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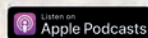


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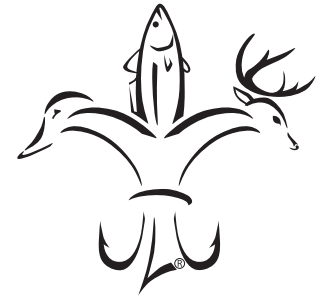
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**SPECKS**  
**AND SHRIMP**



**12**  
**RUT RULES**



# Carolina SPORTSMAN



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Hunters across the Carolinas know that the peak of the whitetail rut is approaching, so it's time to change tactics.



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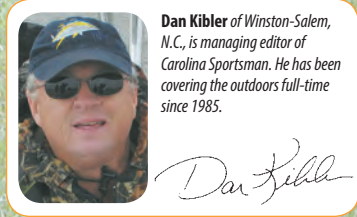


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# OUTDOOR UPDATE

with Dan Kibler

The author and his son gave these two gobblers a ride home in the back of the pickup truck many years ago.



## A LITTLE MORE TIME, PLEASE

### LORD WILLING, I'LL BE AROUND TO TAKE MY GRANDSON FISHING, HUNTING

**We** celebrated my grandson Allen's first birthday last month. I'll be 65 in a couple of weeks, and about 10 days before my grandson's big party, my oldest daughter (not his mother) told me that I needed to live at least another 12 or 13 years.

I asked, "Why?" Was there a reason other than her just wanting me around a little longer?

She told me that her husband's beloved N.C. State Wolfpack had just signed a contract to play a home-and-home football series with my beloved Georgia Bulldogs in, she thought, 2033 and 2034.

Other than watching the Dawgs absolutely kick butt in Carter-Finley Stadium and Sanford Stadium in back-to-back years, I have a big reason to make it another dozen or so years, Lord willing, if my ticker will keep on ticking.

By that point, my grandson will be about the age that my father started me hunting, the same age that I started my son hunting, and I'd sure like to be around to see how Allen, aka "Little Dude" operates with a shotgun or rifle on his shoulder, not to mention a fishing rod in his hand.

Two of my most-prized possessions are photos of Allen's father, my son: one at about age 12 or 13, standing next to guide Ken Dempsey, who is holding up a 60-pound cobia my son caught off the famous

Diamond Shoals at Cape Hatteras; the other, from about the same age, he's posing with my father with his first buck, in the back of a pickup truck. They were sharing a stand when he shot him. Dad just turned 91.

Between the three of us, we have put quite a few more deer in the back of that pickup truck, along with enough turkey gobblers to fill the biggest Thanksgiving dinner table at the biggest hotel; even a few ducks have taken a ride home in that 1995 Ford Ranger.



Albert Threadgill, 73, killed this huge Montgomery County, N.C., buck with a crossbow. It weighed 239 pounds and had a 9-point rack that netted 162 $\frac{3}{8}$  inches. See more big bucks in the Big Buck Gallery.

## 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. To enter or see deer that have been entered, log onto: [www.carolinasportsman.com/bag-a-buck/](http://www.carolinasportsman.com/bag-a-buck/)

The truck left us a few weeks before it would have turned over 300,000 miles. Hopefully, I'll still be around when I hit a similar milestone, if only to be able to share some time afield with my grandson. Maybe I can watch him carry along a family tradition of hunting and fishing.

And I'd like to see the Dawgs kick butt again. ■

# FEMALE BOWHUNTER IS BAG-A-BUCK WINNER

**L**aura Tucker of Manson, N.C., only had one whitetail on her hit-list when North Carolina's deer season opened on Sept. 11.

She didn't have to wait long.

The afternoon of the season's opening day, Tucker arrowed a 10-point buck that had been a regular on trail cameras on her family's farm in Warren County.

She entered *Carolina Sportsman's* Bag-A-Buck contest two days later, and on Oct. 2, her entry was drawn as the winner of the first monthly contest.

Tucker's prizes include a 1-year subscription to *Carolina Sportsman* and a prize package that includes a True Flipper folding knife and other goodies. She, along with every subscriber who enters the contest, will be eligible for the grand prize: a 3-year subscription to *Carolina Sportsman*, a 2-day deer/hog combo hunt for two people at South Carolina's Cherokee Run Hunting Lodge, and a prize package that includes a Millennium M25 Hang-On tree stand and other goodies.



Laura Tucker's entry of this 10-point buck taken on Sept. 11 won the first monthly Bag-A-Buck contest for *Carolina Sportsman*.

was hunting out of a ladder stand on the edge of a soybean field, waiting for a buck she had in trail-camera photos for several weeks. She had sprayed her boots with Hughes Outdoors' Honeysuckle Scent Concealer.

"We had him in full velvet for a couple of weeks, and it wasn't until two days before the season opened that he lost his velvet," she said. "He was the only buck that I'd been seeing for a while."

At around 7:15 the evening of Sept. 11, Tucker said the buck, which green-scored 138 inches and carried a 5x4 rack with one sticker point and a 16½-inch inside spread, showed up on the other side of the bean field and worked its way slowly across.

"He fed along the other edge for a while, and he finally came across," she said. "It took him 20 or 30 minutes. I was thinking, 'What am I going to have to do to get this deer?' He would eat a little bit and move, eat a little bit and move."

Finally, the buck made it to Tucker's side of the field. She raised her Killer Instinct crossbow and sent a bolt tipped with a Rage broadhead cleanly through the buck's vitals. It went only 50 yards before crashing to the ground. ■



## NC CERTIFIES ONE SW STATE-RECORD FISH; ONE WORLD RECORD CAUGHT

**T**he N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries certified a state-record in September for an out-of-the-ordinary species, and it's liable to have another one on its hands.

Robert Feldhaus of Nags Head, N.C., caught a 52-pound golden tilefish fishing out of Oregon Inlet on Aug. 28. The fish was 44½ inches long and had a 33¾-inch girth. It broke the previous state record, a fish caught off Cape Hatteras in 2013, by 6 pounds.

Feldhaus caught the tilefish — a deep-water species that lives along the Continental Shelf — while fishing on the boat *Rock Solid* with Capt. Aaron Kelly. He used a jig and 65-pound line on a spinning rod with a Daiwa Saltiga reel.

The International Game Fish Association's all-tackle world record for golden tilefish is a 65-pound, 3-ounce fish caught off New Jersey in 2012.

Speaking of the IGFA, it certified another out-of-the-ordinary fish from North Carolina as its all-tackle world record. Dr. Bob Timson of Southport, N.C., boated a 2-pound, 11-ounce Spanish hogfish on July 17, fishing with Capt. Hiroki Toma on his boat, *Matais*, in about 200 to 250 feet of water near Frying Pan Tower.

For bait, Timson was using a crab that had been spit up by another bottomfish that had been boated. He was using a custom rod and an Accurate Valiant 30 reel loaded with 30-pound test Sufix 832 braid. The fish was 15 inches to the fork of its tail, 18 inches long overall, and it had an 11-inch girth. It weighed more than 2 pounds on a set of scales on the boat.

At first, the crew thought Timson's fish was a parrotfish. Once back within cell-phone range of land, Timson looked online and determined the fish was a Spanish hogfish and a possible world record at that. He had it officially weighed the next morning at Island Tackle

& Hardware in Carolina Beach and did the paperwork for the IGFA, which certified his catch as an all-tackle world record in September. He has submitted the fish to the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries for state-record designation. ■



Bob Timson of Southport, N.C., caught this world-record Spanish hogfish near Frying Pan Tower on July 17. TOP: Robert Feldhaus of Nags Head, N.C., caught the state-record golden tilefish, this 52-pound specimen, fishing out of Oregon Inlet on Aug. 28.

# SC ADDS NEW AREA TO QUAIL PROGRAM

**T**he S.C. Department of Natural Resources has added a fifth S.C. Bobwhite Initiative focal area through a partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: the Bordeaux Quail Focal Area in McCormick County.

The area is a 3,000-acre tract of USACE land adjacent to Thurmond Lake. It joins the Indian Creek (U.S. Forest Service), Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge, Oak Lea (S.C. Forest Service) and Web Center Complex (SCDNR) as focus areas for the S.C. Bobwhite Initiative.

Cory Drennan, an SCDNR biologist, started habitat-management activities with USACE forestry, fish and wildlife staff several years ago, trying to restore pine savannah habitat that's beneficial to bobwhites as well as many other songbirds. The designation as a focal area will bring added attention and expanded habitat work.

Habitat-management work includes thinning of timber to open the canopy, prescribed burning in small units, herbicide application to control hardwood understory and establishment of brood habitat for quail in patches and fallow fields. The habitat work has benefits for wild turkey, deer and many other animals.

Goals for the Bordeaux Quail Focal Area include:

- Restore/establish a minimum of 1,500 acres of year-round bobwhite quail habitat that comprises more than 25% of the area within five years;
- Achieve a bobwhite density of a minimum of one bird per three acres within 10 years;
- Monitor quail and associated songbird population response through establishment of annual spring breeding-bird point transects and fall bobwhite covey counts within the focal area;
- Monitor hunting pressure and disturbance on quail coveys through hunter sign-in and sign-out points across the focal area, as well as direct interaction with quail hunters as possible;
- Enlist interested landowners in the area to restore and manage habitat by providing technical guidance and assisting with participation in federal financial incentive programs if desired.

"It is gratifying to see our state quail restoration efforts growing, especially considering the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative had its start here in South Carolina back in 1995 with the first meeting of the Southeast Quail Study Group, held at the Webb Wildlife Center," said Billy Dukes, SCDNR's chief of wildlife.

Jeff Brooks, district wildlife biologist for USACE, predicted good things for the focal area.

"Based on the vegetation response to SCDNR's current management practices, an increased management intensity at the Bordeaux Quail Focal Area will certainly have a high probability of success," Brooks said. ■



The SCDNR will be enhancing habitat for bobwhites on a 3,000-acre tract near Thurmond Lake.

# TUCKERTOWN TRACT ADDED

## TO NC GAME LANDS PROGRAM; ALCOA GAME LANDS BECOMES YADKIN RIVER GAME LANDS

**T**he N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission has added 2,424 acres to the Alcoa Game Lands in Davidson and Montgomery counties and renamed the entire area the Yadkin River Game Lands.

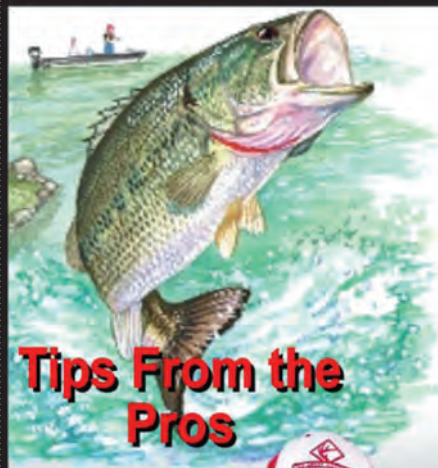
In a Sept. 13 announcement, The Commission, the Three Rivers Land Trust and the Conservation Fund purchased the land, including 31 miles along the eastern shoreline of Tuckertown Reservoir, for inclusion in the state's Game Lands program. Including previous acreage in the Alcoa Game Lands along the Yadkin River and around High Rock, Tuckertown and Badin lakes, the game land will cover 11,110 acres in Davie, Davidson, Montgomery, Rowan and Stanly counties.

"This is a tremendous accomplishment, and we are thankful to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife Restoration Program, the North Carolina Land and Water Fund, Three Rivers Land Trust, The Conservation Fund and all of our funding partners who realized the importance of this acquisition and worked so diligently to make it happen," said Cam Ingram, the Commission's executive director.

"These lands have over a 30-year history of providing the public opportunities for hunting, fishing, and wildlife-associated recreation in the Piedmont. Conserving these lands for public access, water quality and wildlife habitat perfectly aligns with our agency's mission to protect our state's natural resources."

This purchase took place pursuant to the 2007 Yadkin River Relicensing Settlement Agreement in which Alcoa offered the state and/or Three Rivers Land Trust the opportunity to purchase these lands for conservation purposes. In September 2019, Phase I of the Alcoa Lands Project was completed. Phase I conserved 2,463 acres and 45 miles of shoreline along High Rock Lake. Now with the closure of Phase II Tuckertown, this project has conserved over 4,800 acres and 76 miles of shoreline along the Yadkin-Pee Dee. ■

**BIG BUCK GALLERY >**



**Tips From the Pros**

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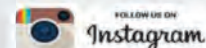
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# SPORTSMAN'S BIG BUCK GALLERY



Javis Cornelius of Columbia, S.C., killed this 10-point, 144-inch buck on Orangeburg County on Sept. 18.



