishermen to keep the line near vertical while drifting, important for detecting bites and avoiding snags. The basic rig consists of a sinker placed at the terminal end of the line with a leader and hook about 12 to 18 inches above it."

Davis (843-312-3080) said to fish just off the bottom and occasionally let the sinker tap the bottom to ensure your bait stays close to it.

"If you simply drop it down and drag it along the bottom, you'll likely get snagged and lose your rig," he said.

"A variety of baits work well and fishermen using small cut bait, night crawlers or minnows will usually catch plenty of fish, often mostly channel catfish and smaller blue catfish," he said.

"For larger fish, I recommend 6/0 to 8/0 circle hooks, 50-pound line and heavy action rods. Cut shad, herring, bream and white perch are all excellent baits." ■



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- 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.)

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2020 BEST DAYS					LUNAR PERIODS					
POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL	VALUE	TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED					
2020 JUL					MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT		
Wed 1	██	██	██	51	5:07 pm	9:52 pm - 11:04 pm	3:03 am	9:15 am - 10:43 am	☉	
Thu 2	██	██	██	58	6:15 pm	10:56 pm - 11:54 pm	3:44 am	10:17 am - 11:29 am	☉	
Fri 3	██	██	██	67	7:22 pm	11:57 pm - Midnight	4:30 am	11:21 am - 12:19 pm	☉	
Sat 4	██	██	██	70	8:23 pm	Midnight - 12:49 am	5:22 am	12:22 pm - 1:14 pm	☉	FULL
Sun 5	██	██	██	59	9:17 pm	12:55 am - 1:47 am	6:19 am	1:20 pm - 2:12 pm	☉	LOW
Mon 6	██	██	██	49	10:04 pm	1:50 am - 2:46 am	7:20 am	2:15 pm - 3:11 pm	☉	
Tue 7	██	██	██	39	10:44 pm	2:40 am - 3:42 am	8:22 am	3:05 pm - 4:07 pm	☉	
Wed 8	██	██	██	35	11:18 pm	3:23 am - 4:39 am	9:23 am	3:48 pm - 5:04 pm	☉	
Thu 9	██	██	██	35	11:48 pm	4:03 am - 5:31 am	10:22 am	4:28 pm - 5:56 pm	☉	
Fri 10	██	██	██	36	12:16 am	4:38 am - 6:24 am	11:19 am	5:03 pm - 6:49 pm	☉	
Sat 11	██	██	██	43	12:16 am	5:11 am - 7:13 am	12:15 pm	5:36 pm - 7:38 pm	☉	
Sun 12	██	██	██	55	12:43 am	5:44 am - 8:02 am	1:10 pm	6:09 pm - 8:27 pm	☉	HIGH
Mon 13	██	██	██	49	1:09 am	6:15 am - 8:51 am	2:05 pm	6:40 pm - 9:16 pm	☉	
Tue 14	██	██	██	47	1:37 am	6:50 am - 9:40 am	3:01 pm	7:15 pm - 10:05 pm	☉	
Wed 15	██	██	██	51	2:06 am	7:26 am - 10:32 am	3:59 pm	7:51 pm - 10:57 pm	☉	
Thu 16	██	██	██	53	2:40 am	8:08 am - 11:24 am	4:58 pm	8:33 pm - 11:49 pm	☉	
Fri 17	██	██	██	65	3:18 am	8:53 am - 12:19 pm	5:58 pm	9:18 pm - 12:44 am	☉	
Sat 18	██	██	██	77	4:04 am	9:43 am - 1:15 pm	6:57 pm	10:08 pm - 1:40 am	☉	
Sun 19	██	██	██	88	4:56 am	10:37 am - 2:13 pm	7:54 pm	11:02 pm - Midnight	☉	HIGH
Mon 20	██	██	██	93	5:56 am	11:38 am - 3:08 pm	8:46 pm	Midnight - 2:38 am	☉	NEW
Tue 21	██	██	██	83	7:01 am	12:39 pm - 4:01 pm	9:32 pm	12:03 am - 3:33 am	☉	
Wed 22	██	██	██	72	8:09 am	1:40 pm - 4:50 pm	10:13 pm	1:04 am - 4:26 am	☉	
Thu 23	██	██	██	60	9:18 am	2:42 pm - 5:34 pm	10:49 pm	2:05 am - 5:15 am	☉	
Fri 24	██	██	██	53	10:26 am	3:43 pm - 6:15 pm	11:23 pm	3:07 am - 5:59 am	☉	Perigee
Sat 25	██	██	██	48	11:34 am	4:44 pm - 6:56 pm	11:56 pm	4:08 am - 6:40 am	☉	
Sun 26	██	██	██	49	12:42 pm	5:44 pm - 7:36 pm		5:09 am - 7:21 am	☉	
Mon 27	██	██	██	55	1:50 pm	6:44 pm - 8:16 pm	12:29 am	6:09 am - 8:01 am	☉	HALF
Tue 28	██	██	██	42	2:57 pm	7:45 pm - 9:01 pm	1:04 am	7:09 am - 8:41 am	☉	
Wed 29	██	██	██	34	4:05 pm	8:46 pm - 9:48 pm	1:42 am	8:10 am - 9:26 am	☉	
Thu 30	██	██	██	32	5:11 pm	9:46 pm - 10:42 pm	2:25 am	9:11 am - 10:13 am	☉	
Fri 31	██	██	██	40	6:13 pm	10:45 pm - 11:37 pm	3:14 am	10:11 am - 11:07 am	☉	LOW

