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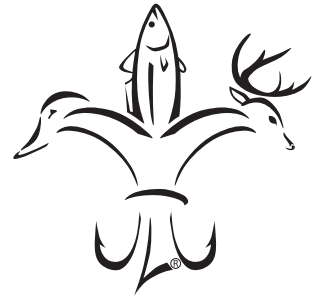
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LITTLE LAKE, BIG CATFISH



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GEAR UP FOR DUCKS



Carolina SPORTSMAN

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Dieter Melhorn, who catches big catfish all over the Carolinas, loves to stay close to home and fish little Mountain Island Lake southwest of Charlotte, N.C., where the big fish roam. Photo by Terry Madewell.



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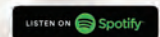
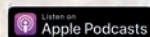


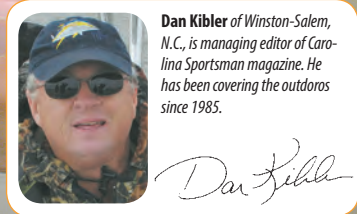
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Dan Kibler of Winston-Salem, N.C., is managing editor of Carolina Sportsman magazine. He has been covering the outdoors since 1985.

Wesley Satterwhite

GOOD-BYE TO OUR TROUT WIZARD

COLUMNIST SATTERWHITE SIGNS OFF AFTER TWO DECADES WITH MAGAZINE

For the better part of a dozen years, it has been my honor and pleasure to bring to readers of this magazine the flawless prose of Bob Satterwhite.

I became acquainted with him maybe 30 years ago, when he was editing *Blue Ridge Outdoors*, a monthly, tabloid outdoor publication of the *Asheville Citizen-Times* newspaper. Our roles were reversed back then; I was writing for him; he was the editor. When I took over *North Carolina Sportsman* in 2009 and became his editor, I remarked on how the world had turned upside down. What was I doing editing Bob Satterwhite?

Our professional relationship ends this month as Satterwhite closes a chapter that was open for more than 20 years that he wrote the *Head for the Mountains* column, first for *North Carolina Sportsman*, then for *Carolina Sportsman*.

Well into his 70s, he is retiring from trout fishing — he explains why in this month's column — and he's also retiring from writing. I am sad for him on both accounts.

A native of Morganton, N.C., he settled in Asheville a long time ago and became the managing editor of the *Citizen-Times*, at that time, the voice of western North Carolina. When he retired from that job, he wrote for

close to a dozen years a weekly outdoors column in the *Citizen-Times*, as well as editing *Blue Ridge Outdoors* for a couple of years.

Among old, ink-stained wretches — a name that we aging, former newspaper people often use to describe ourselves — he wasn't just well respected, no, it was far more than that. From the hires I know he made to stories about him from those same reporters and columnists, I know he was a tremendous judge of talent, and once hired, he got out of the way and let that talent perform.

Who amongst us didn't wish our bosses would do exactly that?

I don't know how we'll replace him; I'm not sure that's possible. And that's my ultimate tribute to him. ■



James Fitzgerald caught this 10.4-pound largemouth bass earlier this fall near Vass in North Carolina's Sandhills region.

Bag-A-Buck Contest
underway



Don't forget to post photos of your bucks in the Carolina Sportsman Bag-A-Buck Contest to be eligible to win monthly prizes of great Sportsman swag from the online Sportsman Store.

To enter or see deer that have been entered, log onto www.carolinasportsman.com/contest/index.php?event=26

NC MAN WINS NOVEMBER BAG-A-BUCK CONTEST

When Justin Riewestahl first became aware of a big buck hanging around on a hunting lease in Harnett County, N.C., it was because of an unbelievably large rubbed tree he didn't immediately recognize.

"In October, my buddy, his uncle and I went out and mowed shooting lanes, and I saw this big rub near where we had the truck parked, on an 8-inch thick hardwood," said Riewestahl, from Coats, N.C. "I said to myself that it looked like his uncle

must have hit the tree with the mower; it couldn't be a rub that big.

"The next time we were out there, though, I noticed that tree had been marked up more, and then, I found five scrapes in the area. We moved a trail camera in there, and two days later, we had a picture of that buck working a rub, so we didn't park there anymore. We walked in further, took the long way around not to disturb him."

On Nov. 9, Riewestahl, a 34-year-old fireman for the town



Justin Riewestahl won the November Bag-A-Buck contest with this Harnett County, N.C., buck with chocolate-colored horns, killed Nov. 9.

of Fuquay-Varina, got a look at his buck, and he dropped him at 150 yards with a single shot from his Browning X-Bolt in .300 Win Mag.

The main-frame 6-point buck — with one sticker point — had a 17½-inch inside spread, tall tines and chocolate-colored antlers. Riewestahl entered the buck in Carolina Sportsman's Bag-a-Buck contest, and on Dec. 1, his entry was drawn as the winner of the November contest.

For winning the third of four monthly contests, Riewestahl gets a one-year subscription to *Carolina Sportsman* and a \$25 gift certificate to the online Sportsman's Store. He, along with every other contest entry, remains eligible for the grand prize: a \$50 gift certificate to the online Sportsman's Store, a three-year subscription to *Carolina Sportsman*, and a two-day, deer/hog combo hunt for two at South Carolina's Cherokee Run Lodge.

Riewestahl was hunting from a stand along the edge between a pine thicket and hardwoods, with a 300-yard shooting lane

CCA-NC SUES STATE OVER MANAGEMENT OF MARINE FISHERIES

The Coastal Conservation Association-North Carolina (CCA-NC) and 86 residents of North Carolina from 29 different counties — including five former members of the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission — filed suit in Wake County Superior Court on Nov. 11, against the N.C. Division of Environmental Quality alleging that the agency that manages North Carolina's marine resources has been an "abject failure" in meeting its legal duties to manage coastal fishing stocks in a manner that would fulfill its constitutional "public-trust responsibilities" and protect "public-trust rights" to fish in coastal waters.

CCA-NC's suit essentially accuses the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries with managing marine resources for the good of the commercial fishing industry alone.

"The state has failed to meet that legal duty, however, instead allowing for-profit exploitation of coastal fisheries resources by fewer than 7,000 citizens to supplant the public rights of 11 million citizens to use coastal fisheries resources," CCA-NC said in announcing the suit.

In addition, CCA-NC's announcement said, "the State's regulatory agencies ultimately become co-opted to serve the commercial interests they are charged with regulating.

In its suit, CCA-NC details what it calls "specific evidence" of long-term declines in North Carolina's marine fish populations, with very few, if any, moves by NCDMF to turn things around. Specifically mentioned were river herring, Southern flounder, striped bass, spot, croaker and weakfish.

CCA-NC also says the lawsuit cites "three critical state management failures that have infringed on the public's right to fish for personal use: (1) facilitating commercial fishing practices and gear that cause staggering amounts of resource wastage; (2) allowing chronic overfishing of multiple fish stocks historically important to the fishing public to cause stock demise; and (3) disregarding a lack of reporting of any harvest by over half of all State commercial fishing license holders."

The suit was filed one day after the N.C. Coastal Fisheries Reform Group dropped NCDEQ from a lawsuit over shrimp trawling, instead focusing on a handful of companies operating the biggest shrimp trawlers in North Carolina. ■

carved out of the timber. On Nov. 9, at daylight, one doe came out in the shooting lane, followed by two more. The does were all eating acorns when a small, 8-point buck — tall but narrow, Riewestahl said — stepped out. Then, a fourth doe emerged.

"The 8-point buck started trotting to her, like he wanted to check her out, but he stopped in mid-trot. He went on point," Riewestahl said. "Then, out stepped this buck with chocolate brown horns. I had a broadside shot, but I wasn't sure he was wide enough. Then, he turned his head to look at the 8-pointer, and I saw how wide he was. I clicked the safety off and shot, and he folded up right there. It was 7:30." ■

SPORTSMAN'S BIG BUCK GALLERY



Jeff Wright of Eden, N.C., dropped this 10-point, 165-inch Rockingham County buck on Nov. 20.



Hunter Price of Princeton, N.C., killed this 8-point, 156-inch Johnston County buck on Thanksgiving afternoon.



Allen Smith of Reidsville tagged this 9-point, 140-inch Rockingham County buck on Nov. 14.



Akec Kearns of Wake Forest, N.C., killed this 16-point, 187-inch Granville County giant on Nov. 4.



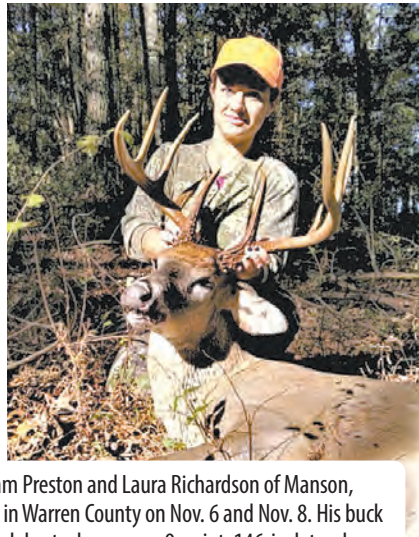
Pearce Ruffin of Greensboro, N.C., dropped this 9-point, 154-inch Rockingham County buck on Nov. 17.



Chris Harden took this huge, Moore County, N.C., buck — 18 points, 197 inches — with a crossbow on Oct. 9.



Hayden Laws of Creedmore, N.C., tagged this 10-point, 140-inch Granville County buck on Nov. 2.



Husband-and-wife team Preston and Laura Richardson of Manson, N.C., took these bucks in Warren County on Nov. 6 and Nov. 8. His buck was a 17-point, 157-inch brute; hers was a 9-point, 146-inch trophy.



Cody Triplett of Sparta, N.C., tagged this 10-point, 157-inch buck in Alleghany County on Nov. 6.



Dillon O'Dell of Clinton, S.C., dropped this 10-point, 149-inch Clinton County buck on Nov. 12.

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

SPORTSMAN'S BIG BUCK GALLERY



Olivia Wilson of Summerton, S.C., dropped this beautiful Clarendon County buck on Nov. 14. The 8-point rack measured 147 inches



Priscilla Blackburn of Mountain City, Tenn., tagged this 153-inch trophy in Ashe County, N.C., on Nov. 11.



R.J. Seiler of Stokesdale, N.C. killed this 11-point, 146-inch trophy in Alamance County on Nov. 5.



Miranda Allen of Gilbert, S.C., tagged this 11-point, 227-pound buck in Lexington County on Nov. 4.



Hunter Pegg of Oak Ridge, N.C., killed this 14-point, 182-inch non-typical on Nov. 14 in Guilford County.

John Johnston of Spartanburg, S.C., killed this 10-point, 145-inch buck on Oct. 26.



Rohn Jones of Oxford, N.C. tagged this 11-point, 142-inch buck on Oct. 31 in Granville County.



Jeff Sellar of Ellenboro, N.C., killed this 10-point, 140-inch Rockingham County trophy.



Fidel Rodriguez of Kernersville, N.C., dropped this 16-point, 168-inch buck on Oct. 31 in Rockingham County.



Josh Thomas tagged this 19-point Randolph County buck on Nov. 11 with a blackpowder gun.



Craig Hester harvested this 10-point, 157-inch trophy buck in Person County on Nov. 14.



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

SHIMANO SARAGOSA REELS

Make no mistake about it. These are big-fish reels.

Shimano's Saragosa series of spinning reels has added two sizes and now offers anglers fishing for big fish with eight different reels.

The 14000XG and 18000HG reels, introduced at last summer's ICAST show, are great for casting or jigging up big fish, featuring Shimano's cold-forged HAGANE gears for lasting durability and smoothness, an ultra-durable, waterproof HAGANE body, the Infinity Drive feature and waterproof Cross Carbon drag.

The 14000XG is ideal for casting pencil baits and deep jigging. It pulls in 53 inches of line per turn of the handle. The spool capacity is 315 yards of 65-pound test PowerPro or 260 yards of 20-pound mono. The 18000HG, returns 51 inches of line per crank with its 5.7:1 gear ratio and it holds up to 440 yards of 65-pound test PowerPro or 340 yards of 25-pound mono.

MSRP: \$299 and \$349.

For more info, visit: fish.shimano.com



TENZING HANGTIME BACKPACK

Deer hunters nowadays take so much more stuff into the woods than even just a decade ago, and fanny packs often won't do the job; backpacks have become a regular sight, but they don't come without the problem of how to access all their nooks and crannies while sitting in a lock-on, ladder or climbing stand 15 to 20 feet above a well-travelled deer trail.

That's where Tenzing's new Hangtime Backpack comes into play. It's designed to be removed once you're in your stand and hung on a device like a bowhanger, so hunters can easily access the myriads of pockets to get out their scent products, rangefinders, cell phones, even an extra sweatshirt. The pack's rigid frame makes it

easy to search for your gear, and oversized zippers make opening pockets easy.

Weighing less than 2 pounds empty, the Hangtime Backpack has seven compartments and 15 pockets, including SD card pockets on the shoulder straps, a removable, ambidextrous bow carrier and a fold-out bow- and gun-carrying boot for the walk or ride in. There's even a base compartment that holds an included Plano® utility box so you can store smaller items for easy access.

MSRP: \$199.99.

For more info, visit: tenzingoutdoors.com



GORILLA GRIP GLOVES

Rarely have sportsmen had so many great choices for gloves from the same manufacturer at the same time, but that's what's up with the four different offerings from Gorilla Gloves.

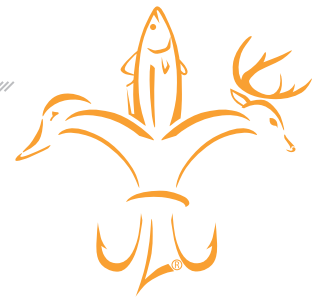
- Gorilla Grip VEIL gloves are light, featuring a quick-dry, breathable design available in three camo patterns in a light knit shell. They're even touchscreen compatible if you're negotiating your marine electronics.
- Gorilla Grip MAX Fingerless gloves give your hands protection while allowing your fingers to work, unfettered, while delivering a supreme grip while wet.
- Gorilla Grip + ANSI Level 5 Cut Protection gloves provide extreme flexibility and protection in wet and dry situations — perfect for

cleaning fish and throwing a cast net for baitfish or shrimp.

- Gorilla Grip + ANSI Level 5 Cut Protection + RhinoFlex have a tough, outer polymer skin for impact and abrasion protection that is flexible enough for natural movement.

MSRP: \$6.99-\$9.99 per pair, or in 3-packs.

For more info, visit: bigtimeproducts.net.



A man wearing a black cap, sunglasses, and a black jacket with red accents is smiling while holding a large blue catfish. He is on a boat, and the background shows a body of water and a clear blue sky. The fish is held vertically, with its head at the top and tail at the bottom. The man's hands are visible, holding the fish's mouth and tail.

Little lake, **BIG** catfish

**OFTEN OVERLOOKED
BECAUSE OF ITS SIZE
AND LOCATION, TINY
MOUNTAIN ISLAND LAKE
IS A REAL HOT SPOT FOR BIG,
NORTH CAROLINA BLUE CATFISH,
ESPECIALLY DURING THE COLDEST
MONTHS. HERE ARE THE DETAILS....**

■ By Tony Garitta

Tony Garitta

Many fishermen believe big lakes hold big fish. That may be true, **BUT SMALL LAKES CAN HOLD BIG FISH, TOO.**

North Carolina's Mountain Island Lake, a diminutive winter stronghold for blue catfish downstream from sprawling Lake Norman — another winter stronghold for blue cats — illustrates that big things can come in small packages.

With 3,281 acres and 61 miles of shoreline, Mountain Isle is dwarfed by Lake Norman's 32,510 acres and 520 miles of shoreline. Despite their stark differences in size, both Catawba River reservoirs yield a prodigious number of burly blues capable of popping the strongest of lines.

The two lakes regularly produce blues weighing from 10 to 25 pounds. Blues from 30 to 50 pounds regularly show up on the scales in tournament son Norman, and the record for total pounds in an N.C. Catfish Association Tournament Series

(NCCATS) event came from a February tournament several years ago: 5 fish weighing 106.96 pounds, capped by a 49.25-pound blue.

An 85-pound Lake Norman fish once held the state record, while a Charlotte angler boated a 70.83-pound blue from Mountain Island in 2015.

While Norman gets most of the publicity and fishing pressure, some fishermen prefer fishing for blues at Mountain Island because of its small size and lack of fishing pressure.

"It's my favorite winter lake for blues for two reasons," said Kevin Custer of NCCATS. "Its small size makes it easier to find blues. They have no place to hide. And who wants to motor around a large lake like Norman in the cold of winter?"

Guide Dieter Melhorn also loves Mountain Island for blues, which he said he feeds all winter.

Custer, who is from Statesville, N.C., and Melhorn, of Cramerton, N.C., know there's more than one way to catch a Mountain Island cat. Custer discounts current as a major factor for catching blues, while Melhorn utilizes current to catch blues.