Adam Rorie of Monroe, N.C., took this huge 6-point buck Sept. 1 in Chesterfield County, S.C. The buck had a 21-inch inside spread, 10-inch tines and weighed 200 pounds.



Zeke Houser of Boiling Springs, N.C., took this 14-point Cleveland County buck on Sept. 12.



Chris Glosson of Rougemont, N.C., tagged this 10-point, 141-inch Durham County buck on Sept. 11.



Zack Porterfield of Roxboro, N.C., arrowed this 9-point, 145-inch buck on Sept. 13 in Granville County.

# OUTDOOR UPDATE



R.J. Seiler of Stokesdale, N.C., arrowed this 130-point, 140-inch Rockingham County buck on Sept. 11.



Josh Hooks of Zebulon, N.C., tagged this 10-point, 147-inch Wake County buck on Sept. 18.



Chase Tedder of Walnut Cove, N.C., arrowed this 12-point buck in Stokes County on Sept. 13.



Dawson Durham, who works for the NFL's Baltimore Ravens, drove home to Stokes County, N.C., to tag this 11-point, 146-inch buck on Sept. 19.



Jennifer Morris of Rougemont, N.C., took this 13-point, 159-inch buck on Sept. 11 in Person County.

To read full stories about any of these trophy bucks, visit [www.carolinasportsman.com](http://www.carolinasportsman.com) and visit the deer-hunting section.



# RUT RULES

**FOLLOW THE FOOD, FIND THE DOES.  
FOLLOW THE DOES, FIND THE BUCKS.  
AND LOOK IN THE THICK STUFF.  
GET YOUR TAG READY.** ■ By Terry Madewell

# TAGGING A TROPHY BUCK

## is the goal of every deer hunter in the Carolinas,

and data from deer-harvest research supports the rut as the prime time to tag one.

It's the time when a buck's acute survival instincts are compromised by the need to reproduce. This doesn't mean big bucks are randomly wandering everywhere, surrendering all survival instincts. The only white flag you'll see when hunting with that philosophy is the south end of a northbound buck.

Willie McCutchen from Kingstree, S.C., said non-rut rules are out the window when the rut is on. McCutchen, 72, a veteran bowhunter, studies the habits and tendencies of deer year-round, and he simplifies what's happening during the rut.

McCutchen said bucks are still wary, but they move much more during the rut, and their sensory efforts are more directed toward seeking does. Hunters can capitalize on these short-lived quirks.

"Prior to the rut, I hunt bucks where they live: near bottoms and thickets," he said. "During their rut it's all about the does. Find the adult does and where they prefer to eat, and bucks will come. Bucks are constantly on the move, searching for does to breed, and eating is secondary. But does will eat, and they draw big-racked bucks to the area."

McCutchen has found that areas of thick habitat near water sources are good options for the rut, and those include creek and river bottoms interspersed with food sources.

"I focus my hunting around food sources and identify what food is available in the area," he said. "It can be persimmons, acorns, late-season agriculture crops, food plots and bait stations. Find what the does are eating."



Hunter Steve Cobb loves cutovers because deer love thick cover, and they are full of browse-type foods. INSET: As the rut approaches, bucks will be drawn to areas does are using, especially areas with primary food sources.

**S**teve Cobb, 59, from Union, S.C., has been on Hunter Specialties' pro staff for the past 20 years. He said the rut offers a great opportunity for hunters with a good hunting strategy that includes food sources and habitat.

Cobb said various areas of the Carolinas have unique habitat, types but deer typically move to thicker cover during the rut.

"Hunting pressure begins to push does into areas where they feel protected and can find food," he said. "One of my favorites are cutover areas in the 4- to 10-year-old regrowth class. This habitat is gnarly thickets, littered with briars and browse-type food sources."

If there are no cutovers in an area he's hunting, Cobb looks for thick vegetation in swamps or dense cover in wooded areas.

Various types of food sources attract deer during the rut, he said.

"Persimmon trees are localized sources, but when they're falling, deer are going to eat them," he said. "Find persimmons, and you have an excellent drawing card."

"Hardwood ridges and hollows, especially with oaks along the edge lines of big woods adjacent to cutovers or other thick cover types, are prime examples of a potential rut hotspot," Cobb said.

"Agriculture fields not yet harvested can still be good food sources, and the use of corn for baiting stations, now legal and common in both states, is good," he said. "But when acorns are available that's the No. 1 choice for deer."

When Cobb hunts an area loaded with acorns, he'll select a stand site with a good view of the wooded area, while being in range of a big oak or two on the edge of the woods.

"My acorn-timing strategy for hunting is based on understanding that red oak acorns typically fall before white oaks," he said. "Also, not all acorns are created equal. Deer prefer white oak acorns over those produced by red oaks, but red oaks typically drop acorns earlier, so they're in play first. But some red oak acorns are favored over others."

Cobb said when hunting areas with an abundance of oak trees, he studies squirrel activity.



**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.

"Squirrels find acorns first," he said. "If squirrels are focusing on specific oak trees, you can bet deer will favor those same oak trees. If you're not seeing squirrels at daylight, you're hunting the wrong hollow or ridge."

Cobb sweetens the deal when hunting oaks by using fertilizer. "I love to find a big white oak or two, and I'll fertilize them early in the year with 17-17-17 fertilizer," he said. "That seems to make the acorns taste more favorable, and a big white oak with great-tasting acorns attracts deer from long distances. It's like me eating chocolate pie over bread crumbs."

Darryl Madden, 61, from Leland, N.C., is a member of the pro staffs of Bass Pro Shops and Mossy Oak. He focuses on big bucks in the rut and said they are on the move throughout the day.

"Magical things can happen any time of the day during the rut," he said. "Hunting the right combination of food and habitat for your area is the key. I personally love cutover areas because they have multiple browse-type food sources that I can enhance with food plots or bait stations."

Madden said a free-standing tripod or a ground blind placed to hunt a road or opening through a thicket is ideal. A climbing stand on a tree adjacent to a cutover with good visibility into the thick cover can be excellent.



A cellular-enabled trail camera can provide the same benefits as card-enabled cameras, plus real-time responses and the ability to stay out of deer habitat.

# CELL-PHONE TRAIL CAMERAS ARE FOR REAL

Deer hunter Willie McCutchen has used trail cameras for years to locate big bucks and define their movement and feeding habits. It's helped him pattern and kill multiple big bucks with a bow.

"I've embraced modern technology, and I credit trail cameras for providing information that I didn't have years ago and made they've me a more effective hunter," he said.

McCutchen now uses cellular-enabled cameras as part of his scouting strategy; it's impacting his hunting in a positive way.

"Cellular cameras enable me to get real-time information when bucks are moving, and it's crucial when I see them on a daytime pattern in a specific area," he said. "With other cameras, I'll get the same basic photos, but I have to go to the camera to download the data. I've frequently found that a buck was frequenting a stand during hunting hours, but by the time I checked the camera, he had moved on or found a receptive doe.

"With the cellular cameras, I'll see him the first time he shows up during shooting hours, and I can react immediately."

McCutchen said cellular-enabled cameras also allow him to get information without intruding into the deer habitat.

"Additional fees are a consideration with cellular cameras, and I still use card cameras, too," he said. "But I now have multiple eyes in their backyard to supplement my own eyes."

Hunter Steve Cobb agrees, saying cellular-enabled cameras are changing how he hunts.

"All the trail cameras, cellular and SD-card types, save me hours of scouting to get the information I need for making hunting decisions," he said.

"Cellular cameras have impressed me over the past two years. Now I can see a shooter buck at a food source near a stand the first time he shows up, and at a specific time. At that point, it's on me to close the deal." ■



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**RUT RULES**

**"D**eer move continuously in heavy cover throughout the day during the rut," he said. "If you have a food focal point, it's even better for pinpointing a productive area. Does will frequent these areas, and bucks may not come to eat, but they'll approach the food source, often downwind, to check for does."

"Your window of opportunity for a good shot may be short during the rut, so diligence in watching is essential," Madden said. "Bucks are moving because they're on a mission to find a receptive doe. If they do stop to eat, it's usually brief."

Cobb said bucks don't like wide-open areas during daylight hours, even during the rut.

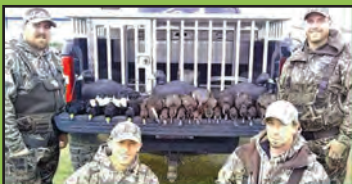
"I've learned that I'm much more likely to see big bucks in thick areas during the daytime, and that's based on a lifetime of hunting experiences and also believing what my trail cameras have shown," he said. "When hunting thickets during the rut, understand that does are likely to walk the path of least resistance, so



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Even if they don't eat a lot during the rut, according to Darryl Madden, they'll still be found around food sources, if only to watch for doe activity.

identifying well-used trails, or opening some myself, helps me be in the right place. If a doe steps out into the lane or opening to feed or walk, a big buck may be only a few seconds behind.

"Remember during the rut, where she walks, he walks," he said. "Combining a food and habitat strategy that best fits the area you hunt is a key to hunting the rut. Do the scouting legwork, find where does are living, and take advantage of the opportunity the rut presents." ■

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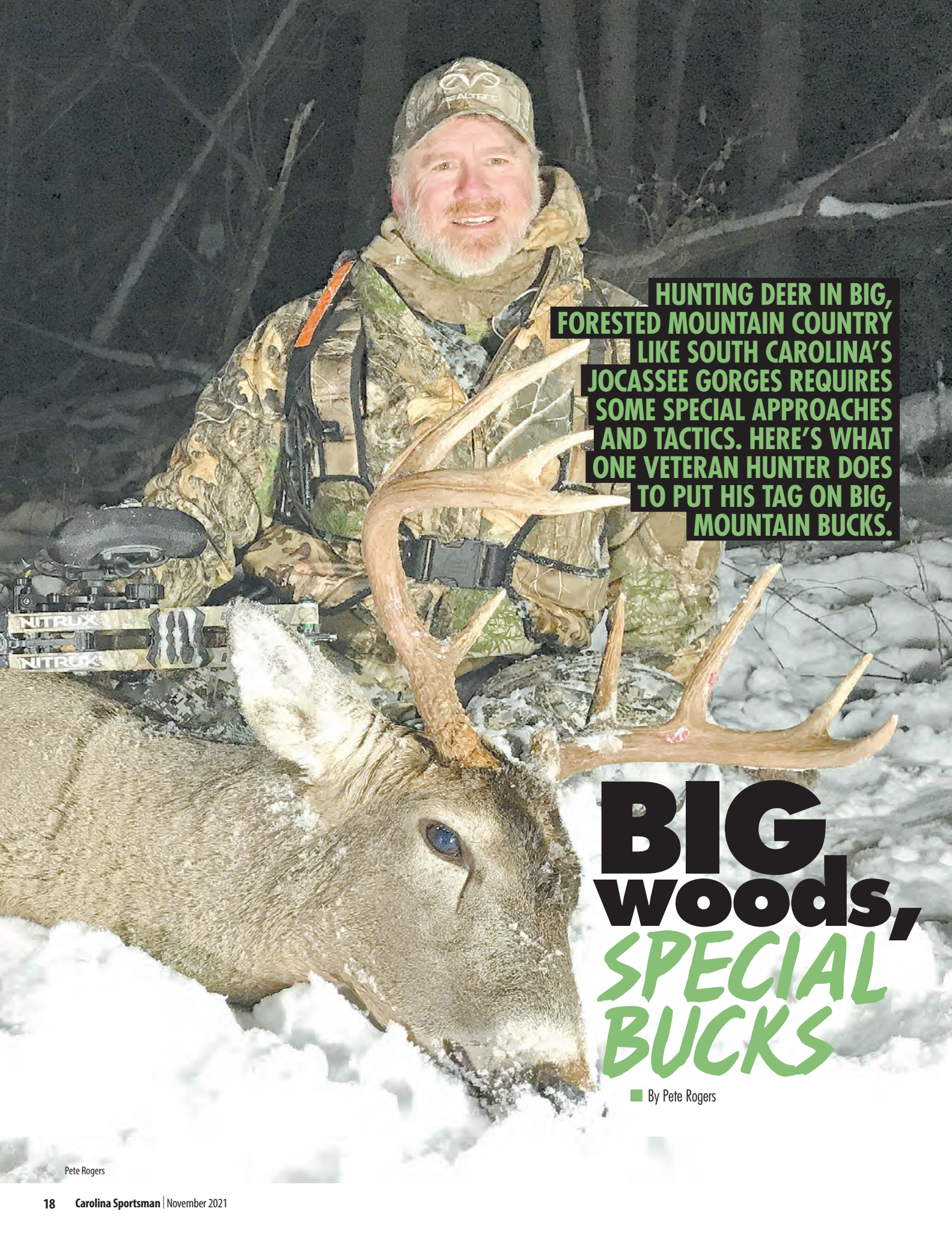
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**HUNTING DEER IN BIG, FORESTED MOUNTAIN COUNTRY LIKE SOUTH CAROLINA'S JOCASSEE GORGES REQUIRES SOME SPECIAL APPROACHES AND TACTICS. HERE'S WHAT ONE VETERAN HUNTER DOES TO PUT HIS TAG ON BIG, MOUNTAIN BUCKS.**

# **BIG** **woods,** **SPECIAL** **BUCKS**

■ By Pete Rogers

Pete Rogers

# At first, it was to try something different.

## NOW IT IS AN OBSESSION.

Growing up in South Carolina's Midlands, deer hunting was centered on pine plantations and cutover properties, a few oak ridges mixed in, as well as some agriculture fields.

