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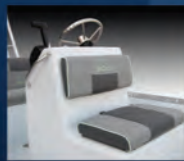


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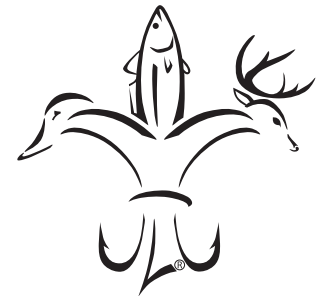
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**21**  
PUBLIC OFFERINGS

**47**

TIPS FOR  
SUMMER STRIPERS



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**Volume 27 | No 8**

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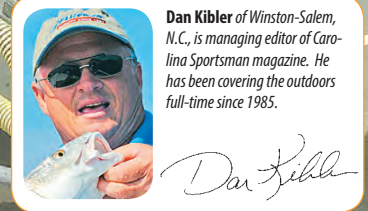
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# Outdoor UPDATE

with  
Dan Kibler

In early June, biologists with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission stocked more than 134,000 largemouth bass fingerlings in the NE Cape Fear River to bolster the population decimated by Hurricane Florence in 2018.



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

*Dan Kibler*

## BAG-A-BUCK CONTEST IS BACK!

### MONTHLY AND GRAND PRIZES OFFERED FOR PHOTOS OF YOUR 2020 DEER

The annual Bag-A-Buck contest has returned to *Carolina Sportsman* for another deer season, offering monthly prizes and a grand prize at the end of the 4½-month contest.

The contest, run through [www.carolinasportsman.com](http://www.carolinasportsman.com), offers sportsmen and sportswomen a chance to post photos of deer they killed during the 2020-21 season on the magazine's website, with a short description of the hunt, for a chance at prizes.

All subscribers to *Carolina Sportsman* are eligible for the contest, which is

divided into four monthly contests (August-September, October, November and December) with prizes that include a \$25 gift certificate to the online Sportsman's Store and a free, one-year subscription to the *Sportsman*. Monthly winners will be announced monthly in the *Sportsman* and on [CarolinaSportsman.com](http://CarolinaSportsman.com).

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

The rules are simple. Subscribe to *Carolina Sportsman*. Take a photo of yourself with a deer you kill during the 2020-21 season, upload the photo to the Bag-a-Buck contest forum on [www.CarolinaSportsman.com](http://www.CarolinaSportsman.com), and write a short account of your hunt, including the date and county of the kill, your name and hometown. You can enter multiple times, with multiple deer, as long as they are legal kills in your state of residence or in the Carolinas.

Winners will be drawn at the end of each month, and the grand-prize winner will be drawn and announced in the March 2020 issue of *Carolina Sportsman*.

The contest will begin on Aug. 15, opening day of deer season in portions of South Carolina.

Preston Scott of Simpsonville, S.C., won the grand prize in last year's Bag-A-Buck contest for his entry of a buck he killed Oct. 11, 2019, in Spartanburg County. ■



Preston Scott of Simpsonville, S.C., won the grand prize in last year's Bag-A-Buck contest for his entry of a buck he killed last Oct. 11, in Spartanburg County.

## NCWRC GETS NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission at its June meeting named Cameron “Cam” Ingram, a major in its Law Enforcement Division, as executive director of the agency, replacing Gordon Myers, who is retiring after 12 years in the position.

Ingram, 47, has been with the Commission since 1997. He has been serving as Major of Field Operations.

“Given Cam’s decades of experience in various leadership roles at the Wildlife Commission, I am confident he will continue to lead the agency in a positive direction,” said David Hoyle Jr., chairman of the Commission, the 19-member governing board for the agency.”

Ingram is a graduate of East Carolina University where he earned a degree in Parks and Recreation with a concentration in Natural Resource Management.

As executive director, Ingram will oversee a statewide agency of six divisions, 650 permanent employees and an annual operating budget of approximately \$89 million. Agency operations include maintaining more than 2 million acres of public lands for hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation; operating six fish hatcheries for stocking public waters; maintaining eight shooting ranges; providing hundreds of free boating access areas and publicly-accessible places to fish on more than 100 different bodies of water; operating three education centers; and offering free hunter education and recreational boating safety courses. ■



Cam Ingram

## SHARK FISHERMEN, MEET CIRCLE HOOKS

Recreational anglers in North Carolina are now required to use circle hooks when fishing for sharks with natural bait in state waters after a June 22 regulation change.

The requirement pertains to all recreational fishing (including possession) using a hook-and-line with natural bait for any shark species, except spiny dogfish, regardless of the tackle and lure configuration. The circle hooks must be non-offset and made of a non-stainless-steel material.

A non-offset (also called inline) circle hook is a hook with the point pointed perpendicularly back towards the shank, with the point and barb in the same plane as the shank. Offset circle hooks and stainless-steel circle hooks are not allowed for shark fishing.

Natural bait is any living or dead organism or part of an organism.

The circle hook requirement complies with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s Coastal Sharks Fishery Management Plan and is designed to minimize harm to sharks that are released after being caught.

State coastal waters include coastal rivers, sounds, and the ocean out to 3 miles from shore. The circle hook requirement is already in place in federal ocean waters (3 miles to 200 miles from shore). ■



## SC SKIPJACK TUNA RECORD FALLS

Lilli Kirkland expected to hook up with a dolphin when her father saw a school of fish at the surface on a trip offshore out of Charleston, S.C., on June 3.

“My dad was up on the fly bridge, and what looked like dolphins were all over the top of the water,” she said. “I picked up a rod and I let some of the line out. And next thing you know, I had a fish on.”

Boated 30 minutes later, the fish weighed 28½ pounds. But instead of being a dolphin, it was the South Carolina state-record skipjack tuna — by more than 2 pounds.

Kirkland, from James Island, caught the fish on a blue/white llander with a ballyhoo trailer. Fishing with her family and Bubby Simmons, the big tuna hit about 105 miles from Charleston

“We knew it was big, but we didn’t really know how big it was, so we just didn’t really worry about it,” she said. “Then, we got back to the dock and looked up the state record, and it was 25 pounds.”

The Kirklands kept the fish on ice overnight after returning to port, and the next morning, the fish bottomed out their scale, which weighed up to 25 pounds. Later, on a set of certified scales at Haddrell’s Point Tackle, the fish weighed 28 pounds, 8 ounces.

“They told us we needed to take it to the DNR,” Kirkland said, so



Lilli Kirkland’s 28½-pound skipjack tuna, caught June 3 out of Charleston, S.C. is likely to be certified as South Carolina’s new state-record fish.

the fish sent to the S.C. Department of Natural Resources’ marine headquarters on James Island, where officials measured the fish and began the paperwork to certify it as the new state record, breaking one set in 1986 by D.L. Stubbs, who also caught his 25-pound, 14-ounce fish, out of Charleston. ■

— Brian Cope

# NC HUNTERS SET RECORD

## TURKEY HARVEST BREAKS ALL-TIME RECORD BY MORE THAN 4,000

**T**he COVID-19 pandemic may have played a role in the all-time record harvest of wild turkeys that North Carolina hunters produced this past spring.

Biologists with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission released harvest data in early June, a month after the end of the 5-week season. Hunters reported 23,341 birds, breaking, no, destroying the previous record of 18,919 turkeys taken in 2017.

Chris Kreh, the Commission's wild-turkey project leader, said most of the big jump in harvest is likely do to statewide "stay-at-home" orders associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. That gave hunters, especially young ones, more time to hunt, and they apparently took advantage. The harvest during the week-long youth-only season increased by 110% over 2019, and harvest in every region of the state increased.

"Our estimates of hunting pressure come from a mail-in survey, so we will not have exact figures for the 2020 season for quite some time," Kreh said. "However, many hunters were telling us that pressure was up considerably this year, especially on game lands."

The top five counties in terms of total harvest were: Duplin, 686; Bladen, 571; Columbus, 539; Pender, 532; and Franklin, 516. In terms of the harvest per square mile, the top counties were: Franklin, Rockingham, Duplin, Stokes and Caswell.



North Carolina hunters crushed the wild turkey harvest record with a tremendous spring season in 2020, with more than 23,000 turkeys taken.

Andrew Kibler

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The Commission reported that the harvest was up 14% in the mountains, 26% in the Piedmont and 37% in the Coastal region. Jakes comprised 20% of the harvest, compared to an average of 12% to 15% in most seasons.

"Our turkey population is very robust, and in most areas, it can handle this additional harvest and hunting pressure quite well," Kreh said. ■

### TOP NC COUNTIES 2020 WILD TURKEY HARVEST

County	Harvest
1. Duplin	686
2. Bladen	571
3. Columbus	539
4. Pender	532
5. Franklin	516
6. Rockingham	480
7. Halifax	467
8. Onslow	447
9. Sampson	446
10. Bertie	434

Outdoor  
**UPDATE**

Jeanine Botkin's 3-pound, 5-ounce whiting is a potential state- and world-record for the species. It was caught May 24 in the surf near Avon, N.C.



Frank & Fran's

# OBX STRIKES AGAIN

TWO POTENTIAL RECORD FISH CAUGHT WITHIN TWO DAYS IN MAY

**N**orth Carolina's Outer Banks may have produced two more state-record fish, one a potential world record, in a period of two days in late May.

On May 24, Jeanine Davidson Botkin of Mt. Sidney, Va., caught a 3-pound, 5-ounce southern kingfish, aka whiting or sea mullet, in the surf at Ramp 38 near Avon. That fish would break the existing state record and world record — which was caught earlier this spring in the surf at Ramp 34 in Avon by Brett Jordan of Florence, S.C. — by four ounces. Botkin's huge whiting, 21 inches long, hit a sand flea-flavored Fish Bite.

Two days later, Todd "Harry" Elder of Virginia Beach, Va., landed a huge permit on live bait in the waters near Hatteras. On scales later that day at Ocean's East Bait & Tackle in Nags Head, the fish weighed 24 pounds, 4 ounces.

North Carolina has no listed state record for permit, a prized tropical fish that's a member of the pompano family, so the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries will have to determine whether or not to establish a record category for permit.

Virginia, South Carolina and Georgia do not recognize state records for permit. Florida's state-record permit weighs 56 pounds, but Alabama recognizes a 3-pound, 12-ounce permit as its state record, Mississippi's state record checks in at 9 pounds and Louisiana's state-record is 5 pounds. ■

Todd Elder has applied to have his 24-pound, 4-ounce permit, caught May 26 near Hatteras, N.C., as North Carolina's first state record for the species.



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# SC: EXPECT GOOD DEER SEASON

## STATEWIDE HERD STABLE, SCDNR BIOLOGIST SAYS

**W**hen South Carolina's deer hunters take to the woods in many parts of the state this month, they shouldn't expect to see a lot more or a lot fewer whitetails.

But according to Charles Ruth, the deer project leader for the S.C. Department of Natural Resources, they should enjoy things as they are.

"If you look at the deer harvest over the past five or six years, the good ol' days are right now," Ruth said. "I think we're in a much better position with our deer numbers. We didn't need what we had 20 years ago.

"We went through a period of time after the turn of the century when we had about 15 years of steady decline (in harvest), and harvest is a function of population," he said. "Now, we've reached a little more stability. And give hunters a lot of credit. They understood that you can't have a lot of deer and good deer at the same time."

Ruth expects South Carolina's harvest this fall, barring some unexpected, far-reaching weather event, to be somewhere in the neighborhood of the 193,073 deer reported in the 2019 season. That was a decrease of 1% over 2018's harvest, and those kinds of numbers make Ruth feel very good about the statewide deer herd.

"Last year's harvest was eerily similar to the year before," Ruth said. "I think, overall, we've seen somewhat of an uptick since the new regulations (tagging and bag limit) went into effect in 2017. Most of that uptick has been on the antlerless side than the antlered side, and I'd like to think that's showing that the limits and tagging have been having the desired effect, taking pressure off bucks.

"It looks a lot like cause-and-effect. Even though the population and harvest is off 30% to 40% from the record, we're in a much better place."

Ruth said that record harvests topped out in 2002, a time when he said South Carolina had far too many deer — and not too many big ones. Then, the population and harvest numbers, for whatever reason, started on its downward trend.

"We went through a period from about 2008 through 2013 when a lot of hunters were talking about not seeing as many deer as they were used to seeing, but we're not hearing that anymore. Hunters wanted to sacrifice quantity for quality."

South Carolina's all-time deer record book entries point way back in the 1980s and 1990s for the best years, percentage-wise, for taking big bucks that qualified with a Boone & Crockett Club score of at least 125 (typical). Ruth said the state is heading back in that direction.

"We have been getting more record-book entries that are making the list annually," he said. "If you compare the entries with the number of bucks killed, one out of about every 800 bucks killed is making the list, and that's as good as it's been."

Ruth said the changes in herd size and harvest numbers have been



Deer season opens in two of South Carolina's four game zones on Aug. 15. Hunters killed more than 193,000 whitetails in the Palmetto State in 2019.

### SOUTH CAROLINA 2020-21 DEER SEASONS

- **Game Zone 1: Primitive weapons, Oct. 1-10; Gun, Oct. 11-Jan. 1. Youth day: Sept. 28.**
- **Game Zone 2: Archery, Sept 15-30; Primitive weapons, Oct. 1-10; Gun, Oct. 11-Jan. 1. Youth day, Sept. 14.**
- **Game Zone 3: Archery & Gun, Aug. 15-Jan. 1. Youth day: Aug. 10.**
- **Game Zone 4: Archery Aug. 15-31; Gun, Sept. 1-Jan. 1. Youth day: Aug. 10**

more or less statewide, with very few localized or regional differences.

"The past few years, we've had some concerns about a harvest drop-off in some of our coastal counties, but we think some of that is relative to access

— properties being flooded where there was no hunting, but it's very short-term."

Ruth said that the number of coyotes being killed in South Carolina has decreased along with the deer population after a high point in 2014. The coyote harvest fell 9% last year from 2018 levels and is 34% lower five years prior.

"What I tell people about deer and turkey, you can throw coyote in there," he said. "If you look at the harvest of coyotes and deer, there is a direct correlation. When deer and turkeys increase, coyotes increase. Maybe past of the uptick in the number of deer harvest is because there are fewer coyotes out there. ■

# FLOUNDER REOPENS

NORTH CAROLINA ANGLERS CAN KEEP FLATTIES FOR 6 WEEKS, STARTING AUG. 16

**N**orth Carolina anglers will finally get a chance to keep some flounder this year — for 6 weeks — when the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries opens an Aug. 16-Sept. 30 recreational season, ending more than 11 months of closure.

NCDMF closed the recreational flounder season and restricted the commercial season last Aug. 28 by approving recommendations designed to end overfishing and help replenish overfished stocks of southern flounder in North Carolina waters. The recreational season was closed last Sept. 4 to reduce the 2019 recreational catch by 62%, and no flounder are to be kept in state waters, except during the 6-week season, to reduce the 2020 recreational catch by 72%.

Federal fisheries managers have reported for several years that southern flounder are overfished and being overfished across the South Atlantic area.

Anglers will be allowed to keep four flounder per day during the 6-week season. All flounder kept must be at least 15 inches long. The season will close again on Sept. 30 and remain closed until NCDMF announces any plans to reopen it for 2021. ■

Fishing with Butch Foster of Yeah Right Charters, Rusty Orrell of Linwood, N.C., caught this nice flounder near Southport, N.C., in June 2019, several months before North Carolina closed its flounder season, which reopens this month for six weeks.