Dieter Melhorn caught this eating-sized blue catfish in front of the old water intake at Mountain Island Lake northwest of Charlotte, N.C.



Tony Garitta



A circle hook baited with a chunk of white perch fillet was a deadly combination for this Mountain Island Lake blue catfish.

Custer targets creek channels and the backs of creeks in 4 to 16 feet of water where current plays a minor role.

“I don’t fish past what’s locally known as The Sandbar, a sharp bend where the waters beyond it feature current when the lake is pulled,” Custer said. Instead, he looks for fish and forage within the creeks and anchors if he can.

“I catch bigger cats when I anchor,” he said. “I don’t know why.”

After anchoring, Custer sets out as many as 16 Shimano TDR 96 trolling rods paired with Ambassadeur 6500 reels spooled with 30-pound Stren Hi-Impact monofilament. The outfits are arranged around his boat, spider-style. For terminal tackle, Custer uses Carolina rigs with 2-ounce, no-roll sinkers and in-line floats positioned a short distance above No. 8/0 Gamakatsu circle hooks.

A special wrinkle he employs is a double leader composed of two sections of 30-pound line with two of the ends tied to a swivel and the opposite ends tied to the hook.

“The double leader keeps most cats from twisting and cutting my line,” said Custer, who uses white perch or gizzard shad cut into chunks for bait, always discarding the tail pieces, which lack the juice and blood to attract cats. His in-line float keeps his bait about 2 feet off the bottom where the blues can find it.

If strong winds prevent him from anchoring, he drifts through likely places, expecting to catch numbers of cats but not the biggest cats.

Conversely, Melhorn loves the current flow when waters are released from Cowans Ford Dam.



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

“
I don’t fish past what’s locally known as The Sandbar, a sharp bend where the waters beyond it feature current when the lake is pulled.
”



DESTINATION INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE — Mountain Island is northwest of Charlotte, N.C., and northeast of Belmont, N.C., nestled between Lake Norman and Lake Wylie. It’s crossed by US 16 on its lower end and US 73 on its upper end near Cowans Ford Dam. The main access is the River Bend Access off US 16. Another access is off Neck Road.

WHEN TO GO — Blue cats become active in the winter with Jan.-February as prime months. Try the backs of creeks and creek channels in 4 to 16 feet of water, rocky outcrops or areas with moving water.

BEST TECHNIQUES — Anchoring and spider-rigging with Carolina rigs baited with cut shad or white perch produces big cats. Given swift current or windy conditions, employ drifting. Check your sonar unit for broken balls of forage, an indication of feeding fish. Heavy tackle and stout line are required to handle cats weighing 25 pounds or more.

FISHING INFO/GUIDES — Dieter Melhorn, Dieter Melhorn Fishing, www.dietermelhornfishing.com; Rodger Taylor, Catfish On! Guide Service, www.catfishon.com.

ACCOMMODATIONS — Holiday Inn Express & Suites, Charlotte North, 877-666-3243; Hilton Garden Inn, Charlotte North, 888-728-3027.

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

Dieter Melhorn's rigs for blue catfish consist of a standard Carolina rig, but with a crappie-sized float threaded on the line that keeps the bait off the bottom.

"F

or every inch that Lake Norman is lowered, Mt. Island rises one foot, creating an almost riverine fishery that is strongly driven by current and water flow," he said. "This can be a good

thing if you are there when they release water from Cowans Ford Dam, but if water has been moving through the lake for several days, it can make fishing tough."

In the colder months, water releases occur in the mornings, so Melhorn likes to be on the water for the early bite. He targets the numerous mid-lake outcroppings of rock, ledges and points because blues seek breaks from current.

"Fishing rocky points is a very productive method of catching blues when there is a constant flow of water through the lake," he said.

Melhorn's favorite cut baits include white perch and spotted bass; the latter can be used for bait as long as they meet length and creel limits and are taken by hook and line.

He slices the perch and spots into fillets, then cuts the fillets into small chunks; he uses the heads as larger baits to attract trophy blues.

Melhorn's gear consists of medium/heavy Big Cat Fever casting rods paired with Ambassadeur 5000 and 6000 reels filled



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with 30-pound Ande Monster monofilament. He either anchors or drifts depending upon the strength of the wind and current.

When the water is not flowing, he slow-trolls deeper channels using Santee rigs with 5/0 Gamakatsu Octopus circle hooks with smaller baits and 8/0 circle hooks with larger baits.

"Anywhere from the waste-intake plant at Gar Creek south to the island above the dam can produce catfish by drifting," he said. "Speed is critical; you can't go too slow, but you can go too fast. I try to stay 0.6 mph or slower. If the water drops into the 50s, I don't go faster than 0.5 mph."

Blue catfish have taken hold in Mountain Island Lake despite no official stockings by the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission.



MOUNTAIN ISLAND'S BLUE HISTORY

How blue catfish got into Mountain Island Lake remains a mystery. Lawrence Dorsey, a biologist with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, said they were either stocked by individual anglers or migrated downstream from Lake Norman, where the Commission stocked them in the mid-1960s.

The Commission conducted its lone assessment study of Mountain Island blue catfish in 2014. The study indicated that blues there exhibited a slower growth rates than blue catfish in Badin and Tillery lakes on the Yadkin chain but a slightly better growth rate than blues in Norman. Most fish were in average or above-average condition for their size.

The 70 blues collected in the survey ranged in age from 5 to 18 years, with the majority between 7 and 11 years old.

The survey revealed a viable population of blue cast, but as the only catfish survey, the results may be an incomplete picture of the blue catfish fishery.

Blue catfish at Mountain Island and other state reservoirs have come under scrutiny as a result of the 2019 Catfish Management Plan, which focuses upon conserving native catfish populations while managing invasive catfish, such as blues, within restricted areas.

The Blue Catfish Management Unit, which includes Mountain Island as part of the Catawba River Basin, dictates current or future management efforts directed at blue catfish. Because of the popularity of blues, fishermen have requested that blues be managed as a trophy fishery.

There's no daily creel limit or minimum-size limit on blues, but only one blue greater than 32 inches may be taken each day.

A consumption advisory for blues applies to Mountain Island because of excessive

levels of PCBs. Pregnant women should not eat any blue catfish from the lake, and others should not eat more than one meal of blue catfish from the lake per month. ■

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SHALL WE GATHER AT THE RIVER?

WINTER CATFISH ACTION GREAT IN COOPER RIVER

Terry Madewell

The Cooper River downstream from Lake Moultrie is an amazing fishery for multiple species, and being located near a big population center in South Carolina, this waterway gets a lot of well-deserved fishing attention.

Catfishing opportunities are excellent year-round, with spring being the high-profile time to hook monster catfish. But the cold-weather fishing in January and February may be one of the few overlooked fishing adventures on the river.

Lonnie East is 73-year-old angler with 64 years of fishing experience on the Cooper River. Hailing from nearby Goose Creek, East has unlocked the secrets to consistently catch huge catfish during the coldest months.

“Spending time on the river and learning the seasonal patterns of what catfish and other species are doing is essential,” he said. “The winter fishing pattern is different from the spring; we’re fishing for the same fish, just in different places. And as always, the key to where big catfish go is the food, and that in turn is dictated by the tides.”

East prefers to fish from his 14-foot johnboat; he said he’s earned the appropriate moniker, “River Rat.”

“I began fishing the Cooper River in the 1950s with my dad and have fished it hard ever since,” he said.

KNOWING HIS STUFF

East has fished without a depth finder, yet he’s unlocked the secret locations

to specific underwater targets. On a trip with East last winter, in a friend’s boat equipped with modern sonar, East described every place we approached in detail before we arrived, in terms of depths, eddies and current flow, and he was dead on-target every time, even with changing water levels with the tide. We literally did not need electronics. But without a “river rat” in the boat, the rest of us need sonar.

“By studying the river for decades, I’ve



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.

OPPOSITE: Lonnie East said the Cooper River can produce some outstanding action on big catfish.

learned where the best targets are located at various tides,” he said. “Understanding where eddies form and how they change with tidal flow helps me pinpoint targets. Fishing success here is not random, it’s a specific, target-oriented pattern.”

WINTER CATFISH

East said during the winter, catfish begin to stage on the shallower breaks and cuts along the main-river channel. Specific spots include creek and river junctions, river bends and cuts and breaks off the river leading into old rice fields. These areas where water flows merge create eddy currents as the water flows in or out of the cuts and creates prime feeding areas.

The fishing setups are always different, based on the tide.

“I don’t have to fish the really deep water at this time of the year to catch big catfish,” he said. “The catfish come to feed, and that’s a big advantage for the fisherman.”

East said on a rising tide, catfish flood back into shallow areas or into the rice fields to forage. That’s a large target to pinpoint, so he concentrates on the ingress and egress locations.

“I’ll move shallower up the ledges as the incoming tides floods into the old rice fields and flats and fish the edge and around the opening,” he said. “On the dropping tide, I’ll move to slightly deeper water and cast to the breaks where eddies exist along the ledge of the river. I’ll make small, corrective moves every 30 minutes to ensure I’m fishing the eddies properly because they’re constantly changing with the tidal flow.”

TACTICS, TACKLE

East said catfish forage on multiple targets of opportunity, and the river offers a variety of food sources.

“Threadfin, gizzard shad and mullet are abundant, and at this time of the year, the shad and herring spawning runs begin,” he said. “I also know these big catfish go really shallow on the flats on rising water, because I’ve caught plenty of catfish with whole, recently-eaten, coots in their belly. Some were so freshly eaten I’ve considered using ‘cut coot’ for bait, but I prefer to use big chunks of shad, herring and mullet.”

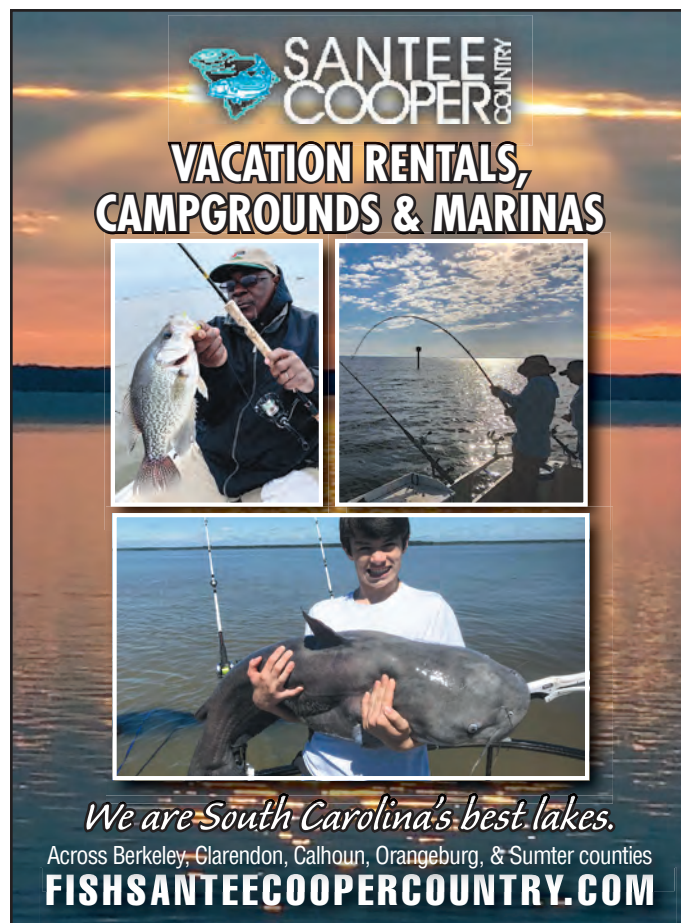
East uses standard spinning or baitcasting tackle: 7- and 7½-foot rods and reels spooled with heavy monofilament. He uses an 18- to 30-inch leader and a 1- to 2-ounce sinker depending on current flow and depth. He typically fishes three rods, two in holders and one he hand-holds to add a “personal” touch.

East said the challenge of successfully fishing the river is often simply adapting to the never-ending changes that occur with tides, water level and the diversity of forage.

“I’ll move regularly because I’m targeting actively feeding fish,” he said. “If I’m in the right area, fish will usually bite

quickly, so I seldom linger longer than 30 minutes. Some moves may only be 30 yards, some may be miles. But it’s the hunt for these big catfish is what I love, and when I find them, my ole river produces awesome fishing.” ■

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Guide Jason Wolfe catches plenty of big blue cats in January by using fresh, cut bait around logjams.

FISHING CREEK CATFISH

use logjams as January current breaks, ambush spots

Fishing Creek Reservoir, which lies between Lake Wylie and Lake Wateree on the Catawba River, is an oft-forgotten fishing hole. But South Carolina anglers heading here in January can expect some hot action for quality catfish.

Capt. Jason Wolfe of Wolfe's Guide Service said the key to catching good catfish on the 3,451-acre lake this month is to focus on logjams. Being prepared to move will help, even though on some days, it won't be necessary.

"This lake is full of logjams," he said. "The catfish love to sit behind those logjams to get a break from the current and to have a good spot to ambush bait. You want to anchor a casting distance away from those logjams, then cast your baits just above them. The catfish will catch a whiff of their presence and come get them."

Wolfe uses a variety of cut baits; he said just about any will do, but the fresher, the better.

"I like to bring some frozen cut bait with me just in case," he said, "but I always try to catch some fresh bait the day before or the day I'm fishing. The fresher the bait is, the more smell it produces. And that's what brings these catfish to them."

He uses a Carolina rig to keep his baits in place, and the size of his sinker depends on the strength of the current.

"You want it heavy enough to keep your baits in place and not swinging all around," said Wolfe (803-487-3690).

Once he has his baits in place, Wolfe puts his rods in rod holders, then sits back and waits. He sets his timer for anywhere from 10 to 20 minutes, depending on how active the fish are that day. If he catches a good fish he'll reset the clock, but if nothing is happening, he'll move on.

"People always talk about patience when fishing, but patience doesn't mean sitting in one place for hours on end, even if nothing is biting," he said. "Patience means getting your gear ready, taking the time to anchor properly, making sure your baits are in the right places. If you don't feel good about any of those things, then you need to have the patience to do them again until everything is set up properly."

Sitting in one hole that isn't producing is stubbornness, he said, not patience. He said that patience also means studying all the details about your surroundings and how they are impacting the fishing. Then, replicate those details in other parts of the lake if they're working, and make adjustments if they're not.

"Try a few spots that are similar in terms of depth, current flow, and size of logjams present. If you catch some decent fish in those areas, keep it up. If you're not, then switch it up. Find areas with stronger or weaker current. Try logjams in different depths of water. Have the patience to keep looking and eliminating water and you'll find some quality fish here this month," he said. ■

— Brian Cope

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WINTER BLUES GREAT for Lake Gaston catfish anglers

Anglers shouldn't feel blue about January fishing. Instead, they should think about boating blue catfish in the depths of Lake Gaston along the North Carolina-Virginia border.

Although the water will be cold and the fish deep, guide Zakk Royce of Blues Brothers Catfishing Guide Service knows he can find them shadowing bait, where they will be stacked up and hungry.

"In January, I'm going to be fishing the lower end of the lake in the main feeder creeks," said Royce (919-724-2474). "I'll be looking for huge schools of threadfin shad in deeper water, anywhere from 40 to 60 feet deep. Everything will be keyed in on the shad: the white perch, stripers and blues.

"I'll be fishing the creek channel itself, closer to the mouth if it gets really cold. If you have a point that comes out to meet the channel, it can be really good, but most of the time I'm simply trolling down the channel."

Royce will always start his troll at .5 miles per hour. Depending on the water temperature, he may slow to as little as .3, but he'll never go faster than .5. Royce will often set out his spread in an area he knows well and feels confident he will find baitfish, but a newcomer is wise to locate the bait first.

Royce's spread includes six rods bouncing baits along the bottom: two straight off the back and two more off each gunwale with planer boards. Each will carry a 3-way Santee rig. Those straight off the back will be weighted by a 2- to 3-ounce slinky weight, while the planer rods will have 1½-ounce slinky weights. Four 9/0 circle hooks will carry white perch filets with two 7/0 circle hooks carrying smaller perch filets for fish that prefer a smaller offering.

Although gizzard shad would be a prime bait for this season, Royce said they are difficult to catch at such great depths. White perch can be caught on a Sabiki rig near schools of threadfin shad.

"If you find a school of stripers, you have to fish under them," Royce said. "You can bet the blue cats will be cleaning up the scraps of shad underneath them. That goes for finding stripers on sonar or finding birds. If you see gulls diving into the water, you know there's active feeding going on. But even if they're just sitting on the water, a large concentration of birds means there's bait and fish nearby." ■

— Dusty Wilson



Zakk Royce

Guide Zakk Royce concentrates on big creeks on the lower end of Lake Gaston for big January blue catfish.