Over the past few decades, with the advent of food plots and baiting in many areas, hunting methods have changed. Instead of going and looking for the deer, we are now manipulating the ground to make the deer come to us. Whether it is planting peas or soybeans, or dumping bait piles, it's different.

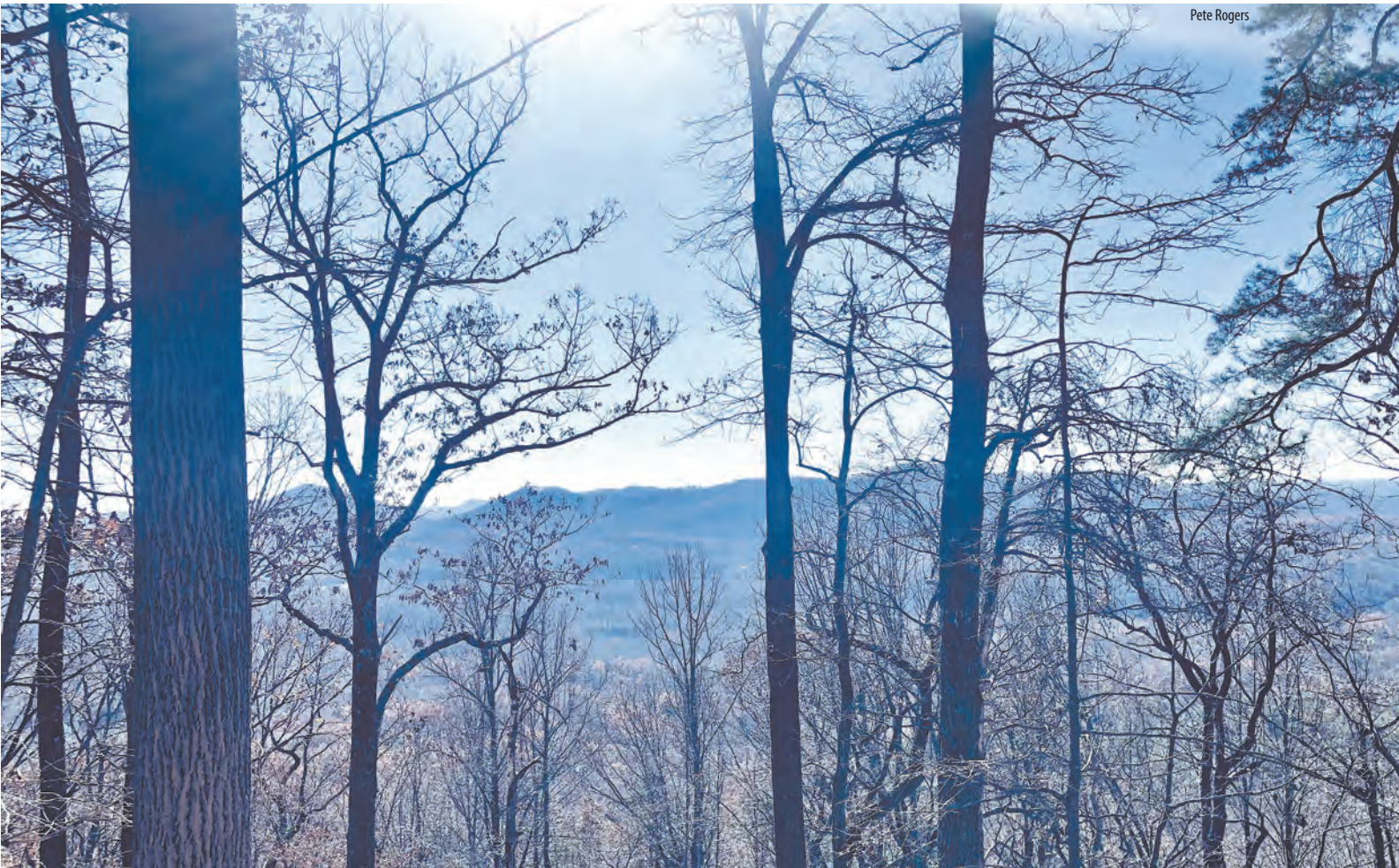
I had been missing some of the challenge of the deer hunting I had done in my youth, so several years ago, I began hunting a big expanse of public land in the South Carolina's northwestern corner, an area known as the Jocassee Gorges, which encompasses 43,500 acres along the border with North Carolina. Merge this with protected lands in both North Carolina and South Carolina,

and the Blue Ridge Escarpment protects slightly more than 150,000 acres combined. The Gorges, as they are known, are the most-rugged and mountainous areas in South Carolina, and they offer hunting challenges unlike any other.

This rich land is steep — by southern measurements — and vast. Even advanced woodsmen and women are prone to some orienteering challenges. With ridges traveling in all directions, steep drainages and valleys, it can be somewhat challenging to find one's way — especially in the dark.

The Jocassee Gorges attracts hunters of all types, mostly during the bear season that runs for two consecutive weeks in October: one week of still-hunting followed by a week of hound hunting for bears. Contrary to popular belief, the hounds do little to disturb the bucks in these woods. With so much country to wander, it isn't too difficult for a hunter to locate an area away from the bear hunters. With gun season for deer closed during bear season, it's archery only for deer during the hound season for bears.

Hunting in the big, open woods of the mountains offers deer hunters challenges they don't face in flatter country.



Pete Rogers

**H**ow does one begin to hunt big woods? Where do you begin? Joel Smith, who lives in South Carolina's Pickens County, begins with maps. The Jim Timmerman map of the Jocassee Gorges is available at the Table Rock State Park Visitors Center. It is a detailed map of the area and shows all roads, trails and access points. These maps help you eliminate much of the land.

"Spend your time looking over the maps to find areas to concentrate on," Smith said. "Then, it's all about the boot leather."

Smith recommends scouting year-round to find trails, bedding areas, old rubs and typical deer sign. Locate these areas and scout them regularly.

Since COVID-19 became an issue, public lands have been getting more crowded. Smith said he has had to go deeper and deeper into the Gorges to avoid human traffic. Smith emphasized being aware of hikers in the Gorges and on other public lands. These lands are open to the public, and with dozens of hiking trails meandering through the area, you are bound to have interactions with hikers, who seldom wear safety orange and are usually talkative. Be patient; they are trying to enjoy

a day afield. Smith said to avoid interaction, locate your hunting areas as far from these trails as possible.

"I am going as much as 3 miles from my truck to avoid other hunters," he said. "Going this far eliminates excessive human pressure that will alarm the deer."

With deer densities much lower than in other areas, big-woods deer are more prone to reacting to pressure than deer that are more accustomed to human interaction. Studies show that most hunters stay within ¼-mile from a road or trail. To find undisturbed deer, go where others will not. The farther you are from other hunters or hikers, the better your chances are for finding trophy bucks.

When looking for likely spots, Smith keys in on ridge lines and saddles.

"I made the mistake early on and concentrated on drainages. Unfortunately, the drainages concentrate feral pigs and they tend to move the deer out of those areas," he said.

After learning this, Smith moved up the mountains and now spends most of his time on saddles— lower areas between two higher points — or along ridgetops.

"Saddles are critical in the mountains, because they is where deer and other animals cross over the ridges," said Smith, who likes to focus his attention on travel corridors that are approaching or crossing these saddles. As a bowhunter exclusively, he believes this gives him the best chance to ambush a buck.



Pete Rogers

An area with productive oak trees is a big plus for mountain deer hunters because deer will find acorns as soon as they start falling. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Hunters need to study topography in a mountainous area and determine areas where deer movements will be concentrated because of an area's ups and downs.

“These saddles can be as narrow as a few yards to as wide as several hundred yards,” he said.

Once you locate a saddle, scout it thoroughly and look for the trails the deer are using to access and cross it. If you see the sign, you know a buck is in the area.

The big woods of the Jocassee Gorges have a variety of fauna and food available for deer. A vast expanse of mast-producing trees covers thousands of acres; it can be overwhelming. But by locating active food sources and bedding areas and setting up between the two, you are more likely to find your deer.

Smith said some of the hunting is the week of bear season reserved for dogs — even if it's archery only.

“I sit and listen to the dogs running bears and stay alert, because I know they are pushing deer everywhere,” he said. “I really enjoy that week because I know I will see a lot of deer.”

Hunting deer in the big woods can be challeng-



ing, for sure, but by spending some time scouting and locating bucks, it is possible to find and kill some of the biggest bucks in your state.

A quick search through the records books shows that these mountains host some giant bucks. Hunters who are more willing to go after them are the ones who are more successful and are often rewarded with a trophy of a lifetime. ■



**Pete Rogers** of Taylors, S.C., who works for USDA Wildlife Services, has been an outdoors writer and photographer for more than a decade. He has a real passion for trapping and enjoys sharing these experiences with his wife and five children.

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# HE'S DOWN, BUT NOT OUT

Retrieving your deer from the big woods can be a chore unlike any other. Motorized vehicles are not allowed in many places, so hunting the big, steep country of the Jocassee Gorges and other wild areas of the Carolinas, including the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests in North Carolina, requires some interesting tactics to get your deer from the woods.

It is not uncommon to be several miles from your vehicle, and dragging a big buck that far is not realistic for most people. First, consider field-dressing your deer to remove as much weight at possible. Leaving a good percentage of the body weight behind is going to lighten the load considerably.

Some options for getting your deer from the woods include:

- **A SLED**, such as a Beavertail or Jet Sled, is designed to haul gear over rough terrain. Often used by waterfowl hunters, these sleds are excellent choices for dragging deer from the woods. The thermoplastic design is durable and tough and reduces the friction along the ground. One tip: take some rope to tie the deer into the sled so it doesn't slide around in the steep terrain.

- **A GAME CART**. Like a wheelbarrow, a game cart places the deer on wheels and allows you to push or pull the deer along with little to no friction. A cart is worth its weight in gold. Semi-pneumatic tires are standard for game carts. Consider replacing them with pneumatic tires to help get over rough ground. Again, strap or tie the deer to the cart to keep from it falling off.

- **PACK THE DEER OUT**. Western hunters have been doing this for centuries. Cleaning the deer where it fell and butchering it in the field makes the pack-out a lot easier. You can quarter it or do a complete de-bone. To be legal in South Carolina, you cannot transport a deer without the head intact. If you are packing out your deer, you must pack out the head intact to be legal. Caution: when packing out the head, cover it with hunter orange to keep an accident from occurring. ■

## STICKS & STRINGS ➤



A portable game cart can make a long trek out of the woods with a slain deer much easier than a drag.

Pete Rogers

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# BE YOUR BEST WITH BOW IN HAND

PRACTICE, BE HONEST ABOUT YOUR BOW AND YOUR SHOOTING

**U**nless you are shooting competitively, archery is much like golf in that you are only competing with yourself.

This is one of the great things about our sport; it allows everyone to feel successful on some level, boosting self-esteem and providing an individual experience. The drawback, however, is that it leaves the results open to individual interpretation.

In today's world of participation and instant gratification, this has led to an epidemic of many archers subconsciously skewing the results in their own favor. Not only does this lead to mediocrity in their shooting, but on some level, it also leads to a lack of confidence in their own ability to make the shot when it counts.

Shooting at a target at exactly 20 yards on an indoor range does not properly prepare someone to shoot a quartering animal from an elevated stand in heavy cover. Neither does "rationalizing" the

fact that the arrow that flew 6 inches out of your group was a "flake." This leads to many missed opportunities or worse, wounded animals each fall.

## PRACTICE MORE

Consistently successful bowhunters practice often. Read that last sentence again. Nothing else prepares you for the moment of truth like proper practice. If you practice regularly, muscle memory takes over, allowing your subconscious mind to run the shot sequence. This frees up your conscious mind to aim and focus on proper shot placement.

Archers who practice often are more confident in their ability to make the shot when it counts. They know they can do it because they have done it hundreds of times in practice. Confidence breeds success and helps to eliminate any thoughts of missing, thereby keeping target panic at bay.