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# Hunting/Fishing SCRAPBOOK



**Gina Morgan**

Gina Morgan caught this nice bass in a small pond in Gold Hill, N.C. last fall.



**Will Scott**

Will Scott of Simpsonville, S.C., caught and released this 28-pound striper at Clarks Hall Lake on March 28.



**Wesley Stewart**

Wesley Stewart killed this nice doe last season, hunting with his father in Lancaster County, S.C.



**Graham Jones**

Graham Jones, 6, of Winston-Salem, N.C., caught this 4½-pound striper on May 25 in the Pamlico River.



**Mason Creech**

Mason Creech shows off a drake mallard taken on a Nov. 23, 2019 hunt near Zebulon, N.C., with his father, Anthony Creech.

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**Eli Herman**

Eli Herman killed this nice 8-point buck on Nov 30, 2019, in Henderson County, N.C. — his first with a rifle.



**Wayne Tierney**

Wayne Tierney caught this 12-pound redfish on May 25 in the Cape Fear River, fishing with Mungo Fishing Charters.

# MAN WITH A PLAN

■ By Jeff Burleson

**BE THAT HUNTER WHO KNOWS  
WHAT HE WANTS TO SHOOT  
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WHAT FACTORS SHOULD BE  
PART OF YOUR DECISION.**

# HUNTING IS A POPULAR OUTDOOR SPORT IN THE UNITED STATES.

While many of the winged variants are quite popular across the country, the white-tailed deer overwhelmingly interests hunters more than any other furred or feathered creature.

## HUNTERS IN THE CAROLINAS ARE NO DIFFERENT.

Deer are a highly sought-after game animal here, and with deer season on the horizon, hunters mindful of management objectives should develop a harvest plan long before the first few minutes of shooting light arrives.

Managing deer is something that begins on a state level, trickling down to the tract level. States' wildlife agencies must track population trends, hunter satisfaction and herd stability in order to make recommendations for bag limits and seasonal opening and closures. Hunters obviously need plenty of deer to hunt, but a combination of a healthy deer population and suitable habitat is mandatory to support a healthy balance. State agencies monitor wildlife populations in order to sustain a healthy and harvestable population of animals.

Typically, regulations are most-often geared towards population sustainability, with a reasonable emphasis on sex ratio, which is primarily monitored for population control. Hunters on the local level are more apt to control their resident populations to produce bigger and better deer, preferably heavy bucks with oversized antlers.

The recipe for a trophy buck has three ingredients: supreme nutrition, adequate genetics and maturity. Land managers can improve habitat and provide supplemental nutrients to improve a buck's dietary intake. Genetics is something that is difficult to fully control, but maturity is the easiest aspect to manage. The greatest impact hunters can have on a deer population is through their trigger fingers.

Harvesting deer can directly impact the sex ratio, age structure and overall population of animals on the farm, and harvesting indirectly affects the quality and abundance of habitat, including food and cover that is a critical segment of the management system.

R.J. Seiler, from Stokesdale, N.C., is not new to deer hunting or to taking mature bucks. He has hunted deer for 27 years, but he didn't start incorporating management tactics until 10 years ago on his land in Rockingham County, one of North Carolina's top trophy producing counties.

"A few years, after I put management practices into effect, I consistently started killing bucks in the mid-130s or better as a result," Seiler said. "My best deer is a 155-inch, main-frame 8-pointer with six kickers from 2015 that I killed with my bow."

Seiler maintains mineral sites and quality food plots of clover and oats across his properties, and he limits the number of bucks he takes by the state-mandated limit of two. But before he releases on a buck, it must meet his maturity level.

"I try not to shoot a buck unless he's at least 4½ years old, with at least 8 points and at least 160 pounds live weight," he said. "I look for a sagging belly, loose brisket, roman nose and other features characteristic of a mature deer. I definitely try to leave the 2½- to 3½-year-old bucks alone to see what they turn into."

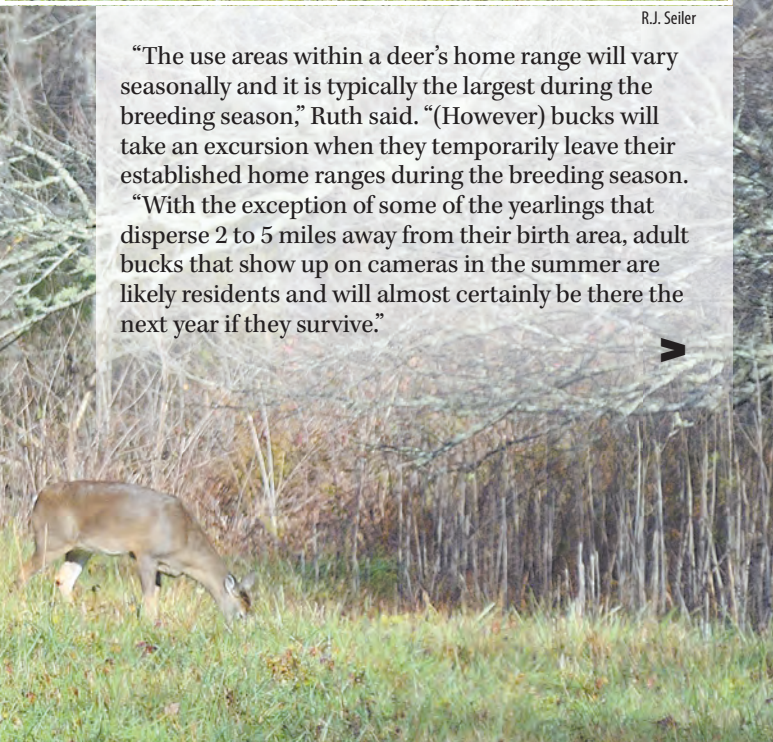
• **BELOW:** R.J. Seiler's efforts to manage the deer herd on his hunting land has resulted in him killing much bigger bucks, on average. **ACROSS SPREAD:** Managing the doe population is as important a tool in ensuring herd health as managing bucks.

Charles Ruth, the deer-project supervisor for the S.C. Department of Natural Resources, agrees with Seiler's sentiment. According to Ruth, adult bucks 2½ years and older are mostly considered residents of a specified home range and will not generally leave it except for a brief episode during the rut.



R.J. Seiler

“The use areas within a deer’s home range will vary seasonally and it is typically the largest during the breeding season,” Ruth said. “(However) bucks will take an excursion when they temporarily leave their established home ranges during the breeding season. “With the exception of some of the yearlings that disperse 2 to 5 miles away from their birth area, adult bucks that show up on cameras in the summer are likely residents and will almost certainly be there the next year if they survive.”



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**T**here are no guarantees yearling bucks will remain on the property for the next season, but bucks 2½ years and older that show up on camera in summer are highly likely to remain on the property, if not killed during their brief excursions to other areas. Passing up 2½- and 3½-year-old bucks can be a beneficial management tool for hunters looking to maximize their opportunity to shoot a trophy buck.

Seiler hunts approximately 500 acres on eight different properties. Because North Carolina allows hunters to take two bucks, many of the bucks on his properties get a pass and get the opportunity to grow and mature. Regardless of how big a buck's antlers measure out to be, allowing bucks to reach 4½ years of age will guarantee a mature animal. Passing up subordinate bucks can be a real bonus for growing trophy bucks ready for harvest the next year.

"In a great year, I'll get to fill both buck tags with mature deer, and sometimes, it may even happen on the same property. I am OK with that, because they are tough to kill as it is," he said.

Seiler runs multiple trail cameras on each property before the season to develop a hit list based on the two most-mature bucks on his eight properties. Preseason camera surveys are a critical component to developing harvest plans for the season and should be part of every hunter's preseason planning activities.

**“On a great year, I'll get to fill both buck tags with mature deer, and sometimes, it may even happen on the same property.”**

In both Carolinas, buck and doe tags provide a method to control harvests by sex and quantity, but most hunters will fine-tune their harvest selections based on a more-specific guideline, whether by antler size, antler configuration, and the approximate age of deer.

If hunters want to take more deer to the taxidermist, a management directive should be developed and carried out to reach those objectives before the season arrives. ■

**TARGET DOES EARLY >**

- Having multiple trail cameras out on a tract of land
- enables hunters to identify which bucks they want to
- shoot in the upcoming season.



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



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# TARGET DOES EARLY

Every deer-management program should include doe harvests. While not as fulfilling to some, they are necessary parts of every program. Does must be harvested every season in order to make necessary reductions in the population, but when should hunters target does, early or late in the season?

According to Charles Ruth, deer-project supervisor for the S.C. Department of Natural Resources, early doe harvests are preferable and most beneficial for the herd.

"I have always encouraged does to be harvested as early in the season as possible, because several positive effects may occur," he said. "A better buck-to-doe ratio will increase competition among bucks for receptive does, and more competition will produce more action for hunters. Also, why let bucks expend additional energy courting and breeding does that will be eventually harvested? Last, removing does early will allow the residual deer to have more food resources available than the does harvested late in the season would have consumed."

Another drawback of taking does later in the season is the misidentification of large fawns or button bucks perceived as does.

"Late in the season, fawns are fairly large and invariably get mistaken for does," Ruth said. "Button bucks seem to be particularly



Jeff Burleson

Does should be targeted early in the season for a handful of management reasons.

vulnerable probably because they are larger than doe fawns and seem to be more inclined to run out to a food plot or bait pile.

"The bottom line is, if you wait to harvest does until late in the season, don't be disappointed if you end up killing some fawns, particularly button bucks."

Shooting does early in the season is not always preferred by deer hunters when a hit-list buck is on the radar. But if a sustainable and healthy population is part of the management objectives, does should be targeted early, long before the breeding season takes off. ■

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SOUTH CAROLINA PROVIDES HUNTERS WITH TREMENDOUS OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC HUNTING ACROSS ITS 46 COUNTIES. HERE ARE A FEW OF THE BEST, FOR DIFFERENT KINDS OF HUNTS: DEER, TURKEY, WATERFOWL, SMALL GAME.

By Terry Madewell

# PUBLIC OFFERINGS

# FOR DEER, TURKEYS FOLLOW THESE TRACKS

WMAs for deer and turkey hunting are found in various shapes, sizes and management schemes. Charles Ruth, SCDNR's deer and turkey program coordinator, said his choices on deer and turkey for 2020 actually are the same WMAs, but for different reasons.

## WEBB CENTER, PALACHUCOLA, HAMILTON RIDGE

Ruth lumps these three Hampton County WMAs into one unit for both species because of proximity; they're all located close to each other on the Savannah River.

"The Webb Center is a standalone deer draw hunt, while Hamilton Ridge and Palachucola are part of a multiple-site application process for gun hunting for deer," Ruth said. "The Webb Center is standalone because it's the premier deer draw hunt in the state. I refer to it as the 'poor man's commercial hunt' because it's a completely catered hunt for those drawn. The Webb Center offers a high success rate, and some big deer are harvested."

Ruth said hunters can apply for the Webb Center hunts at [www.dnr.sc.gov](http://www.dnr.sc.gov). The opportunities at Hamilton Ridge and Palachucola include open hunting for archery season at these tracts without a draw process.

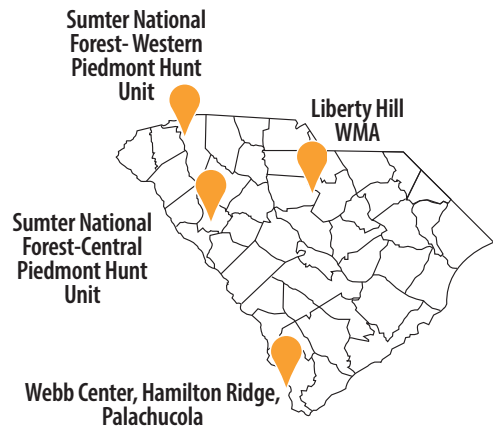
"These areas offer excellent archery hunting for deer," Ruth said. "Archery hunters have the opportunity to hunt these deer first, before they're pressured. With appropriate effort, the potential for success is very good."

Hunters have to be drawn for gun season at Hamilton Ridge and Palachucola, and they're on their own to scout and hunt. Permanent stands are not allowed, but details are provided in the WMA regulations for the use of stands on WMAs. Ruth said the use of climbers, ground blinds and lock-on stands are examples of what can be used on WMAs.

"I include the Webb, Hamilton Ridge and Palachucola tracts as the prime WMA turkey hunting experience in the Lowcountry," Ruth said. "They're all open during the same period as private-land hunting, except for Sundays. The management plan for these areas, particular the Webb Center, is ideal for turkeys, with thinning and prescribed burning practices. Plus, being adjacent to the Savannah River, much of this land is ideal habitat."

## SUMTER NATIONAL FOREST

"This is a large area, encompassing over 200,000 acres, but one difference when considering various areas around the state is



that within the coastal plain, multiple, named WMAs exist," Ruth said. "That's not always the case in the rest of the state."

"For deer and turkey hunters, this situation is excellent because this WMA is not one contiguous tract; it's interspersed with private lands throughout," he said. "This type of land use creates habitat diversity, which is good for game populations on both WMA and private lands. Plus, with the exception of Sundays for WMAs, the hunting season on the WMA generally coincides with private lands."

Ruth said the U.S. Forest Service manages timber on the Sumter National Forest in both the Central and Western Piedmont hunt units, and under its management practices, different areas are routinely thinned or cleared.

With different areas in various stages of growth and/or regrowth, Ruth said hunters must do the necessary legwork to find prime areas.

"I know hunters who put in the effort to locate prime hunting habitat for deer or turkeys are rewarded," he said, "but it's an ongoing process that must be done every year."

Ruth said plenty of old-growth hardwoods and bottoms exist and are great for turkeys, along with newly cleared open lands and prescribed burn areas. For deer, thick bottoms are scattered throughout, as well as timber regrowth areas less than 10 years old that typically offer prime habitat.



Terry Madewell

WMAs are home to plenty of nice whitetail bucks if you put boots on the ground, get off the beaten path and find areas of good habitat.

## LIBERTY HILL WMA

Liberty Hill is an 8,000-acre WMA straddling Kershaw and Lancaster counties, including 17 miles of shoreline on Lake Wateree and the Catawba River.

Ruth said this WMA has antler restrictions for deer hunting, and it offers excellent deer and turkey habitat.

"Liberty Hill has a lot of typical, Piedmont habitat, with plenty of hardwoods interspersed with pines," he said.

The topography is hilly, rising from an elevation of 225 feet at Wateree's shoreline to more than 500 feet on the hilltops. Ruth said selective timber harvests and prescribed fire are the primary management tools utilized to improve habitat conditions. Openings and meadows are also managed to provide early successional habitat and supplemental forage for wildlife.

"Access to this site is good, and hunters do need to check in and out, but it's not a draw hunt; it's open to hunters with a WMA permit," he said.



Terry Madewell

Turkey hunting on South Carolina WMAs can be very rewarding if hunters do plenty of scouting and locate areas being used by gobblers.

### WATERFOWL WMAS >

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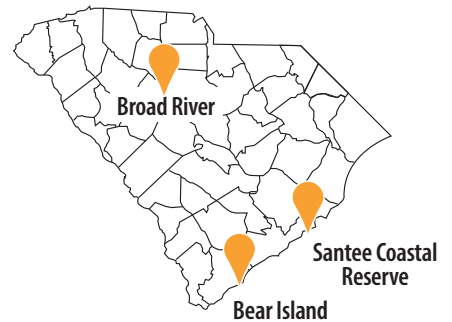
# These WMAs Offer **CRACKERJACK WATERFOWL HUNTING**

Biologist Alicia Farrell said South Carolina WMAs provide excellent diversity in terms of hunting opportunities, and the top WMAs all provide excellent duck hunting.