ANY LUNAR PERIOD IS ENHANCED WHEN IT OVERLAPS A KEY SOLAR PERIOD. THE BEST OF THESE OVERLAPS ARE DESIGNATED BY THE SUN SYMBOLS:  
 ☉ = DAWN ☉ = HIGH NOON ☉ = DUSK  
 WHILE THE LESSER MOONRISE AND -SET OVERLAPS (ABOUT 30 MIN. BEFORE AND AFTER THE LISTED TIME) ARE DESIGNATED BY BOLD BLACK TYPE.

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## HEAD FOR THE MOUNTAINS

Robert Satterwhite

When summer arrives, trout get spooked, especially natives like this brook trout that live in smaller, higher-elevation streams. They must be approached with caution.



# A SPECIAL EFFORT FOR SUMMER TROUT

PICK YOUR SPOTS, TIMES FOR PRODUCTIVE STREAM VISITS

**W**hen mountain streams are low and clear and temperatures are in the 80s, trout are less active, and catching them requires finesse and patience. Learn how to consistently catch trout in the summer, and you'll be able to catch them any time of year.

Low, clear water makes trout spooky, especially wild ones. Wear drab clothing, colors that blend in with your surroundings — nothing white or bright, down to your socks. Keep a low profile and fish upstream so trout are less likely to see you coming. Use long leaders, at least 9 feet, and cast from behind rocks or other

natural obstructions. If you see fish darting when you move in the water, forget about that stretch of water. No amount of coaxing will result in a strike. Learn your lesson and move on to the next stretch.

Cast close to banks, under low hanging mountain laurel and rhododendron. You'll lose a few flies and spend an inordinate amount of precious fishing time getting line and flies out of bushes, but that's part of the fishing experience.

## GO FOR THE COOL

In hot weather, trout stay in cooler areas of a stream where oxygen content is higher, places that have bubbly, white

water, especially little pools below ledges and waterfalls. Let your fly drop naturally into bubbly water or let it drift through riffles. Look for small tributaries that feed cooler water into a main stream. Think like a trout and fish the areas you'd prefer to be in the heat of the day.

Fish smaller streams. The ones with the most cover have the coolest water.



**Bob Satterwhite** has been writing about the outdoors, particularly trout fishing, for more than 25 years. A native of Morganton, N.C., he lives in Cullowhee, N.C., close to the Tuckasegee River, Caney Fork, Moses Creek, and several other prime trout streams.

Small, high-elevation streams with a heavy canopy can be fished all day. Save the large, open streams for early morning and late evening.

## FEED 'EM RIGHT

**Dry flies.** Trout feed during the comfortable times of the day: early morning before the water heats up, and late evening after the water cools down. For dry-fly fishing, these are the most productive times, but sporadic hatches occur all day, only in smaller numbers. For morning dry-fly fishing, Blue-Winged Olive, female or male Adams (winged or parachute), Light Cahill, Tan Caddis and parachute Pheasant Tail are good patterns. Usually a No. 16 or No. 14 works well. For late evening, midges are especially effective in gray, creme, brown or black. Nos. 18 to 22 work best. Some dry-fly patterns, particularly a Cahill or Adams, can be fished all day. Experiment until you get a strike, then stick with that pattern.