We all know a guy who says, "I'm not

really good shooting at a target, but I shoot really well when there's fur in front of me."

I'm going to call BS on this statement 99% of the time. There are exceptions to every rule, but most people do NOT perform better under pressure. If they can't hit the bull's-eye when it doesn't matter, what would make them think it will happen at a crucial moment? A majority of people who say this are effectively kidding themselves, and deep down on some level, they know it. When the moment of truth arrives, they are often disappointed with the results.

A lot of people take their bow out the week before the season and fling a few



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

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** Practice may not make perfect, but not practicing will put bowhunters behind the 8-ball when a buck steps into range. Regular practice can result in tight groups on the range (right) and accuracy afield.

arrows downrange, and they are satisfied with a 5-inch group at 20 yards. If your bow is shooting a 5-inch group at a stationary target in the wide open, you can just about double it in a hunting situation, which will put you right on the edge of the animal's vitals. That doesn't leave any margin for error or movement by the animal. This is a wounded animal waiting to happen. Sadly, this is easily avoidable, but it happens far too often.

### BE HONEST, FOR A CHANGE

This lack of self-honesty can apply to both the tune of the bow and the shooter's form. There is no exception for a properly tuned bow. It will shoot field points and broadheads to the same point of impact and is fairly easy to sight in. Continuing to shoot arrow after arrow and telling yourself the next arrow will be better rarely solves any problems. If your bow is inconsistent or excessively difficult to sight in, take it to a pro shop immediately to have it checked out. Remember, Albert Einstein defined insanity as continuing to do the same thing and expecting different results.

With deer season already well underway in most places, this advice may be a little late for many. Even so, it would be wise to remember for next year. Be honest with yourself about your equipment and your shooting ability. Always strive for perfection, especially when it comes to hunting. Develop a scoring system and keep score, even when you are shooting at an animal target. This way, you can measure your own progress. Be accountable for your results; accountability leads to better performance in the future. After all, we owe it to ourselves and especially to the animals we hunt to shoot as well as we possibly can. ■



Sammy Romano

**GREENER PASTURES** ➤

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# GREENER PASTURES

Jeff Burleson

Plant some cereal grains or legumes in November; when they start to green up the landscape in a few weeks, deer will find them and flock to them.

## IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

NOVEMBER PLANTINGS CAN PROVIDE NEEDED FOOD FOR DEER, NOT TO MENTION A PLACE TO AMBUSH LATE-SEASON WHITETAILS

Jeff Burleson

**D**eer season across both Carolinas is open this month, with all 150 counties open for pulling the trigger. Not to mention, the rut is on fire, with the peak of breeding happening across both states.

While November isn't exactly the planned time to add a new food plot, it surely isn't a bad time, either. Establishing a new food source in November doesn't have to be an uphill battle, and in the right places, it could be an excellent option to establish a preferred food source, even for landowners showing up late to the party.

Deer and other wildlife rely on locating consistent food sources throughout the year. Spring and summer foods are typically very abundant, giving deer a long list of food options. As the fall arrives and many summer foods become unavailable, both soft and hard mast mature, providing deer with a tasty and nutritional option. But fall foods eventually

reach a low-supply level, and deer go on the prowl for a solid food source.

Luckily, deer get the opportunity to feast on agriculture crops. While most of the corn and peanut fields have been reduced to scattered residue, massive soybean fields are typically mature and being harvested, leaving some highly nutritious and palatable legumes to eat. Soon, these crop fields will be harvested and left void of much of the residue left to sustain wildlife for the winter.

### ADD TO THE MENU

As fall foods begin to diminish, a new food source coming online is always welcomed and often relished. The combination of an energy-depleting breeding season and cooler weather fires up hunger pangs in deer, and a late-fall food plot can be an excellent idea to get deer and other wildlife committed to an area.

November is also at the end of the "official" growing season. But anybody who understands the weather in the

Carolinas knows that warm days are just around the corner from cold days, and soil temperatures are typically much warmer than air temperatures. Unpredictable weather, with equal amounts of warm and cooler days is always the norm, especially in the Piedmont and coastal plain areas.

Some planting options are accustomed to cooler soil and air temperatures that can be good options for a November planting. The big killers are heavy frosts and freezes in November that are possible, but they aren't a reason to avoid a November planting effort, either.

November plantings for wildlife must produce soon after planting without any maturation dates needed. November



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.

plantings can be singular crops or mixtures. For late-fall plantings, a mixture of seeds would be preferred to take advantage of growth rates and forage availability characteristics of each contributing seed variety.

## MIX 'EM UP

All November plantings should include small-grain, annual cereal grains at a minimum due to the quick establishment, rapid forage availability, and cold-weather tolerance. Winter wheat, rye, oats and triticale can sprout rapidly and provide a quick food source for deer and turkey over winter. For the best results, 20 to 40 pounds of nitrogen per acre should be added to kick-start growth, along with other fertilizer requirements.

In addition to winter small grains, some legume plantings can be mixed into the planting regime to produce added benefits to the late fall plot. Crimson clover and hairy vetch are the two best winter legumes to incorporate into a late-fall mixture. Crimson clover is typically planted in the spring but can grow vigorously during mild conditions that are often associated with fall in the Carolinas. Hairy vetch is more of a climbing vine and is much more cold-hardy than crimson clover, but it will provide forage through the winter and possibly into the spring if allowed to grow.

Cereal grain and legume mixtures of these types are made up of small seeds that can be either broadcast or drilled on a prepared seedbed.

There is not a perfect mixture for a fall plot of this nature, but a good overall seed mix would be 70 pounds of rye and/or wheat with an additional 10 to 15 pounds of crimson clover with some hairy vetch mixed in, if broadcasting the seed. For the best results, seeds should be planted in moist soil or right before a rain.

The winter is approaching, and deer are looking hard to find a consistent food source. Even though most cool-season plantings should have been planted 6 to 8 weeks ago, November is still not too late to establish a food plot with immediate availability. Cereal and legume mixtures can grow fast and provide a solid food source for deer. In fact, a late plot filled with small cereal grain and legumes can erupt very quickly providing an instant food source that can be an excellent place to set up for the rest of the season. ■



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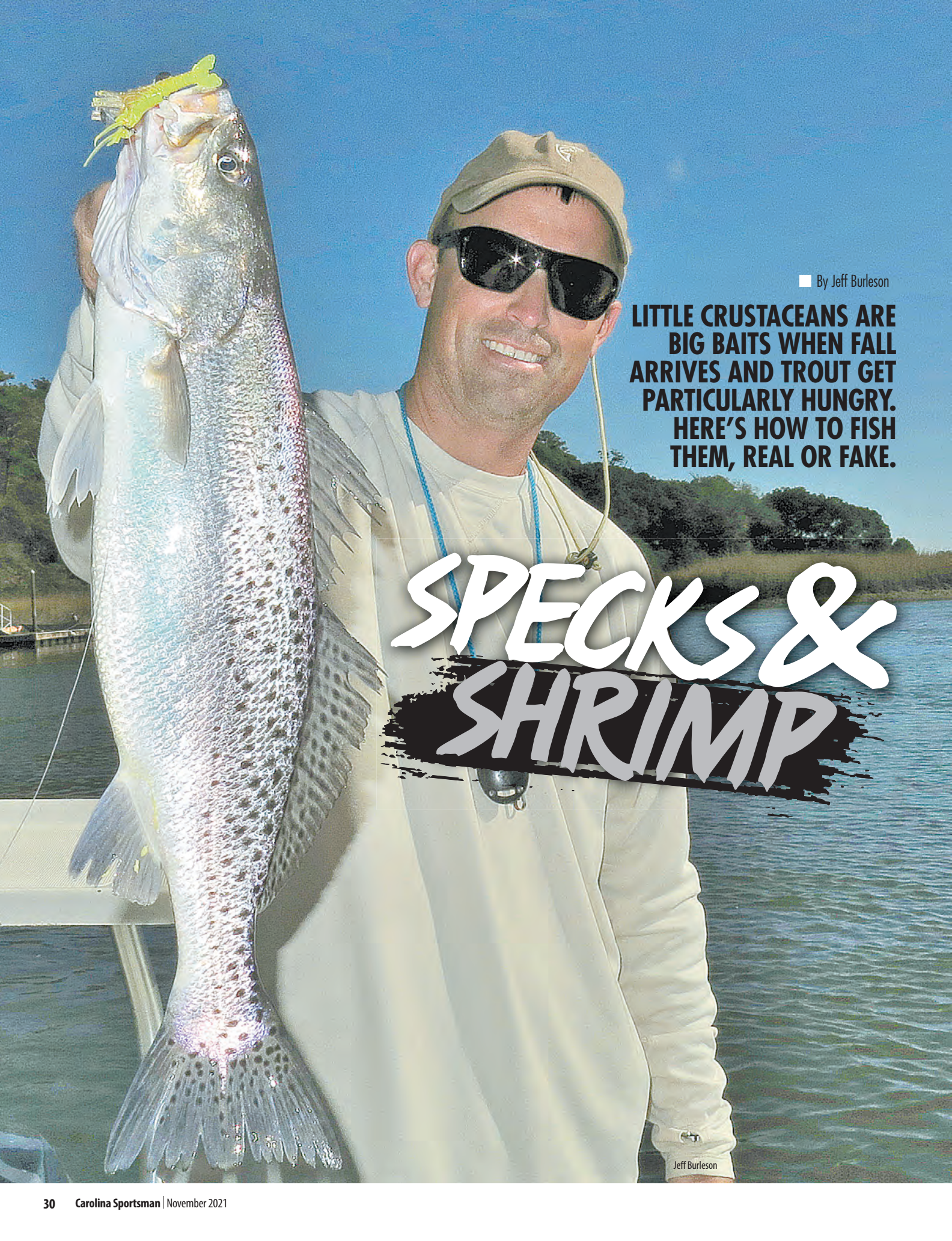
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■ By Jeff Burleson

**LITTLE CRUSTACEANS ARE BIG BAIT WHEN FALL ARRIVES AND TROUT GET PARTICULARLY HUNGRY. HERE'S HOW TO FISH THEM, REAL OR FAKE.**

# **SPECKS & SHRIMP**

Jeff Burleson

# LATE AUTUMN ARRIVES IN THE CAROLINAS

with college football, duck and deer seasons going full bore. It's a wonderful time, with cool temperatures and gorgeous scenery, and anglers who target speckled trout are about as fired up as they can get.

November is the prime time to catch specks; a limit can be just a few casts away. While anglers use a wide variety of lures and baits, America's favorite crustacean is and will always be the top choice.

The coasts of North Carolina and South Carolina feature enormous nursery areas for fish, shrimp and crabs. Shrimp — pink, white and brown — will spend most of the summer in the estuaries, feeding and growing to maturity. And the estuaries will fill up with these tasty creatures until falling water temperatures, poor salinity or some other environmental factor sends these tasty decapods out to sea. Few fish will ever turn down a shrimp dinner.

According to guide Ricky Kellum of Speckled Specialist Fishing Charters in Sneads Ferry, N.C., speckled trout rank

shrimp atop their menu, and few shrimp will evade an ambushing trout.

"Shrimp is No. 1 for forage choice," said Kellum (910-330-2745). "They are No. 1, especially in the New River area, but they will eat anything when they are in a feeding frenzy."

If there is ever a time when trout will be in the mood to eat, November is it. Water temperatures aren't too low, but they are falling every week, and trout feel the itch to feed up on anything that's available.

"I find glass minnows, pinfish, mullet and menhaden in their bellies when I am cleaning them, but shrimp is their No. 1 choice every month," Kellum said.

Speckled trout will eat shrimp even when they are already topped out on shrimp or fish.

"Trout will eat shrimp even when their bellies are full. They are obviously not starving when they eat with a full belly, but they just can't resist it," he said.

## NO BETTER BAIT, LURE



A soft-plastic imitation shrimp is especially effective when most live shrimp have left coastal estuaries for the ocean.

Jeff Burleson

## NO BETTER BAIT, LURE

So what better bait or lure is there other than a live or imitation shrimp?

As far as Kellum is concerned, live shrimp and shrimp imitations are the top options to entice a speck into striking and committing to a tasty meal. Kellum will use live or artificial shrimp under an adjustable slip cork. A live shrimp under a slip float is hard to beat when the bait is presented within sight of a hungry trout. Kellum will use live shrimp under a float as long as he can get them for guide trips and trout will eat them any time, but so will everything else. Fortunately, November water is cool, and cooler conditions on the horizon eliminates much of the competition for these tasty morsels.

Typically, Kellum floats live shrimp in places with current and along ledges, bridges, near inlets or places where deeper water is present. A kicking, live shrimp under a float is a deadly combination for trout in the fall, and really, just about any time of year when speckled trout are around.