"Different factors play a role in determining the best WMAs for various hunters," Farrell said. "Ease of access is important to some, the diversity of species available at a given WMA is important to many, and the total harvest success is the crucial factor for others. Our Category I Waterfowl WMAs are the top areas for waterfowl hunting, and different areas have different blends of these factors."

Farrell said Category I WMAs are all intensively managed for waterfowl hunting, and hunters are chosen by drawings. The application process begins mid-September, and hunters apply for WMAs for specific hunting days. Full details are in the WMA/waterfowl section of the SCDNR website at [www.dnr.sc.gov](http://www.dnr.sc.gov).

Farrell said the top 3 WMAs selected for waterfowl hunting for 2020/21 have unique characteristics that can help hunters find the right blend of characteristics for their individual hunting style.



South Carolina hunters can run into a lot of different waterfowl species, depending on the specific WMA and its location.

## **SANTEE COASTAL RESERVE**

"Located near McClellanville, this WMA had the highest harvest of ducks in 2019-20 season," she said, "but it's a physically hard hunt, with difficult walks in marshy mud. It's a hunt where hunters have to find and make their own hunting setup without the use of blinds."

Farrell said that less dependence on blinds and more emphasis on moving, locating and hunting ducks where naturally congregated usually results in more ducks harvested. It's a trend on their Category 1 WMAs in general.

"The reward for this demanding hunt is more ducks to hunt once you get to the hunting area," she said. "Primary species last year were gadwall and green-winged teal. Another attractive factor of Santee Coastal Reserve is 17 different species of ducks were harvested last year. Really diverse waterfowl hunting opportunities exist here."

## **BROAD RIVER WMA**

"The Broad River WMA is physically easier hunting to access, yet it still produces excellent hunting," Farrell said. "Walking through flooded fields here is easier than the flooded, mucky marsh. Plus, some blinds are available, as well as areas where hunters find their own cover. The hunting may be near natural vegetation, close to planted agriculture crops or in a greentree reservoir type of hunting environment. In 2019-20, the primary species harvested here



was ringnecks and mallards, with not as much species diversity as found on the coast. But of all the Category I WMAs, Broad River produced the most mallards in the 2019-20 season."

Broad River WMA is in Fairfield County.

## BEAR ISLAND WMA

"A unique feature of Bear Island WMA is the opportunity to hunt saltwater and freshwater marsh environments," she said. "Many hunters appreciate the opportunity for different types of hunts in close proximity. The harvest at Bear Island is very high, with a diversity of species represented. About half of the areas have blinds brushed, and the other half require the hunter to set up where the majority of ducks are located."

Farrell said the difficulty of this hunt is mid-range between Santee Coastal Reserve and Broad River.

"It's very important that hunters recognize on all Category 1 Hunts this year, because of COVID-19, social distancing will be observed for the safety of all," Farrell said. "It's a big change, and we want hunters to know this prior to the hunt."

Bear Island WMA is in Colleton County.

## HIDDEN WMA GEMS

"Not everyone can be drawn on Category I hunts, but some of the Category II hunts are excellent," she said. "Category II sites are WMAs that have waterfowl habitat but are not managed intensely and specifically for waterfowl. These are open hunts and require hunters to do their own scouting and setups. But those who put in the work often have excellent success."

"The three Category II sites, I think, are hidden gems for waterfowl are Donnelly, Dungannon and Hickory Top WMAs," she said. "With good scouting, excellent waterfowl hunting is available at all of these areas."

**SMALL GAME WMAS** ➤

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# FOR **SMALL GAME,** VISIT THESE PUBLIC AREAS

Michael Hook, SCDNR's small-game program leader, said the status of small game hunting on WMAs is excellent and improving. He singled out three specific areas where hunters can target multiple small-game species.

## **FRANCIS MARION NATIONAL FOREST**

Hook said this 258,000-acre WMA in Berkeley and Charleston counties is continuously undergoing habitat changes, including timber cutting and other management practices.

"That's an exceptionally good recipe for creating great habitat for small-game hunting," Hook said. "Proper habitat is the key to having excellent populations of small game, and timber thinning, clearing and prescribed burning continuously changes the area in terms of available habitat."

Hook said an excellent example is the progression of an area after a controlled burn, a major management tool at Francis Marion.

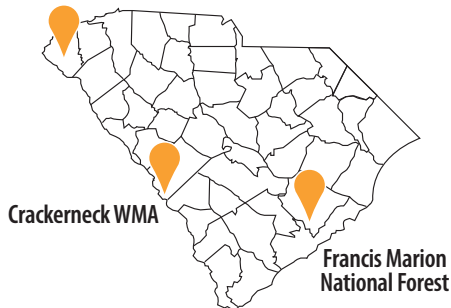
"For the first two or three years after a burn, the quail population thrives," he said. "In years 4 through 7, the area becomes overgrown with blackberries, sweet gums and becomes too thick for prime quail hunting, but it's ideal for rabbits. With a little effort and windshield time, hunters can find a lot of prime hunting areas for both species."

Hook said that woodcock are abundant throughout Francis Marion, and during woodcock season, quail hunting is also excellent; the two species make an excellent combo hunt.

"A real key to success in this area is not getting locked into a single area being good for a single species for multiple years," he said. "As the habitat changes, the game species using it may change too."

"The hardwood bottoms have an abundant squirrel population and excellent squirrel hunting exists," he said. "Francis Marion National Forest is a small-game hunter's dream."

Fants Grove WMA



Terry Madewell

The Francis Marion National Forest and Crackerneck WMA both have excellent habitat for squirrels.

## **CRACKERNECK WMA**

Hook said this 10,600-acre WMA in Aiken County has two distinct habitat types. One includes about 3,100 acres of swamp off of the Savannah River, characterized by old-growth timber, and the other about 7,500 acres of woodland. The land is owned by the U.S. Department of Energy, but the U.S. Forest Service does the timber management, and SCDNR oversees the hunting and wildlife management.

"With forest service management, the habitat is constantly changing and creates ideal small-game habitat," he said. "Quail and rabbits are found in good numbers in the same type habitats as Francis Marion."

"Woodcock also provides another excellent hunting opportunity at Crackerneck, and SCDNR-managed doves fields are found on the area, typically providing excellent bird hunting."

The swamp bottomlands have a considerable amount of mature timber, and Hook said they harbor an abundant squirrel population.



Habitat is the key to good, huntable small-game populations. Quail love the habitat that develops after a prescribed burn of pines — common on WMAs — and they thrive for several years.

## FANT'S GROVE WMA

Fant's Grove is an 8,540-acre property owned by Clemson University, primarily located in Anderson County with portions in Oconee and Pickens counties.

"The diversity of habitat at Fant's Grove creates excellent hunting for woodcock, rabbits and squirrels, as well as having good habitat for quail," he said. "As in the case with other WMAs, hunters must do the windshield work to find prime hunting for various species."

Hook said excellent squirrel-hunting habitat is also found at Fant's Grove, and multiple dove fields are planted annually, providing additional hunting opportunities.

"One interesting thing about Fant's Grove is, in the right habitat, some sneaky good rabbit hunting exists," he said. "Cottontails are plentiful, but Fant's Grove is one of the few WMAs where true swamp rabbits are found in good numbers, and these are really big rabbits."

Many hunters mistake a marsh rabbit for a cottontail, and while marsh rabbits are larger than cottontails, the true swamp rabbits are even larger than marsh rabbits." ■



**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

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## STICKS AND STRINGS

Sammy Romano

A hand-held release usually requires a lower anchor point; this archer shows proper form.



# A RELEASE THAT'S HANDY

HAND-HELD RELEASE AIDS ARE BECOMING MORE AND MORE POPULAR IN THE ARCHERY WORLD, AND FOR GOOD REASON

**T**he majority of bowhunters shoot using a mechanical release aid, and most of them here in the Southeast use a wrist-caliper design that secure around the wrist of the archer's draw arm with a wide strap, allowing the archer to draw the bow by pulling from their wrist.

When used properly, the index finger is hooked around the trigger at the first or second crease from the tip. The archer then flexes his shoulder blades inward, using "back tension" to cause the release aid to fire unexpectedly.

In a perfect world, this is how it should work, but in my experience, a vast majority of bowhunters don't use their release aid correctly. Most archers incorrectly pull the trigger of their wrist caliper with their index finger. In the worst cases, archers jerk or even slap the trigger, round-housing it and causing the bow to move at the shot. This malady commonly progresses into severe target panic, robbing the archer of accuracy, and leading to blown shot opportunities or even worse, wounded game.

## TARGET PANIC

I have suffered from target panic myself, and it is both extremely frustrating and de-motivating. One common treatment for target panic involves the use

of a hand-held release aid, especially a hinge-style, back-tension model. These releases force the archer to pull through the shot and follow through properly. Bowhunters, however, often need to release the arrow in a shorter time frame, both to allow for the animal's movement and narrow shooting lanes.

## RELEASE STYLES

Although this often rules out the use of a hinge-style release while hunting, other hand-held release aids will help increase accuracy by promoting better form and can be fired using proper back tension more easily than wrist-caliper models.

The most popular and easiest hand-held releases to use are thumb releases. These hand-held releases are triggered by either back tension, thumb pressure or a combination of both methods. This allows the archer to practice good shooting habits by using back tension to trigger the release, but also to fire more quickly when necessary.

Hand-held releases are available in many configurations, and these are usually described by the number of fingers used to grasp the release. Also available are 2-, 3- and even 4-finger releases. Four-finger releases provide the most-secure grip but are notorious for allowing the shooter to torque the string more easily.

One notable exception is the Hardcore 4-Finger release by Tru-Fire. This model uses a fully swiveling head to eliminate string torque. I shoot this model personally and really like it. Three-finger releases are the most popular, but lately, 2-finger models have been quickly gaining ground. I recommend trying several different styles and models when possible before purchasing a hand-held release. Since these releases are actually held in your hand, the fit and design matters more than with a wrist release. Also, hand-held releases are generally much more expensive, so it helps to purchase the right one the first time.

## MAKE ADJUSTMENTS

One common mistake when switching from a wrist caliper to a hand-held release is a failure to make the necessary adjustments in order to guarantee success. In most cases, a draw-length adjustment of one-half inch longer draw is required. The peep sight needs to be raised both to adjust for both this new,



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).

longer draw length, and because hand-held releases usually call for a lower anchor point.

Many archers want to “try out” a hand-held release aid without making these adjustments that are necessary to ensure success. This transition is best made before beginning to practice for hunting season, because it not only requires the archer to modify his or her form, but requires the bow to be re-tuned — and often new arrows. Trying to change releases with only a short practice window is a recipe for disaster. It takes many practice shots to develop the muscle memory required to shoot consistently, and anything less is cheating yourself.

Because of their design and the fact that they help promote proper form and release, thereby increasing accuracy, hand-held releases are growing in popularity every day. In fact, one of the most frequently asked questions at our bow counter is “Will a hand-held release help me shoot more accurately?” The answer is a resounding yes.

But like a lot of other things in this world, changing your release aid requires both practice and commitment to get the most benefit from it. As with any change to your bow setup, a good pro shop can make this process much easier. If you’ve ever considered switching releases, stop in your local pro shop and try out a hand-held release aid soon. ■

Two-finger, hand-held releases are gaining in popularity among archers.



**GREENER PASTURES >**



**Evan Hendricks**

Evan Hendricks of Raleigh, N.C., caught this 9-pound, 10-ounce bass from Falls of Neuse Lake on March 30.



**Bailey Baker**

Bailey Baker of Greenville, S.C., caught this 2-pound crappie at Lake Hartwell this past spring.



**Matt Thompson**

Matt Thompson boated this huge blue catfish from North Carolina’s Badin Lake.

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Deer feel comfortable feeding during daylight hours in protected areas, making a food plot back in the woods a real whitetail magnet.

## CANOPY PLOTS CAN ATTRACT DEER

PROTECTED AREAS CAN BE USED AS FOOD-PLOT SITES

Jeff Burleson

**D**eer and other wildlife live in a wide variety of natural communities, including forested and non-forested venues.

Deer utilize habitats they are accustomed to, whether it's a hardwood bottomland, swamp, cutover, pine plantation, open meadow or agriculture centered.

These animals utilize various habitats for all parts of their life history, including feeding, bedding and reproducing, but deer remain protective and avoid human interactions as much as possible. Plots built within the protection of the woodlands can be a sure-fire way to entice deer and other wildlife to feed in the daylight.

Plots built within the understory of large, towering trees are referred to as canopy plots. Deer will feed throughout the day and night, but daylight feeding will generally be in places where cover and safety are apparent. Canopy plots can be a perfect place to encourage feeding behavior during legal shooting light.

Canopy plots cannot be created everywhere, however. The right combination of mature trees and a light understory is required in order to create these food centers.

### CANOPY PROBLEMS

Hunters creating canopy plots can face stumbling blocks. For one, mature trees utilize a large amount of the critical resources that will immediately rob from potential food plots down below. Large, mature trees have large crowns that hog a massive quantity of sunlight, only allowing minimal sunlight penetration to the soil surface. Sunlight is not only important, plants require it for photosynthesis and the creation of plant energy. Additionally, mature trees utilize every available nutrient from the soil to fuel maintenance and growth functions.

To make the process more difficult, mature trees will have large root systems extending well beyond their trunks. In most cases, the root systems extend laterally to the tips of the branches, out all four sides. And they excrete acids into the soil to inhibit the growth of other competing vegetation.

Trying to grow a forage crop under the canopy of mature trees has its challenges, but the canopy can also have a positive influence on growing plots on certain sites. Limited sunlight penetration can be beneficial on dryer sites by preventing excessive moisture loss, espe-

cially during the middle of the day when full sunlight beams down to the soil's surface. While young plots need sunlight to create energy, the tender sprouts and leaves are delicate. Full sunlight on hot and dry days can stress these plants to their fatal end.

Some food-plot varieties prefer partial sun as opposed to full sun. These plots are typically referred to as shade-tolerant varieties; the most common shade-tolerant planting is Durana white clover, which do well in partial sun and can perform well under the canopy.

### NO COMPETITION

Canopy food plots can be created in both hardwood and pine forests with partial sun penetrating to the forest floor. The most-suitable areas are already enrolled in a routine burning schedule, so understory vegetation is minimal. However, these areas can be mowed and sprayed to



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.

kill future, competing vegetation.

In order not to impact canopy trees, only foliar-acting herbicides should be used; a full spectrum herbicide like glyphosate can be used to prepare the site for planting.

For the best results, crown closure should be less than 75%. Anything higher will prevent food plots from flourishing.

Landowners can also create canopy plots by thinning forest stands to reduce crown closure for the purposes of creating a more open canopy. The best type of cut to create the opportunity for canopy plots is a shelterwood cut, where a light canopy remains but enough forested area remains to provide security cover and partial crown coverage.

Plots located in forested areas should be lightly disked, only churning up the top 3 inches of soil. Any deeper, and the root systems of nurse trees will be damaged. Since small-seeded food-plot varieties will be used, shallow disking is all that is needed to create a seed bed.

Canopy plots are well suited to be planted in late summer and fall as cool-season food plots instead of spring and early summer as warm-season plantings.

Typically, most cool-season food plots are planted from late September and through October. But cool-season canopy plots can be planted a little earlier, since much of the planting area will be buffered from the harsh, summer sun. In fact, cool-season varieties may even grow better when planted in areas of partial sun a little early in the fall planting season.