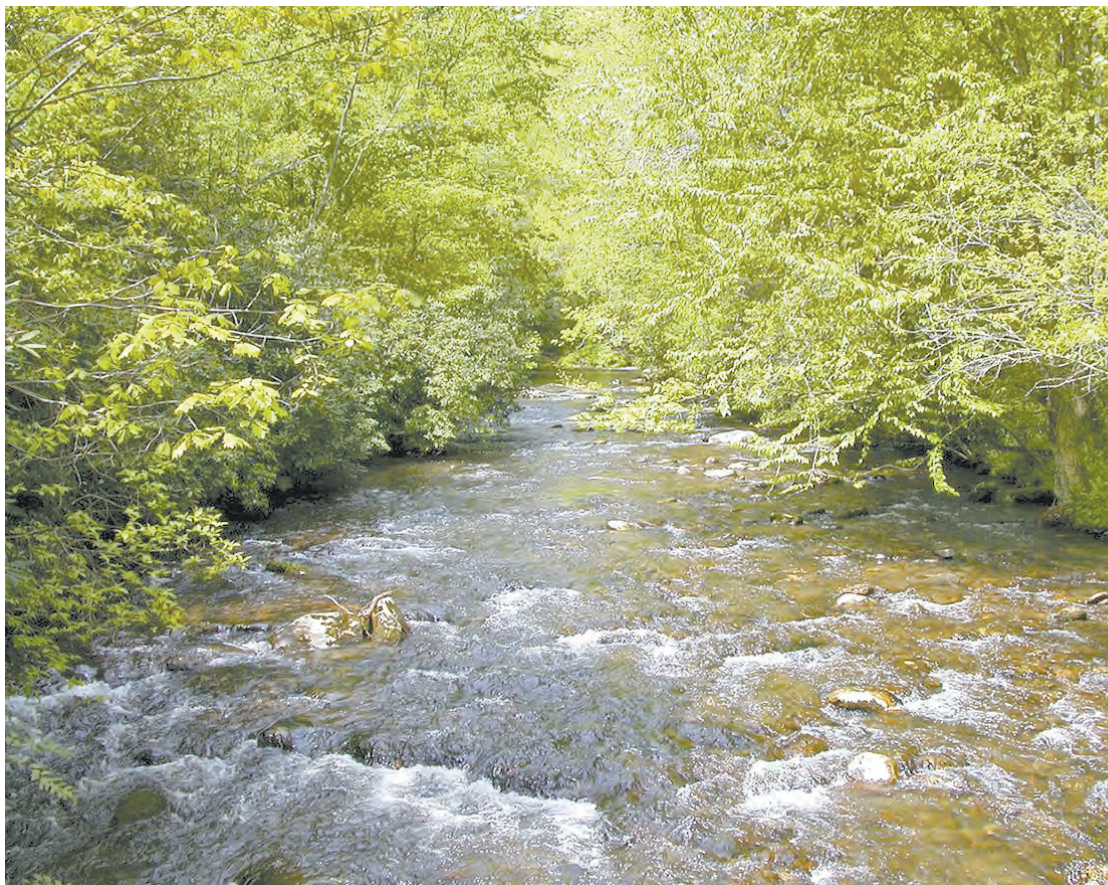
**Nymphs.** Nymph patterns can be fished all day, but they require more skill and patience than dry flies. Strikes can be subtle and difficult to detect unless you've done a lot of nymph fishing. Sometimes a strike will be little more than a slight hesitation of the leader. If your nymph fishing is limited, use a commercial strike indicator and attach it to the leader 2 to 3 feet above the fly. A piece of yarn or patch of cotton attached to the leader works just as well as a commercial strike indicator. Watch the indicator as it floats. If it hesitates or moves to one side or the other, raise the tip of your rod. You've likely had a strike.

## DO DOUBLE DUTY

Dry flies also make excellent strike indicators, and they give you an extra edge in the water. Sometimes, a trout will hit the dry fly instead of the nymph. When using a dry fly as a strike indicator, use a section of leader and tie the nymph onto the shank of the main hook and use the nymph as a dropper. If the stream is

shallow, the dropper should hang about six inches below the dry fly; 12 inches for deeper water. The nymph should be small enough that it doesn't drag the dry fly down. If you're using a No. 14 or No. 16 nymph, for example, use a No. 12 or larger dry fly.