## WHERE TO FIND THEM

Fall is great for a trout angler, because specks can be stacked up at jetties or along every grass and shell bank in the entire inshore realm.

“Trout can be about anywhere this time of year. Trout will be at the inlets and up the river in the creeks,” Kellum said.

Trout invade the estuaries in fall and set up in places where conditions are ideal. Since food is especially important in November, good ambush positions in areas abundant with bait are choice locations. Shorelines with oysters, grass or some

type of submerged structures with current are places to target.

Trout will still be concentrated in areas where feeding is the easiest, but as conditions change in the late fall, they will move around, following shrimp and other schools of bait. Covering water is a solid technique, and anglers tying on an artificial shrimp can't go wrong in trout-infested waters. Artificial shrimp is undoubtedly one of the best options for specks and one of Kellum's favorites.

“The Betts Perfect Sinker is my go-to lure this time of year, or really, any time of year. I use a bunch of different shrimp imitations, but the Perfect Sinker falls perfect, and I just know this bait. I also really like the D.O.A. Shrimp, but I like to rig it on a jighead,” he said.

Kellum will thread a D.O.A. Shrimp on a 1/16-, 3/16- or 1/8-ounce jighead and cast it in places with more current or deeper water.

Shrimp are like candy to speckled trout, and even when the inshore shrimp population has evacuated an area, shrimp lures continue to fire up trout into taking the bait.

“Trout crave shrimp and will eat them anytime they are offered to them,” he said. “Even if the native shrimp are gone, they will still eat an artificial shrimp.”

Kellum's colors of choice are chartreuse and pink. He loves bright-colored versions, but he won't buy a chartreuse or pink shrimp.

“I prefer to get clear shrimp, and I dip them in Spike-It chartreuse or pink (dye). It doesn't look like a natural shrimp at all to us, but the



**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.

Jeff Burleson



The author rarely passes up an opportunity to put a bait in front of a speckled trout come November. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Guide Ricky Kellum's favorite colors for soft-plastic shrimp are chartreuse and pink.



Jeff Burleson

fish have no reservations about swallowing it either," he said. Artificial shrimp come in a wide variety of sizes, depending on the manufacturer. D.O.A. and Vudu both come in five sizes; Betts' Perfect Sinker comes in one size, and its Halo Shrimp comes in two. Size doesn't seem to matter to Kellum. "I will use different sizes some, but the size of the Perfect Sinker and the 3-inch D.O.A. is about as big as I go," he said. "The fish will not overlook a smaller shrimp. They will pounce on it and go look for the next one." The fall fishing season ramps up this month, when falling water temperatures and an abundant fish population makes inshore fishing well worth the price of admission. For anglers targeting speckled trout, live shrimp and shrimp imposters are truly the best choices available to quickly connect with a limit of specks. ■

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# LURE ACTION CRITICAL FOR SUCCESS

Anglers started using artificial shrimp when D.O.A.'s Mark Nichols began selling his plastic shrimp imitations in Florida bait shops more than three decades ago. His and dozens of other shrimp imitations made by different companies surely resemble a natural occurring shrimp, and LiveTarget's version exactly replicates a live shrimp. But the most-important part of any fake shrimp is its action or how the angler works it through the water.

Guide Ricky Kellum knows how to catch speckled trout, and artificial shrimp are his favorite lure choices, bar none, but he will tell anybody that baits work the best when fished correctly.

Jeff Burleson



The action an angler puts into an artificial shrimp, whether fished under a cork, on a jighead or weightless, is the determining factor in drawing strikes from speckled trout.

"Artificial shrimp get the attention of trout, but you have to get the bait in front of the fish to make them eat it," he said. "You have to fish it right, and that is slowly."

Most anglers fish artificial shrimp too quickly and lose contact with the bait when making a retrieve.

"You have to fish it slow," Kellum said. "Too many people fish shrimp too fast and want to constantly reel the shrimp in. The bait will never get down to where the fish are if you just reel in the lure, but you also have to retain contact with the lure so you can feel the bites too."

Most artificial shrimp are designed to fall naturally, exactly like a live shrimp will. That's when the fish will generally strike these lures.

Kellum will cast upcurrent, giving the lure a natural twitch, then allow them to swing in the current or naturally fall in places with little to no current. The natural fall shortly after a twitch will trigger a strike.

"The action of the lure is everything," he said. ■



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# CAPE FEAR TROUT HOT

## COOL WATER PUTS SPECKS ON LATE-FALL FEED

**S** By Jerry Dilsaver  
 peckled trout have been biting in North Carolina's Cape Fear River between Wilmington and Southport all summer, and Capt. Stu Caulder of Gold Leader Guide Service expects the action to get even better as falling water temperatures stimulate trout to feed aggressively and bulk up for the coming winter.

Lures and baits that were checked out but didn't quite make the grade during the summer will be rapidly sucked down by hungry fish in November. The last of the baitfish and shrimp are moving out of the creeks and marshes, and this is a time for catching trout and more.

Fish and fishermen have enjoyed four mild winters, and the trout fishery has responded well. November is a great time to catch limits, plus there is an excellent opportunity to add an outstanding catch citation (5 pounds and up) to your man-cave wall.

"We are blessed with a lot of opportunities to catch trout between the Cape Fear River inlet and Wilmington," Caulder said. "It's also nice to have a healthy trout population after several mild winters. The good fishing begins just inside the Cape Fear River inlet with the creeks that flow in behind Bald Head Island, continues by the rock wall that runs from Fort Fisher to Bald Head, then moves into Snow's Marsh and Walden Creek. Heading west, the Elizabeth River and Dutchman Creek work through a large marsh system between Southport and Oak Island.

"Moving farther up the river, there are 20-some spoil islands along the ship channel, plus Town Creek, the Brunswick River, Mallory Creek, Motts Creek and Barnard Creek that flow into the river between Snow's Cut and Wilmington," Caulder said. "If there hasn't been much rain for a while, salt-water may move far enough up the river to catch specks in Wilmington and beyond."

Many fishermen believe the best way to catch fall trout is to suspend a live shrimp or minnow under a float and drift it past creek mouths, across points and along grass edges, oyster or sand bars. Caulder



Guide Stu Caulder fooled this Cape Fear speck with a D.O.A. shrimp.

(910-264-2674) said specks will also respond to lures in these same locations and specializes on catching them on artificials.

"There is a variety of structure in the lower Cape Fear that includes shallow flats, bars and points off creek mouths, oyster rocks and surprisingly steep drops," Caulder said. "I leave home with multiple rods rigged with topwaters, suspending baits and sinking baits. My favorites are MirrOlure Top Pups for topwater, MirrOlure 17MR and 27MR MirrOdines for mid-depths or situations where a suspending lure works best, and D.O.A. shrimp, paddletails and jerkbaits for fishing deeper and when the bait needs to move along the bottom." ■

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# COOL NOVEMBER SPURS NC SPECKS

## Big trout get active around Wrightsville

**W** By Craig Holt  
 ith recent trends moving toward warmer-than-usual temperatures later in the fall, November should be a great time to fish for large speckled trout along North Carolina's coast.

"There aren't as many little trout in November," said Jot Owens, a Wrightsville Beach-based guide. "Size is a seasonal thing, and that means anywhere you fish for trout these days.

"We catch the biggest trout of the year during November, sometimes 8- and 9-pounders. A couple years ago, the second week of November, we caught two 8¾-pounders and a 9½."

Water depths and clarity, plus different venues from spring and summer, are the key components in finding trout bites in November.

"I'll fish in 6 to 12 feet of water and target bigger creeks leading to inlets and at inlets," said Owens (910-233-4139).

Best water temperatures to activate the trout bite are 60 degrees falling to 54 as winter approaches.

"November water usually is in that range, and you can catch trout into December," he said. "But once it falls below 52 degrees, I fish for stripers."

Owens also likes to target specks during falling tides at inlets and bigger creeks leading to inlets.

"I like the last couple of hours of falling tide and concentrate on deeper ledges at inlets," Owens said.

With their main food, finger mullet, often absent by November, specks target little green shad, pinfish, small spots and the occasional menhaden, if they're still present. Trout eat shrimp any time.

Big speckled trout really pull on their feed bags in November as water temperatures drop into the 50s.



Craig Holt

However, Owens doesn't use live bait.

"Mostly, I fish artificial lures," he said.

His favorite hard baits include 2½ - to 3-inch MirrOlure 17MRs and Catch 22 Juniors — or suspending, bone-colored twitch baits.

"In clear, cleaner water I use pink, chartreuse and white colors," Owens said. "Closer to river systems where water is darker, I throw

MirrOures in the 808 Halloween shade (orange belly gold sides and black back) colors."

At inlets with deeper water and current where trout gather on the bottom and cranking lures aren't effective, he bottom bumps ⅛- to ¼-ounce jigheads and soft-plastic grubs.

"You want just enough weight to let lures fall slowly," Owens said. "Trout always hit soft-plastic jigs on the fall."

His most effective trout rigs include 3-inch PowerBait Ripple Shad and Pro Twitchtail Minnows and 3-inch Berkley Gulp! shrimp. ■

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Big specks are not uncommon in November around Little River.

# TROLL FOR SPECKS

## in ICW from Little River to Sunset Beach

**W** By Jeff Burleson  
 ith the last calendar page just one turn away, fishermen targeting speckled trout are out to play with-out any holds barred. And the ICW running through Little River near the North Carolina-South Carolina border is one of the best places to chase fish in the late fall.

Specks slide into the Intracoastal Waterway in large schools, chomping on baitfish and preparing for the winter. While many anglers choose to beat the banks with soft plastics and float live shrimp, others with years of experience chose a different game plan.

Tom Cushman of Captain Cush's Calmwater Charters gets fired up this time of year and targets speckled trout on nearly every trip to the brackish waters of Little River.

"Speckled trout stack up this time of year in the ICW here," said Cushman (843-997-5850), "but the fish will often migrate around to different places in the ICW."

The ICW in Little River area is practically a large ditch with a deep channel in the center and shallow banks on either side, but it is littered with docks, small creeks, seawalls and other man-made features, with tons of oysters and grass lines in between. As a result, trout will sometimes shift to different areas from day to day, chasing bait or just finding places they prefer on a particular tide. As a result, a more-active method to find and catch fish may be better suited.

Slow-trolling jigs is Cushman's foolproof way of finding and catching fall specks.

"I love trolling for trout in the fall. It's a great way to find the fish, and you can catch plenty of fish too," he said.

Cushman will fish from just above the turn bridge in Little River into North Carolina towards Sunset Beach. He will troll the edges, targeting a specific water depth range.

"We catch them in as little as 1 to 2 feet of water, and as deep as 6 to 7 feet. The sweet spot is 2 to 6 feet," he said.

This area is affected by a moderate tidal swing; water depths can change as much as 5 to 6 feet, but 4½ feet is the most-likely change on a tidal swing. Cushman will troll against the grass and structures on higher water and will move off the bank, near the dropoff, on lower tides. He will rarely troll much beyond the shelf in the deeper water.

"I troll against the current at one to two miles per hour and with ¼- to ½-ounce jigs (with soft-plastic trailers) approximately 70 to 80 feet behind the boat," he said.

Depending on the water's color and clarity — the ICW in this area is fed by the tannic Waccamaw River, which gives the water a tea to coffee-colored look, despite remaining fairly clear — Cushman will use a wide variety of colors to get the job done. His favorites will feature red and green/chartreuse, but trout will hit a wide variety of colors, some being bright and gaudy and some more natural.

"I like red and green, but I will use a lot of different colors when the fish aren't hitting regularly on red and green," he said.

Trolling can be an easy way to find fish this time of the year.



Jeff Burleson

While anglers may have to cover a lot of water, the fish are aggressive, will let anglers know exactly where they are and will not have any problems pouncing on passing baits. ■

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**WHEN WATERFOWL SEASON KICKS OFF IN THE CAROLINAS THIS MONTH, BE READY FOR THE BIRDS THAT ARE ALREADY AROUND, AND DON'T TREAT THEM LIKE MIGRATING DUCKS.**

■ By Phillip Gentry

**T**he long-awaited waterfowl season kicks off this month, bringing with it the usual challenges and rewards. Both Carolinas have split seasons that really kick in this month. After a short, introductory season in October, North Carolina opens up Nov. 6, running until Nov. 27 in the Inland zone and Nov. 29 in the Coastal zone. South Carolina's first leg opens Nov. 20 and also runs until Nov. 27.

Most waterfowlers agree that the November segment is often quite different from hunting in December and January as far as weather, food sources, and movements of ducks.

These tips should help you make the necessary adjustments to make the most of your November duck hunts.