## SHADE-TOLERANT SELECTIONS

Shade-tolerant species should be selected as singular plants or as a food-plot mixture. Not all plants prefer full sunlight to survive and flourish. Certain varieties are more sustainable when grown in partial sun. They are often more-tender varieties that can be damaged from excessive heat exposure. Partial sun on these plots can be beneficial, allowing enough sun for photosynthesis but preventing damage from heat stress.

While some varieties of seed options can tolerate some level of shade, variations of clover are the best options for canopy plots. Crimson, white Durana and subterranean clovers are well-suited for sites where shade tolerance is critical.

Some select cereal grains can also be successfully grown in areas of partial sun. Winter rye is the best candidate as a cereal grain, but forage oats can also flourish with average success under a forested canopy with limited sunlight.

Mixtures of clovers and cereal grains can also be used in shaded areas. The mix can be variable, but a good recommendation per acre is 40 pounds of rye and 15 pounds of clover.

Since these selected seeds are relatively small, only light disking is necessary to get the seeds set in the soil for germination. These seeds can even be top-sewn or lightly raked in order to encourage germination. ■



Brantley Pegram killed this two woodies, his first and second ducks, in a Summerfield, N.C., beaver pond last December.



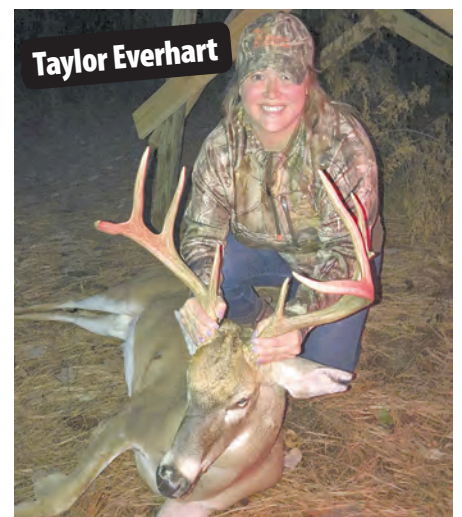
Chris Currin killed this big 9-point buck last season with his CVA Wolf muzzleloader.



Zach Berg killed his first deer, this button buck, in Horry County, S.C., on Nov. 1, 2019.



Owen Ramsey, 7, of Raleigh, N.C., killed this doe last Nov. 16 with a crossbow.



Taylor Everhart of Lexington, N.C., a second-grade teacher, dropped this 9-point buck in Randolph County last Nov. 4.

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**Tenley Schutte**

Tenley Schutte killed her first deer, this spike buck, with a 125-yard shot last Nov. 9 in Horry County, S.C.



**Jim Rogers**

Jim Rogers caught and released this 43½-pound blue catfish on 6-pound test line at Lake Tillery on Jan. 20.



**Michelle Estes**

Michelle Estes from Statesville, N.C., took this beautiful buck last Thanksgiving Day in Iredell County.



**Avery James**

Avery James, 7, killed his first bear last November hunting with his father in Jones County, N.C.



**Chuck Stewart**

Chucks Stewart of Stem, N.C., caught this nice bass in the Flat River on March 18.



**Luke Adams**

Luke Adams, 8, of Fuquay-Varina, N.C., took his first doe last fall in Pitt County with an Airforce .308 air rifle.

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# KINGS OF THE SUMMER

GET THERE EARLY AND WITH THE RIGHT BAIT, ACCORDING TO THIS NORTH CAROLINA CHARTER CAPTAIN, AND YOU CAN CATCH YOUR SHARE OF KING MACKEREL AS SUMMER REALLY DIGS IN.

By Craig Holt



Craig Holt



# THE

sonar screen showed a jagged bottom 85 feet beneath the hull of Kevin Sneed's boat. Occasionally, spikes arose between smaller, sawtooth-like protrusions. The screen told a story to Sneed, a veteran saltwater guide from Holden Beach, N.C., who held the wheel.

"This is where we want to be," said Sneed, who runs Rigged & Ready Fishing Charters.

Sneed had carried Aubrey Linville, a commercial real-estate salesman from Winston-Salem, and his 14-year-old son, Grayson, to one of his favorite offshore king mackerel haunts. With a north wind that calmed the ocean that morning, he'd zipped along and reached the spot less than an hour after leaving Lockwood Folly Inlet.

"One of the advantages of having a fast boat is you can get where you want in a hurry," said Sneed,

He had two reasons for haste:

- To reach the spot as quickly as possible so his anglers would have first shot at enticing a big summer king mackerel;
- Hot-weather king mackerel bites are notoriously fickle, turning on and off unpredictably. It's best to have lines in the water when kings decide to eat.

"By August, king mackerel seem to leave most shallow, inshore waters," Sneed said. "You can catch them at wrecks, ledges and good livebottoms from 15 to 20 miles out, but they seem to like water around 75 degrees. A lot of times it's 80 degrees close to land. Not many kings get caught off the end of piers in July and August.

"That's not to say it doesn't happen, but the best early months for inshore king mackerel bites are late April, May and June. It slows down in summer, then picks up in late September through November when waters start to cool."

Sneed said the best bite and biggest king mackerel are during November and December.

"During August, I actually don't do much fishing for big kings, because I get caught up in the (nearshore) charter aspect," he said. "We're busy running half-day trips 10 to 15 miles offshore. That's not to say we don't catch kings — we catch a lot of them — but they're usually smaller. That's okay. We try to release big ones in summer because they're not as good to eat as the 8- and 10-pounders. But if someone wants to go specifically for large kings, we'll try it."



Craig Holt





Grayson Linville, 14, battles a king mackerel while guide Kevin Sneed watches the line.

# EVIDENCE OF FISHING PROWESS

Kevin Sneed's king-mackerel tackle and techniques haven't been pulled out of thin air but earned during 20 years of saltwater fishing.

Not only that, he's got visible proof of his fishing prowess in tournaments. Hanging on the wall behind the counter of his business, Rigged & Ready Fishing Center in Supply, N.C., is an enlargement of his \$127,755 check for winning the 2018 Kingfish Cup in November 2018. It was the largest king mackerel tournament winner's check on record nationally.



Kevin Sneed

Being able to catch big king mackerel in tournaments has provided Kevin Sneed with seed money for his business.

"We had a great run from 2018 to early 2019," Sneed said. "We also won the Jolly Mon KMT (\$5,600), earned \$30,000 at the East Coast Got 'Em On, my wife Kim was first-place Lady Angler at the Rumble in the Jungle (\$900), and in May 2019, we won \$20,345 for the Cape Lookout Shootout."

That's a grand total of \$184,600.

"Kim was a big help, along with friends who fished with us," Sneed said. "King mackerel tournament fishing is not a one-man show, but a team effort."

Their earnings allowed them to expand their bait-and-tackle store and purchase a boat. ■

**T**rolled slowly, live menhaden, aka pogies, are the universal king mackerel baits for anglers, but other baits also work.

“I’ll throw a cast net to fill the baitwell, if I can find pogies,” Sneed said, “but I don’t like to waste a lot of time searching for them, because anglers are paying to fish. Summer kings eat frozen cigar minnows just as well as pogies.”

If Sneed is fishing in a tournament during summer, he heads for livebottoms, ledges or wrecks in 85 to 100 feet of water south of Frying Pan Tower, some 44 miles from Lockwood Folly Inlet. Those spots are part of Frying Pan Shoals, which stretches dozens of miles southwest from the mouth of the Cape Fear River.

“I like to fish those livebottoms, especially near schools of beeliners (vermilion snappers),” he said. “In summer, if you find beeliners, kings will be near them.”

Beeliner schools show up as large red blobs on his screen, he said.

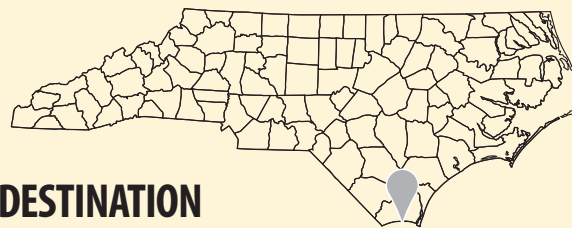
“If I see a school, I’ll cast a 1/0 live-bait hook with a little piece of Boston mackerel,” Sneed said. “Beeliners can be from 12 inches long and a half-pound to 2 pounds. King mackerel love them. If I catch several, I often put them on my trolling rods.”

In the absence of beeliners, Sneed prefers big menhaden, threadfin herring (aka greenies), bluefish or cigar minnows, live or frozen.

His trolling spread includes four rods, two at the corners of the stern and a third in a T-top holder, to pull surface baits. The fourth bait is in deeper water, clipped to a downrigger ball.

“If I check the scope and see kings, I lower the ball to their depth,” Sneed said. “Before I see kings on the screen, I put the downrigger line 20 feet deep and adjust from there. If I don’t get any action, I’ll lower it to 30 feet, then 40, 50 or 60 feet. Sometimes, all the bites come on downriggers, but sometimes they come on surface baits. You never can tell.”

His downrigger fits into a rod-holder at his boat’s right stern corner. “All you need is a plug-in (gunwale) socket for power,” Sneed said.



## DESTINATION INFORMATION

Holden Beach/Supply

**HOW TO GET THERE** — Holden Beach is accessed from most parts of North Carolina via I-40, US 17, US 74, NC 87 and NC 211. The closest public boat ramps are at Shallotte Inlet on the western end of Holden Beach and Oak Island across Lockwood Folly Inlet to the east.

**WHEN TO GO** — June through December

**BEST TECHNIQUES** — Live-bait fishing with menhaden or bluefish is hard to beat when kings are around in good numbers. Kings will hit dead baits like beeliners, threadfin herring (greenies) and cigar minnows if presented correctly. Live-bait tackle and king mackerel rigs are the ticket.

**FISHING INFO/GUIDES** — Kevin Sneed, Rigged & Ready Charters, 910-448-3474, [www.holdenbeachcharter.com](http://www.holdenbeachcharter.com). See also Guides & Charters in Classifieds.

**ACCOMMODATIONS** — Gray Gull Motel, Supply, N.C. 910-842-6775; Brunswick County Chamber of Commerce, 910-754-6644. [www.brunswickcountychamber.org](http://www.brunswickcountychamber.org).

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

A youngster reels a Frying Pan Shoals king mackerel as other anglers prepare to land the fish.

Craig Holt



Even though he may cruise above structure 100 feet below his boat's keel, baitfish swim above structures from the bottom to the surface.

"Best livebottoms have ledges, which may have only 4 or 5 feet of change or as much as 10 feet," Sneed said. "Ledges give baitfish somewhere to hide from predator fish. Beeliner schools and cigar minnows also hang out above ledges and livebottom or even a big rock."

Sneed moves the boat forward at a crawl.

"You troll just enough to keep your lines tight," Sneed said. "You don't want to drag your baits; you want them to swim naturally."

Once a king attacks, the rod screams as the fish peels line off a reel's loosely set drag.

Sneed uses 7-foot Star Handcrafted live-bait rods with Shimano Torium 30HG spinning reels spooled with 20-pound Momoi Diamond monofilament tied to an 18-inch leader of 15- to 30-pound line. His terminal tackle includes a Spro swivel and 18 to 24 inches of 40-pound Seven Strand wire and two No. 6 black VMC treble hooks separated by a 6-inch section of wire.

"The wire keeps a king's teeth from slicing through leader," Sneed said.

If he's trolling live bait, he hooks one treble horizontally through its nostrils to allow it to swim naturally and barely attaches a second treble through the skin near the bait's dorsal fin.

If he's pulling a frozen cigar minnow, he hooks the front treble vertically from under the jaw and out between the nostrils. The other treble goes just beneath the skin near its tail. ■

Craig Holt



**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.

The best tactic to troll frozen cigar minnows with two No. 6 treble hooks is to put an outboard motor barely in forward gear.

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## COOKING ON THE WILD SIDE

Jerry Dilsaver

# GRILLED MACKEREL FAJITAS

DON'T LIKE KING MACKEREL? TRY THEM IN THIS TASTY TREAT



Grilling outside is an awfully good way to enjoy a late summer afternoon. **INSET:** Fajitas are a great way to introduce diners to king mackerel, which many people shy away from eating.

**N**ot everyone appreciates the taste of king mackerel, but I can't remember ever meeting anyone who didn't enjoy catching them. Plus, they are one of the few fish that you have a good chance of catching in August's heat, and they can usually be found just a short run off the beach. Making fajitas is a fun way to eat them that may get more folks to try them.

As hot as it is, August is when fall begins to occasionally flex its muscles, and there are occasional cooler mornings and evenings. These same days are great times to fire up the grill and have a fun meal on the deck or patio with lots of friends and/or family. There are options for meals to prepare outside, but grilled king mackerel fajitas are tasty, good for you and fun to make. It's also nice that during August king mackerel may

be caught as close in as the end of piers, while they are almost always within 10 miles or so of the beach.

If you like fish but think king mackerel have a strong flavor, this is a great way to try them. Trim all the red from the fillets before slicing them, and all that remains is pretty meat. Cook it until it begins to flake but be sure not to overcook it. The ingredients for the marinade make it seem like it will be spicy, but it's not. It really is a great recipe to prepare a fun and tasty meal from a fish that often gets maligned. Mackerel has the B-complex vitamins that help lower blood pressure and cholesterol, so it's good for you too.

Give grilled king mackerel fajitas a try. The idea is unusual and the flavor is unusually good. I'm sure you'll be surprised how much you like it. ■

# KING MACKEREL FAJITAS

I know this sounds unusual and isn't a way you'd think of to prepare king mackerel. Don't let that stand in your way, or you'll be missing out. This is a combination of king mackerel, peppers, onions and a of spices that make it taste just right. It's even better when prepared outside on one of the August nights when the heat of summer breaks.

I like king mackerel, and this is a different way to eat it. Just about everyone likes fajitas, so why not feature king mackerel as the meat? This may be a little better when using smaller kings, but it tastes good regardless of the size of the fish used. On a smaller king, the fillet can be from about anywhere, but with a larger king, a section of fillet between the anal vent and the tail is about the right thickness.

Start by trimming all the red meat off the fillets; it is simple and only takes a few minutes. The strips should be roughly the diameter of a man's index finger — thick enough not to overcook easily, and it also seems to absorb just about the right amount of marinade to have the taste, but not be overpowering.

The marinade ingredients and amounts listed make a good combination that adds some flavor without being too strong or spicy. I don't mind experimentation with my recipes and

actually encourage varying the amounts to lean to your personal tastes. Add more chili powder or cayenne pepper to make it spicier and reduce them to make the flavor more subdued. More or less soy sauce and just about every other ingredient changes the taste a little.

Be careful with the lime. This calls for a third of a cup of fresh lime juice, and it can get a little strong if the fish marinates too long. A half-hour is a good minimum to absorb some lime taste, and two hours lets it absorb a lot of lime flavor.

The vegetables contribute a lot. I like to use mini sweet peppers; they are milder and more tender, and I believe taste a little sweeter. Jalapenos are a personal preference. I would suggest at least using one to get the flavor, and if you like them, use two or maybe even three.

I used medium-size tortillas for this meal. When fixing for more people or people who haven't tried this before, I would suggest using small tortillas. They are large enough to give folks a good taste and easier to handle.