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Jeff Burleson

Jeff Burleson

HUNTERS CAN FILL UP ALL KINDS OF SPACE WITH THE IMPLEMENTS INVOLVED IN WATERFOWL HUNTING, BUT WHAT'S REALLY IMPORTANT? NOT NEARLY AS MUCH AS YOU'D THINK.

GEAR UP FOR DUCKS

By Jeff Burleson

Every serious hobby can generate enough gear to fill up a shed, garage or a spare bedroom — every type of tool to make success more achievable.

Duck season draws hunters from all walks of life, and they are far from immune to this syndrome. What is considered necessary equipment to one and maybe a gimmick to others?

Some items are required to take down a limit of ducks, and some items can surely make the task more streamlined. And then you have some items that are more beneficial to the companies selling them rather than being good to the consumer trying to bring a flock of greenheads into shotgun range.

DUCK HUNTERS NEED THE BASICS TO TAKE DOWN A LIMIT OF DUCKS:

a capable weapon, necessary licenses and permits and non-toxic loads are the absolute minimum. In some situations, it's all that is needed to get some birds in the bag. Unfortunately, these unique situations aren't too available for most people and on most properties. Ducks are semi-aquatic species that feed, rest and loaf in an inundated environment. And with ultra-keen senses and the eyes of an eagle, ducks often require hunters to have some level of specialized equipment to get the job done.

Many hunters who love the sport often hire a guide or outfitter to take them to their blinds or in their specialized duck boats. For a little money, these hunters can be put into the right situations with all the right equipment, and if the birds cooperate and the shooters are good, they can head back home with a limit of birds and even more precious memories to treasure. But other hunters choose to find the right places on their own and buy their own equipment to get the job done.

Bradford Howell of Surfside Beach, S.C., isn't a hunting guide nor an outfitter, but he sure could be. For more than a decade, he has chased these winged migrants over 10 states and in all four major flyways across North America.

After putting in a ton of hours each year, sometimes hunting 50 days out of a 60-day season, Howell takes a dynamic approach to perfecting his duck-hunting tactics.

"I put a lot of time into scouting, and I am a firm believer in

matching the hatch," Howell said. "If you scout it, replicate it the best that you can with good decoys."

Ducks can be lured into a place that looks similar to places they visited the day before, and ducks sure like company, because it lets them know the spot looks like a safe place to drop their feet and eat.

"If you see 20 mallards in a hole the day you scout it, replicate it the best as possible in any situation," he said.

Decoys are a duck hunters' best friend and a must-have for hunters attempting to lure birds into a specific spot, but not all decoys are created equal. Howell said motion decoys are critical in any decoy spread and are the most-important factor when he arranges his decoys.

"Make sure to have water movement, a flutter on the water, or spinning wings of some sort. You need something to catch their eye when they are coming in from afar," Howell said.

Thirty years ago, hunters relied on the wind to blow decoys around, but the wind doesn't always cooperate at the right time, and a jerk string or a battery-powered device may just do the trick.



.....
You don't always need dozens of decoys. Just have your spread mimic the kind and numbers of ducks you've seen in the area.



Jeff Burleson

Motion decoys come in wide variety of flavors, from traditional spinning-wing decoys and shakers to full-fledged water thrashers. Regardless, something is needed to incorporate into the decoy spread to grab the duck's attention from afar and lure them into shooting range.

Another must-have piece of equipment Howell recommends is a good duck call or a good lanyard filled with duck calls.

"Unfortunately, there isn't a perfect formula for calling in ducks. Each day has its own technique. I listen to the ducks, and some days you have to scream at them, and other days you have to sweet-talk them," Howell said.

Hugh McLaurin of Big Lake Outdoor Products in Elloree, S.C., knows just about everything about calling duck and making duck calls. For 15 years, McLaurin has made and sold duck calls all over the United States.

"Calls can certainly be overused and abused," McLaurin said. "The call is the greatest conservation tool ever invented. They have scared more ducks and kept them from getting shot than any item in the hunter's tool bag. But when used correctly, they can bring them right to you."

In most situations, a good duck call is necessary, because the

Big Lake's Hugh McLaurin said to keep your calling soft when ducks are approaching; get loud only when they're going away.

ducks don't always see the decoys, or sometimes they need a little encouragement to know that it's okay to come down and join the crowd in the festivities.

"Ducks in flight are looking for food, fellowship and safety — a good place to congregate, just like people. Ducks aren't too much different than people in that respect," said McLaurin, who uses a wide array of calls and vocalizations to pull ducks into range. He will use the hail call, soft feeding chuckles, the come-back call and others that mimic ducks in their natural environment. And he will use calls that sound like mallards, pintails, gadwalls, wood ducks, teal and others. But for McLaurin, a solid mallard call is hard to avoid having in his tool bag.

"About every duck will respond to a mallard call. Mallards are almost always associated with other ducks, which is why the mallard call can be so productive to have on your lanyard," McLaurin said.

Knowing how to use calls can make a big difference. As easily as they bring ducks in, they can scare them away. Primarily, McLaurin calls to ducks when they are flying away from him, but he will give soft, feeding ticks when the ducks are coming in.

"The decoys are the No. 1 attractor, but I will encourage them with some soft calling



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.



Hugh McLaurin



Mallards are so common across the Atlantic Flyway that mastering a mallard call can result in all kinds of ducks coming to the decoys.

as they approach. But other times I have to call very aggressively to get them to commit,” said McLaurin, who brings a full lanyard of calls to the duck blind, his favorite being his T-Rex Double Reed. It utilizes a dimpled, stainless-steel reed and is extremely versatile, which can be real benefit when calling to ducks in full camo and reaching for a call.

“The stainless reed makes it so raspy, and it is easy to blow for anybody if you are calling loud with a hail call to soft feeding ticks. It’s just the perfect call,” McLaurin said.

Hunting is one of those hobbies that appeals to a wide range of companies that can successfully sell products to its target audience. And out of every type of hunting opportunity available, duck hunters are subject to every gimmick imaginable. But some of these tools of the trade are far from gimmicks and truly flatten the curve. ■

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DON'T YOU MOVE!

Ducks are some of God's creatures that received excellent vision, a factor that keeps the species sustainable. Keen vision has enabled many ducks to live another day, and duck hunters have to prevent these little feathered migrants from seeing them to have any measure of success.

Ducks and all wild populations of game utilize their senses to avoid predation and any dangers on and above the ground. Since ducks have such great vision, hunters must up their game to make sure they stay invisible to their prey.

The first method to stay hidden is to blend into the surroundings with a full covering of camouflage. Camouflage is one of the largest components of the hunting industry, with every type of pattern available, yet something that is equally important as camouflage and possibly more important comes in a different set of color palates.

"Camouflage is important for duck hunting, but the best thing



Jeff Burleson

Well-camouflaged or not, being motionless in the blind until it's time to shoot is a big factor in fooling incoming ducks.

you can do is sit still," veteran hunter Bradford Howell said. "If you can be still, you can be in a solid or pattern color and still get ducks to come in."

Ducks pick up on movement, and hunters need to avoid being seen if wearing full camouflage or in a solid olive drab. ■

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When the temperature drops in South Carolina's Upstate, many anglers head to the crystal-clear waters of Lake Keowee to chase spotted bass.

Keowee is one of the most-picturesque lakes in the South. Nestled in the Blue Ridge escarpment, it covers 18,500 acres with an average depth of 54 feet. Its 300 miles of shoreline are dotted with developments and golf courses, but this doesn't discourage anglers.

For many fishermen, targeting spotted bass instead of largemouth bass is akin to eating potatoes for breakfast instead of grits; it's not something you should do under any circumstances. But for others, spots make a fine target species. Smaller than their largemouth cousins, spotted bass are feisty and tasty, a favorite of many anglers because their fight once hooked is more than most largemouths will provide.

Keowee had been known as a difficult lake to fish successfully because of its water clarity. That has been a changing trend in recent years, as the lake is becoming one of the best in the Southeast for catching limits of big spotted bass. This is especially true when the temperature drops in the winter.

COLD KEOWEE FOR HOT SPOTS

By Pete Rogers

WHEN WINTER ARRIVES, SOUTH CAROLINA'S LAKE KEOWEE BECOMES A GREAT DESTINATION FOR ANGLERS TARGETING SPOTTED BASS IN DEEP WATER. HERE'S WHY AND HOW.

Pete Rogers

Chase Simmemon of Westminster, S.C., thrives on catching spotted bass in KEOWEE'S DEEP, CLEAR WATER.

"I like to focus on the deep water in excess of 30 feet and as far as 100 feet," he said.

When Keowee was built in 1971, the bottom was cleared. There are a lot of topography changes, but little vertical structure. Virtually no standing timber was left, so the only structure is topographical — ravines, ditches, drainages and valleys — and the only cover has been added by anglers over the years.

Simmeron begins most trips utilizing his marine electronics.

"I look for baitfish on the graph and fish as close to that as possible, he said. "Stopping directly over the baitfish, I will lower a Damiki rig into the school."

A Damiki rig consists of a soft-plastic shad-type lure on a jighead tied 90 degrees on a line. It is a dynamite way to fish vertically in deep water.

"When fishing a Damiki rig, I will dead stick it, (hold the lure dead still) in the area I see the fish on the graph," he said.

When the water is cold, the fish are lethargic, and adding too much movement to the bait makes it look unnatural. When dead-sticked, the bait appears more realistic.

"Even when I am not moving the lure, the lure is still moving slowly due to the movement of the boat," he said.

When the Damiki rig isn't working, vertical jigging is another good option.

Cliff Tilley of Travelers Rest, S.C., another angler who fishes Keowee more than any other lake, enjoys vertical jigging for large numbers of spots.

"It is not uncommon to catch over 30 fish a day on Keowee when it is cold," he said, the colder the better.

Water temperatures during winter run around 49 to 50 degrees, using a ¾- to 1-ounce jigging spoon in white or pearl is a deadly offering. Another good choice is a 1-ounce, Blade Runner DUH spoon.



Pete Rogers



Damiki rig jighead

“I will position the boat directly on top of the fish and drop my spoon to the bottom. Give it short jerks upward, (and) as it flutters down, it is mimicking a dying herring,” said Tilley, who gets most of his bites when the spoon is falling.

Tackle Warehouse



Lake Keowee produces a lot of chunky spotted bass, making winter trips worthwhile.



DESTINATION INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE — Lake Keowee’s two dams impound five rivers in Oconee and Pickens counties: the Little, Toxaway, Keowee, Whitewater and Thompson. Keowee is near the towns of Seneca and Clemson. SC 130, SC 183, SC 28 and US 123 provide access to the lake. Cane Creek and Crooked Creek ramps are convenient to the lower end of the lake; Fall Creek, Crow Creek and Mill Creek landings are convenient to the upper end.

WHEN TO GO — Vertical fishing for spotted bass in deep water arrives just as winter does, in late December, and it can stretch through February into March.

BEST TECHNIQUES — Fish vertically with a drop-shot rig, Damiki rig or an underspin jighead and soft plastic. Look for fish in 20- to 30-foot depths holding on contour changes like ditches, ravines and creek channels.

FISHING INFO/GUIDES — Brad Fowler, Fowler Fishing Guide Service, 864-934-5813, www.fowlerfishing.com; Rusty Griffin, Hooked on Hartwell, 864-328-4899. See also Guides & Charters in Classifieds.

ACCOMMODATIONS — Clemson Area Chamber of Commerce, www.clemsonareachamber.org/tourism; Visit Oconee, www.visitoconeesc.com. Camping is available at Keowee-Toxaway State Park, www.southcarolinaparks.com/keowee-toxaway

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

Simmemon has won many winter tournaments on Keowee using a drop-shot rig, which includes a small, straight-tail worm fished several inches above a small weight at the end of the terminal tackle. His lure preference is a 6-inch worm.

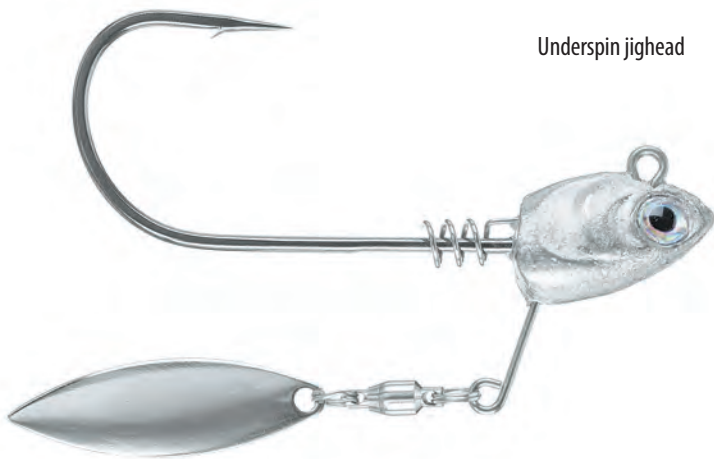
Simmemon and Tilley both are big believers in using electronics to target deep-water fish.

“I use my electronics as a video game,” Simmemon said. “I can see the fish. I see my lure dropping to them, and I can watch the fish come up to look at or even take the bait.”

Tilley pays special attention to his electronics, even using them to determine what lures to use.

“If I see fish not taking the bait, changing the size or color may be all that is needed to get a bite,” he said.

Spotted bass on Keowee can also be caught using more traditional, casting techniques. Locate ditches, drains and ravines in the 20- to 30-foot depth range.



Underspin jighead

Tackle Warehouse

Simmemon likes using an underspin jighead with a white or pearl, soft-plastic shad body.

“I cast and let the lure drop to the bottom, pop it up to get the blade spinning, and keep it as close to the bottom as possible,” he said, emphasizing that when you think you are fishing slow enough, slow it down, just fast enough to get the blade running.” ■

“

If I see fish not taking the bait, changing the size or color may be all that is needed to get a bite.

”

Small, soft-plastic worms are the ticket when you're fishing a drop-shot rig vertically for spotted bass on Lake Keowee.





Tackle Warehouse

DEEP-CAUGHT BASS OFTEN REQUIRE FIZZING

Releasing fish alive after they've been caught out of deep water can be challenging. Pro angler Chase Simmemon advises when fishing beyond 40 feet deep, if you are not going to keep them, be sure to bring fish up slowly and release them immediately. When fish come up from those depth too quickly, it can cause a displacement of their swim bladder. If you are not sure if you want to keep the fish, before placing them in the livewell, or before releasing them, you will need to remove air from the fish's swim bladder.

If the swim bladder becomes displaced, or distended, anglers fizz the bladder, a simple technique that releases air from the swim bladder. Most reputable tackle shops carry Fizz needles for less than \$5.

Fizzing is done by inserting a sterilized Fizz needle into the side of the bass. Draw an imaginary straight line down from the middle of the dorsal fins towards the anal fin. Just below the lateral line, insert a fizz needle at an angle, pointing towards the head of the fish, to release air from the swim bladder. This will help the fish regain buoyancy and help it to swim back down to where it came from. You will hear the air releasing; once complete, return the fish to the water or your livewell. ■



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

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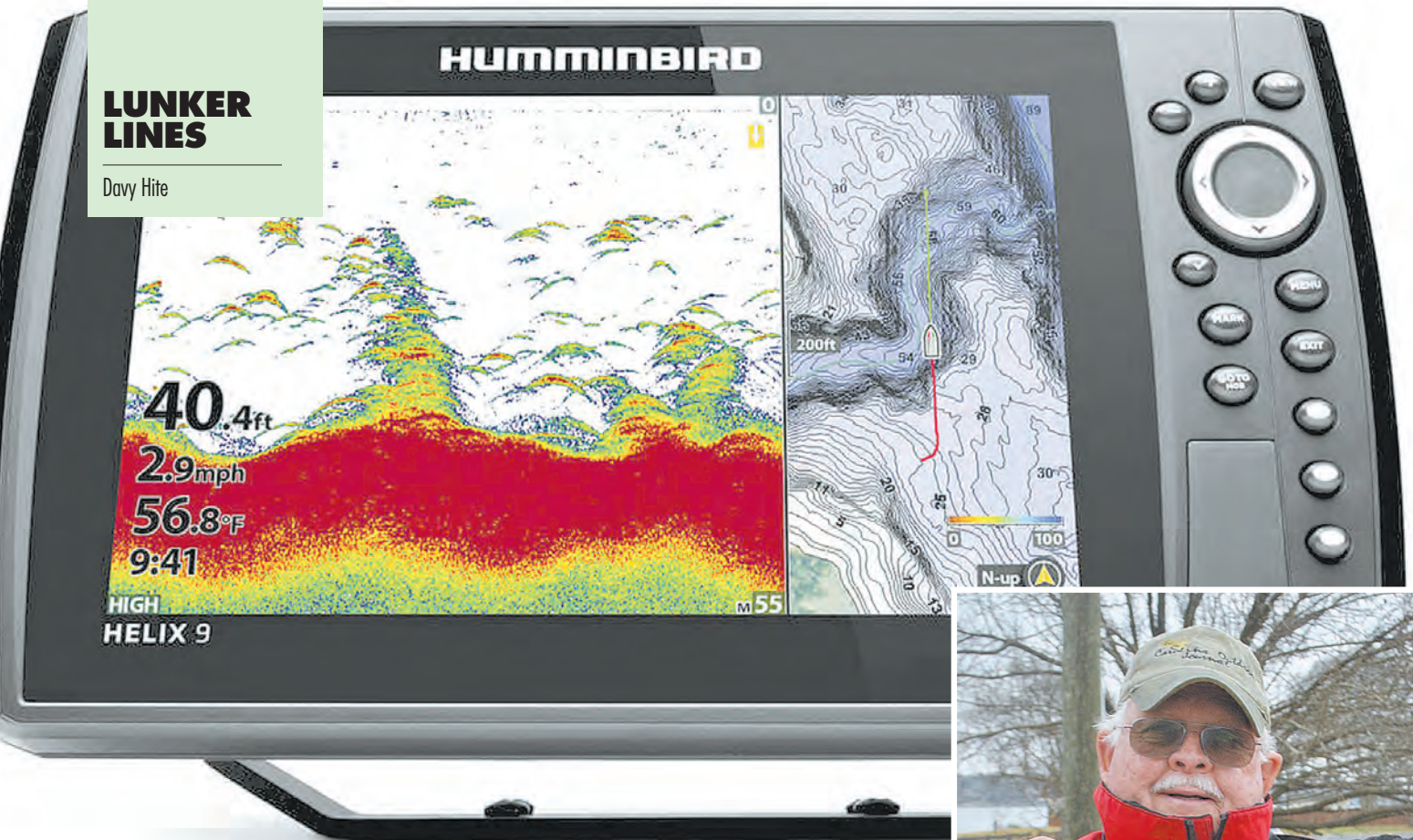
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LUNKER LINES

Davy Hite



FEED SPOONS TO JANUARY FISH

SURE, IT'S COLD, BUT BAIT AND FISH ARE GANGED UP, AND FINDING THEM USUALLY MEANS CATCHING THEM

January is a great time to be on the water. I know, that's hard for a lot of anglers in the Carolinas to believe, but it is actually one of my favorite times of the year to just go out and fish for all different kinds of species. For one thing, I won't see the numbers of fishermen on the water I will in other times of the year.