Phillip Gentry

## **EARLY SEASON DUCKS: TRY THESE 5 TACTICS**

## HUNT THE DUCKS YOU HAVE

Dean Harrigal, former waterfowl biologist (now retired) for the S.C. Department of Natural Resources, suggests not waiting around for birds that might make their way into the Carolinas and hunt the birds you already have. Most early season ducks will be residents and will pattern somewhat differently than migratory birds.

Harrigal said that the idea of a vertical flyway where birds push due south is a misnomer. Weather patterns to our west affect duck migrations just as significantly. In fact, the species of duck and where it originates is a key element in knowing how it migrates.

“The rule of thumb that we talk about is the further south we are in the flyway, the further west your birds come from,” he said. “Like in the Atlantic flyway, we get mallards and wood ducks and some green-winged teal to some extent from New England. But we also get more mallards and wood ducks and blue wings and ringers from the Great Lakes region. Then, we also get gadwall and green-winged teal and shovelers and blue-winged teal. Those are traditional prairie-nesting birds. Where we are in the flyway, we get birds from all sources.”

## SCOUTING IS CRITICAL

Robert Garmany of Charleston, S.C., spends a lot of time scouting before the season and between hunts, getting to know the areas ducks prefer to use, then using that knowledge to insert himself into the area where the ducks want to be.

“I’d say scouting is 80% to 90% of what I do when I’m on the water from early November on,” he said. “If there are no ducks in the area or you’re not seeing ducks in the area, why waste time sitting there all morning?”

“Grab a pair of binoculars and go watch where ducks are going, then try to figure out what’s going on with the duck population,” he said. “Afternoon scouting is also a great way to find out what areas the ducks are using. I use the afternoons, if I’m off work, to scout where ducks are coming from.”

“Get with a good friend and let him go to one area and watch the area, and you go to another,” Garmany said. “By scouting, I mean sitting off of a rice field or sitting off in an area and watching birds through binoculars and seeing where ducks are going. However, do not disturb the birds, I truly believe if you run the duck out of an area, you’re going to make that duck leave that area.”

Both North and South Carolina offer November seasons to hone your waterfowling skills for the rest of the year.

**FEWER DECOYS,  
MORE ACTION >**



Phillip Gentry

## FEWER DECOYS, MORE ACTION

Matthew Cagle of Newport, N.C., president of Rig 'Em Right Waterfowl, said one mistake many early season hunters make is trying to use too many blocks. He said early season birds won't be flocked up the way they will be when migratory birds push in, so it's better to have a dozen or fewer decoys in your spread — but make the most of the decoys you use.

"We created a jerk-cord system at Rig 'Em Right that brings in ducks just as good if not better than spinning-wing decoys," Cagle said. "First, the hunter is controlling the movement, so

you don't have a constant spinning or whirling motion at a critical moment when ducks are being finicky. The movement is also variable, which I believe looks more natural to circling birds."

An old-fashioned jerk string

allows hunters to impart the right amount of movement to three or four decoys within a spread, but it also creates a wake that will move up to a dozen ducks. Cagle said the result is natural, subtle movement of a whole flock at the pull of a string.

## DON'T FORGET ABOUT GEESE

When Scott Emery of Greer, S.C., thinks about waterfowl hunting in November, it's either wood ducks or geese.

"Years ago, we'd get out on a farm pond and get all set up before daylight and get all our duck decoys out, and right at daylight, we'd normally get shots at a couple of wood ducks," he said. "If we were lucky, a couple of mallards might drop in, but we realized more often than not, the best shooting came about mid-morning when a flock of geese would drop into the pond."

Emery tried for several years to integrate both ducks and geese into his decoy spread, but it never worked out the way he intended.

"I'd start out putting them together, then realized you don't see that many ducks and geese together unless it's at a park



**Phillip Gentry** of Waterloo, S.C., is host of "The Outdoor Show," a weekly radio podcast that can be seen at [www.pgandboatgirl.com](http://www.pgandboatgirl.com) or heard on WZLA FM, 92.9, in Greenwood/Abbeville, S.C.

Smaller decoy spreads with more controlled movement will attract more attention during the early season.





Resident flocks of Canada geese often fill in voids before migratory birds start to show up.

somewhere,” he said. “I’d start splitting them up, and eventually, it would be ducks on one side of the pond and geese on the other.”

After the initial volley of woodies, he’d give the local mallards about an hour to show up, and then he would move over to the other side of the pond.

“If we did get a late duck that circled out of range, somebody might ease over there and jump-shoot him, but the best way was to sit tight and wait for the geese to show up.”

**SET THE TABLE YOURSELF ➤**

**HUNTING SEASONS**

SPECIES	SEASON DATES (PRIVATE LAND)	BAG LIMIT	POSSESSION LIMIT
Doves	Sept. 4-6, Sept. 7-Oct. 2 Nov. 13-27, Dec. 17-Jan. 31, 2022	15	45
Crow	Nov. 1-March 1, 2022	No limits	
Quail	Nov. 22-March 1, 2022	12	36
Rabbit	Nov. 25-March 1, 2022	5	15
Squirrel	Oct. 1-March 1, 2022	10	30
Fox	Nov. 25-March 1, 2022	No limits	
Grouse	Nov. 25-March 1, 2021 (Game Zone 1 only)	3	9
Raccoon	Sept. 15-March 15, 2022 (statewide)	3 raccoons per party	
Opossum	Sept. 15-March 15, 2022	No limits	
Other furbearers	Nov. 25-March 1, 2020 (bobcat, otter, weasel, mink, muskrat, skunk)	No limits	
Bear	Game Zone 1	Oct. 17-23 (still hunting only) Oct. 24-30 (dogs)	
	Game Zone 2	Oct. 17-30 (still hunting only) (parts of Oconee, Pickens, Greenville, Spartanburg counties not in Game Zone 1)	
	Game Zone 4	Oct. 17-30 (still hunting only) (Georgetown, Horry, Marion and Williamsburg counties)	
Rails	Sept. 8-12,		
King & Clapper	Oct. 4-Dec. 7	15	45
Sora & Virginia		25	75
Gallinules		15	45
(common/purple)			
Snipe	Nov. 14 - Feb. 28, 2022	8	24
Woodcock	Dec. 18 - Jan. 31, 2022	3	9
Wild Turkey	March 22-April 30, 2022 (Game Zones 3&4) April 1-May 10, 2022 (Game Zones 1&2)	3	3

**DEER SEASON**

ZONE	ARCHERY ONLY	PRIM WEAPON	GUNS
1		Oct. 1-10	Oct. 11-Jan. 1, 2022
2	Sept. 15-30	Oct. 1-10	Oct. 11-Jan. 1, 2022
3			Aug. 15-Jan. 1, 2022
4	Aug 15-31		Sept. 1-Jan. 1, 2022

**Youth Days:** Game Zone 1, Sept. 25, Jan. 8; Game Zone 2: Sept. 11, Jan. 8; Game Zone 3: Aug.14, Jan. 8; Game Zone 4: Aug. 14, Jan. 8.

**WATERFOWL SEASONS**

SPECIES	DATES	BAG LIMIT
Duck	Teal only: Sept. 10-25 Nov. 20-27, Dec. 12-Jan. 31, 2022	6 6
Canada geese	Sept. 1-30, Nov. 20-27, Dec. 12-Jan. 31, 2022, Feb. 15-March 1, 2022	15 (Sept.) 5 (Others)
Blue/snow (light) geese	Nov. 20-27, Dec. 12-Jan. 31, 2022, Feb. 15-March 1, 2022	25
Brant	Dec. 13-Jan. 31, 2022	2
Sea ducks	Nov. 20-27, Dec. 12-Jan. 31, 2022	5
Mergansers	Nov. 20-27, Dec. 12-Jan. 31, 2022	5 (1 hooded)
Coots	Nov. 20-27, Dec. 12-Jan. 31, 2022	15

Creating your own impoundment is an investment that will pay off in duck hunting opportunities through all seasons.

## SET THE TABLE YOURSELF

After spending much of his duck-hunting career hunting open-water sounds for divers, callmaker Allen Bliven decided it was time to invest in his own private land and let the ducks come to him.

He bought a small farm near the Swanquarter on the south side of North Carolina's famed Lake Mattamuskeet. He soon discovered that it wasn't as easy as he thought and learned some valuable tips in manipulating his own land.

"You read a lot about exotic duck foods, but to me corn is the best crop to grow," he explained. "First, ducks love it, and second, it allowed me to co-op with a local farmer. That wouldn't be possible with Japanese millet or other duck food that isn't marketable."

Along with food, water was also a big concern for Bliven. His land was graded to manipulate water, but he discovered that seasons of drought meant no water and no ducks. He finally went the distance and built a well on his property, which guarantees him water even during drought times.



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"Another thing I recently discovered about the water levels is that the deeper the water, the more divers and mergansers we had coming to our land," he said. "By maintaining just 6 inches of water over the crops — rather than 6 feet — I'm saving money on pumping costs and I'm getting more puddlers like teal, mallards and widgeon." ■

**ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN** ➤



# HUNTING/FISHING SCRAPBOOK

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Send us your photos, and you may appear on the pages of Carolina Sportsman magazine. Send clean, sharp shots of you with your fish, deer, ducks, rabbits, squirrels, doves, etc. to

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or to [images@CarolinaSportsman.com](mailto:images@CarolinaSportsman.com)**

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



**Rick Longnecker**

Rick Longnecker of Wilmington, N.C., caught this 6.47-pound bass in a New Hanover County pond on May 25.



**Jamie Matthews**

Jamie Matthews of Lexington, S.C., boated this 8-pound, 15-ounce striped bass fishing on Lake Murray on May 27.



**Wyatt Conaway**

Wyatt Conaway, 13, of Lillington, N.C., tagged his first deer, this nice doe, last fall at 220 yards with his Mossberg .30-06.



**Ryan Kees**

Ryan Kees, 13, caught this 2.7-pound crappie on April 13 at Lake Higgins in Greensboro, N.C.



**Tony Wilcox**

Tony Wilcox of Louisville, Ky., took this nice wahoo fishing with Luke Foster out of Atlantic Beach, N.C., in May 2020.



**Gavin Bowen**

Gavin Bowen, 9, dropped this 7-point buck in Robeson County, N.C., on Oct. 24, 2020.



**Chris Barras**

Chris Barras caught this nice striped bass out of Lake Hartwell on April 18. He was pulling a live, blueback herring on a WaterBug planer board.

## ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN

Pat Robertson

Retrievers need plenty of work before waterfowl season begins. Summer swims are great, but as the season approaches, training should mirror real hunting situations.



# DOGS NEED TRAINING CAMP

**W**aterfowl hunters live year-round for the season. If it opened tomorrow, they would be ready

to go. Here's a duck hunter's checklist.

Shotgun: check. Shells: check. Waders: check. Decoys: check. Duck calls: check. Ready for waterfowl season? Check.

Uh, maybe. Maybe not.

What about your canine hunting partner? Is your retriever ready for waterfowl season? There are three things to consider before the season begins, according to veteran trainer Mike Parker of Back Creek Kennels in Mt. Ulla, N.C.: the age of the dog, the level of training and the physical condition of the dog.

Parker has been producing well-trained hunting retrievers for almost four decades. He maintains some level of activity — both physical and mental — for his dogs throughout the year, so they will be ready for increased activity as the season nears, even in the hot summer.

"In 90-degree weather, you have to be cognizant of the conditions. He could

suffer a heat stroke if you work him too hard," he said

Parker keeps his dogs in shape in the summer by taking them to the water for a swim when the sun is first coming up, to keep their muscles in shape and improve their cardiovascular activity, much like an athlete in training.

## STAMINA FIRST

"We don't do a tremendous amount of retrieving that time of year, but I want them to develop their stamina. Once the season starts, training time diminishes," he said.

Many hunters use dove season to help prepare their retrievers for waterfowl season, and that works fine for older dogs, but not so much for young dogs, Parker said.

"You get them out, and it is exciting and fun for the dogs, but you don't get the exercise for them dove hunting like you do water retrieving," said Parker, who builds on the excitement level and works to hone his dogs' retrieving skills using

other birds and having hunting buddies help with training.

## TEST RETRIEVERS

"Most of my dogs are retrievers, but they are also flushing dogs, so when the preserve season opens, I will buy a few quail and let the dogs find two or three of them," he said.

"I also save some of my ducks from the season before, and I plant them out in the field near my house. I let them sit for an hour or two so the scent is coming off them and then work my dogs into the wind. They get their tails wagging, and I shoot, and the dogs go into the brush and find the birds. It really lights a fire under them to get out and find birds."



Pat Robertson covered outdoors issues for more than 30 years for *The State* and *The Columbia Record* newspapers. Now retired, he is a full-time free-lancer living in Blythewood, S.C., where he and his wife, Jan, raise beagles and compete in field trials.