This is a fun meal that is easy to prepare and tastes very good. It lends itself to preparing outside on a grill, so having a vegetable tray to prevent small pieces from falling through the grate is a must. If you like fish, I'm pretty sure you'll enjoy it. ■

## PREPARATION:

Combine the lime juice, water, 3 tablespoons of olive oil, garlic paste, soy sauce, liquid smoke, smoked paprika, onion powder, black pepper, chili powder and cayenne pepper and whisk until mixed well.

Cut the fillets into approximately finger-size strips. Put the king mackerel strips in a Zip Lock bag, add the marinade, squish it around a little, squeeze all the air out and let it marinate in the fridge for 30 minutes to 2 hours.

Slice the onions and bell peppers into strips approximately 3/8- to 1/2-inch wide. Slice the jalapenos into strips approximately 1/4-inch wide. Combine the onions and peppers and drizzle a little olive oil on them. Sprinkle the peppers and onions with Cavender's All Purpose Greek Seasoning (to taste) and put them in a Zip Lock bag in the refrigerator until ready to cook. Spray a grill vegetable tray liberally with non-stick cooking spray and place on the grill.

Preheat grill to high. Pour the peppers and onions onto the grill tray and cook until they begin to wilt, stirring often and being careful not to scorch them. Remove the peppers and onions to a bowl. Spray non-stick cooking spray on the vegetable tray again. Place the fish strips on the grill and cook 2 to 4 minutes on each side, depending on heat of grill. Remove as soon as the meat flakes and be careful not to overcook.

Warm tortillas on the grill. Combine fish, peppers and onions on tortilla shells and serve immediately.

## INGREDIENTS:

1½ pounds of king mackerel fillets  
1 large sweet onion  
1 package of mixed mini sweet peppers  
1 or 2 jalapeno peppers  
1 package of small or medium size flour tortillas  
½ cup fresh lime juice (from 4 to 5 limes)  
¼ cup water  
3 tbsp and a drizzle of olive oil  
1 tbsp garlic paste  
2 tps soy sauce  
½ tsp liquid smoke  
2 tsp smoked paprika  
1 tsp onion powder  
½ tsp black pepper  
1 tbsp chili powder  
¼ tsp cayenne pepper  
Cavender's All Purpose Greek Seasoning (to taste)



Feel free to add any sauces, squeeze of lime, or salsa that you like. I believe the lime is strong enough as it was marinated and usually add a squeeze of Texas Pete Cha Sauce or Scotch Bonnet Pepper Sauce to my fajitas. Others will have their favorite sauces.

I really like salads and would have a lettuce wedge or green salad to begin the meal. This is a fresh and light meal so chunks of cooled watermelon or fruit salad make a nice dessert. If you've got to have something sweeter, try a slice of Key Lime pie. ■



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



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# **NEW** HYDROTECH SERIES **NEW** PACIFIC BOARD SHORTS

**T**he catfish population boom and the subsequent surge of catfishing popularity has encompassed waters throughout South Carolina, but the explosion in the Catawba River system has been phenomenal.

The South Carolina portion of the Catawba River includes Lake Wateree, Stumpy Pond, Fishing Creek Lake and a significant portion of Lake Wylie.

Guide Scott Peavy from Blythewood, S.C., operates Polebender Fishing Adventures; he targets all of these lakes year-round and said the catfishing is outstanding, and both

day and night offer excellent fishing opportunities.

“August is a prime time to load up on fast-paced action at any of these Catawba River lakes if fishermen have a good strategy for fishing conditions,” he said.

Peavy, 42, said each lake is unique in terms of hot-weather catfish action.

## LAKE WATREEE >

CATAWBA  
CATFISH

CONNECTION

FROM LAKE WYLIE  
DOWNSTREAM, THE LAKES  
OF THE CATAWBA RIVER  
PROVIDE SOUTH CAROLINA  
ANGLERS WITH GREAT  
SUMMER OPPORTUNITIES.

■ By Terry Madewell

Terry Madewell

## LAKE WATEREE

Waterree is one of Peavy's "go-to" lakes for summer action, in part because of the diversity of fishing patterns and targets.

"Waterree is a fertile lake, producing excellent fishing for numbers as well as trophy-sized blue catfish," he said, "but the lake is producing increasing flathead action, and I think flatheads will expand here."

Peavy (803-569-7917) said Waterree's 13,700 surface acres provide diverse fishing opportunities, and one prime example occurs after a heavy rain.

"A major summer rain event causing lots of water to be released from the Cedar Creek Dam at the upper end of Lake Waterree attracts catfish in big numbers, and the fishing can be awesome," Peavy said. "The first couple of miles below the dam will provide sensational fishing under these conditions."

Peavy said his typical summer pattern on Waterree during periods of normal weather is fishing flats from the middle part of the lake down to the lower end in 12 to 20 feet of water. He also targets humps, points, channel ledges and deep holes.

"I generally anchor-fish, but during the summer, I'll also drift-fish the flats," he said. "I'll fish around mussel beds

where catfish congregate during July and August. My

favorite bait on Waterree in mid-summer is a

5- to 6-inch white perch with the tail cut off

and one side filleted, leaving it connected to flap and create scent.

Gizzard shad chunks are also very good."

Sutton's Landing near

Lake Waterree State

Park in Taylor

Creek usually has

plenty of live and

fresh bait available, he said.

Peavy said when he finds a productive stretch, he'll go back and repeat the drift, day or night.

"I've drifted areas in this depth range on 100-degree days and just be killing the catfish in the 14- to 16-pound range," he said.

"Waterree is one of my favorite catfishing lakes anytime," he said. "The big fish potential here, especially for blues, is outstanding," he said.

## STUMPY POND

Impounded by Cedar Creek Dam at the upper end of Lake Waterree, this lake is primarily known as Stumpy Pond and encompasses 847 surface acres of water. Despite its smallish size, this lake packs a powerful catfish punch.

"Stumpy Pond is an appropriate name, and fishermen have to be careful where they run boats wide open," he said. "But this also means most of the motorized boating traffic is by fishermen.

"When I find moving water in this lake, I'll go to the current in the upper end of the lake for catfish."

When flow is not significant, Peavy targets more typical areas such as large flats in 10 to 20 feet of water. He also fishes the eddy sides of points, deep holes scoured out by current and mid-lake high spots.

Peavy said the lake's size creates unique opportunities for fishermen.

"Because of the size of the lake, a heavy afternoon storm can create a short-term but significant water flow into the upper end, creating excellent catfishing conditions," he said.

"Stumpy Pond produces a lot of catfish, but I'm high on the big-fish potential here," Peavy said. "It wouldn't surprise me to see a record-sized catfish caught from this lake. Stumpy Pond has huge numbers of shad, perch and bream for forage, and the catfish have the potential to grow huge."

## FISHING CREEK LAKE >



Scott Peavy and his wife, Amanda, doubled up on these big blue catfish by fishing current after a rain.



Terry Madewell

## FLOAT RIG FOR BONUS CATFISH

Scott Peavy uses a float rig to target suspended summer catfish; it adds bonus fish to the cooler

Guide Scott Peavy employs a float rig for summer catfish at all of the Catawba River lakes in South Carolina, and he said it produces bonus fish.

"Catfish often suspend during the summer," Peavy said. "If I'm only fishing baits on the bottom, I'm missing some excellent fish-catching opportunities."

He said a depth-specific float works, but he prefers a slip-float rig so he can easily set and change the depth when necessary.

Peavy uses an egg-shaped float, slightly larger than a large egg, that slides on the line and stops at a bobber stopper. He has an 18- to 24-inch leader with a 7/0 or larger circle hook and adds enough weight above the swivel to keep the bait in the target zone. He uses a 7½-foot, medium-heavy Mustard rod.

"Fish suspend for various reasons, but forage availability is certainly one," Peavy said. "Presenting the bait at the depth fish are suspended enables me to target these fish."

"I may be fishing a flat that's 12 to 30 feet deep and marking a lot of fish suspended in the water column well off the bottom," he said. "With this rig, I can work baits at any depth."

"When fishing current-flow situations during the summer, I'm usually in shallow water, and this rig also enables me to float a bait down the current just off the bottom to keep it in the strike zone. Sometimes in these situations, I may not use any additional weight other than a swivel!" ■

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## FISHING CREEK LAKE

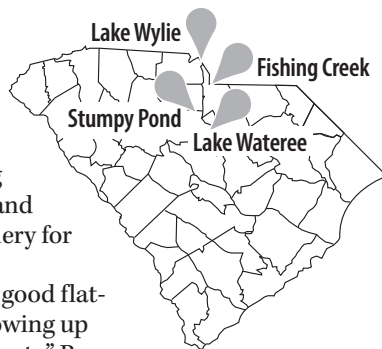
Fishing Creek has morphed into an excellent fishery, with a long-standing channel catfish population and an excellent blue catfish fishery for several years.

“It’s now becoming a really good flat-head fishery, and they’re showing up regularly in catfish tournaments,” Peavy said. “Even if targeting blue catfish, flat-heads often load on.”

Fishing Creek’s 3,112 surface acres of water are only part of the fishing options. Peavy said the lake is similar to Stumpy Pond in that after heavy rains, fishermen can go up the river and catch catfish feeding in the current. During normal conditions, it’s similar to Lake Wateree in terms of fishing the main-lake area and targeting drops, flats, points and channels.

“I generally fish depths from 6 to 18 feet here, fairly shallow due to the water having pretty good oxygen content,” Peavy said. “The water tumbles down the Catawba River from Lake Wylie Dam to Fishing Creek, and I think that helps the oxygen level.

“I catch flatheads and blues on fresh cut shad or perch, but live bait is fine as well,” he said. “I’m excited about the big-fish potential on this lake, with fish over 60 pounds having been caught in tournaments. A lot of big fish are in this lake.”



## LAKE WYLIE

Lake Wylie’s 13,400 surface acres are split between the Carolinas, but much of the lower end of the lake lies in South Carolina, offering prime summer fishing.

Peavy said that opting to get an out-of-state fishing license for North Carolina will significantly expand a fisherman’s potential to catch fish.

“Lake Wylie is a fantastic fishery for the big three catfish species,” he said. “A unique opportunity is the realistic potential to catch the Grand Slam of catfish — channel, blue and flatheads — on the same trip.”

Peavy said the primary drawback for August catfishing is the tremendous amount of non-fishing, recreational boating traffic.

“I generally fish Wylie at night in the summer because the daytime boat traffic is so congested,” he said. “But from daylight until 9 o’clock, fishermen have a small window of opportunity.

“I like fishing deep holes surrounded by shallow water when night fishing,” he said. “And the same type targets described for Lake Wateree for blue catfish — mussel beds, humps, points and channel ledges — are excellent.”

Peavy said big fish potential is off the charts at Lake Wylie, because both blue and flat-head catfish grow to enormous sizes, with blue catfish over 80 pounds having been caught. ■



**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.



When targeting catfish on any of South Carolina’s lakes on the Catawba River, you’d better bring a big net.



■ By Phillip Gentry

**T**he horizon was barely lit by the sun, which was still an hour or so from showing its face, as guide Mike Gault put the big outboard on his fishing pontoon in reverse and backed away from the dock at Dreher Island State Park on South Carolina's Lake Murray.

The quest was striped bass, a fish that has a huge following with guides and weekend anglers across the Carolinas. One of the reasons for the popularity of this engineered fish is its willingness to bite and fight hard under almost any conditions, including the heat of summer, when other fish have turned lethargic.

Gault said a lot of behind-the-scenes preparation and understanding of the habits of these fish comes into play. In fact, he has a list of tips that he relies on to help him catch fish this time of year.

**TIME ON THE WATER >**

**HERE ARE SOME IDEAS NEAR AND DEAR TO THE HEART OF A SOUTH CAROLINA STRIPER GUIDE THAT CAN LEAD TO BETTER SUMMER FISHING ACROSS BOTH CAROLINAS.**

# TIPS FOR SUMMER STRIPERS

Phillip Gentry

## TIME ON THE WATER

Striped bass are notorious wanderers. Gault, who runs Time2Fish Guide Service, said it's not unheard of for a school he fished the day before to move 3 to 5 miles overnight. In order to stay abreast of the habits and whereabouts of these fish, you have to spend a lot of time on the water.

"I mostly guide during the summer, but I fish for them year-round," said Gault (864-426-0709). "To build consistency, you have to put in time on the water. I learn something new almost every day, and that adds to my knowledge of what to do and where to fish under different conditions."

The only possible substitute for time on the water is a timely, reliable fishing report. That was Gault's goal when he set up the Lake Murray Fishing Reports Facebook page. He keeps the page posted in an attempt to help out other anglers.

"I started this page about 4 or 5 years ago," he said. "We've got maybe 9,000 followers."

The other version of time on the water is time of day. During summer, it's not unusual for Gault to begin his charters an hour or more before sunrise and finish by 10 o'clock.

"I know it's early, but bright sun and boat traffic really makes it hard to keep these fish grouped up," he said. "It's best to get your fishing done before the sun and the recreation crowd gets up."

## KNOW YOUR ELECTRONICS

Gault said it isn't necessary to have top-of-the-line electronics, but knowing how to read and how to use the units you have is all-important.



"A guy who's got a decent system and has it adjusted correctly, where he can mark fish and mark bait and know exactly where he's at on the lake, (and he) will outfish a guy with better electronics who can't read them," he said.

Philip Gentry

Start early and finish early is the summer striper angler's motto. **INSET:** Knowing how to interpret your electronics will yield better results than simply having the best sonar money can buy.



## FEEL THE THUMP

Some years ago, beating or drumming on the floor of the boat while fishing for striped bass was a closely held secret of the die-hard angler set.

The practice was to use a broom stick, pool cue, landing net handle or other hard object to tap or drum on the floor of the boat while fishing. The practice was primarily used when down-rod fishing for stripers with the boat positioned directly above the fish.

"I've heard a lot of different reasons for doing it," said Mike Gault, who guides on South Carolina's Lake Murray. "Some said it was vibration in the water that excites the fish. Others said the sound mimics pumping water through the dam, which stimulates feeding, and still others say it reminds the fish of feeding time at the hatchery where they were raised. Whatever the

reason, I've just seen it work too much not to believe it works."

In recent years, inventive entrepreneurs have even devised "thumpers" to do the drumming for anglers. While a commercially made device is not currently on the market, plenty of garage businesses have put together a small electric motor on a cam shaft attached to a rubber mallet and striking base. All of this is contained in some type of box, and the result is a continuous thumping as the cam turns and drops the hammer on the base.

"It's become popular here on Murray, sometimes too popular," said Gault. "I'll run mine when I have an area and a school of fish to myself. On the weekend, when you have a half-dozen boats all in the same area, and they're all thumping, I think it can spook the fish." ■

Anglers catch loads of striped bass while tapping or drumming on the bottom of their boats. Now, some mechanical 'thumpers' are showing up to make the practice a lot easier.



Phillip Gentry

## KEEP YOUR BAIT HEALTHY

Gault makes a distinction between fishing with live bait and fishing with lively bait. Like many anglers who target striped bass, his bait of choice is fresh blueback herring, which he buys from local bait shops the morning before a trip.

"This time of year, the surface temps are hot, upper 80s," he said. "I make it a point to get that bait from my bait tank to the hook and free-falling into deep water in under 10 seconds. It's a matter of practice. I see too many people not accustomed to handling bait fumble getting it out of the tank, fumble getting it on the hook, maybe even drop it on the floor and then let it sit in hot surface water for several seconds while they get situated. Once the bait gets down to the fish, it might still be alive, but it won't be lively. Lively is what catches fish."

## USE LIGHTER TACKLE

August is probably not the time to be chasing trophy striped bass, but it is a good time to catch numbers of decent fish.