We have some of our coldest weather in January, and when the water gets cold, baitfish and gamefish gang up. It used to be you could have a tough time finding them, but with the marine electronics we have now, it's much easier. You just spend some time behind the wheel, looking at your down-scope and side-scope and Lake Master maps, and you can find fish ganged up.

When I go out in January, I start looking in 15 to 20 feet of water, and I'll look all the way out to 50 feet. The key is to find bait with fish mixed in.

My No. 1 lure in January is a jigging spoon; I'll use an underpin and a swim-suit sometimes and just crawl them

through the fish, but most of the time, I'm jigging vertically with a spoon.

The key is, by this time of year, the shad will be much slower; they get lethargic. If you have water temperatures in the low 50s and high 40s, you start having some shad kills. In lakes where you have big populations of threadfin shad, die-offs are natural, and those stripers, large-mouth bass, spotted bass, white bass and white perch will really take advantage of them. They will really get fired up, and you can catch good numbers of fish. Really, this is the time of year that I will put some fillets in the freezer.

FEED THEM SPOONS

There are tons of good spoons out there — I usually fish a Hopkins Shorty — but the big thing to understand is size. I've learned through the years that if you look at the size of spoons by weight, that can be very misleading, because you have some spoons that are made of lead and some of stainless steel, and other metals. They can weigh the same and be very dif-



Dan Kibler

ferent in terms of size.

I want to fish a spoon that matches the size of the shad the fish are feeding on. I try to fish a size that the fish will want. One key is, if I see some shad dying, I want to use a spoon the size of those shad. You can start with that and go bigger or smaller from there; usually, I will



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

OPPOSITE: Advanced marine electronics allows anglers to do a much better job of finding big concentrations of bait and fish and getting their lures in the middle of them. **INSET:** White perch are one staple of Carolina lakes that are often caught vertical jigging with a spoon.

go smaller if I can't get them to react to the first spoon. Nowadays, on a down-screen, you can see the fish and the spoon, even down 40 feet, and you can see them and see if they don't react. When that happens, I'll go to a smaller spoon than what I've got tied on.

I don't typically use a spoon with a feather on the treble hook. My opinion is that a feather will calm a spoon down. I want to be able to provide the action by how hard I pop it off the bottom and how far I pop it off the bottom with my rod tip. You pop it off the bottom and follow the spoon back down with your rod tip, to make sure it's not falling on slack line and you can see or feel the strike.

Something real important to me is, if I'm fishing for bigger fish like largemouths or stripers, I will fish a spoon on a baitcasting rod, a 6½-foot, medium-action rod. But if I'm fishing a smaller spoon for white perch, a smaller spoon will feel more comfortable in my hands on a spinning rod — and most people know I hardly ever use a spinning rod.

When I'm jigging a small spoon, I'll use a 6-foot spinning rod. Part of the reason is, it's comfortable for me to fish with one hand in my pocket and the other hand on that spinning rod. It's much harder to fish a baitcaster with one hand, the way it's weighted, so top-heavy and awkward. You may have more power and leverage with a baitcaster, but you don't need that fishing this way. You aren't fishing a Mop Jig on 40-pound braid.

If you are fishing a spoon on a baitcaster, you don't need to worry as much about line twist, so I'll tie 14-pound braid on the reel directly to an 8- to 10-pound fluorocarbon leader. On spinning tackle, I'm just using 10-pound fluorocarbon. When I fish an underspin or a swimbait, I'll use a 7-foot, medium-action bait casting rod with 12-pound fluoro on the reel. When I find the fish with my electronics, I'll cast it, count it down to the depth the fish are holding and slowly crawl it back to them. A big thing is, the closer to the bottom you can mark the baitfish and fish, the easier they are to catch. That's not to say you can't catch 'em if they're suspended way up off the bottom, but if you can find 'em within a few feet of the bottom, they'll be more likely to bite.

I hope you take a flier on this and visit your home lake this month. Yeah, it's cold, but with all the quality clothing we have now, with the gloves and suits and rain gear, you can be out on the lake all day and be comfortable and catch a lot of fish. And that's the reason we all do this to start with. ■



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2021 BLACKJACK 256 BAY

The BlackJack 256 Bay is the flagship of the BlackJack line. With its larger size, you can take the 256 Bay into bigger, rougher water and still get the exceptionally smooth and dry ride that's come to be expected from the BlackJack brand.

The 256 Bay comes loaded with many standard features, such as LED lights, custom upholstery and gas shocks on all hatch lids. The console has a large door in the front, making it big enough to house multiple batteries and extra storage space. The large dash has plenty of real estate for aftermarket electronics. The

hull itself is a work of art, with a subtly more aggressive styling, while still maintaining BlackJack's beautifully unique look. When you drive a BlackJack, you drive a boat that makes everyone take notice.

Length 25'6"	Beam 8'6"	Capacity 10	Max HP 400
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www.blackjackboats.com/our-boats/blackjack-256

2021 BLACKJACK 224



The BlackJack 224 represents the ultimate blend of prowess and performance, all wrapped together in a sleek and striking design from legendary boat builders Bill and Gary Kenner.

From the smooth, dry ride of the “Carolina flare” bow to its classic “tumblehome” transom, the BlackJack 224 blends tradition and technology like no other boat on the market. Her hand-laid hull and deck are heavy-duty but lightweight. Reverse-angle, spray-reduction chines deflect the water with authority.

Length 23' 1"	Beam 8' 3"	Capacity 10	Max HP 300
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2021 BLACKJACK 256 COASTAL

The BlackJack 256 Coastal is the newest addition to the BlackJack line that combines offshore and bay boat elements to give you a boat that lets you decide how you want to fish on any given day.

Its three-piece design, deeper casting deck and open aft deck give you the ability fish comfortably in bigger waters without sacrificing inshore fishability. Add the optional removable forward seating, and the Coastal quickly converts to a day cruiser perfect for family trips to your favorite sandbar or island.

The BlackJack 256 Coastal has the versatility you need with the style and performance you've come to expect from BlackJack Boats.



Length 26' 6"	Beam 8' 6"	Capacity 10	Max HP 400
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AV26

The Avenger AV-26 has an overall length of 26-foot-2 and a beam of 8½ feet built with the serious fisherman in mind. This stable fishing platform is complimented with standard equipment like two live release and one baitwell, dual lockable rod storage boxes, and an anchor locker built to accommodate both bow and stern anchors. The Avenger AV-26 is rated for a single engine of up to 400 HP and features an 89-gallon capacity fuel tank, making your favorite fishing spot easily and quickly accessible.



Length 26' 0"	Beam 8' 6"	Capacity 8	Max HP 400
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www.avengerbayboats.com/av26.html

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AV24

The Avenger AV-24 has an overall length of 24-foot-8 and a beam of 8½ feet built with the serious fisherman in mind. This stable fishing platform is complimented with standard equipment like two live release and one baitwell, dual lockable rod storage boxes, and an anchor locker built to accommodate both bow and stern anchors. The Avenger AV-24 is rated for a single engine of up to 300 HP and features an 89-gallon capacity fuel tank, making your favorite fishing spot easily and quickly accessible.

Length 24' 8"	Beam 8' 6"	Capacity 8	Max HP 300
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2021 BLUE WAVE MAKAIRA

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Based on the wildly successful 2800 Pure Hybrid platform, Makaira provides the boat the marketplace has been begging for; offshore ability with nearshore capability.

NEW for 2021... Makaira is equipped with the standard features you need and has new options you want. Noteworthy standards for 2021 include: Garmin electronics, deluxe captains seats on a tackle station, compass, 3-sided tempered glass windshield, freshwater washdown, swim platform / ladder and a T-top with a finished edge. New optional equipment includes a second station and marine head.

Makaira has a spacious cockpit that seriously rivals that of traditional centers yet manages to keep a legit aft platform largely

thanks to the no-splashwell build utilized on all Blue Wave Boats that keep the aft decks huge on the entire line-up.

Forward features wrap around seating that quickly and easily transforms into a casting platform or u-shaped seating. And yes, the forward pitch-well of the 2800 Pure Hybrid is literally front and center on this model too. This smart design has an optional quick stow and easy access table and base unseen in larger boats.

Even more surprising features include lockable rod storage built into the gunwales, both port and starboard, that can accommodate up to ten 8' rods with reels. Additionally, these compartments do double duty as dry storage.

Length 27' 2"	Beam 9' 2"	Capacity 11	Max HP 600
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2021 BLUE WAVE 2400 PURE BAY



Get to know 2400 Pure Bay, AGAIN. Totally reinvigorated for 2021, the Pure Bay Series has a redesigned helm station capable of accepting a 16-inch GPS, new helm seating and standard features that are sure to catch the eye of any angler. What hasn't changed? The legendary ride!

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Length 24' 6"	Beam 8' 6"	Capacity 9	Max HP 350
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bluwaveboats.com/boats/2021-purebay--2400

2021 BLUE WAVE 2800 PURE HYBRID

Meet 2800 Pure Hybrid, it is just as comfortable fishing the shallows as fishing blue water. This is the evolution of a new species of boat from the Parks family, who have been leading the charge in innovation since 1992.

NEW for 2021... 2800 Pure Hybrid is equipped with the standard features you need and has new options you want. Noteworthy standards for 2021 include: Garmin electronics, deluxe captains seats on a tackle station, compass, 3-sided tempered glass windshield, freshwater washdown, swim platform / ladder and a t-top with a finished edge. New, optional equipment includes a second station and marine head.

The unique hull design of 2800 Pure Hybrid delivers a soft and comfortable ride with enough Carolina flare to stay dry in most conditions. The double-stepped hull gets on top of the waves immediately for peak fuel economy and nimble performance.

The boat's impressive size assures space for everything you need for a day of fishing or fun in the sun. Fishing is at the forefront of this boat's purpose-built design. One standard pressurized livewell aft holding 35 gallons of live bait and a 10-gallon pitchwell forward, are standard. An additional seventy-five gallons of livewell is optional. Spacious platforms with insulated fish boxes and lockable rod storage all drain overboard and keep the deck dry. The console is large enough for twin screens at the helm and a spacious step-down compartment has ample room for a marine head. A comfortable jump seat and optional seat cushions for the bow turn this fishing machine into a sandbar champ.



And to top it off you can easily fill 'er up thanks to fuel fills port and starboard. The transom is Kevlar reinforced to accommodate up to 600 hp in a single or twin set-up. Truly, no species is safe.

Length 27' 2"	Beam 9' 2"	Capacity 11	Max HP 600
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bluwaveboats.com/boats/2021-pure_hybrid--2800



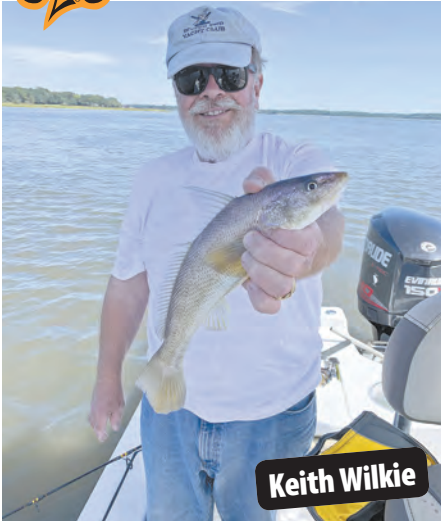
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or to images@CarolinaSportsman.com

Digital images must be at least 500KB and in jpeg format.
Print photos cannot be returned.



Keith Wilkie

Keith Wilkie caught this nice whiting off the ICW on the Wadmalaw River near Yonges Island in Meggett, S.C.



Justin Hall

Justin Hall caught and released this 20-inch flounder on July 5 in Surf City, N.C. The fish hit a Trout Trick.



Ridge Seay

Ridge Seay, 5, of Rock Hill, S.C., caught this 4-pound red fish with his dad, Casey, off Oak Island, N.C.



Ron Dills

A Blabbermouth popping cork helped Ron Dills catch this 40-inch redfish near Oriental, N.C., on July 19.



Caleb Phillips

Caleb Phillips and his dad, Jason, after taking this 7-point buck in Moore County, N.C., on Nov. 23, 2018.



Drew Pressley

Drew Pressley of Germantown, N.C., caught this 7-pound bass in Walnut Cove, N.C., on July 11.



Kaitlyn Seiler

Twin sisters Kaitlyn and Lindsey Seiler of Stokesdale, N.C., killed their first turkeys a year apart in Rockingham County. Kaitlyn killed her bird in 2019, Lindsey in 2020.



Lindsey Seiler

A photograph of two deer standing in a field of tall, dry grass. In the background, a paved road with a yellow line is visible. The deer are facing right. The word "OVERTIME" is written in large, bold, black letters across the top, and "ARCHERY" is written in yellow, stylized letters below it, both partially overlapping the deer.

OVERTIME ARCHERY

■ By Craig Holt

**NORTH CAROLINA'S
URBAN ARCHERY
PROGRAM ADDS
A POSTSEASON TO
DEER SEASON FOR
BOWHUNTERS WHO
DIDN'T GET ENOUGH
TIME IN THE WOODS.**

For most North Carolina hunters, deer season lasts almost 4 months, from the second Saturday in September through Jan. 1.

BUT ARCHERY HUNTERS GET TWO EXTENSIONS:

Urban Archery seasons from early January through mid-February and the Community Deer Management Assistance Program (CDMAP) set by residential areas.

“I started hunting Urban Archery about five years ago, the same time Oak Ridge joined,” said Tory Pegg. “The town council approved (UA) because the doe population was through-the-roof crazy.”

An Oak Ridge resident who killed North Carolina’s state-record non-typical buck in 2019, Pegg planted food plots inside the town’s boundaries.

“I focused on does,” said Pegg, 26. “Today, the doe population is much more in balance. UA season offers a good chance to shoot a doe and fill a freezer.”

Urban Archery’s 2021 hunt dates are Jan. 9-Feb. 14, while CDMAP bowhunting is controlled by private clients.

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission created Urban Archery 13 years ago. Elkin in Surry County and Washington in Beaufort County were the first municipalities to join. In 2008, Washington archers took four deer, while Elkin hunters nailed 45, the single-season record.

Sixty-four communities had joined by 2020 when UA hunters tagged 163 whitetails.

UA and CDMAP programs have major differences. Ordinary bowhunters can hunt in municipalities involved

in the Urban Archery program. In the CDMAP program, archers who receive Bowhunter Certification Referral Service training from the N.C. Bowhunters Association are chosen to hunt primarily in residential communities, often gated communities, with deer problems.