In late summer, a yellow Stimulator or other attractor pattern makes an excellent strike indicator. Suggested nymph



the sizes closest to the natural thing: a No. 12 up to a No. 10 or No. 8. To get terrestrials such as an inchworm down deep, use a bead-head or tie on extra weight to the leader just above the fly.

Spinning lures such as Rooster Tail, Mepps, Panther Martin and Joe's Flies all work well for summer fishing. Use smaller lures, 1/16- to 1/8-ounce, in small streams, 1/4-ounce for larger streams.

Streams with heavy cover, like this section of Noland Creek in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, are the best places to fish for trout during hot weather.

patterns for this time of the year are Secret Weapon, Sheep Fly, Pheasant Tail (nymph or emerger), yellow Tellico, and Stone Fly.

**Terrestrials.** The ubiquitous bugs of summer — ants, beetles, crickets, grasshoppers, caterpillars, inchworms and bees — provide a constant and substantial food source for trout. Terrestrials can be fished up until the first frost, and they can be fished either wet or dry. Terrestrials usually drop or land in the water with a slight plop, so presentation isn't a critical factor. Fish them close to banks, around bushes, and anywhere where grass grows along the stream. Fish

One effective way to work a spinner is to stand in the middle of a stream and cast in quarter sections, covering as much water as possible. Let the lure sink, then began a slow, steady retrieve. Alternating between a slow and fast retrieve will often cause a trout to strike. ■

Normally a bluewater, offshore fish, mahi mahi, aka dolphin, venture closer to shore when summer waters heat up.



# Sportsman FISHING HOTSPOTS

## NEARSHORE MAHI INVADE CAPE FEAR

Warmer waters bring bluewater predator closer to shore, in range of more anglers

**M**ahi mahi, aka dolphin, are one of the most-popular fish in the ocean, very tasty and extremely fun to catch.

Another factor boosting their popularity is that when offshore waters warm during summer, they break away from the Gulf Stream and follow bait schools much closer to land. This brings them within range of more fishermen, and any day that includes a mahi or two in the fish box is special.

The waters around North Carolina's Frying Pan Shoals are time-tested to hold a variety of fish, and mahi are one of the favorites. The nearshore water tends to be cleaner on the eastern side of the shoals, which includes Wrightsville Beach and Carolina Beach, and mahi often venture closer to land in the cleaner water. However, they are also on the western or Southport side of the shoals, but typically a few miles farther offshore.

Capt. Rod Bierstedt, who runs On My

Way Charters ([www.OnMyWay.com](http://www.OnMyWay.com)) out of Carolina Beach, N.C., catches a lot of mahi in these waters. He said when the water warms during summer, mahi move closer in, and he catches them several different ways. Some days, he targets them, and some days they are incidental to catching bottomfish or trolling for king mackerel. Mahi are almost always feeding and will usually bite when found.

"The work for catching them begins the night before by searching seawater thermal charts for eddies, rips and areas rich in chlorophyll," Bierstedt said. "Once we get there, we put out a trolling spread of small ballyhoo, some naked and some rigged behind small lures like the Moldcraft chuggers and Blue Water Candy king skirts. We also use teasers and spreader bars to get their attention.

"Mahi are not just surface feeders, so we troll at least one deep line that might be a Rapala swim lure or another rigged

ballyhoo. Trolling at 5½ to 6 knots allows us to cover water quickly to find the hot spot that morning.

"We also catch a lot of mahi while slow-trolling for kings," Bierstedt said. "They are aggressive feeders and will hit live baits, cigar minnows and more. Always use your downriggers and don't be surprised to catch mahi on them. We also keep a light line out, with other baits ready to cast, when bottom-fishing. It creates a chum line, and curious mahi will swim up to see what's happening."

Bierstedt said to check out any floating object. Mahi are attracted to buoys, boards, balloons and just about anything else floating along on the surface.

Summer mahi move to within sight of the beach at times and this puts them within range of many fishermen. Grilled mahi mahi tastes even better when you caught it just a few hours earlier. ■

— Jerry Dilsaver

# TARGET FLATHEADS

## on Norman around schools of bait, perch

**G**uide Gus Gustafson said if fishermen want to catch big cats weighing 15 pounds or more during summer, they should visit Lake Norman, a North Carolina stronghold for flathead and blue cats.