Gault suggests downsizing your main line to 12-pound mono. Like most striper anglers across the Carolinas, he fishes vertically, using Carolina-rigged down rods to fish live herring. His main line is 12-pound test, but he also uses smaller leaders.

"I'll run 10-pound fluorocarbon leaders, and I also match the hook size to the bait," he said. "My choice is a No. 1 or 1/0 Owner Mutu Light circle hook. It's not that I believe stripers are particularly line or hook-shy, but it's that lively bait thing. The lighter line and hooks will let that bait act more natural, and I've seen that catch fish 5-to-1 to anglers using 20-pound test and 3/0 and 4/0 hooks."

Phillip Gentry



## BE EQUIPPED

Lively bait will outfish bait that's simply alive every time.

Gault has fished in every type of boat imaginable, but he finally settled on a fishing pontoon boat made by Angler Qwest and hasn't looked back.

"This boat is a tri-toon, which makes it very stable, even when you're got a lot of summer traffic," he said. "It's also well designed, with space for a large bait tank, top-of-the-line rod holder configuration and plenty of room to fish."

"The front is laid out for comfortable seating, but the back is hard-core fishing. I like to say it's party in the front and business in the back." ■



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).

## LUNKER LINES

David Fritts

In August, fish isolated cover or structure that isn't getting pounded by other fishermen.



# TIME TO GRIND IT OUT

AUGUST PRESENTS BASS FISHERMEN WITH SEVERAL CHALLENGES

**A** lot of bass fishermen really don't like to fish in August, and I can understand why. The weather is so hot, it's miserable, and it's reflected in the way the fish bite. It's a grind-it-out month, when you go to the lake, work your butt off and hopefully, you can catch five fish.

But even though fishing is tough, I've always enjoyed August, even though instead of pulling up to a place and catching two or three fish, I'm just catching one. August is, like every summer month, a good month to fish a crankbait, and that's what I do best.

A couple of things you need to know about August. Bass tend to get away from the sharp breaks they're usually on. They

go more to contour breaks. Instead of a 10-foot break, they're on a 2- or 3-foot break. Also, a lot of guys will go into the backs of creeks and up in the river because things get so tough on the lake. That may be because they aren't finding fish because they aren't looking in the right places.

The deal about August is, you can catch fish anywhere from 3 feet deep all the way to 25 or 28 feet deep; it depends on the current and how much rain we get. If your lake doesn't have a lot of current, the fish might move up, because there won't be enough oxygen in deep water for them to live there. And then, they can be scattered out in all kinds of depths.

## FULL OF SURPRISES

When I won the Bassmaster Classic in 1993 in Alabama, that tournament was in August. About half of my fish came from 15 feet of water, and the other half came from 6 of 7 feet of water — those were the fish I caught on the flat-sided bait. They could have been anywhere. You would have expected them all to be 40 feet deep, because the water tempera-



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



Berkley Dredger, rubber-tail bream

ture at Logan Martin Lake was 92 degrees. But there wasn't enough oxygen down deep, so they scattered out.

This means you need to look for fish in a lot of different places. Because it's August, and because fishermen have been putting a lot of pressure on fish in obvious places, they're going to scatter out and get on places that are a little bit out of the way, that don't get beaten up. All the really good, easy-to-find places are getting pressure, and those fish are either getting caught or they're moving to avoid the pressure.

I actually like to fish those kinds of places, the ones that don't show up right away on all the new, improved electronics we've got on our boats. I love to be in the situation — which is kind of old-school — where I'm finding structure with my bait, not with my electronics.

August is the start of the time of year when fish really start hanging around wood better than anything else. You start seeing them around brush, and August is a really good month to find bass on isolated brush or stumps. You just have to fish enough places to find ones where they're biting. At Buggs Island, out of 100 brush piles you fish, you might find 10 where they're biting. This is one of the best times of the year to fish isolated stumps — the No. 1 kind of structure to fish any time when fish get scattered.

## FLAT SIDES IN CURRENT

A couple more things. A lot of guys feel more comfortable in August fishing way up the river or way in the back of the creeks, because they can find current. What's good to know is that in that situation, in those places, bass will get on flat-sided baits like my Berkley Frittsides. They will get you a bite when nothing else will.



Berkley Dredger, lone ranger color

When you've had plenty of rain and there's moving water in the main lake where you're fishing, you should be able to catch them on anything from a Dredger 14.5 to a 25.5, depending on the lake you're fishing.

The other thing is, your chartreuse colors start to come back in August. I love the rubber-tail bream and lone ranger colors, which are sort of a chartreuse baby bass and chartreuse/silver back. Your baitfish colors like honey shad and chartreuse/blue will be good, but the first two are colors that are extremely good for getting big bites.

So, don't put your boat away in August because it's so hot and the fish don't seem like they're interested. They're probably still interested, when you find them, and that will take you looking in little places that are off the beaten path, away from all the rest of the boats and fishermen. ■

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## SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY

Phillip Gentry

The author shows that kayaks and skinny water go hand-in-hand when redfish move up on the shallowest of flats.



# PADDLING THE TAILING TIDES

AUGUST'S FULL MOON BRINGS ON HIGH-WATER OPPORTUNITIES FOR KAYAKERS

Phillip Gentry

**A**ugust can be a tough month for a lot of inshore species due to high water temperatures, but it also offers some great opportunities to sight-fish for redfish in a lot of areas across the Carolinas.

Known by redfish fanatics as “tailing tides,” the August full moon is called the sturgeon moon, after North America’s largest fish, the lake sturgeon; it might as well be named the redfish moon.

In fact, this August starts out on with a building full moon, which officially appears Aug. 3. Anglers can expect higher than normal tides to flood dry areas of the marsh, making those areas appealing to redfish and kayakers.

Prior local knowledge is key to finding and fishing flooded flats. Some areas of the Carolinas may flood with as little as 4½ feet of tide, while areas further south along may need 8 feet or more.

## FOOD IS FIRST

The appeal for redfish is food. Fiddler grabs make their holes in sandy areas above the normal tidal reach in the marsh, and they will hide in those holes as the water encroaches. Redfish, in turn, file in and ferret the crabs out by rooting

in the grass and sand.

The appeal to the kayak angler is the same basic appeal of a lot of plastic boat fishing: access to areas not accessible to others. Even the shallowest flats boat can’t go where a kayak can, especially when porting and pulling the boat over sandbars to reach the areas beyond.

Prevailing winds are also a consideration, especially the further north you go in the Carolinas. Ideally, you want a wind that will push water onto the flat you’ll be fishing and not sucking it out.

Timing is everything when fishing flooded flats. The best window may only be an hour or two at best, so it’s important to have you, your boat and gear prepared, and be sitting on the edge of the flat you want to fish before the water comes up.

Unlike a flats boat where one angler poles and one fishes, a kayak angler does the work and reaps the rewards.

Fly fishing is king when fishing flooded flats for redfish. Anglers choose 8-weight rods, floating lines and crab-imitating fly patterns to entice redfish into taking the bait. It’s also not uncommon for anglers to use spinning and even baitcasting gear on flooded flats. Soft plastics and subtle

surface or sub-surface baits fill the bill.

## BE CAREFUL

Regardless of the tackle used, stealth is paramount when fishing flooded flats, another advantage of approaching via kayak. Anglers typically look for redfish tails gently waving at or even above the surface, hence the moniker “tailing tides.” As a fish’s head goes down into the marsh bottom, the tail rises and waves as the redfish push their noses into the mud, sucking out crabs.

Don’t expect redfish to see baits as well as they might when fishing a school or even an individual fish swimming in more open water. The best presentations will be just ahead of the fish’s path, but not on top of working fish.

It can be maddening to work into position, perfectly place a bait and have the fish ignore or miss it because he was rooting face down in the mud. ■



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.

## TAILING RED? NO-TAIL RED

Chase Fuchs of Conway, S.C., has one of the best fish stories when it comes to redfish. This past May, he was fishing alone near Murrells Inlet, in the marsh behind Huntington Beach State Park. Hoping to catch a flounder as part of a month-long competition with the Pee Dee Kayak Anglers, Fuchs was doing his best to catch a flatfish from his Hobie Pro Angler 14 when his first redfish ever showed up.

"Earlier in the day, I had scooped up a blue crab and put him in the cooler for bait," he said. "I had been out fishing for several hours and was waiting for high tide to see if that would turn the fish on. I busted up the crab and was soaking it under a cork while I worked casting another rod."

After about 5 minutes, when he decided to check the crab and reposition it, he thought he was hung on some oyster shells.

"The cork never moved, and I pulled up and thought I was hung," Fuchs said. "That's when I felt something heavy on the end of the line. It didn't make a long run, but it just kept diving, trying to get back on the bottom."

After an impressive struggle, Fuchs landed a 20-inch redfish. The

only problem was, the fish was missing its entire tail from just past the anal and dorsal fins back.

"The photos don't do it justice for its size, because it was really thick," he said. "I didn't weigh him but I'm sure he'd go 10 pounds."

Fuchs said the missing tail appeared to be a long-healed injury, possible from being grabbed by a dolphin or a shark. The wound had completely healed over.

Although the fish would have fit inside the legal harvest slot limit in South Carolina of 15 to 23 inches, Fuchs decided to release it.

"I figured he'd already had a tough life, but he was apparently making it just fine without a tail," he said. "He would easily have been over the slot if his tail wasn't missing."

Talk about a great fish to catch in a redfish tournament, Fuchs' redfish won't have to worry about giving away his location on a tailing flat. ■

**Chase Fuchs caught this redfish, which was missing its normal tail assembly from the dorsal fin back, in the marsh behind Huntington Beach State Park this past May.**



## BEST BETS

### NORTH CAROLINA

**WHAT** — Redfish

**WHERE** — Bear Island marshes near Swansboro

**HOW** — Fly fishing is preferred in the shallow marsh.

**LAUNCH** — An N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission ramp in Cedar point, or Shell Rock Landing in Hubert.

**INSIDER TIP** — If fly fishing, use as light a line as you think you can get away with. Many times, with everything in order, redfish will still spook simply due to the line falling near them

### SOUTH CAROLINA

**WHAT** — Redfish

**WHERE** — Beaufort County

**HOW** — If you're not a fly fisherman, casting a scented Z-Man Crab rigged weedless and weightless will get the job done.

**LAUNCH** — Public launches on the south end of the ACE Basin are few and far between, but kayak road access is not bad. Google Maps and satellite are your best planning tools.

**INSIDER TIP** — Typical flood tides in Beaufort County run from 7.8 to 9 feet, which allows a little longer fishing window than most places.

## SANTEE STRINGER

Terry Madewell

Guide Bobby Winters said that not all catfish are caught in deep water in the Santee Cooper lakes during the summer.



# DON'T DEPEND ON DEEP

SANTEE FISHING ACTION CAN BE SHALLOW IN RIGHT AREAS

Terry Madewell

**T**he best August fishing opportunities certainly include deep water for some species some of the time, but skinny water fishing is alive and well during August.

Not all the fish are always in deep water in the Santee Cooper lakes during hot weather. Crappie will be caught on deep brush, and catfish can be found in deep holes. But excellent fishing opportunities exist in skinny water and plenty of big fish are available.

## HILLS AND VALLEYS

Catfish action can be excellent in the deep waters of both Lake Marion and Lake Moultrie, but Bobby Winters, who guides out of Blacks Camp, said not all the fishing is necessarily in deep water.

“Deep water is certainly an option, but what I refer to as shallow to mid-depths can still be excellent choices,” Winters said. “Just because the temperature is high doesn’t mean all the fish are deep. I like to drift fish hills and valleys this time of the year, and that’s simply bottom contours with a good bit of change in depth over a relatively small area.”

Some of his summer hotspots may be as shallow as 10 feet deep or less on the

top of the underwater hump, but they drop down to deeper water on the sides. The fish can often be found in the 10- to 20-foot depth range.

Winters (843-751-3080) will certainly fish deep water this month, but the shallow to mid-depths will often be the prime spots.

“Find the forage in either Lake Marion or Lake Moultrie, and you’ll have a good leg up on the catfish action, including the potential for big fish,” he said.

## CURRENT FOR CATS

That’s just one excellent hot weather catfish option, and fishing current is another, specifically in the Wateree or Congaree rivers in the upper end of Lake Marion. Both rivers offer miles of potentially productive water and typically provide good current flow, a strong attraction for hot-weather catfish.

The two rivers have excellent catfishing in common but are fed by separate drainage systems, creating varying opportunities based on upstream rainfall and water conditions. Adapt to the best water-flow situation for top results.

Because of the current flow and abundant snags and bends in both rivers,

most anglers fish from an anchored position. Depths are usually fairly shallow, and anglers will set up around the outside bends and along shoals to target blues, channel and flathead catfish. Often, a combination of two or all three species will be caught during any given day. Shad, bream and perch are good bait choices for all three species, and stink-bait and red worms often help target hefty channel catfish.

## SKINNY WATER FOR FAT BREAM

Bream action continues for those willing to hunt them down. This month, bream will be scattered around heavy cover, but working the edges of this shallow water cover will produce good limits of fish for those willing to cull smaller fish.

Guide T.C. Lloyd said many anglers totally overlook the opportunity for catching bream on the beds during August.



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.

“The bed-fishing is still excellent around the full moon,” Lloyd said. “However, most of the beds are in slightly deeper water than where fishermen found them during the spring, and often far from the shoreline cover. But they’re still in shallow water, maybe 4 to 6 feet deep.”

Lloyd (843-307-6678) will also use the side-scan feature on his graph to search for bream beds in open water, enabling him to pinpoint open water beds much quicker.

“This has the advantage of enabling me and my clients to fish beds that are almost untouched by other anglers,” he said.

## EARLY BIG BUCK OPPORTUNITY

August marks serious deer season preparation, with the season opening in many areas around the Santee Cooper lakes on Aug. 15. It's time to check stands to ensure they're in safe hunting condition, rid them of wasps and clear shooting lanes. Also, scout for heavy deer-use patterns and make plans for the opening of the season. One thing that will get fishermen off the lakes during August is the allure of deer hunting.

It's a hot time for sure, but the first few days of deer season offer a great opportunity for harvesting big bucks, many still adorned in velvet. Scout soybean and peanut fields early with trail cameras and glass.

Using trail cameras to lock into deer patterns enables hunters the opportunity to take a big buck very early in the season. Often the first few days of the season offer big buck potential because deer have not had hunting pressure.

The fish are biting and early season deer hunting offers prime, but often short-lived, opportunities for a big buck that hasn't been pressured. ■



Guide T.C. Lloyd said some bream will spawn in August on the Santee Cooper lakes. They'll still be shallow, but maybe not quite as shallow as they were in late spring.

### SALTWATER

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

FISH SPECIES	Minimum Lengths	Creel Limit (per person)
Greater amberjack	28" FL	1/day
Blue marlin	99" LJFL	1/day
White marlin	66" LJFL	1/day
Sailfish	63" LJFL	1/day
Sharks	%	%
Cobia	36" FL	1/day&
Bluefish	None	15/day
Black drum	14" minimum 27" maximum TL	5/day
Redfish (red drum, channel bass)	15" minimum 23" maximum TL	2/day
Flounder (state waters)	14" TL	10/day
Groupers (black and gag)	24" TL	1/day
Red, scamp, yellowfin, yellowmouth	20" TL	3/day
Speckled hind/Warsaw grouper	closed	closed
Red porgy (aka silver snapper, pinky)	14" TL	3/day#
King mackerel	24" FL	3/day
Spanish mackerel	12" FL	15/day
Sheepshead	14"	10/day (30 per boat)
Spadefish	None	20/day (agg. grouper)
Black sea bass	13"	7/day
Dolphin	20" FL	10/day (60 per boat)
Yellowfin tuna	27" CFL	3/day
Bluefin/Bigeye tuna	Contact NMFS ( <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

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

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

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

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

% For lake-specific regulations, see the SCNDR's Regulations Digest or visit [www.dnr.sc.gov](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.