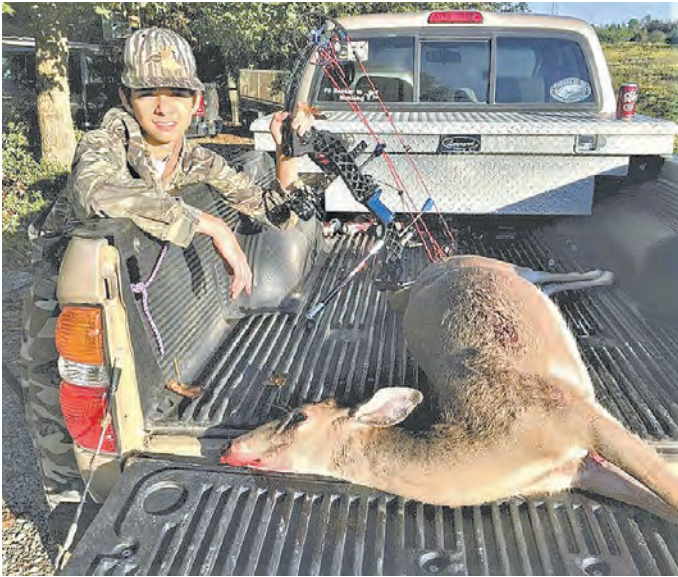
“Any Joe Bowhunter can do Urban Archery,” said Don Moore, NCBA’s BCRS chairman.

“Any bowhunter can hunt UA where it’s legal, if they have (landowner) permission,” said Bud Blaylock, the NCBA’s membership committee chairman. “But BCRS is only for NCBA members who are picked for properties that require trained archery hunters.”



Craig Holt

Bowhunters in North Carolina can hunt Jan. 9-Feb. 14 in 64 communities across North Carolina. **ACROSS SPREAD:** Many municipalities have signed up for the Urban Archery program because deer populations within their boundaries have soared.



- Quail, Mallard Ducks, Pheasants and Chucker Season, Oct. 1 - March 31
- Deer, Sept. 1 - Jan. 1
- Wild Boar, Sept. - May



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URBAN ARCHERY HARVESTS

Season	Total
2020	163
2019	169
2018	143
2017	133
2016	197
2015	191
2014	151
2013	82
2012	70
2011	96
2010	* 83
2009	83
2008	49

* Incomplete data (Rowan, Union, Stanly counties unreported)

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URBAN ARCHERY 2021 PARTICIPATING MUNICIPALITIES

	Phone	Web site		Phone	Web site
Albemarle	704-984-9565	albemarlenc.gov	Midland	704-888-2232	midlandnc.us
Archer Lodge	919-359-9727	archerlodgenc.gov	Mineral Springs	704-243-0505	mineralspringsnc.com
Belmont	704-825-5586	cityofbelmont.org	Mooresboro		townofmooresboro.org
Boiling Springs	704-434-9691	boilingspringsnc.net	Morganton	828-438-5290	morgantonnc.gov
Catawba	828-241-2215	townofcatawbanc.org	Nags Head/KDH	252-441-2525, Ext 2	
Chapel Hill	919-968-2784	townofchapelhill.org	New London	704-463-5423	
China Grove	704-857-2466	chinagrovecnc.gov	N. Wilkesboro	336-667-7129	north-wilkesboro.com
Clayton	919-553-5002	townofclaytonnc.org	Norwood	704-474-3416	norwoodgov.com
Cleveland		clevelandnc.org	Oakboro	704-485-3351	oakboro.com
Concord	704-920-5000	concordnc.gov	Oak Ridge	336-644-7009	oakridgenc.com
Denton	336-859-4231	townofdenton.com	Pleasant Garden	336-674-3002	pleasantgarden.net
East Bend	336-699-8560	eastbendnc.com	Randleman	336-495-7500	cityofrandleman.com
Eden	336-613-3434	edennc.us	Red Cross	704-485-2002	townofredcross.com
Elkin	336-258-8900	elkinnc.org	Richfield	704-463-1308	richfieldnc@aol.com
Fairview	704-753-1981	fairviewnc.gov	Ronda	336-835-2061	townofronda.org
Franklinville	336-824-2604	franklinvillenc.org	Sanford	919-777-1104	sanfordnc.net
Glen Alpine	828-584-2622	townofglenalpine.org	Shelby	704-484-6800	cityofshelby.com
Granite Quarry	704-279-5596	granitequarrync.gov	Stallings	704-821-8557	stallingsnc.org
Grifton	252-524-4161	grifton.com	Stanfield	704-888-2386	stanfieldnc.com
Harrisburg	704-455-0709	harrisburgnc.org	Stokesdale	336-643-4011	stokesdale.org
Huntersville	704-875-6541	huntersville.org	Summerfield	336-643-8655	summerfieldnc.gov
Indian Trail	704-821-5401	indiantrail.org	Trent Woods	252-637-3030	trentwoodspd.org
Jamestown	336-454-1138	jamestown-nc.gov	Troutman	704-528-7610	troutmannnc.gov
Jefferson	336-846-9368		Unionville	704-226-1989	unionvillenc.com
Jonesville	336-835-3426	jonesvillenc.gov	Valdese	828-879-2120	townofvaldese.com
Kannapolis	704-920-4052	kannapolisnc.gov	Wake Forest	919-435-9609	wakeforestnc.gov
King	336-983-8265	ci.king.nc.us	Walnut Creek	919-778-9687	walnutcreekncc.com
Landis	704-438-0610	townoflandis.com	Waxhaw	704-843-2195, Ext. 278 & 225	waxhaw.com
Lattimore	704-434-2620	townoflattimore@gmail.com	Weddington	704-846-2709	townofweddington.com
Lenoir	828-757-2200	cityoflenoir.com	Wentworth	336-342-6288	townofwentworth.com
Lewisville	336-945-5558	lewisvillenc.net	Yadkinville	336-679-8732	yadkinville.org
Locust	704-888-5260, Ext. 101	locustnc.com			

Municipalities that wish to trim deer herds with Urban Archery must contact the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission by April 1. Urban Archery participants require no special hunting permits, just a state hunting license and big-game tags, but hunters participating in UA may purchase unlimited, bonus either-sex deer tags (two for \$10).

“United Archery seasons are simply an extension of the archery season for municipalities that request to be enrolled,” said Jonathan Shaw, the Commission’s supervising deer biologist. “The same licensing and big-game reporting requirements that exist during normal deer seasons apply. Any municipality can enroll, but (UAs) don’t obligate private landowners to allow hunting on their property.”

Archers who want to hunt in municipalities with an Urban Archery season receive a map of that town’s boundaries. Hunting zones may include public and private lands.

Shaw said that towns join the UA program “as a combination of hunters making requests to increase opportunity, landown-

ers who want to address deer-damage issues, and officials recognizing deer-density issues.”

The Commission started CDMAP in 2018 for residential communities with localized deer-population problems. NCBA provides trained BCRS bowhunters to those communities.

“BCRS isn’t (a program) to get a place to hunt; it’s a service we provide to the public and private-sector that have been overpopulated by deer,” Moore said. “Clients determine hunt rules, so BCRS isn’t everyone’s cup of tea.”

The Commission offers bonus antlerless permits to communities, which in turn distribute them to participating bowhunters who have used their six annual deer tags.

“Groups and individuals in the CDMAP program coordinate with the Commission to find people who would be good fits, as far as hunters, for their area,” Moore said. “BCRS is a free public service with volunteer bowhunters on a year-round basis.”

Archers who wish to become BCRS-certified must be NCBA members who take the Commission’s Hunter Safety Education course, International Bowhunter Education Course, plus other



Craig Holt

Bowhunters who have used all six of their annual deer tags can purchase extra doe tags for Urban Archery at two for \$10.

training. They also must show archery skills, using their own traditional or compound bows.

To learn more about Urban Archery, CDMAP and BCRS, visit:

- www.ncwildlife.org/Portals/0/Hunting/Documents/Deer/Urban_Archery_2020.pdf;
- [www.ncwildlife.org/Portals/0/Hunting/Documents/Deer/CDMAP Overview Final.pdf](http://www.ncwildlife.org/Portals/0/Hunting/Documents/Deer/CDMAP_Overview_Final.pdf);
- www.ncbowhunter.com/bcrs.html.

Although some archery hunters may hope to drop a buck they targeted during the regular hunting season and couldn't tag, the major focus of Urban Archery and CDMAP hunters is to reduce doe numbers.

"I've taken does during UA," Pegg said. "I did have a buck I wanted to hunt, but I didn't see him. I got him two years later in the regular season." ■



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

SERIOUS BOWHUNTERS GET LATE SEASON >

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OVERTIME ARCHERY

SERIOUS BOWHUNTERS GET LATE SEASON

As many motivations exist for hunting whitetails with archery equipment as there are hunters.

Urban Archery municipalities dot North Carolina's landscape, and bowhunters who take advantage of the late season may come from anywhere. Many focus on does or scouting.

Matthew Head, who hunts Urban Archery in Summerfield, said it gives him more scouting opportunities for the regular season.

"I'm more of a spectator during Urban Archery season," said Head, a 43-year-old engineer. "This year, I have more access to more properties, because I didn't have a lot of places to hunt. I see more deer than during the regular season, and I do more scouting with trail cameras.

"Spending more time outdoors lets me observe more deer behavior. I can put boots on the ground for active scouting. I hope to understand how deer patterns shift as food sources change, plus, I don't affect deer movement during prime times."

Karen Baskin of New Bern became a N.C. Bowhunters Association member a few years ago but didn't become active until last year.

"I wanted to improve my archery skills and put some food in my refrigerator," said Baskin, an industrial engineer at Cherry Point Marine Air Station. "I wanted to improve my upper-body strength, because you can't use rifles on the ground in neighborhoods around here. I've received good ideas about skills, techniques and stand placements from women hunters.

"I don't care about horns; I'm about culling does. But if a (buck) walked in front of me, well..."

Mark Headen was a member of Elkin's inaugural 2008 class of urban archers.

"We harvested the most deer that year (45)," said Headen, 52.

Tucked in the Foothills of northwest North Carolina, Elkin has acres of excellent whitetail habitat inside its perimeter.

Headen emphasized hunters need to be courteous.

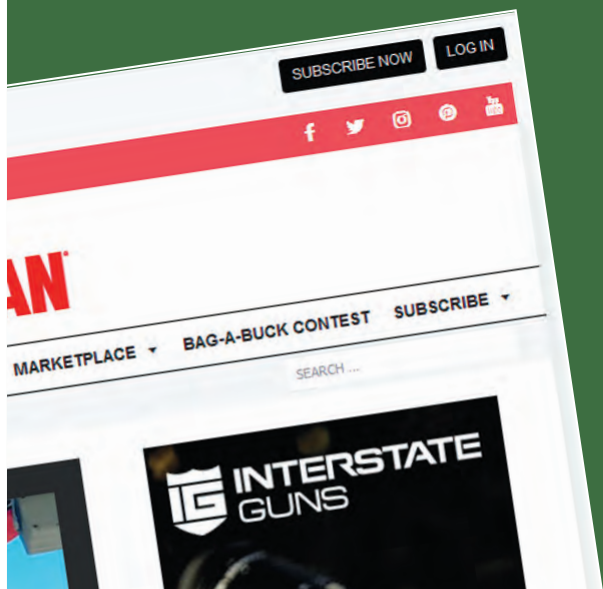
"Hunters need to ask permission, be discreet and not drag deer through backyards," he said. "All a hunter has to do is contact a city or county seat and make sure it's open, then talk to residents who are okay with it. You have to remember, you're there to help reduce car accidents, deer eating up yards and gardens and running between houses.

"Talk to property owners. Not all will give permission, but be respectful; you're asking to be on their property." ■



Bowhunters across North Carolina are taking advantage of Urban Archery seasons for many different reasons.

Craig Holt



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HUNTING SEASONS

DEER

Region	Method	Season Dates
Western	Bowhunting	Sept. 12-27 Oct. 11-Nov. 22 Dec. 12-Jan. 1, 2021 (bucks only)
	Muzzleloader	Sept. 28-Oct. 10
Northwestern	Gun	Nov. 23-Dec. 12
	Bowhunting	Sept. 12-Nov. 6
Central	Muzzleloader	Nov. 7-20
	Gun	Nov. 21-Jan. 1, 2021
	Bowhunting	Sept. 12-Oct. 30
Northeastern/ Southeastern	Muzzleloader	Oct. 31-Nov. 13
	Gun	Nov. 14-Jan. 1, 2021
	Bowhunting	Sept. 12-Oct. 2
	Muzzleloader	Oct. 3-16
	Gun	Oct. 17-Jan. 1, 2021

BEAR

Oct. 12-Nov. 21 & Dec. 14-Jan. 1, 2021:	In and west of Surry, Wilkes, Caldwell, Burke and Cleveland counties
Nov. 14-Jan. 1, 2021:	Alamance, Anson, Cabarrus, Caswell, Chatham, Davidson, Durham, Granville, Guilford, Lee, Mecklenburg, Montgomery, Orange, Person, Randolph, Rockingham, Rowan, Stanly, Union counties
Oct. 17-Jan. 1, 2021:	Franklin, Harnett, Hoke, Johnston, Moore, Richmond, Scotland, Vance, Warren, Wake counties
Nov. 21-Jan. 1, 2021:	Alexander, Catawba, Davie, Forsyth, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Stokes, Yadkin counties
Nov. 11-Jan. 1, 2021:	Bladen, Brunswick, Carteret, Columbus, Cumberland, Duplin, New Hanover, Onslow, Pamlico, Pender, Robeson, Sampson counties
Nov. 14-29, Dec. 12-27:	Dare, Hyde, Tyrrell counties
Nov. 14-22, Dec. 12-27:	Beaufort, Bertie, Craven, Hertford, Jones, Martin, Washington counties
Nov. 14-22, Dec. 12-27:	Camden*, Chowan*, Gates, Pasquotank*, Perquimans (*Seasons open Nov. 13 by local laws)
Nov. 21-Dec. 20:	Edgecombe, Greene, Halifax, Lenoir, Nash, Northampton, Pitt, Wayne, Wilson counties

SQUIRREL

Oct. 124-Feb. 28, 2021 (gray & red)
Oct. 11-Jan. 31, 2021 (fox)

RABBIT

Oct. 12-Feb. 28, 2021

RACCOON, OPOSSUM

Oct. 12-Feb. 28, 2021

QUAIL

Nov. 21-Feb. 28, 2021

GROUSE

Oct. 12-Feb. 28, 2021

RAILS

Sept. 1-Nov. 20

(KING, SORA, VIRGINIA, CLAPPER)
(GALLINULES, MOORHENS)

CANADA GEESE

Resident zone, Oct. 7-17, Nov. 7-28,
Dec. 19-Feb. 13, 2021
Statewide: Sept. 1-30; NE Zone, Jan. 15-30, permit only

SNOW, BLUE, ROSS GEESE

Oct. 13-Feb. 13, 2021, Feb. 15-March 31, 2021, permit

DUCKS

Oct. 7-10, Nov. 7-28, Dec. 19-Jan. 30, 2021

EARLY TEAL

Sept. 12-30 (east of US 17 only)

SEA DUCKS

Nov. 23-Jan. 30, 2021

BRANT

Dec. 19-Jan. 30, 2021

DOVE

Sept. 5-Oct. 10, Nov. 14-28, Dec. 12-Jan. 31, 2021

TUNDRA SWAN

Nov. 7-Jan. 30, 2021. Bag limit 1, by permit only.

WOODCOCK

Dec. 10-Jan. 30, 2021

WILD TURKEY (Youth)

April 3-9, 2021
April 10-May 8, 2021

HUNTING SEASONS

SPECIES	SEASON DATES (PRIVATE LAND)	BAG LIMIT	POSSESSION LIMIT
Doves	Sept. 5-7, Sept. 8-Oct. 11 Nov. 14-28, Dec. 25-Jan. 31, 2021	15	45
Crow	Nov. 1-March 1, 2021	No limits	
Quail	Nov. 23-March 1, 2021	12	36
Rabbit	Nov. 26-March 1, 2021	5	15
Squirrel	Oct. 1-March 1, 2021	10	30
Fox	Nov. 26-March 1, 2021	No limits	
Grouse	Nov. 26-March 1, 2021 (Game Zone 1 only)	3	9
Raccoon	Sept. 15-March 15, 2021 (statewide)	3 raccoons per party	
Opossum	Sept. 15-March 15, 2021	No limits	
Other furbearers	Nov. 26-March 1, 2020 (bobcat, otter, weasel, mink, muskrat, skunk)	No limits	
Bear	Game Zone 1 Game Zone 2 Game Zone 2 (Georgetown, Horry, Marion and Williamsburg counties)	Oct. 17-23 (still hunting only) Oct. 24-30 (dogs) Oct. 17-30 (still hunting only) Oct. 17-30 (still hunting only)	
Rails	Sept. 15-20, King & Clapper Sora & Virginia Gallinules (common/purple)	15 25 15	45 75 45
Snipe	Nov. 14 - Feb. 28, 2021	8	24
Woodcock	Dec. 18 - Jan. 31, 2021	3	9
Wild Turkey	March 22-April 30, 2021 (Game Zones 3&4) April 1-May 10, 2021 (Game Zones 1&2)	3 3	

DEER SEASON

ZONE	ARCHERY ONLY	PRIM WEAPON	GUNS
1		Oct. 1-10	Oct. 11-Jan. 1, 2021
2	Sept. 15-30	Oct. 1-10	Oct. 11-Jan. 1, 2021
3			Aug. 15-Jan. 1, 2021
4	Aug 15-31		Sept. 1-Jan. 1, 2021
Youth Days: Game Zone 1, Sept. 26, Jan. 2; Game Zone 2: Sept. 12, Jan. 2; Game Zone 3: Aug. 8, Jan. 2; Game Zone 4: Aug. 8, Jan. 2.			