As the season nears, Parker steps up his training regime so it's closer to an actual hunting situation, both to sharpen the dog's mental capabilities and to further increase stamina.

"Sometimes, I will get with two or three of my buddies who have the same type retrievers, and we will set up simulated retrieves," Parker said. "We will have two or three blinds and vary the distance. Then, we run the dogs on marks, further than I could throw a bumper by myself.

"A lot of people take their dogs out in the backyard and throw a bumper, but we might be throwing the bumper 40 or 50 yards," Barker said. "I like having other people throwing the bumper for me, because the dog will be looking at the bird, not at me."



Mike Parker

Trainer Mike Parker puts one of his retrievers through pre-season paces.

## BUILD THEM UP

Once you have your dog's retrieving skills honed and his excitement level up, you are almost ready for the season, but there is one more item to address: making sure your dog's health is up to the rigors of winter hunting. Temperatures below freezing and harsh, frigid winds, which are ideal for waterfowl hunting, can drain a dog's stamina quickly if he is not prepared for it, and retrieving in icy waters can increase the possibility of health issues.

"It is not good for dogs to expect them to perform well if they are not getting good quality food," said Parker, who said that the protein and fat content of their food should be increased so they can survive in dramatic temperatures. He recommends a 30-to-20 protein-to-fat level in the dog's daily food intake.

Now, complete your checklist for the waterfowl season. Add Dog's physical condition: Check; Dog's mental sharpness: Check.

Now you AND your hunting partner are ready to go hunting. ▀

For more information about Mike Parker's Back Creek Kennels, call 704-278-1699 or visit [www.backcreekkennel.com](http://www.backcreekkennel.com).

### HUNTING SEASONS

#### DEER

Region	Method	Season
Western	Bowhunting	Sept. 11-Oct. 3 Oct. 17-Nov. 21 Dec. 12-Jan. 1, 2022 (bucks only)
	Muzzleloader	Oct. 4-16
	Gun	Nov. 22-Dec. 11
Northwestern	Bowhunting	Sept. 11-Nov. 5
	Muzzleloader	Nov. 6-19
	Gun	Nov. 20-Jan. 1, 2022
Central	Bowhunting	Sept. 11-Oct. 29
	Muzzleloader	Oct. 30-Nov. 12
	Gun	Nov. 13-Jan. 1, 2022
Northeastern/ Southeastern	Bowhunting	Sept. 11-Oct. 1
	Muzzleloader	Oct. 2-15
	Gun	Oct. 16-Jan. 1, 2022

#### BEAR

Oct. 18-Nov. 20 & Dec. 13-Jan. 1, 2022:	In and west of Surry, Wilkes, Caldwell, Burke and Cleveland counties
Nov. 13-Jan. 1, 2022:	Alamance, Anson, Cabarrus, Caswell, Chatham, Davidson, Durham, Granville, Guilford, Lee, Mecklenburg, Montgomery, Orange, Person, Randolph, Rockingham, Rowan, Stanly, Union counties
Oct. 16-Jan. 1, 2022:	Franklin, Harnett, Hoke, Johnston, Moore, Richmond, Scotland, Vance, Warren, Wake counties
Nov. 20-Jan. 1, 2022:	Alexander, Catawba, Davie, Forsyth, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Stokes, Yadkin counties
Nov. 18-Jan. 1, 2022:	Bladen, Brunswick, Carteret, Columbus, Cumberland, Duplin, New Hanover, Onslow, Pamlico, Pender, Robeson, Sampson counties
Nov. 13-28, Dec. 11-26:	Dare, Hyde, Tyrrell counties
Nov. 13-21, Dec. 11-26:	Beaufort, Bertie, Craven, Hertford, Jones, Martin, Washington counties
Nov. 13-21 Dec. 12-27:	Camden*, Chowan*, Currituck Gates, Pasquotank*, Perquimans (*Seasons open Nov. 12 by local laws)
Nov. 20-Dec. 19:	Edgecombe, Greene, Halifax, Lenoir, Nash, Northampton, Pitt, Wayne, Wilson counties

#### SQUIRREL

Oct. 18-Feb. 28, 2022 (gray & red)  
Oct. 18-Jan. 31, 2022 (fox)

#### RABBIT

Oct. 18-Feb. 28, 2022

#### RACCOON, OPOSSUM

Oct. 18-Feb. 28, 2022

#### QUAIL

Nov. 20-Feb. 28, 2022

#### GROUSE

Oct. 18-Feb. 28, 2022

#### RAILS

Sept. 4-14, Oct. 2-Dec. 1

#### COMMON SNIPE

Oct. 27-Feb. 28, 2022

#### CANADA GEESE

Resident zone, Oct. 21-30, Nov. 6-29,  
Dec. 18-Feb. 12, 2022  
Statewide: Sept. 1-30; NE Zone, Jan. 15-31, 2022 permit

#### SNOW, BLUE, ROSS GEESE

Oct. 12-Feb. 12, 2022, Feb. 14-March 31, 2022, permit

#### DUCKS

##### (Inland Zone)

Oct. 21-23, Nov. 6-27, Dec. 18-Jan. 31, 2022

##### (Coastal Zone)

Oct. 29-30, Nov. 6-29, Dec. 19-Jan. 31, 2022

#### EARLY TEAL

Sept. 11-29 (east of US 17 only)

#### SEA DUCKS

Nov. 23-Jan. 31, 2022

#### BRANT

Dec. 18-Jan. 31, 2022

#### DOVE

Sept. 4-Oct. 2, Nov. 6-27, Dec. 9-Jan. 31, 2022

#### TUNDRA SWAN

Nov. 6-Jan. 31, 2021. Bag limit 1, by permit only.

#### WOODCOCK

Dec. 10-Jan. 31, 2022

#### WILD TURKEY (Youth)

April 2-8, 2022  
April 9-May 7, 2022



By Craig Holt

# JORDAN'S FALL BASS ALTERNATIVE

**PUT UP YOUR DEER-HUNTING GEAR FOR A DAY OR TWO AND TREAT YOURSELF TO SOME EXCELLENT FALL BASS FISHING ON THIS TOP-DRAWER NORTH CAROLINA LAKE.**

Craig Holt

# If deer hunting isn't your November cup of tea, another outdoors activity offers

## PLENTY OF ACTION.

In some respects, fall bass fishing at North Carolina's B. Everett Jordan Lake resembles chasing whitetails. Both involve scouting, knowing best times and where to go, being at hot spots and using appropriate equipment for success.

Some outdoorsmen believe November isn't a great time to target largemouths. But it can be as productive as the spring spawn, and Jordan presents multiple chances to land whopping lunkers.

Two Durham County anglers who are tournament partners, best friends — and deer hunters — have deciphered the puzzle of November bass fishing in the 13,940-acre impoundment on the Haw River and New Hope Creek.

Stephen Lasher, 31, of Bahama, and Chad Fara, 36, of Durham, have won multiple bass tournaments on Jordan and other area lakes and rivers. The past two years, they've won season-ending championship tournaments, each of which offered a Ranger bass boat as the top prize. The pair also fishes for fun all year, and they intersperse November bass trips with some deer hunting.

"November at Jordan Lake kind of resembles prespawn fishing for bass," Fara said.



Craig Holt



Craig Holt

A Rapala DT-6 crankbait that resembles an injured shad is a prime fall bass lure when retrieved parallel to rip rap at Jordan Lake causeways and bridges. **RIGHT:** This 6-pound bass attacked a Stephen Lasher's crankbait cast to a rock pile.

Lasher, a former member of N.C. State's BassPack fishing team, said several factors cause the lake's largemouths to gang up where anglers can put lures in front of them.

"And they're game-changers," he said.

The first factor is water temperatures as it dips toward 60 degrees. Bass put on the feed bag to gain weight and prepare for the winter lull.

"It triggers the bite," Lasher said, "and a lot of bass go to riprap at causeways, bridges and humps in the middle of coves. The other factor is wind. We get some strong winds that time of year that stack up baitfish against riprap."

Sunlight also warms riprap, which attracts baitfish, while wind creates currents beneath bridges that are pinch-point highways for baitfish and bass.

When fishing bridges and causeways, Lasher and Fara cast and retrieve lures parallel to rocks at 45-degree angles from their boat.

"Sometimes bass can be tight on the rocks," Fara said.

"Sometimes they hang off riprap in 5 to 12 feet of water. The main problem is that riprap gets a lot of pressure."

The US 64 causeway bridge that crosses the 13,500-acre lake

from east to west is a prime example of a place that gets lashed by hundreds of anglers.

"The best thing about fishing riprap in late fall is it holds some giants," Lasher said.

Fara and Lasher often try other bridges and causeways that cross Jordan, the main two being the Ebenezer Church Road bridge at the mouth of Beaver Creek just south of mid-lake and the Farrington Road bridge on the northern end of the lake.

Additionally, sunken bridge spans with demolished rubble also are good targets. The old Poole Road bridge at the eastern end of Little Beaver Creek is such a place. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers deconstructed that span while excavating Jordan before it was impounded. Today, the bridge's center provides a pinch-point for baitfish where bass can collect during the fall.

"When the water starts to cool, the riprap bite lights up at these places," Fara said. "We don't spend time beating other banks."

Best fall lures for riprap include Rat-L-Traps, Rapala DT-6 crankbaits and Alabama rigs.

"A bunch of tournaments have been won with Alabama rigs," Lasher said.

Anglers Chad Fara (left) and Stephen Lasher admire a 5-pound Jordan Lake fall largemouth that slammed a black/blue 3/8-ounce jig.



# PATIENCE REQUIRED TO LAND JORDAN BASS

## ON THE ROCKS

Stephen Lasher and Chad Fara said nothing sparks Jordan Lake bass to bite in November better than blustery weather.

"I think it has something to do with the water temperature cooling down," Lasher said. "A cloudy, breezy day with a passing cold front and rain is a good time to bass fish. Most people wouldn't think about going in that weather, but it gets them moving."

On the other hand, sunny days cause baitfish to orient to relatively shallow, rock-covered humps at the mouths of big coves, especially those with surrounding deeper water. And large-mouths follow.

"Jordan Lake has lots of rock piles, especially at feeder-creek cove mouths," Lasher said, "and bass like to get on them."

The tops of rock piles may be as shallow as 6 to 10 feet deep, making them easily reached with medium-diving crankbaits and 3/8-ounce black/blue jigs.

Lasher's bass boat has fish-finder equipment that includes Lowrance Elite 12 T12 and P12 sonar with 12-inch screens on the console and a 9-inch screen at the bow.

"Both have side-imaging," Lasher said. "If bass aren't moving, they look like long, thin lines. If they're suspended off the bottom, you can see a shadow. Stumps show up as (blocky) shadows. And we can spot fish on humps."

Using their sonar equipment, Fara and Lasher have saved dozens of rock-pile waypoints. They don't pull directly on top of them; they'll circle within casting distance and chunk lures to their targets.

"If we don't get bites at one place, we'll try a different one, then maybe return later," Fara said. "November bass at Jordan may not bite at a spot when we arrive, but after we come back, we often catch them at the same place." ■



## DESTINATION INFORMATION

**HOW TO GET THERE** — B. Everett Jordan Lake is south of the Raleigh-Durham area. US 64 is the best access point; it crosses the lake a few miles west of US 1, and several prominent public boat-access areas are within sight of the road. Other key routes are Farrington Point Rd. out of Chapel Hill and NC 751 out of Durham.

**WHEN TO GO** — November through February

**BEST TECHNIQUES** — Retrieve medium-diving or count-down crankbaits or Alabama rigs parallel to riprap at causeways or underneath bridge spans or DT-6 crankbaits or blue/black or brown/chartreuse jigs around rock piles in open water near cove mouths or at submerged road beds.

**FISHING INFO/GUIDES** — Wilsonville General Store, 919-362-7101; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 919-542-4501 for lake level reports and ramp closures. Also visit [www.ncwildlife.org/InlandFisheries](http://www.ncwildlife.org/InlandFisheries).

**ACCOMMODATIONS** — Jordan Lake State Recreation Area, 919-362-0586 for campground information. Quality Inn & Suites, Apex/Holly Springs, 919-446-6700; Comfort Inn Apex, 919-387-4600.

**MAPS** — GMCO 888-420-6277, [www.gmcomaps.com](http://www.gmcomaps.com); Fishing Hot Spots, 800-500-MAPS.

**R**at-L-Traps in chrome/black are countdown lures, most effective when allowed to sink at a rate of about a foot per second; they should be retrieved at moderate speeds. Rapala DT-6 crankbaits in mule, big shad and pearl/gray shiner colors are effective divers that easily reach 6 feet and can be bounced off riprap.

"Bass also likes Shad Raps in foxy shad color or an Excalibur One-Knocker," Fara said. "I also like a No. 7 Shad Rap for fishing riprap."