## HEAD FOR THE MOUNTAINS

Robert Satterwhite



# BUG-EYED FOR TERRESTRIALS

WITH INSECT HATCHES LARGELY MISSING IN SUMMER, GO TO THE BIG BUGS

**W**ith few exceptions, major insect hatches have run their course, and trout are turning to more substantial fare: those land-based insects called terrestrials.

These insects — ants, beetles, grasshoppers, crickets, bees, worms and caterpillars — usually begin showing up in late May and June, and they are a major part of a trout's diet until the first freeze either kills them or sends them scurrying underground to await another season.

While delicate presentation is important when fishing with tiny “hatch” insects, a terrestrial should land in the water with a plop, according to Bruce

Harang of Asheville, a former president of Smoky Mountain Fly Fishers.

“It’s a natural sound that immediately gets a trout’s attention,” he said. “Grasshoppers, beetles and the like aren’t dainty bugs. They land like a cargo plane.”

Since terrestrials usually are found in trees, bushes and grass along edges of streams, Harang said he casts as close to the bank as possible, 6 inches or so, because trout know insects are more likely to fall into the water near the bank.

## HARD LANDING

Also, he said, “If I’m casting to a fish I can see, I plop the fly down hard right behind the trout’s head, off to one side or


the other. Nine times out of 10, the fish will instinctively react by turning and taking the fly. They don’t want to let a good-sized bug get away.”

Although a wide variety of materials are used to make terrestrials, Harang prefers deer-hair patterns such as the Letort cricket and Letort hopper.

Another terrestrial pattern Harang favors is a Crowe beetle. “I also use Humpy pat-



**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 Tuckasee River, Caney Fork, Moses Creek, and several other prime trout streams.



Fish terrestrial patterns as close as you can to a stream's banks, because when they fall in the water, they typically don't fall very far off the bank.

terns tied in yellow, brown, and black. These flies have a bulbous body and are easier to see in late evening. They work extremely well on mountain streams.”

Kevin Howell of Brevard, a trout fishing guide and owner of Davidson River Outfitters in Brevard, N.C., usually starts the terrestrial season with an inchworm.

“Both inchworms and beetles are present throughout the summer and fall,” he said.

Inchworms are good patterns because they work just about any place in a stream, from pools to riffles. Bead-head patterns are especially effective because the fly tumbles like a real inchworm, and the added weight gets the fly down into deeper water, an important factor when fishing in hot weather.

In late summer, Howell uses a No. 12 or No. 10 caterpillar pattern: “You see a lot of caterpillars this time of the year, and they’re always falling into the water.”

In July and continuing through early September, Howell also fishes with black ants, either foam or dubbed, in Nos. 20 to 14.

## BEETLES AND WIND

“If you see trout feeding under tree overhangs, and there’s no wind blowing, they’re usually feeding on beetles,” he said. “But if the wind is blowing, use an ant pattern, because ants are more likely to be blown into the water than beetles. Insects just don’t jump in the water and commit suicide. They either land in the water accidentally or they’re blown into the water.”

When fishing with beetles and ants, Howell uses long leaders, 8 or 9 feet, and a 7X tippet, letting the fly ride on the surface and giving it an occasional twitch to make it appear more like a live insect struggling in the water.

Harang said the most-common ants found along stream banks are carpenter ants.

“I use a No. 16 to No. 14 with two black balls of dubbing separated by a midsection that has a few strands of peacock or pearl-colored Krystal Flash and a few turns of black CDC feather,” he said.

The Krystal Flash draws attention to the fly, and the CDC fibers wave like the legs of a real ant when it finds itself in the water.

“If an ant falls into the water, it will paddle its legs like there’s no tomorrow, and with a trout’s love of ants, there’s usually no tomorrow,” Harang said.

## SINKING ANTS

Harang also uses an ant pattern with a lacquered-thread body that allows the ant to sink.

“This is especially effective if you cast just above a shoot at the head of a pool and let the fly wash down into the pool,” he said.

Unlike spring hatches, terrestrials come in all shapes and sizes, and trout don’t see them in great numbers since they randomly fall or land in the water. What a trout does see when a terrestrial pops into a stream is a big mouthful of protein. Often enough, a big brown or rainbow trout will go out of its way to nab it. ■

Redfish will crowd the edges of the ICW on both sides of the North Carolina-South Carolina border, feeding on abundant baitfish.

# Sportsman FISHING HOTSPOTS



## WATERWAY REDS INVADE LITTLE RIVER

Jeff Burleson

### Lower end of tide cycle concentrates gamefish, baitfish in ICW

**A**ugust is the last full month of summer, and while school might be back in session soon, it is a fine time to head to the coast to put a bend in the rod.

With water temperatures high, the inshore nursery grounds are full of bite-sized morsels for the gaggle of gamefish to feast upon. And the Atlantic Intra-coastal Waterway (ICW) is a prime location to tangle with redfish that taking advantage of the buffet.

The ICW serves as a thoroughfare for boaters for commercial and private transport along the coast of both Carolinas. For most of its route, the ICW travels just inshore of the inlets, which makes it an excellent platform for baitfish and large gamefish living in these waters.

Greg Holmes of Fish Skinny Guide Service out of Little River, S.C., homes in on the ICW when the bait gets thick at the height of the summer fishing season.

Redfish are at the top of his hit list, and the ICW is his ground zero for these feisty fish.

"The ICW heats up in the summer," said Holmes (843-241-0594). "The waterway is clogged full of baitfish this time of year, and the reds school up and feast on them."

Inshore waters are prime nursery grounds for juvenile fish, and the finger mullet and menhaden are very plentiful. But many inshore marshes drain into the ICW's deep channel, pulling all the small fish into troubled waters. Holmes targets the ICW around the lower end of the tide, when many of the adjacent creeks and marshes are nearly dry.

"I like to start targeting these areas when the water is off the grass completely and the mullet will be running down the edges of the mud," he said.

The bait can be thick along the shallow edges of the ICW, and for Holmes, anglers need something that stands out and entices redfish to come in.

"I like to use either large mullet or something smelly like a fresh-cut chunk of mullet. That's the trick," he said. "There is already a buttload of small baits everywhere, and the chunk of bloody mullet sitting there will bring them in."

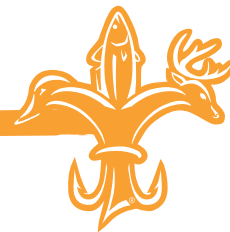
Holmes will hook his baits on an Owner Mutu light 2/0 circle hook with just enough pinch-on weights to keep the bait stationary. And he also uses a short leader between the weights and the hook.

"The short, 3 inches of leader helps keep the bait from going too deep in their mouth, and it also helps with the hookset," he said.

Holmes targets these fish along the ICW during the low end of the tide cycle, and his favorite tide is between halfway out to halfway back in, but he avoids any slack tides.

"The bite is best when the tide is running," he said. ■

— Jeff Burleson



# CAPE FEAR TRIPLETAIL

## make for some fun, summer action

**T**he Cape Fear area is the farthest northern range of several species of fish that love warmer waters, and tripletail are one of the favorites. They are typically found in limited numbers in South Atlantic and Gulf Coast states and are comfortable in rivers and sounds, plus, during the summer they may ride the ocean currents northward. They arrive with the warm, summer waters in July and stay until it begins to cool.

Tripletail get their name from their large dorsal and anal fins that extend well back on the body and round out above and below the tail. At a quick glance, a tripletail appears to be a chunky fish with three tails.

The North Carolina state record is a 27-pound, 7-ounce fish caught from Oak Island's Ocean Crest Pier in September 2009. Ocean tripletail are often larger, while tripletail caught in the Cape Fear River typically run from 3 to 12 pounds.

Jeff and Christian Wolfe, of Seahawk Inshore Fishing Charters ([www.seahawkshoringfishingcharters.com](http://www.seahawkshoringfishingcharters.com)) in Kure Beach said tripletail in the Cape Fear River feed on minnows and shrimp that are riding the current. They are attracted to floating objects and structure that extends above the water.

"We like to look in the bays out of the main flow of the river for tripletail," Jeff Wolfe said. "This is where the range markers for the ship channel are set, and tripletail are attracted to them for their shade and disrupting the current. Tripletail are also attracted to buoys marking crab pots, and there are lots of them in the bays."

"Tripletail may be on the surface or a few feet below, but they are usually in the shade of something," Christian Wolfe said. "We use live minnows and shrimp and suspend them under small floats to be sure they stay in the strike zone. Tripletails can be really spooky, so we only get close enough to cast and don't cast directly at them, but a little upwind or upcurrent and let the bait drift in."

Tripletail fight hard, sometimes making a long run but always

fighting all the way to the boat. These ferocious fighters also have a soft side, and that's their delicious white meat. They taste great grilled, fried, baked, broiled or steamed — as long as they aren't overcooked.

The N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries has no size or creel limits for tripletail. ■

— Jerry Dilsaver

Tripletail are caught around floating structure in the ocean, the Cape Fear River and its bays.



Jeff Wolfe



Brian Cope

## CHARLESTON JETTIES are full of hungry, summer visitors

**W**hile the shallow waters in many creeks and inlets almost boil in the August heat, two of the most consistent Lowcountry hot-weather fishing spots are the jetties just outside of Charleston Harbor.

Bull redfish, huge black drum, flounder, black sea bass and all kinds of sharks will bite just fine here through the summer, and anglers anchored up within casting distance of the rocks will find deeper holes on the other side of the boat, holding the same species. But sometimes, this is where the bigger fish are.

James LaVanway of Reel Fish Finder Charters said this is no place to be stingy with bait. He loads three, four, even five shrimp on a 8/0 hook and likes to drop two lines straight down, then cast two more out the back of the boat, parallel to the jetty.

After that, it's just a matter of waiting. Circle hooks allow the fish to hook themselves, so he suggests leaving the rods in rod holders. If using J-hooks, LaVanway likes holding that rod to stay ready for a hookset.

"When using circle hooks, most anglers don't realize how much they need to reel, reel, reel before pulling the rod out of the rod holder," he said. "That helps the fish hook itself, and you have to reel fast and constantly until you feel the fish. Of course, a lot of times, the fish is already hooked, and that helps. But still, these

are big fish, and they will run you into any structure they can find. You have to really stay aggressive when fighting them."

If anglers want to target big black drum, LaVanway eases away from the jetty a bit and drops cut bait down to the bottom.

"The big black drum love these deep holes," he said. "When you're fishing here, you need to have a venting tool ready, because these fish will not be slot fish. They will be over, and some way, way over. These are trophy fish, and you don't want to harm them. A quick photo, then vent them, then back in they go."

LaVanway (843-697-2081) uses heavy rods, 4500 to 6500 series spinning reels and 50- to 80-pound line. He uses as much weight as necessary to keep his bait down. One-ounce sinkers are usually enough, but this changes as the tide shifts. You want to stay as stationary as possible, and he prefers the anchor locking feature on his trolling motor over a traditional anchor.

"One thing you don't want to do here is sit in one spot without getting a bite for more than a few minutes," he said. "There's plenty of fish running along this structure throughout the day. Sometimes all it takes is you moving 30 or 40 feet and you'll go from nothing to a fish on every cast." ■

— Brian Cope

# FLOUNDER ARE BACK!

## Cape Lookout guide expects great action

**A**fter almost a year on the sidelines, North Carolina fishermen will be able to keep flounder for six weeks, beginning Aug. 16.

"Flounder fishing should be off the charts when the season opens," said guide Noah Link of Harkers Island, who said the season closure that began last Sept. 4 — along with a restricted commercial fishing season — makes the Aug. 16-Sept. 15 season very promising. "It looks like the closure already has helped flounder, so this summer should be great.

"That's a lot of the reason we've caught flounder (this spring) in the marshes," he said. "The giggers aren't getting out there, so nobody's been hitting flounders."

This year, Link and his clients, along with anglers guided by his son, Tanner, have caught and released dozens of hefty, legal-sized flounder while fishing for spotted seatrout and red drum.

"Reds and specks hit the same lures as flounders," said Link, who operates Noah's Ark Fishing charters. "It wasn't unusual to catch a dozen or more 3- to 5-pound flounder each trip."

The Lynks fish inside waters around Cape Lookout: near Harkers Island and behind Shackleford Banks, Beaufort and Morehead City. After years of fishing Crystal Coast waters, the father and son know where to find flounder and other species.

"I don't hit the wrecks at all for flounders in August," said Link (252-342-6911).

Inside creek mouths and creek bends with ledges are good spots during falling tides.

"Tanner often goes into a creek during high tide and waits for the tide to start falling, then fishes his way out," Link said. "When the tide drops, baitfish come out of the marshes and get swept along edges. Bottom contours with holes also concentrate flounder.... I target holes; I anchor there and don't drift fish."

Link's tackle includes 7-foot Plasma spinning rods with a 2000 or 3000 series spinning reels spooled with 12-pound braid, a 2- to 3-foot leader of 30-pound P-line fluorocarbon and a 1/0 or 2/0 J-hook. Link ties on ¼- or ⅜-ounce jigheads, depending on the current, tipping them with baitfish. Popping-cork rigs are also effective with live baits.

"I like mud minnows or killifish," he said. "Flounders eat them; finger mullets are harder to keep alive."

Recreational fishermen can keep four flounder per day of at least 15 inches in length. ■

— Craig Holt

Guide Noah Link believes flounder fishing will rebound this month thanks to a long season closure this year.



Noah Link

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# TOPWATER ACTION

## makes Broad River a great summer fishery

It's sweltering, and that kind of heat can push bass into feeding for only a few minutes in the morning and then again in the evening. It can make a day of fishing seem like a drag on many bodies of water.

But that's not the case on the cool, flowing waters of South Carolina's Broad River. And that cool water keeps the fish biting on a much more angler-friendly schedule.

Mike McSwain of Broad River Smallmouth uses a number of different strategies when fishing the river summer's heat. One of those is topwater lures. They're good choices for mornings and evenings, but what many anglers don't realize is how good they are through the middle of the day.

"River fishing is different than fishing in lakes or ponds," said McSwain (843-763-3805). "The constant ripple on the surface caused by moving water is always perfect for topwater lures."

Smallmouth bass are his main target on the Broad, but he catches plenty of largemouth, too.

Whopper Poppers, Zara Spooks and Pop-Rs are three lures, all with different characteristics, that McSwain uses in the summer.

He employs a typical walk-the-dog style retrieve with the Spooks, twitching his rod tip and reeling in the slack as he goes. This causes the lure to shimmy side to side, enticing some violent strikes from hungry fish.

With Pop-Rs, he twitches his rod tip, then reels in the slack, pretty much the same way he fishes a Spook. But the Pop-R's concave front causes a popping noise, sending water splashing out front of it.

The Whopper Popper gets a different kind of retrieve.

"There's more than one way to fish this lure, which is what makes it so good," he said. "But what works best for me here is to retrieve it steadily, at a pretty brisk pace. You can play around with reeling it at different speeds and the fish may react different from one day to the next. I call a slow retrieve a 20-mph speed. I like to reel it at about a 60-mph speed."