WATERFOWL SEASONS

SPECIES	DATES	BAG LIMIT
Duck	Teal only: Sept. 11-26 Nov. 21-28, Dec. 12-Jan. 31, 2021	6 6
Canada geese	Sept. 1-30, Nov. 21-28, Dec. 12-Jan. 31, 2021, Feb. 14-March 1, 2021	15 (Sept.) 5 (Others)
Blue/snow (light) geese	Nov. 21-28, Dec. 12-Jan. 31, 2021, Feb. 14-March 1, 2021	25
Brant	Dec. 13-Jan. 2-31, 2021	2
Sea ducks	Nov. 21-28, Dec. 12-Jan. 31, 2021	6
Mergansers	Nov. 21-28, Dec. 12-Jan. 31, 2021	5 (1 hooded)
Coots	Nov. 21-28, Dec. 12-Jan. 31, 2021	15

A photograph of three men and a dog in a wooded area. The man in the center is wearing a camouflage cap and a tan vest over a green shirt, holding a rifle. The man on the left is wearing an orange cap and a blue jacket, also holding a rifle. The man on the right is wearing a camouflage jacket and an orange cap. A large, dark brown dog with a white patch on its back is standing in the foreground, looking towards the camera. The background is filled with trees and foliage.

BARKING UP THE RIGHT TREE

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BY USING DOGS TO FIND
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■ By Mike Marsh

THREE HUNTERS

drained their coffee cups down to the dregs before heading into a hardwood forest in farming country near Rocky Point, N.C., in Pender County, close to the home of 67-year-old Preston Casteen, a retired aircraft engineer.

Casteen was holding a dog leash that might have been better described as a dynamite fuse. On the opposite end was tethered a brindle-coated dog, chuffing her breaths, straining at her collar, itching to be set free to follow her nose.

"This is Cammie," Casteen said. "She is an original mountain cur. At 9 years old, she is an experienced dog. My other dog is Penny, a young puppy. She's out in there in the woods, somewhere. I will have to check her location with the GPS tracking collar she's wearing if we don't hear from her soon. She's still in training and may not be of much use."

Along for the morning's squirrel hunt were Wayne Batson, a 53-year-old retiree from Atlantic Seafood and Bill White, 55, a retired school teacher. All three carried semi-automatic shotguns loaded with No. 5 or 6 lead shot, although Casteen said he sometimes used a .22 rifle for head-shooting squirrels.

"It keeps you from having to pick shot out of the meat when eating barbecued squirrels," he said.

Penny was burning off puppy energy, running around the edges of woodlots bordered by the brown dormancy of agricultural fields. Casteen collected her and put her back in her pen before unclasp the leash holding Cammie, who is partly owned by Batson. Besides sharing the expense of her upkeep, the two hunters share the pride of her accomplishments, as well as the enjoyment of hunting with her. Eventually, Penny will follow in her footsteps, and another cur will come along to fill hers.

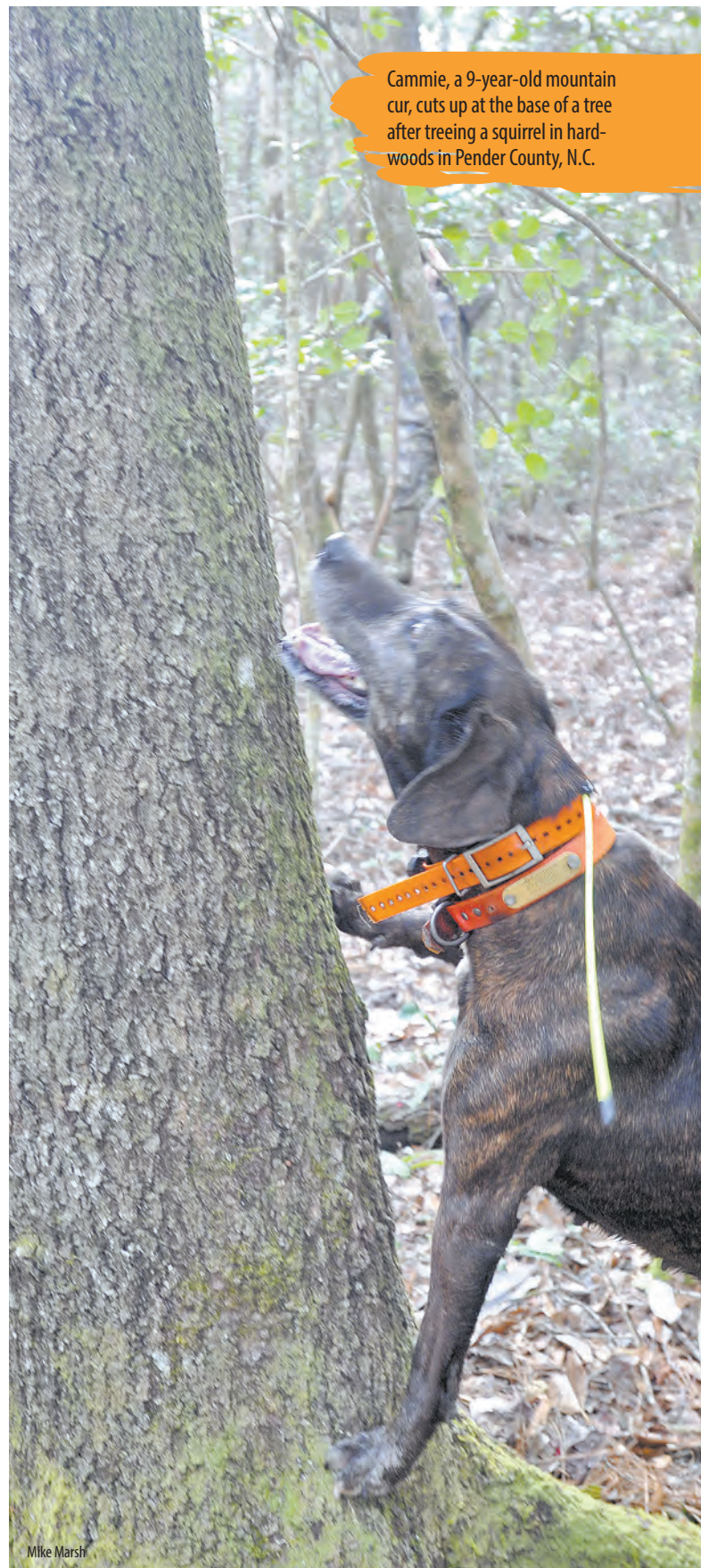
"On a good morning, we may shoot 12 to 14 squirrels," Casteen said. "On an average morning, we bag seven or eight. It depends upon the type of woods and how hard they have been hunted. If it's a mature forest with hollow trees, a lot of squirrels run into holes to escape. Middle-aged, mixed stands of pines and hardwoods are best."

"The success of a hunt also depends upon how late in the season you are hunting," Batson said. "We do most of our hunting after deer season ends, because deer hunters don't like squirrel hunters disturbing the woods. They think it alarms the deer, making them more difficult to hunt."

This particular hunt took place on Feb. 27, 2019. Deer season had long since ended, and the hunt began in Casteen's backyard. The goal was not to bag a lot of squirrels, because he uses his home territory as a training area for the dogs. However, he said it was not difficult to get permission to hunt squirrels nearly anywhere he asked once deer season was out.

"Listen," Casteen said. "Cammie's treed a squirrel."

The hunters made their way through the shirt-ripping briars and pants-slapping switch cane of the understory, with dew from sweetgum saplings raining down as they pushed them aside.



Cammie, a 9-year-old mountain cur, cuts up at the base of a tree after treeing a squirrel in hardwoods in Pender County, N.C.

Mike Marsh

Cammie was biting and barking at the base of a tree, signaling that a squirrel was up there, somewhere. White keeps binoculars on an elastic harness that keeps them from dangling and snagging vines yet instantly available for viewing aloft.

“There he is,” he said. “He’s moving around the tree.”

Casteen shook a sapling on one side of the tree, while the other hunters remained in their positions on the opposite side. The squirrel spooked at the commotion and moved around the tree, presenting a shot. White fired, and the squirrel fell. A streak of brown, Cammie was on it the instant it thumped the ground. As Casteen took it from her and pocketed it in his game vest, she took off again, sniffing the woods for the trail of the next squirrel.

It didn’t take long for her to pick up hot scent. The squirrel treed but took off. Leaping from limb to limb, tree to tree, it stopped several times. However, no one got off a shot, and it escaped into a hole high in a tall oak. White beat on the trunk with an aluminum ball bat, to no avail.

“Sometimes a squirrel can’t stand the sound of tapping on the trunk of a hollow tree and runs out of the hole,” he said. “It

works often enough that it’s worth a try, though, as long as you want to go to the trouble of carrying a bat. It’s something else to carry that can slow you down.”

The squirrel stuck tight. The hunters continued on, but not so much hunting themselves as following Cammie’s lead. She treed another squirrel that escaped, then another that presented a good opportunity. Casteen instructed another hunter to shoot it with a scoped .22 rifle.

“I have been hunting squirrels since I was 12 and had a feist dog,” Casteen said. “I hunted them before school on our family farm. I also hunt deer and other game, but I have never outgrown the joy of hunting squirrels with a dog.”

White began hunting squirrels with Casteen and Batson in 2018, while Batson has been hunting squirrels for many years.

“I hunt with Preston on Saturdays, mostly,” Batson said. “I recently had knee surgery, and it slowed me down some, but hunting squirrels with a dog can be done at a



Mike Marsh is a freelance outdoor writer in Wilmington. His latest book, *Fishing North Carolina*, and other titles, are available at www.mikemarshoutdoors.com.

Bill White bangs on the trunk of a tree with an aluminum baseball bat to try and get a squirrel that’s gone in a hole to leave it.



A good pair of binoculars can really pay off for squirrel hunters when a bushytail stops moving and tries to hide in a tree's branches.



leisurely pace. Once the dog is barking up a tree, the squirrel usually stays put, and you can take your time getting there to shoot it.”

All the hunters agreed that, while still-hunting squirrels without a dog is an early morning or late-afternoon pursuit, anyone can hit the woods anytime behind a dog and have a great hunt. They prefer getting together to drink coffee and eat breakfast and begin hunting around 8:30 or 9 a.m., which gives the squirrels some time to move around and leave scent. Mornings are also cooler than afternoons. Even in February, long walks in the woods can make hunters sweat and take a toll on the performance of an animated tree dog.

Another great result of a hunt, besides plain, all-out fun, is eating. Casteen prepares squirrels for the table several different ways. He cooks them in a smoker, placing chicken on top to allow the fat to drip onto them for flavoring and tenderizing them. He also boils them, de-bones them and mixes them into rice. Another favorite method is slathering them with barbecue sauce, placing them on trays and baking them in an oven.

Obviously, hunting squirrels with a dog produces so many squirrels Casteen has been able to experiment with various recipes. However, Batson is more pragmatic in his cooking techniques.

“I don’t go usually to a lot of trouble to cook them,” he said. “I like them fried.” ■

STOVEPIPE SQUIRREL FEEDER FAST-PACES DOG TRAINING

Preston Casteen attracts squirrels to his dog-training area with a feeder made of a 2-foot section of sheet metal stove pipe with an internally mounted, sheet plug on the bottom. The plug can be a stovepipe plug, homemade plug or paint can of correct diameter to fit inside the stove pipe. It is held in place with sheet-metal screws or rivets. He drills a hole near the bottom and inserts a ¾-inch diameter PVC or galvanized steel plumbing nipple to serve as a spout.

The top of the feeder is an upside-down metal paint can. It keeps water from entering though the top and is quick and easy to remove and replace when adding corn or checking the corn level in the feeder.

While squirrels may gnaw a plastic nipple, a metal one lasts a long time and is easy to replace. A galvanized nipple cannot be damaged by squirrels’ teeth, but it is more expensive and a bit more difficult to install. Either nipple is held in place with threaded fittings. If the feeder was made of PVC pipe, squirrels would gnaw holes in it to get to the corn.

The feeder is placed on a plywood platform, with the platform and feeder attached to a tree at one end of the pen. When

Preston Casteen uses a squirrel feeder made of stove pipe to attract squirrels and help train his dogs.



Mike Marsh

squirrels sit on the plywood to feed, the dog sees them and becomes familiar with them. If it is worth its salt as a squirrel dog, it soon begins barking and learns to tree them. ■



DON'T FORGET JANUARY

IT MIGHT BE WINTER, BUT THERE ARE PLENTY OF FISHING OPPORTUNITIES

January brings the coldest weather of the year to the Carolinas, but that doesn't mean anglers should stow their fishing gear away. In most years, both states experience numerous, unseasonably warm days that can make fishing productive and enjoyable.

Even on bitterly cold days, many anglers can find a handful of fish to make a trip to the water worth it. But those warm spells can turn into the stuff of which angling dreams are made.

When compared to other parts of the country, the Carolinas' weather in January is actually quite pleasant, on the average. Along the coasts especially, the average highs range from 51 to 61 degrees, and the average lows run between 38 and 48. These aren't the

worst of fishing conditions; however, inshore water temperatures drop considerably, slowing down fish metabolisms.

Of course, fish have to eat, but during cold spells, they eat far less than most people realize. One reason the fall bite is so good is that these same fish know they need to pack on the mass to carry them through the winter. Instead of eating the same amount of food, their bodies transform that mass into energy to get them through until spring weather arrives. So on an average January day, the average inshore fishermen will generally struggle to catch his fill.

THE WARM WATCH

Luckily, weather patterns usually bring some 70-plus degree days to our coasts — and some days are considerably

warmer than that. During these warming trends, anglers can experience unforgettable fishing trips — even better than they'll have on spring days with the exact same temperatures.

One of the main reasons these days can be so good is because the fish are going to swarm to the warmest water close to them to chase the baitfish that are doing the same thing. These areas are small, so while fish can be just about anywhere in spring, in January, they are much easier to find. The shallow spots in creeks and



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



Brian Cope

Capt. Ben Powers likes fishing during the winter, especially during warming spells, because fewer joy-riders are on the water, and the fish cooperate nicely.

inlets become hotbeds of activity as the fish move in to warm their bodies, creating the need for them to feed more than normal for the winter.

Live bait is much more scarce this time of year than any other, but some baitfish are inshore, and a cast net or a well-placed minnow trap can provide you with more than enough. Using them under a cork is about as good as it gets. Suspending lures fished slowly can also be deadly, and even topwater lures can draw a strike or two on exceptionally warm days.

Think about the areas you generally fish in the spring, summer and fall. Those areas you concentrate on during the rising to high tide are where you want to spend most of your time in January. They warm up the quickest and stay the warmest thanks to their shallow natures.

And as the tide falls out, stay focused on areas with enough water to cover the fish, but not the deeper holes you look for in summer. The areas in between those are usually the most productive this time of year.

FISH STRUCTURE

Fishing around docks, bridge pilings and submerged debris is also a good tactic in January. Those structures suck up the sun's heat, and that heat transfers into the water, attracting baitfish and gamefish. During low stages of the tide, when the shallows are high and dry, many fish retreat to these types of

structure. And they can be anywhere in the water column, depending on how much heat is transferred through their preferred structure. So stay flexible.

Live bait fished at different depths can tell the tale around these structures, and experimenting with artificial lures that run at different depths is also a good bet. Don't be afraid to try working your lures a little faster at times, but abandon that tactic if it's not producing bites.

The water is generally clear in January, so keep that in mind when approaching areas you think are holding fish. Keep your distance, make long casts and stick with smaller lures and whatever natural bait you find. Many anglers also prefer fluoro-carbon leaders.

Even on the warmest days this month, you'll find far fewer people on the water. This allows you to fish more areas with less competition, so once you get your fill from one hole, it's a good idea to move on in search of another one. Your time is limited this month, so make the most of it. ■



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GREENER PASTURES

Jeff Burleson

Most soils in the Southeast are slightly on the acidic side, so correcting the pH with an application of lime will jump-start plant growth

JANUARY: A FINE TIME TO FIX pH

MOST FOOD-PLOT SOILS START OUT ACIDIC; NOW'S THE TIME TO GET THAT BALANCING ACT IN LINE

Certainly, 2020 was a year to remember — or maybe it should be a year to forget. Regardless, the year has come to an end, and a new 2021 is in store for hunters and fisherman.