Gustafson ([www.fishingwithgus.com](http://www.fishingwithgus.com)) said while flatheads can exceed 50 pounds — as can blue cats — they bite much better through summer than more cold-natured blues, which makes flatheads the preferred species for July fishing.

Another distinguishing feature is that flatheads are aggressive predators that rely more upon sight than smell to feed, a factor that Gustafson takes advantage of while targeting them.

"Flatheads prefer live bait — white perch, bream, shad and herring — while blues prefer cut baits," Gustafson said. "That doesn't mean flatheads won't dine on large strips of cut bait if they are fished a few feet off the bottom where they can see them."

For really big flatheads, Gustafson said many anglers use live goldfish, buying the baits at pet stores if they can't find them at bait shops.

Gustafson has caught three flatheads weighing almost 60 pounds each, but he said the average

Lake Norman flathead weighs from 15 to 25 pounds.

Although flatheads may be huge, that doesn't mean they're easy to find, especially in Norman's 32, 510 acres. Gustafson uses his electronics, beginning his searches in Mountain and Stumpy creeks and the Duke Power State Park area, targeting creek channel edges in 15 to 20 feet of water.

"I don't look for catfish on my side-scan unit; I look for large schools of white perch, which are abundant and easier to find," he said. "I know if I find suspended white perch gorging on shad, big flatheads will be below them feasting upon the scraps."

After locating the fish, Gustafson anchors and lowers either live white perch or strips of white perch to the feeding cats. Some fishermen opt to slow-troll or drift through the area.

Big fish dictate stout tackle. Gustafson uses medium-heavy to heavy action 7-foot rods and ABU 6500 clicker reels holding 30-pound line connected to 15-foot leaders of 50 to 80-pound line, featuring No. 5/0 to 7/0 wide-gap circle hooks.

"A small hook won't go over the jawbone of a big flathead; that's why big hooks are needed," said Gustafson.

Fishermen unaccustomed to fighting big fish try to crank in flatheads, a bad mistake.

"With fish that size, you need a pump-and-pause retrieve to get the fish to the net," said Gustafson. ■

— Tony Garitta



Guide Gus Gustafson put Brandy Bailey on this hefty Lake Norman flathead catfish.

# NEARSHORE REEFS

## out of Murrells Inlet hold plenty of flounder

**C**reeks and sounds produce good fishing all year for a wide variety of finned favorites, but the summer heat can make the inshore bite wane for certain species, including the flounder that many coastal anglers covet.

Hotter weather brings diehard flounder anglers out of the estuaries and off the white, sandy beaches, and the waters off South Carolina's Murrells Inlet are a choice spot for those fishermen.

In Murrells Inlet, the inshore flounder bite takes off in April, peaks around the first of June and quickly falls off as the rising water temperatures shift the better bite into the ocean.

Because of an abundance of nearshore reefs and other structures outside of Murrells Inlet, anglers in small boats have ample opportunities to find places to target doormat-size flatties. Livebottoms, reefs and ledges become the summer haunts for flounder and ground zero for anglers. Justin Whitten of Ambush Fishing Charters keeps his clients in steady flounder action within a short ride from the Murrells Inlet jetties.

"The hotter temperatures push flounder into nearshore places around structure," said Whitten (843-685-9910). "Doesn't matter what kind of structure, either. Ledges, live bottom, wrecks, and reefs...any kind of structure will hold flounder in summer.

"Flounder are schooled up at the reefs and can be quite aggressive. The water is cleaner, and they will eat about anything that comes by."

Flounder eat a wide assortment of forage species, including small fish and shrimp. Whitten generally fishes live bait for ocean flounder, sinking it to the bottom with a standard Carolina rig.

"Any kind of live bait will work," he said. "I usually bring mullet, menhaden or mud minnows, but cut bait will also catch flounder. It makes no difference. They will eat just about anything you drop down there. The flounder are more aggressive at the reefs as opposed to inshore. There are tons of sea bass out there and with the extra competition, they eat the baits quicker."

Whitten's Carolina rig consists of an egg sinker between  $\frac{3}{4}$ - and  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -ounce, a No. 2 to 1/0 J-hook and a 12-inch mono or fluorocarbon leader tied to a barrel swivel below the weight. He will use heavier sinkers to make sure larger baits get to the bottom.