No matter which lure you're using, where should you cast it?

"Pretty much anywhere," McSwain said. "All the usual spots you would on a lake, like near downed trees, along the edges of grass lines, near rocks. But you can cast it in the eddies formed by the shoals in the middle of the river. Cast it to shallow water right at the bank, then reel it over deeper cuts and into the shoals. Cast it right into the churning waters tumbling through the shoals.

"You really can't go wrong throwing these lures on this river." ■

— Brian Cope

Guide Mike McSwain said topwater fishing on the Broad River can be good all day, even during August's heat.



Brian Cope

# FIND THERMOCLINE, and you'll find Falls of Neuse Lake bass

Guide Joel Munday turns on his side-scan unit to locate the thermocline in August before he makes his first cast at Falls of the Neuse near North Carolina's Raleigh-Durham area.

Munday is searching for that thin layer of cool, oxygenated water that exists beneath a layer of warm water above it and a cold layer of water beneath it caused by hot summer weather.

It's usually full of fish  
"The thermocline in August at Falls is typically around 14 to 15 feet," said Munday, who runs Outdoor Expeditions Guide Service, "but it can exist in shallower water given changing weather patterns."

Munday (919-669-2959) likes the thermocline setting up at its usual depth because that translates into bass holding on ledges and main-lake points with Carolina-rigged plastics and deep-diving crankbaits.

For Carolina rigging, Munday uses a

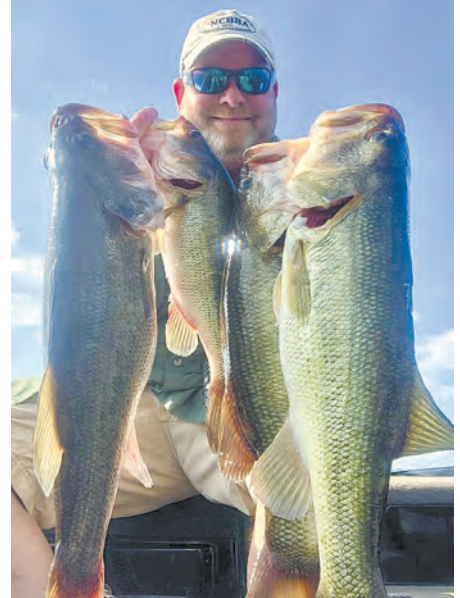
7-foot, medium-heavy, 13 Fishing Envy rod paired with a 13 Fishing Concept reel spooled with 15- to 17-pound fluorocarbon. He ties a 3-foot leader to the main line and fishes a 7-inch Zoom Trick Worm or 10-inch Zoom Ol' Monster worm. The depth he's fishing determines the weight he uses, though it's usually ½-ounce.

A deep-diving Rapala DT Series crankbait in a shad pattern is his lure of choice cranking with a 7-foot, medium action, 13 Fishing Envy rod and Concept C reel housing 12-pound fluorocarbon.

If the thermocline dictates fishing shallower, Munday targets shallow water adjacent to deep water, at creek mouths, the first third of creeks and along steep banks. He'll often find fish around wood that includes tree laps, standing timber and stumps near shaded areas.

"I'm mainly seeking reaction bites flipping jigs and Senkos," Munday said. "I want

Guide Joel Munday shows off the kind of bass that Falls of Neuse Lake produces, even during the summer.



Outdoors Expedition Guide Service

to drop the bait right in front of the fish and let it fall slowly."

Munday said a brief topwater bite early in the morning occasionally takes place. He keeps an outfit rigged with a Pop-R or Zara Spook for any surface activity.

One factor can ruin thermocline fishing. "A period of heavy rain can really disturb the thermocline and force most of the fish to the bank," said Munday. ■

— Tony Garitta



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

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

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

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

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

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**The 2020 PrimeTimes Wall Calendar.** \$13.95 (plus \$4 s&h). Know the best days, best times, and their relative strengths for all of 2020 with this information-packed, full-color, 11-inch by 17-inch, graphic peaks

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2020 AUG		BEST DAYS		LUNAR PERIODS				TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED	
POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL	VALUE	MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT	
Sat 1	██	██	██	49	7:09 pm	11:41 pm - Midnight	4:08 am	11:10 am - 12:02 pm	☉
Sun 2	██	██	██	57	7:58 pm	Midnight - 12:33 am	5:07 am	12:06 pm - 12:58 pm ☀	☉
Mon 3	██	██	██	62	8:40 pm	12:32 am - 1:30 am	6:09 am	12:57 pm - 1:55 pm ☀	☉ FULL
Tue 4	██	██	██	53	9:16 pm	1:19 am - 2:27 am	7:10 am	1:44 pm - 2:52 pm ☀	☉
Wed 5	██	██	██	44	9:48 pm	1:59 am - 3:21 am	8:10 am	2:24 pm - 3:46 pm	☉
Thu 6	██	██	██	35	10:17 pm	2:36 am - 4:14 am	9:08 am	3:01 pm - 4:39 pm	☉
Fri 7	██	██	██	33	10:44 pm	3:09 am - 5:05 am	10:05 am	3:34 pm - 5:30 pm	☉
Sat 8	██	██	██	35	11:10 pm	3:43 am - 5:55 am	11:00 am	4:08 pm - 6:20 pm	☉
Sun 9	██	██	██	39	11:37 pm	4:14 am - 6:44 am	11:55 am	4:39 pm - 7:09 pm	☉ Apogee
Mon 10	██	██	██	46		4:47 am - 7:33 am ☀	12:51 pm	5:12 pm - 7:58 pm	☉
Tue 11	██	██	██	59	12:05 am	5:23 am - 8:23 am ☀	1:47 pm	5:48 pm - 8:48 pm	☉ HALF
Wed 12	██	██	██	53	12:37 am	6:01 am - 9:13 am ☀	2:45 pm	6:26 pm - 9:38 pm	☉
Thu 13	██	██	██	50	1:12 am	6:44 am - 10:06 am	3:44 pm	7:09 pm - 10:31 pm ☀	☉
Fri 14	██	██	██	53	1:54 am	7:31 am - 11:03 am	4:43 pm	7:56 pm - 11:28 pm	☉
Sat 15	██	██	██	64	2:43 am	8:23 am - 11:59 am	5:40 pm	8:48 pm - 12:24 am	☉ HIGH
Sun 16	██	██	██	75	3:39 am	9:22 am - 12:54 pm	6:34 pm	9:47 pm - 1:19 am	☉
Mon 17	██	██	██	85	4:42 am	10:22 am - 1:48 pm ☀	7:23 pm	10:47 pm - 2:13 am	☉
Tue 18	██	██	██	88	5:50 am	11:24 am - 2:40 pm ☀	8:07 pm	11:49 pm - Midnight	☉ NEW
Wed 19	██	██	██	76	7:00 am	12:28 pm - 3:28 pm ☀	8:46 pm	Midnight - 3:05 am	☉
Thu 20	██	██	██	64	8:11 am	1:31 pm - 4:11 pm	9:22 pm	12:53 am - 3:53 am	☉
Fri 21	██	██	██	52	9:21 am	2:34 pm - 4:52 pm	9:56 pm	1:56 am - 4:36 am	☉ Perigee
Sat 22	██	██	██	43	10:31 am	3:36 pm - 5:34 pm	10:30 pm	2:59 am - 5:17 am	☉
Sun 23	██	██	██	39	11:41 am	4:37 pm - 6:15 pm	11:05 pm	4:01 am - 5:59 am	☉
Mon 24	██	██	██	40	12:50 pm	5:40 pm - 6:58 pm	11:42 pm	5:02 am - 6:40 am ☀	☉
Tue 25	██	██	██	47	1:58 pm	6:40 pm - 7:46 pm ☀		6:05 am - 7:23 am	☉ HALF
Wed 26	██	██	██	34	3:05 pm	7:41 pm - 8:37 pm ☀	12:24 am	7:05 am - 8:11 am ☀	☉
Thu 27	██	██	██	27	4:07 pm	8:40 pm - 9:32 pm	1:11 am	8:06 am - 9:02 am	☉ LOW
Fri 28	██	██	██	26	5:04 pm	9:36 pm - 10:28 pm	2:03 am	9:05 am - 9:57 am	☉
Sat 29	██	██	██	26	5:55 pm	10:28 pm - 11:24 pm	3:00 am	10:01 am - 10:53 am	☉
Sun 30	██	██	██	36	6:38 pm	11:14 pm - 12:20 am	4:00 am	10:53 am - 11:49 am	☉
Mon 31	██	██	██	46	7:16 pm	11:56 pm - Midnight	5:00 am	11:39 am - 12:45 pm	☉

25 50 75  
AVERAGE

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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**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
Grouper (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:	12" TL	10/day in federal waters
Gray (mangrove), yellowtail, queen, cubera, dog, mahogony, schoolmaster		
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](http://hmspermits.noaa). % 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.

# TARGET DEEP CRAPPIE

## around main-lake brush at Kerr Lake

**W**hen the August sun sends folks searching for shade, Kerr Lake crappie will be doing the same. Slabs will be utilizing the thousands of man-made brush piles anglers have arranged over the years to gain relief for their lidless eyes and find an easy meal.

Whether he's casting a jig or jigging a spoon, guide Eddie Moody of Roxboro, NC will be browsing the brush for a creel full of crappie.

"In August, the crappie at Kerr will be patterning the deeper brush," said Moody (984-363-5256), who runs Slab's Guide Service, "most predictably, main-lake brush in the 20- to 30-foot range at normal pool. I'll be checking those near the main channel where it swings close to the bank and a point runs out to it."

Although many anglers have waypoints for brush they have placed or found, a newcomer could use his sonar — especially side-scan — to probe a likely area and find a few good spots for a day's fishing. Moody prefers the area from mid-lake to the dam in August because of the consistently deeper water. After a suitable brush pile is chosen or found, he will figure the distance from the top of the brush to the surface to determine his approach, since the most catchable fish will be close to the top.

"I'll drive over and throw a marker buoy on the upwind side so I'm facing into the wind when I circle back to fish," Moody said. "If there's less than 10 feet from the top of the brush to the surface, I'll back off and throw a 1/16- or 1/8-ounce jig with a Bobby Garland Stroll'R soft plastic in electric chicken. You can count down about a foot per second until you get down to the top and then begin a slow retrieve, adding a Pautzke Crappie Fire Ball during a tough bite.

"If it's more than 10 feet below the surface, I'll switch over to a 3/8-ounce Hopkins spoon and jig vertically right over top. When you get deeper than 10 feet, you take up a lot of fishing time waiting for the jig to get to the brush. With most 1500 to 2500 series spinning reels, one backwind equals two feet of line out when you're measuring down."

Moody prefers 6-pound Slime Line Hi-Vis green for casting and jigging, believing he can see many bites in the line before he feels it. Silver and gold are the norm for spoons, but, Moody will add some extra flare with white or chartreuse fingernail polish. ■

— Dusty Wilson



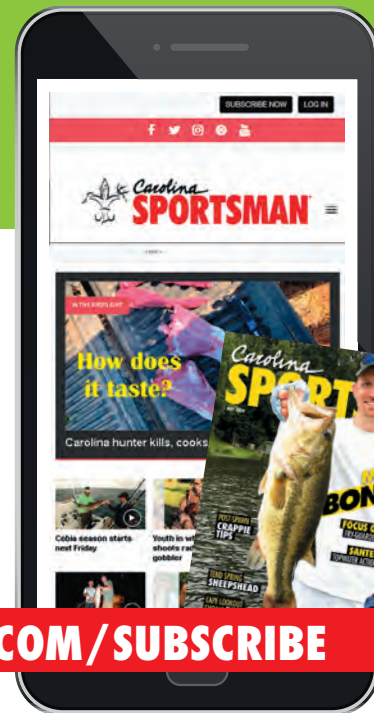
Eddie Moody

Deeper brush piles produce a lot of summer slabs on Kerr Lake.



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## BARNETT EXPLORER CROSSBOWS

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The XP370, XP380 and XP400 come ready to hunt with a single-bolt assembly, 4x32 scope, a side-mount quiver, rope-cocking device and two 20-inch carbon arrows.

Two important features are the Soft Lok Floating Bristle Arrow Retainer, which holds arrows securely in place, an Anti-Dry Fire trigger system. The three crossbows propel arrows at 370,

380 and 400 feet per second, respectively, based on draw weights of 165, 185 and 200 pounds, with weights between 6 and 6.2 pounds. Overall lengths are 32¼ to 33¾ inches and all three bows are 19 inches wide.

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## MILLENNIUM L105, L110 LADDER STANDS

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The L105 is an 18-foot, single-seat ladder. The L110 has a fold-up seat and larger platform that makes it bowhunter friendly, as well as a double-rail rigid ladder system that allows the stand to be

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Both stands feature an anti-flex support system that eliminates the need for a tree brace, and both come with 35-foot Safelink Safety lines and carabiners that allow you to raise and lower your weapon safely. Both have 300-pound capacities and weigh between 90 and 92 pounds.

**MSRP: \$299.99, \$339.99.**

**For more info, visit: [millenniumstands.com](http://millenniumstands.com)**

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Plano Molding, the Texas-based company that has provided the fishing market with hundreds of great products over the past several decades, has moved some of its tackle-box technology to its line of protective gun cases, introducing its All-Weather 2 Rifle Cases with the Rustrictor waterproofing technology.

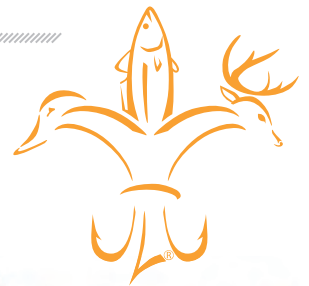
Perfecting on the company's tackle boxes, Rustrictor makes the rifle cases, 36-, 42- and 52-inch models, perfectly waterproof and able to withstand any of the rigors or travel.

The cases feature the Dri-Loc seal that is waterproof and dustproof, so there's no chance of rust or corrosion developing, even if the case sits through a downpour on a baggage carrier somewhere. By the way, the cases are lockable and airline approved, including a pressure-release

valve to equalize pressure changes while in flight.

**MSRP: \$119.99-\$199.99**

**For more info, visit: [www.planomolding.com/hunting/gun-cases/rifle-cases](http://www.planomolding.com/hunting/gun-cases/rifle-cases)**



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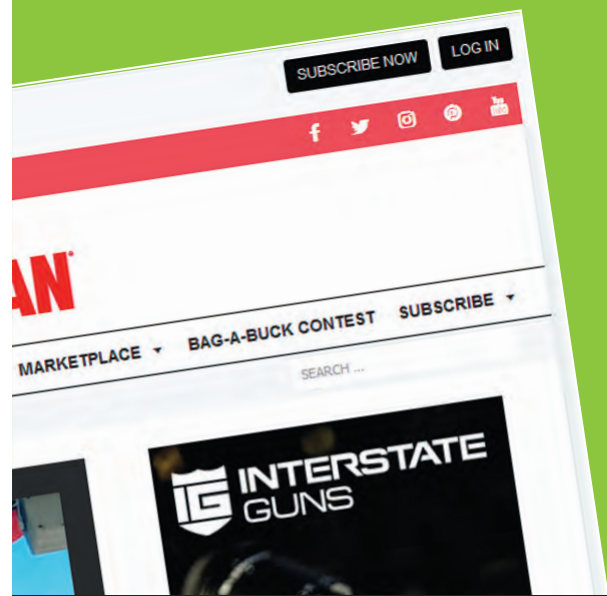
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