With the passing of New Year's Day, it's time for land managers to be preparing and improving the quality of the dirt in their food plots.

First, most food plots planted with annuals in the fall are typically demolished by now and are looking quite pitiful. But hopefully, these fall plots provided hunters with successful outcomes, with nutrient-rich food and maybe even a trophy kill or two. If this is the case, it is the perfect time to load these food plots up with lime to begin adjusting the pH for next year's crop.

Yes, another discussion about acid-base correction. But it is especially important for producing lush food plots and should **NEVER** be avoided or put off until planting time. At a minimum, sufficient acid-base correction should occur at least four months before planting.

Food plots in the South are predominantly constructed on land that was formerly forested or areas adjacent to forested areas — places that have naturally acidic soils. These soils are perfect for growing trees but can be a problem when forbs and annual legumes are the target growth species.

UNDERSTANDING pH

Most forest soils in the South carry a pH between 4.0 to 5.0. At these levels, preferred planting varieties suffer from the minute they are planted, and the acidic environment makes fertilizers insoluble or practically unavailable for the plants to uptake to fuel growth.

The pH scale ranges from 0 to 14, with

7.0 considered as neutral; anything above 7.0 is considered alkaline or basic, and anything below 7.0 is acidic. pH is measured in logarithmic units where each number represents a 10-factor change.

Technically, the pH determines how many free hydrogen or hydroxyl ions are present. The more free hydrogen ions available causes a mixture to be more acidic, and the opposite is the case for hydroxyl ions where it is more basic or alkaline.

In simple terms, the pH dictates the solubility of certain macro and micronutrients. For most beneficial elements to plants, including phosphorus, nitrogen and potassium in large amounts and some heavy metals in lower amounts, the soil pH needs to be near or approaching neutral for plants to utilize these nutrients. But some toxic, heavy metals are more soluble to plants at lower pHs.

The bottom line is, a low pH is a problem for developing food plots and growing them to their full potential. January is a prime time to start applying lime to adjust the pH in soils. While a soil test is always beneficial for determining chemical composition, the soils in the Southeast are going to be on the acidic side of the scale, and pH corrections are rarely avoided.

BRING ON THE LIME

In acidic soils, acid-base correction is obtained from applying calcitic lime, and some methods are better for some soils than others. To begin, it is a slow process even when quick-acting versions are



Jeff Burleson

used. The quick-acting versions are great for applications within 30 days of planting and when only a small adjustment is needed, but they don't have the ability to change the pH very much in that short amount of time. Large corrections take longer — sometimes a few years — to get the pH into the ideal range.

Larger gaps in pH should be accomplished with pelletized limestone or larger particle-limestone. These take longer to dissolve and make a larger impact to changing soil pH than pulverized limestone, which may leach away or run off after a heavy rainfall. Pelletized limestone should be applied in January so it has several months of exposure to allow the chemical process to work.

For the best results, sites should be lightly disked to allow pellets to get lodged in the soil. Soil tests will determine the actual amounts needed, but for most sites, one to three tons per acre is generally the recommended rate within heavy acidic soils. These amounts can be applied in split applications as well. ■



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.

BREAKING GROUND IS FOR THE BIRDS

For some people, waking up late on Saturdays after deer season has ended, and cranking up a tractor is much needed therapy. For landowners with birds on the brain, the tractor time is beneficial for creating future feeding opportunities. And turning up the soil in key areas is a perfect way to pave the trail for creating prime feeding zones for game birds, specifically quail and wild turkey.

Deer and most other mammals can eat a variety of foods, but quail and wild turkeys are a little more specific on the types of foods they can consume, and it is mostly determined by particle size. Deer are able to chew up foods of various sizes and shapes, but birds must swallow their lunch and rely on their crops to churn up their food.

Small legumes and seed-bearing forbs offer birds with feeding opportunities. Winter disking can energize soils and allow small, dormant seeds to germinate. Some seed varieties prefer winter disking and will germinate faster over the winter than other times when other weed seeds are present.

Fields and field edges are generally full of dormant seeds and plenty of preferred and non-preferred seeds. Partridge pea, ragweed and blackberry prefer winter disking and can provide beneficial foods for quail, turkey and other birds. In fact, ragweed seeds are known to get a head start on all other weed and forb seeds if disked from November through January. Whichever plant gets a head start in these open grounds will have the tendency to flourish and take over the bare space first.

Winter disking can be performed just about anywhere on the

Breaking up soils along forest openings, including old logging roads, can provide plenty of seeds that game birds including quail and wild turkey will readily consume.



Jeff Burluson

farm where adequate sunlight is available. Power-line right-of-ways, old fields, food plots, road shoulders, fire lanes and other strips are generally excellent places to disk up to benefit game birds. The benefits from winter disking are best recognized when completed between November and February. ■



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Anglers looking to buy their first kayak should understand what features their boat should have, plus accessories.



RIG THAT FIRST KAYAK

KNOW WHAT YOU NEED BEFORE YOU PUT THAT BOAT IN THE WATER

Phillip Gentry

It's hard to describe the kayak-fishing phenomenon. Kayaks have been around for ages, but sometime during the last 20 years, the mentality of a lot of anglers shifted from fishing from powerboats to fishing from plastic paddle boats.

Even today, that shift has resulted in more availability of better products for anglers new to the sport. There has never been a better time to get started in kayak fishing than today for any species of fish you can imagine. However, with the boom, there's also been a lot of over-selling of what you need to get started. Below are some pretty basic, but pretty necessary items that will help you the most when starting in this sport.

FISHING PFDS

This item is listed first for a reason. The vast majority of people who die while kayak fishing die from drowning. The vast majority of those were not wearing a personal flotation device. Kayak fishing has made it cool to wear a life jacket when fishing. It's expected, so get one that fits and wear it.

RODS AND REELS

A seeming no-brainer. With all the selection out there, the best advice for a

kayak angler is to use rods long enough to let you reach around the boat from a seated position. The second-best advice is to go lighter than you think. The kayak becomes part of the drag system when fighting a fish, which makes it harder to break off because the boat is never really stationary unless you're on anchor. Doubt this? Try breaking off when you get hung up. Most times, you'll pull the boat to the snag before the line breaks.

FISHING TACKLE

Remember this phrase: know what you're going to throw before you go. Tackle storage capacity is limited, especially if you're accustomed to fishing from a larger powerboat. Pare your tackle down to match what you expect to catch. You'll soon discover that presentation of a bait is much more important than having a variety of colors, sizes, styles of basically the same bait.

PADDLE

A paddle is necessary if you fish from a paddle boat, but it can also be useful from a pedal boat. Pick a lightweight paddle you can handle all day.

Paddles can get pricey. You don't have to have one with a built-in measuring tape and hook-retrieval slot.



Phillip Gentry

Removable plastic rod holders are preferred over metal ones that are permanently attached to the boat.

ROD HOLDERS

If you like to anchor, drift or troll with multiple rods, you'll need rod holders. Once you lose one rod from just setting it down in the boat, you'll wish you'd spent the money on rod holders.

Plastic varieties are the lightest and most versatile; they won't rust or corrode like metal ones. If your boat has a track



Phillip Gentry of Waterloo, S.C., is host of "PG & Boat Girl Outdoors" podcast and a veteran outdoor writer.

system built in, or you can add track, it's worthwhile to remove, store and position rod holders rather than permanently screwing them to the deck or railings.

ANCHOR SYSTEM

This breaks down into two parts: stake-out poles for fishing in rivers and shallow coastal areas and small anchors for use everywhere else. If you plan on fishing in current or wind, a trolley system lets you adjust your tie-off spot from a seated position in the boat. You can buy commercially made systems or make one yourself from parts available at any hardware store.

FISH FINDERS

Without a doubt, sonar units are a valuable part of fishing, if not for marking fish but determining depth of water, presence of structure and baitfish, water temperature, etc. A sonar unit is probably an advanced piece of kayak gear, but suffice it to say, the kayak fishing market has paved the way for the availability of advanced sonar that's easily installed, powered and used in a plastic paddle boat.



Phillip Gentry

KAYAK CART

Whether you transport your kayak to the water on top of your car, in the bed of a pickup or on its own trailer, a kayak cart will be a lifesaver unless you intend to only launch at public boat launches where you can drive right up to the water's edge. Dragging a kayak is an option, but that puts a lot of wear and tear on the boat. If you're going down gated-off roads, through the woods, across a beach, through the neighbor's back yard, or whatever, consider obtaining a cart. The one that fits in the scupper holes are much easier to maneuver in a straight line than those you simply strap to the hull.

FISH/BAIT STORAGE

There's no research to prove it, but more kayak anglers use artificial baits than live baits. The major reason is that storage and weight capacity for keeping live bait is limited. Worms, crickets and dead cut bait isn't nearly as big a problem as holding water to store live baits. Some anglers use troll buckets and hang them off the side of the kayak, but they soon realize the drag created by the bucket is prohibitive.

The same research, if it existed, would show most kayak anglers release their catch rather than keep it for the same reason that space and capacity are limited, and dragging it alongside the boat is more trouble than it's worth. If you plan to use live aquatic baits and or keep some of your catch, plan accordingly when it comes to space and weight allowances on your kayak. ■

JANUARY'S BEST BETS

NORTH CAROLINA

WHAT — White perch

WHERE — Lake Tillery, Badin Lake

HOW — White perch don't slow down in the dead of winter as much as other species. They tend to school more and roam. Any long point with 25-plus feet of water is likely to hold white perch when they are not feeding on the surface. A ¼- to ½-ounce jiggging spoon in white, gold or chrome will catch white perch both deep and shallow. Get over the top of the fish and jig when they're deep or cast long distances and work the spoon back in a fast, erratic motion when they're near the surface.

LAUNCH — www.ncwildlife.org/boating/where-to-boat/

INSIDER TIP — Small baits will catch numbers of small white perch. For bigger fish, try using larger versions of your choice of minnow-imitating baits.

SOUTH CAROLINA

WHAT — Hybrid bass, spotted bass

WHERE — Savannah River lakes: Hartwell, Russell, Clarks Hill

HOW — It's bird-chasing time on these reservoirs. Many times, birds will be diving on baitfish on a point in some secondary creek or the back of a secluded cove. Don't get bogged down chasing birds, just let them tell you where to start, then work that area thoroughly with an Alabama rig, a Fluke or other shad imitating bait.

LAUNCH — www2.dnr.sc.gov/ManagedLands/boatramp/boatrampsearch

INSIDER TIP — Across the border in Georgia, Capt. Mack Farr makes a mini-Mack rig, a downsized umbrella rig. You can cast these or troll them. They catch fish. You'll find these rigs in many of the bait shops around the lakes.

UPSIZING?

"You're gonna need a bigger boat."

Truer words were never spoken. When it comes to selecting a first boat for kayak fishing, pick what you can afford. Once you have achieved some proficiency, you're going to want a bigger, or at least better, boat. The second- and third-hand market for used kayaks is as alive and well, as is the market for new ones, maybe more so.

You are not likely to get stuck in a kayak, no matter which you choose. You may choose to keep your out-grown boat as a backup or loaner for a friend who's interested in the sport.

Some final words for the beginner would be to join a kayak fishing club. Joining a club lends purpose to your pursuits, and clubs are readily available across the Carolinas. Some clubs are more active than others while some focus on holding fishing tournaments and others conducting outings.

Either way, a kayak fishing club is a great resource for finding out where to go, what to use, and maybe even buy a second-hand boat from someone who's moving on to the next level. ■

HEAD FOR THE MOUNTAINS

Robert Satterwhite



HANGING UP THE ROD

TROUT FISHING HAS BEEN THE COLUMNIST'S JOY, BUT NOW IT'S BEHIND HIM

The day after Thanksgiving, my son and I fished the hatchery supported waters of North Carolina's Tuckasegee River, starting in the lower section above the delayed-harvest waters.

I had one strike and missed, and when neither one of us had another strike, we moved upstream about 2 miles to East Laport. Once the site of an 18th century French Trading Post, East Laport is now a Jackson County park.

Caney Fork enters the river above the park; below the park, the river is split by a small, wooded island. The lower split forms a wide curve of water about 75 feet across, a combination of slow water bordering the island and swift water on the opposite bank. The bank is heavily vegetated and not easily accessible, ignored by most fishers because finding an open place to cast is difficult. It is a place I go when I don't catch a fish in more accessible areas. Rarely does it fail to produce a nice trout or two.

My son found an accessible spot, and I went downstream until I found a small, open space surrounded by thick, bank-side growth. I waded through vines and

brush, and when I stepped out of the brush to the open area, my legs became tangled in vines. I stumbled and fell face down in the water.

The cold water took my breath, but I wasn't hurt. My glasses were knocked off when I fell, and I was hesitant to get up. My feet were tangled in vines, and I was afraid that if I tried to free my legs, I would step on my glasses in the 3 feet or so of water, so I waited, sitting in the water, for my son to come within hailing distance.

TIME TO QUIT

As I sat in water up to my chest, a realization that I had been ignoring for more to a year hit me full force. Every time I had been fishing lately, I had fallen, never hurting myself seriously, just scratches and bruises, but the falls were bothersome. I no longer can navigate swift water and rocky streambeds, even with a wading stick. I can no longer crawl through endless laurel growth, climb steep, rocky banks looking for the special patch of water that always held trout.

I had to finally accept that my trout-fishing days are over.

FAVORITE MEALS

I've fished for more than 60 years, starting when I was 13, catching bluegill in Paddys Creek in western Burke County. I always ate my catch, and fish, fresh-water or saltwater, has always been my favorite food.

When I want trout to eat, I fish hatchery waters, usually using live bait or spinners, whichever is convenient at the time. When I fish wild-trout waters, I fly fish, and will occasionally keep one or two for dinner, but never more than I need. Trout are best when they are consumed fresh from the water. I do not eat trout in restaurants or buy frozen trout, an abomination.

I am a member of Trout Unlimited because I want to help support its stream restoration projects. I do not follow TU's insistence on catch-and-release,



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



Wesley Satterwhite

The author fishes a section of North Carolina's Tuckaseegee River with a fly rod.

mainly because most fisheries biologists don't agree with strict catch-and-release policies. Trout have a short lifespan, particularly in small, mountain streams where adequate food isn't abundant. Thinning them helps reduce the competition for food. What I don't condone is keeping more trout than you need, regardless of the legal limit.

One exception is that I do not keep native brook trout, in any case. Brown and rainbow trout are interlopers, no matter how long they've been here. Brook trout, from all evidence I've read, were here even before the Cherokee. Their habitat is limited due to competition with the more aggressive browns and rainbow. They deserve a break.

As for whether stocked trout and wild trout taste differently, there is a difference, one I can only describe as comparing the difference in how a sun-ripened tomato tastes compared to a grocery store tomato or how new potatoes straight from the garden taste compared to old potatoes.

TIME TO STOP WRITING

I started writing about the outdoors when I worked for the *Asheville Citizen-Times* and did so for about 10 years until the paper was sold to Gannett and writing a weekly column became work instead of pleasure.

Shortly thereafter, I started writing for *North Carolina Sportsman* magazine in its infant stages when it was a tabloid type of publication, and I've stayed with it through its transformation into *Carolina Sportsman*, becoming a first-class outdoors magazine. I never missed a column.

In more than 60 years of trout fishing, I have had the pleasure of fishing all the primary trout streams in western North Carolina and hundreds of secondary streams.