According to Whitten, flounder will typically concentrate around the structure, but they can also be just away from the structure on the perimeter, lying along the sandy sea floor. He will anchor up on top of the structure and fan-cast away from the structure, retrieving his bait back towards the boat.

"We have more numbers of bigger fish off the reefs in the summer; a 5- to 7-pound average is common," he said. ■

— Jeff Bursleson



Guide Justin Whitten turns his flounder-fishing attention to nearshore ocean structure out of Murrells Inlet.

Justin Whitten

# FLATHEADS AFTER HOURS

Early mornings, after dark can bring big Lake Wylie up to feed.

Jeff Taylor of Rock Hill, S.C., shows off a nice flathead catfish taken at Lake Wylie.

Located in the middle of the Rock Hill-Charlotte megalopolis, Lake Wylie is a wide-open lake, filled with recreational boats during summer, so in July and August, catfish guide Rodger Taylor usually fishes at night after the water skiers are gone and temperatures are more bearable.

His target species most nights is flathead catfish, and a good night can produce three to five fish, normally in the 15- to 25-pound range, he said, noting that some flatheads grow much bigger, so the opportunity for a trophy catfish is always possible.

"Growing to sizes in excess of 50 pounds, Wylie flatheads are very formidable, even on heavy catfish tackle," said Taylor, of Catfish On! Guide Service (803-517-7828).

Flatheads are so well established, Taylor said, that you are subject to catch one in the main lake just as easily as are in the river section, but most serious fishermen will concentrate on the river because of its cover, structure and good water flow.

"I like to start before dark, set up on a likely spot and put out multiple rods with live and cut bait. You will probably will get some blue cats too, and that is a bonus. Flatheads are not caught in the numbers that blues are," he said.

Early morning is another good time to fish for flatheads in the heat, Taylor said.

"I like to start days in the summer around 5 a.m., then get off the water by 10 a.m.," he said, leaving the 13,400-acre lake to the pleasure boaters.

Drifting is an effective alternative to anchoring from July through September, he said, noting that flatheads often locate near vertical changes in the bottom such as river ledges, confluences and creek mouths. They often will be just sitting on the flat near the channel drop.

Top baits include bream, white perch and gizzard shad, all readily available in Wylie, he said.



Rodger Taylor

"I like to snip part of the tail fin on large, live offerings. This causes the fish to move erratically, and it's less likely to pull your rig around," said Taylor, who also cuts up pieces of gizzard shad that run to as big as 12 inches — so a cut piece including head may be several inches long.

"I once believed that the best bait for flatheads was live bait, but cut bait drifted or trolled is an excellent way to hook up with flatheads. This technique in July often produces the bigger numbers of fish," he said. "I do prefer live bait, but like other species of catfish, flatheads will not turn down fresh cut bait. Gizzard shad are bloody, muddy and very oily. They put off a lot of smell in moving water. You may also hook up with a big blue when fishing a large piece of gizzard shad." ■

— Pat Robertson

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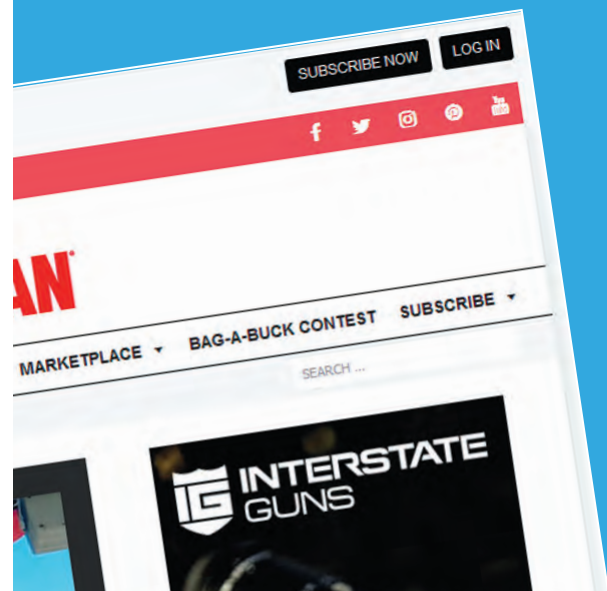
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