The trout my son caught that day was my last trout dinner, and after 30 years of writing about trout fishing, this is my final column. ■



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2021 JAN		BEST DAYS				LUNAR PERIODS					
		POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL	VALUE	MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT	
Fri 1	☀	██	██	██	██	50	7:49 PM	12:25 am - 3:55 am	9:28 AM	12:50 pm - 4:20 pm	☾
Sat 2	☀	██	██	██	██	39	8:55 PM	1:25 am - 4:41 am	10:08 AM	1:50 pm - 5:06 pm	☾
Sun 3	☀	██	██	██	██	33	10:00 PM	2:23 am - 5:25 am	10:44 AM	2:48 pm - 5:50 pm	☾
Mon 4	☀	██	██	██	██	31	11:06 PM	3:22 am - 6:04 am	11:17 AM	3:47 pm - 6:29 pm	☀
Tue 5	☀	██	██	██	██	35		4:18 am - 6:44 am	11:48 AM	4:43 pm - 7:09 pm	☾
Wed 6	☀	██	██	██	██	43	12:12 AM	5:19 am - 7:21 am	12:19 PM	5:44 pm - 7:46 pm	☾ Half
Thu 7	☀	██	██	██	██	41	1:19 AM	6:18 am - 8:00 am	12:52 PM	6:43 pm - 8:25 pm	☾
Fri 8	☀	██	██	██	██	24	2:28 AM	7:18 am - 8:44 am	1:28 PM	7:43 pm - 9:09 pm	☾
Sat 9	☀	██	██	██	██	33	3:38 AM	8:22 am - 9:30 am	2:09 PM	8:47 pm - 9:55 pm	☾ Perigee
Sun 10	☀	██	██	██	██	40	4:49 AM	9:27 am - 10:23 am	2:56 PM	9:52 pm - 10:48 pm	☾
Mon 11	☀	██	██	██	██	48	5:58 AM	10:31 am - 11:19 am	3:51 PM	10:56 pm - 11:44 pm	☾ Low
Tue 12	☀	██	██	██	██	53	7:01 AM	11:32 am - 12:20 pm	4:53 PM	11:57 pm - Midnight	☾ New
Wed 13	☀	██	██	██	██	43	7:56 AM	12:27 pm - 1:23 pm	5:58 PM	Midnight - 12:45 am	☾
Thu 14	☀	██	██	██	██	33	8:43 AM	1:18 pm - 2:24 pm	7:04 PM	12:52 am - 1:48 am	☾
Fri 15	☀	██	██	██	██	24	9:22 AM	2:03 pm - 3:21 pm	8:08 PM	1:43 am - 2:49 am	☾
Sat 16	☀	██	██	██	██	20	9:56 AM	2:43 pm - 4:15 pm	9:09 PM	2:28 am - 3:46 am	☾
Sun 17	☀	██	██	██	██	22	10:26 AM	3:17 pm - 5:09 pm	10:08 PM	3:08 am - 4:40 am	☾
Mon 18	☀	██	██	██	██	24	10:53 AM	3:51 pm - 5:59 pm	11:05 PM	3:42 am - 5:34 am	☾
Tue 19	☀	██	██	██	██	31	11:19 AM	4:23 pm - 6:49 pm		4:16 am - 6:24 am	☾
Wed 20	☀	██	██	██	██	43	11:45 AM	4:56 pm - 7:38 pm	12:01 AM	4:48 am - 7:14 am	☾ Half
Thu 21	☀	██	██	██	██	34	12:12 PM	5:28 pm - 8:28 pm	12:56 AM	5:21 am - 8:03 am	☾
Fri 22	☀	██	██	██	██	32	12:42 PM	6:06 pm - 9:18 pm	1:52 AM	5:53 am - 8:53 am	☾ Apogee
Sat 23	☀	██	██	██	██	34	1:16 PM	6:48 pm - 10:10 pm	2:50 AM	6:31 am - 9:43 am	☾
Sun 24	☀	██	██	██	██	37	1:55 PM	7:32 pm - 11:04 pm	3:48 AM	7:13 am - 10:35 am	☾
Mon 25	☀	██	██	██	██	48	2:41 PM	8:23 pm - 11:59 pm	4:46 AM	7:57 am - 11:29 am	☾
Tue 26	☀	██	██	██	██	60	3:34 PM	9:17 pm - 12:53 am	5:42 AM	8:48 am - 12:24 pm	☾ High
Wed 27	☀	██	██	██	██	71	4:33 PM	10:14 pm - 1:46 am	6:35 AM	9:42 am - 1:18 pm	☾
Thu 28	☀	██	██	██	██	77	5:37 PM	11:14 pm - Midnight	7:23 AM	10:39 am - 2:11 pm	☾ Full
Fri 29	☀	██	██	██	██	66	6:43 PM	Midnight - 2:36 am	8:06 AM	11:39 am - 3:01 pm	☾
Sat 30	☀	██	██	██	██	55	7:51 PM	12:15 am - 3:21 am	8:44 AM	12:40 am - 3:46 pm	☾
Sun 31	☀	██	██	██	██	43	8:58 PM	1:14 am - 4:04 am	9:18 AM	1:39 pm - 4:29 pm	☾

25 50 75
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Crappie numbers at Lake Norman may not match other North Carolina lakes, but the size of the fish makes up for it.

Sportsman FISHING HOTSPOTS

SLOW DOWN FOR NORMAN SLABS

Big, winter crappie are a draw for anglers on sprawling Lake Norman

Guide Gus Gustafson of Lake Norman Ventures said fishermen need to understand the difference between Lake Norman's crappie fishery and other nearby lakes before they wet a line so they will have realistic expectations.

"The Yadkin (River) lakes have always held a lot more crappie than Norman, but most of the fish are small," said Gustafson. (www.fishingwithgus.com). "At Norman, the crappie are not plentiful, and in the winter, they're scattered out and harder to catch, but they're much bigger than the fish in Yadkin lakes."

Gustafson said typical winter hangouts for Norman crappie include old piers and boat houses, tree laps, bridges and deep brush.

"The better piers and boat houses are the rickety ones with age on them, featuring lights and/or rod holders," said Gustafson. "More than likely, these aged structures are laden with brush, with the better ones adjacent to deep water."

Tree laps also attract crappie. Gustafson said erosion above the NC 150 bridge at mid-lake has resulted in a numerous tree laps that extend into deep water.

"The longer the trees, the better, because they continue out to deeper depths," Gustafson said.

Deep brush piles are coveted by crappie as well.

If you're skilled with a side-scan depth finder, Gustafson said you use your units to locate brush piles others have sunk throughout the lake. He warns that you can't fish one brush pile for hours and expect to catch crappie like you can on Yadkin system lakes.

"Brush piles at Norman hold only a limited number of crappie;

you need to run to several brush piles to catch a stringer of fish," he said. "Brush piles at Norman also take time to replenish."

If all else fails, Gustafson fishes the bridges.

"There's always some crappie around the bridges, either at the abutments, pilings or in the channel under the bridge," he said. "But you must fish them patiently and vertically."

Gustafson said the water can be as deep as 60 feet at many bridges.

"Don't be afraid to fish vertically as deep as you can," he said. "Drop your bait close to the piling or abutment, and let it slowly fall to the bottom. Then slowly raise your bait and be prepared to detect bites midway up. Crappie often suspend 40 to 45 feet deep near the pilings."

Whatever the cover or structure, always fish slowly because winter crappie are sluggish.

Gustafson prefers live bait over jigs.

"It's easier to feed 'em than it is to trick 'em," he said. Light-action, 6½- to 7-foot spinning rods paired with reels spooled with 4- to 8-pound line are preferred. Light extension crappie poles also work.

Gustafson's live-bait outfit includes a tiny split-shot and a No. 10 bait hook running from under the chin of the minnow up through its nose.

If jigs are used, Gustafson recommends ½- or ¼-ounce jigs that sink slowly. ■

— Tony Garitta

BIRD-WATCH FOR ALBEMARLE SOUND ROCK

Stripers will be spawning on bait; hovering, diving gulls and terns will give them away

Guide Richard Andrews of Bath, N.C., is a bird-watcher in January on the Albemarle Sound.

Not normally mesmerized by birds, he looks for hovering and diving gulls and terns when winter arrives.

"A lot of times, you'll find stripers underneath birds," said Andrews, of Tar-Pam Guide Service (252-945-9715).

Striped bass — or "rockfish" east of I-95 — have voracious appetites. After their strength-sapping, spring spawning migration up the Roanoke River, resident fish return to the sound where they remain, feeding on gigantic schools of menhaden.

"Stripers suspend under congregated baitfish schools and often push them to the surface," said Andrews, 51, in his 11th year as a guide. "Look for birds circling and diving or sitting on the surface picking. Sometimes you see stripers busting baits on the surface.

"I'll cast soft-plastic lures — Flukes, 5-inch jerkbaits or 3- or 4-inch swimbaits — at 'em."

Andrews will fish 3/8- or 1/2-ounce jigheads with white or chartreuse Z-Man lures for trailers.

"I also look for schools of fish with my adjustable side-imaging radar that picks up fish from 80 to 100 feet to the sides of my (boat)," he said. "The side-imager's zoom function can reach out to 400 or 500 feet, but that's too far. It won't give you a good idea of what's out there."

Andrews, who prefers 7-foot, medium-light spinning rods with 2500 Series reels spooled with 15- to 20-pound braid, doesn't charge into schools of birds or stripers once he locates them.

"You want to slow down to idle," he said. "You don't want to bust up the birds; you want them to stay over the fish. But if birds disperse, a lot of times stripers still will be there."

After finding a school, Andrews casts swimbaits and lets them drop slowly to the bottom before using a steady retrieve. If he's using Flukes or jerkbaits, he lets them sink, then retrieves them by popping his rod tip a couple of feet and letting them fall.

"During cold weather, stripers stay on the bottom," he said. "They like to hit falling lures. But if they suspend in the water column, you can crank a little faster to run lures through them or rip jerkbaits up in the water column then let them fall."

If birds aren't flying or stripers are scattered, Andrews will throw the same lures at structures such as bridges or deep stump fields

off points or offshore from certain shorelines.

The sound's bottom can range from 12 to 20 feet deep.

"Fish get shallower when days are warmer," he said. "Sometimes stumps extend into 10 feet of water, and stripers will orient over them. I'll run lures right over the top of stumps," said Andrews, whose fishing area extends from the mouth of the Roanoke River east and south into the Alligator River.

In the Albemarle Sound Management Area, anglers can keep two fish per day longer than 18 inches from Oct. 1-Dec. 31, 2020.

"A really good day, you might catch and release 100 to 200 fish," Andrews said. "An average day should be 50 to 100 fish." ■

— Craig Holt



Stripers suspend under congregated baitfish schools and often push them to the surface. Sometimes you see stripers bustin' baits on the surface.



Guide Richard Andrews said that 50- to 100-fish days are common in January targeting Albemarle Sound stripers.

Richard Andrews

COLD MEANS HOT

Lowcountry reds love winter conditions

In South Carolina's Lowcountry, along the Intracoastal Waterway from Mount Pleasant to McClellanville and beyond, January means fewer anglers on the water, huge schools of redfish in the mud flats, and daily battles waiting to happen between the two.

If you're into fishing, staying home is not an option. The fishing is truly as good as it gets if you practice a little bit of patience and take some precautions. Tom Siwarski of Carolina Aeromarine Adventures loves January fishing, and redfish are his prime target.

"This time of year, no fish is more predictable than redfish," he said. "When you find a wintertime school of 100 redfish on Monday, that same school will be together and in the same general area on Friday almost 100% of the time."

And while those fish are cautious and eat less than they will in a few months, they still get hungry. Anglers who offer them the right portions without spooking them can pick at a school throughout the day, catching one fish after another.

One reason Siwarski (843-327-3434) finds the fishing easier is the sheer size of the schools. In his decades of fishing for these fish, he's spotted schools that have contained 500 or more fish.

These reds are seeking safety in numbers from bottlenose dolphins, which prey on them heavily during winter.

Siwarski said the ICW is loaded with shallow mud flats that anglers can get to in boats of almost any size. The key, he said, is keeping your distance, making long casts and setting the hook when the time is right.

He loads his spinning reels with 10-pound PowerPro braid. Some anglers think that's too small, but he said that, coupled



Brian Cope

Big schools of redfish can provide tremendous fishing for Lowcountry anglers throughout January.

with the right drag, it's all you need. It allows for longer casts than heavier line, and that helps anglers keep their distance from these wary schools of fish.

"I like a 7-foot, medium-heavy rod, and I use about 18 inches of 15-pound fluorocarbon leader. I use 4- to 5-inch Gulp shad on a 1/16-ounce, 3/0 Gamakatsu flutter hook jig. It wobbles when it falls, and redfish can't resist it," he said.

When anglers find a school of redfish, Siwarski said it's best to get ahead of and parallel to the school. He suggests making a cast well in front of the lead fish, then lift the rod tip as the redfish move into range.

"That Gulp gives off a lot of scent, and the slight wobble created by lifting the rod tip is usually all you need to entice a bite," he said.

Sometimes, the school will break up when you're fighting a fish, especially if the fish bulls its way through the school. If that happens, Siwarski said to give it a little time, and the school will form back up. He also said it's not usually difficult to find another school nearby. Moving back and forth between schools can help keep each school calm, together, and more willing to eat than they are when spooked. ■

— Brian Cope

Jerry Dilsaver



The bays and creeks off the lower Cape Fear River, downstream from Wilmington, provide plenty of January action for fishermen like guide Rennie Clark, who caught this nice speckled trout.

CAPE FEAR'S PRIZES

Reds, specks await patient anglers

The Cape Fear River begins spreading out once it passes Wilmington, N.C., with many creeks, bays, islands, spoil islands and other features present that hold fish in the warmer waters away from the main body of the river.

This warming water away from the channel gives fish some range to move and find food and the water temperatures they prefer. A fisherman willing to take his or her time and cover a lot of water should find speckled trout and red drum and may also find black drum, striped bass and an occasional flounder.

The creeks begin immediately downstream from Wilmington and show up all the way to Bald Head Island at the mouth of the river. The bays begin around Snows Cut, with some providing great winter habitat. All can be very productive at any time, but the bays and creeks between Fort Fisher and Bald Head Island stand out.

Three large contained bays — The Basin, Second Bay and Buzard Bay — are prominent features of this area, plus an abundance of creeks that connect and wander through the marsh. Rennie Clark of Tournament Trail Charters (910-465-8943) fishes

CAPE FEAR'S PRIZES continued >

this area regularly all year — especially during the winter. He said there are a lot of fish, but they are pressured and will test your patience and abilities.

"The suspended silt falls out of the cooling water, and it gets really clear," he said. "This makes it great for sight-fishing, but the fish can see you and your equipment better, too. I lighten everything up to help with the presentation. You can get by fishing lighter during the winter, as the fish are usually out on oyster rocks or clear bottom, not around grass and stuff that will break you off.

"In addition to lighter line and fluorocarbon leaders, I downsize to 1/8- or 1/16-ounce and sometimes even weightless jigheads and

hooks," Clark said. "The fish are spooky, so I lead them farther and cast upcurrent to let the current sweep the lure to them, rather than making a splash nearby. I like the Manic Minnow from Category 5 Outdoors. These are smaller, like most winter baitfish, and they have one with a green back that looks like the mud minnows the fish are feeding on at that time of year. They also make a blue back version that looks like a small mullet."

Clark said the keys to success in these areas are approaching quietly, making a subtle presentation and showing them a lure that looks familiar. ■

— Jerry Dilsaver

MURRELLS INLET'S GATOR TROUT

have plenty of places, things to eat in January

Guide Jason Whitten loves to target speckled trout in January in the waters of Murrells Inlet.

Winter trout earn their nicknames every year when Old Man Winter flips the thermometer and transforms a warm fall into an old-fashioned southern freeze.

Anglers who target specks in South Carolina's Murrells Inlet rarely complain too much, because they often catch their biggest gator trout. January is one of the coldest months and also the best time to catch the biggest, fattest specks in Murrells Inlet.

Justin Whitten of Ambush Sport Fishing Charters loves the winter, and January is among his favorite months for speckled trout.

"We catch speckled trout all winter long," said Whitten (843-685-9910), "and the biggest ones come the days around the full moons in December and January."

Speckled trout, aka winter trout, live in the South Carolina's estuaries year-round, but they thrive when the water temperature drops in the fall and throughout the winter into early spring. According to Whitten, Murrells Inlet will produce more trophy trout than the neighboring waters to the north and south.

"We catch bigger fish here than Charleston and Georgetown," he said. "Murrells Inlet fills up with shrimp and typically holds them all winter; that's why the bigger trout overwinter here."

Murrells Inlet is one of the smaller estuaries along the eastern seaboard; it is predominantly a saltwater estuary with little freshwater intrusion. Trout and redfish thrive in these waters and consume shrimp all winter.

Whitten will fish the estuaries and the jetties along the inlet itself through the winter. He will fish the creeks and the deeper holes in main creeks like Oaks and Garden City. On warmer days, he will fish shallower banks because the trout will slide into shallower areas following schools of bait. But the jetties are always good places to catch a big trout in the colder periods of the year.

"Jetties are always good places to fish this time of year," he said.



Justin Whitten

"We often catch some really nice fish back in the creeks in the winter, but the jetties always produce the biggest ones, especially around the full moon in December and January."

Typically, Whitten will use Matrix Shad in shrimp creole color. He casts these lures and fishes them slowly along the bottom in deeper areas of creeks or along the jetty rocks. When the fishing gets tough, he will get 10 dozen shrimp and head to the jetties.

"I would rather throw artificial lures, but on some days, it gets tough, and a live shrimp under a slip float is the way to make it happen," said Whitten, who will drift shrimp under a slip float and make sure he fishes the lower half of the water column. Sometimes he will even fish right on the bottom.

"January is a great time to go trout fishing in Murrells Inlet," he said. "And you will be catching plenty of fish that are all the same size until the big one hits and you catch that one that is approaching 30 inches." ■

— Jeff Bureson

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