Alabama rigs are spreader/umbrella rigs that feature small plastic lures tied to multiple wire leaders. When retrieved, they resemble a school of baitfish and can be fished at any depth.

Fara and Lasher both like 7-foot-2, medium-heavy Kistler or Cashion rods and Lew's reels spooled with 15- to 20-pound mono, depending on the type of structures they target. ■



**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.

**LUNKER LINES** ➤



Steven Lasher and Chad Fara target the mouth of big coves for November bass.



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

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

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

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and-valleys forecaster. Includes rise and set times for the sun and moon, space to log your catches, "Timely Tips," plus fish and game symbols showing you each month's don't-miss periods. Also includes exclusive summary charts revealing the best and worst days of 2022, the year's best periods, a look ahead at 2023, and more. Comes with FREE 2022 Astro Tables pocket calendar, which sells separately for \$8.95, plus \$3 s&h. **Book: "How to Know When to Go" by Rick Taylor.** \$14.95 (plus \$4 s&h). 100 pages, 43 illustrations. A comprehensive look at the main factors influencing fish and game activity periods, plus how to devise an effective when-to-go game plan using any year's PrimeTimes calendars. Individual assessments of bass, panfish, deer, turkey, and more.

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2021 NOV	BEST DAYS				LUNAR PERIODS				MOON PHASE
	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL VALUE	MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT	
Mon 1	██	██	██	45	3:44 AM	9:02 am - 11:34 am	4:43 PM	9:27 pm - 11:59 pm	☾
Tue 2	██	██	██	53	4:51 AM	10:01 am - 12:13 pm	5:13 PM	10:26 pm - 12:38 am	☾
Wed 3	██	██	██	61	6:00 AM	11:03 am - 12:51 pm	5:45 PM	11:28 pm - Midnight	☾
Thu 4	██	██	██	64	7:12 AM	12:06 pm - 1:34 pm ☀	6:20 PM	Midnight - 1:16 am	☾ New
Fri 5	██	██	██	52	8:27 AM	1:13 pm - 2:21 pm	7:00 PM	12:31 am - 1:59 am	☾ Perigee
Sat 6	██	██	██	38	9:43 AM	2:20 pm - 3:16 pm	7:48 PM	1:38 am - 2:46 am	☾
Sun 7	██	██	██	25	9:57 AM	2:28 pm - 3:14 pm	7:43 PM	2:45 am - 3:41 am	☾ End DST
Mon 8	██	██	██	19	11:05 AM	3:32 pm - 4:18 pm	8:46 PM	2:53 am - 3:39 am	☾ Low
Tue 9	██	██	██	19	12:04 PM	4:33 pm - 5:21 pm ☀	9:54 PM	3:57 am - 4:43 am	☾
Wed 10	██	██	██	24	12:52 PM	5:26 pm - 6:24 pm	11:02 PM	4:58 am - 5:46 am	☾
Thu 11	██	██	██	35	1:32 PM	6:11 pm - 7:23 pm	12:09 AM	5:51 am - 6:49 am ☀	☾ Half
Fri 12	██	██	██	27	2:06 PM	6:51 pm - 8:19 pm	12:09 AM	6:36 am - 7:48 am ☀	☾
Sat 13	██	██	██	23	2:35 PM	7:26 pm - 9:14 pm	1:12 AM	7:16 am - 8:44 am	☾
Sun 14	██	██	██	24	3:02 PM	8:00 pm - 10:06 pm	2:13 AM	7:51 am - 9:39 am	☾
Mon 15	██	██	██	26	3:27 PM	8:31 pm - 10:57 pm	3:12 AM	8:25 am - 10:31 am	☾
Tue 16	██	██	██	38	3:53 PM	9:03 pm - 11:49 pm	4:10 AM	8:56 am - 11:22 am	☾
Wed 17	██	██	██	50	4:20 PM	9:37 pm - 12:39 am	5:07 AM	9:28 am - 12:14 pm	☾
Thu 18	██	██	██	61	4:49 PM	10:14 pm - 1:30 am	6:05 AM	10:02 am - 1:04 pm ☀	☾
Fri 19	██	██	██	67	5:22 PM	10:53 pm - 2:23 am	7:03 AM	10:39 am - 1:55 pm ☀	☾ Full
Sat 20	██	██	██	57	5:59 PM	11:38 pm - Midnight	8:01 AM	11:18 am - 2:48 pm	☾ Apogee
Sun 21	██	██	██	48	6:42 PM	Midnight - 3:14 am	8:58 AM	12:03 pm - 3:39 pm	☾
Mon 22	██	██	██	40	7:31 PM	12:25 am - 4:07 am	9:52 AM	12:50 pm - 4:32 pm	☾
Tue 23	██	██	██	36	8:25 PM	1:16 am - 4:58 am	10:42 AM	1:41 pm - 5:23 pm	☾ High
Wed 24	██	██	██	37	9:22 PM	2:07 am - 5:47 am	11:26 AM	2:32 pm - 6:12 pm ☀	☾
Thu 25	██	██	██	36	10:22 PM	3:02 am - 6:32 am	12:05 PM	3:27 pm - 6:57 pm ☀	☾
Fri 26	██	██	██	40	11:24 PM	3:57 am - 7:13 am	12:40 PM	4:22 pm - 7:38 pm	☾
Sat 27	██	██	██	48		4:51 am - 7:53 am ☀	1:12 PM	5:16 pm - 8:18 pm	☾ Half
Sun 28	██	██	██	36	12:27 AM	5:48 am - 8:30 am ☀	1:41 PM	6:13 pm - 8:55 pm	☾
Mon 29	██	██	██	29	1:31 AM	6:44 am - 9:06 am ☀	2:10 PM	7:09 pm - 9:31 pm	☾
Tue 30	██	██	██	27	2:36 AM	7:42 am - 9:44 am	2:40 PM	8:07 pm - 10:09 pm	☾

25 50 75 AVERAGE

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

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

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# HUNTING/FISHING SCRAPBOOK



**Wesley, Jeffrey Stewart**

Jeffrey Stewart and his son, Wesley, from Lancaster, S.C., doubled up on these two Lancaster County gobblers last spring.



**Harley Jones**

Harley Jones, 16, a junior at Polk County H.S., killed her first buck on Nov. 23, 2020 near Saluda, N.C., with her .243.



**Randy Kottwitz**

Randy Kottwitz caught this 40-pound blue catfish on Easter Sunday at Badin Lake on fresh cut bait on a Santee rig.



**Madison Brafford**

Madison Brafford, 9, from Pinebluff, N.C., killed this turkey in Richmond County this past spring, with her grandfather.



**Jen Lee-Baron**

Jen Lee-Baron caught this 26½-inch red drum in the surf at Hatteras, N.C., on April 12, 2021.



**Bailey Baker**

Bailey Baker of Greenville, S.C., caught this 6-pound hybrid bass on a chilly morning in April 2021 on Lake Hartwell.

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## LUNKER LINES

David Fritts

Bass will likely be in shallow water for most of November, but deep water will be close by.

# DEER ME, GREAT BASS

TAKE SOME TIME OUT OF THE DEER STAND THIS MONTH AND CRANK 'EM IN

**N**ovember is a time when a lot of bass fishermen put away their tackle and climb into deer stands.

I'm one of them.

But I also know that November has been one of my best bass-fishing months, because fish are shallow, fish are hungry and fish are biting crankbaits.

In the Carolinas, what bass are doing in November depends a lot on the weather. It's a sure thing that they're going to be in shallow water, but they'll also be relating to deep water. They'll get on riprap, short points and places where there's a lot of current.

In that regard, November fishes a lot like late February and March. You can be casting into super-shallow water, but you need to have some deeper water underneath your boat. Bass are going to be close to deep water, so if we get some really cold weather, they can move into that deeper water without having to move too far.

You aren't going to find bass on big, shallow flats anymore; they can still be shallow, but they aren't going to be

far from the deep water in a ditch or channel.

## BRUSH AND ROCKS

You can count on fish to be on brush and rocks if the weather is relatively warm, but if it's cold, they're going to be around rocks, where that little bit of warmer water is going to be found.

Because of those two cover types, November is a great month to fish a crankbait more than anything else in your tackle box, and when the weather starts to cool, a flat-sided crankbait like a Berkley Frittside 5 or 7 really comes into play. You get the water temperature down in the 50s, and a flat-sided bait is the way to go. It just has the kind of action that fish like in colder water.

So because bass are still concentrating on shad in November, I want to be using shad colors like honey shad, gray ghost, Kentucky blue. The lone exception is the long ranger color, which is a faded chartreuse with a silver back.

Shad colors are a pretty big deal in November, because most of your shad are still going to be up in the creeks, and

the bass are going to be on them.

## SHAD STOPOVERS

When it gets real cold, on into December or January, some of those shad are going to migrate back out of the creeks, but some will stay back there; I think some overwinter there. If you go up north and fish places like the Hudson River and some of those lakes, the creeks will be stacked full of fish and bait, and they'll winter in the creeks because the water is warmer back there. That's hard to believe, but most of those places are iced over in the winter, and the warmest water is the runoff coming into the creeks.

The kind of place I'm really looking for is a place where a creek might narrow down, like under the low-water bridge in the back of Nutbush Creek at Buggs



David Fritts is a 64-year-old pro bass fisherman from Lexington, N.C. He won the 1993 Bassmasters Classic champion and the 1997 FLW Tour Championship, and he was the 1994 BASS Angler of the Year. He is sponsored by Ranger boats, Lew's, Lowrance, Power Pole and Berkley.



Berkley Frittside

Because a Frittside comes with a split ring attached to the line tie, I'm going to use a Uni Knot to tie it on.

## SLOW, NOT SMOOTH

You are going to want to fish the bait with an erratic retrieve, stop-and-go, and if the water is fairly cool, you're going to want to slow your retrieve a little. One thing I always liked to do with a bait like this is to make a cast, crank it down a ways, then bring it back by sweeping my rod tip to the side, then taking up the slack, so the bait moves a few feet, then stops and suspends. A bass just can't stand that.

You will sometimes find bass ganged up in November pretty good. You might fish several hundred-yard stretches and not catch anything, then you'll catch a limit in a hundred yards when you find the right place. It's a lot of trial and effort.

Now, there are some lakes that aren't going to be that good when the water really cools down. My home lake, High Rock, is one of them. I think the water may just have a little too much color. But other lakes, like Norman and Buggs Island, they're just fine in late November and early December when the water temperature drops into the mid- and low-50s.

With any kind of luck this year, you can fill a few deer tags early enough to take advantage of some of the great fishing that November has to offer in the Carolinas. ■

Island. That's the kind of place that will consistently hold fish in November. I think about Table Rock Lake in Missouri. In November, fish get on bluff rocks real good, because they can move up and down easily. Find places in the Carolinas like that, and you're going to find fish.

I'm going to be fishing a Frittside 5 or 7 on a 7-foot Lew's David Fritts Perfect Crankbait Rod — a 6-foot-8 rod if you're casting more at targets. I'll have a Lew's BB1 reel with a fairly slow retrieve rate spooled with mono like 10-pound Sensation.



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Don't pull your boat up the ramp, then park it where it is an obstacle to other boaters dropping in or pulling out. Get out of the way before getting ready to leave.



## BOAT-RAMP ETIQUETTE 101

KNOW THE PROCEDURE, GET IN AND OUT AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, BE KIND

Brian Cope

**B**oat-ramp etiquette 101 is a class that's rarely taught but greatly appreciated by most boaters who spend any time on the water serviced by public access areas.

Boat ramps are the gateway to a fun day on the water, but they can also be the source of unnecessary stress, especially when crowded. And that's even more true when boaters don't use proper boat-ramp etiquette.

Boat-ramp etiquette comes down to being courteous and thoughtful to other boaters looking to launch or retrieve their boats. While this seems obvious to most of us, a single boater who is either unprepared, rude or simply oblivious can back up traffic and spoil the party for everyone else. Don't be that boater.

Next time you launch your boat, keep these tips in mind, and you'll be one cog in the well-oiled machine of a smooth-running boat ramp:

### IS BOAT READY?

Have all your prep work completed before you back your boat down the ramp. Some boat landings have designated "Make Ready" lanes that are out of the way of the ramp. If yours doesn't, find a place that's out of the way of boaters who are backing down or pulling up the boat ramp. Install your boat plug and remove all straps except the trailer's winch strap. Have the key in the ignition and make sure your boat is ready to go as soon as it's backed down the ramp.

Think of everything you need in the boat. This is the time to load it all. Don't wait until you're on the ramp to do this. Remember, once you're on the ramp, your only goal is to get the boat off the trailer, secured to the dock, out of every-

one else's way, then drive your truck to a parking spot.

### LAUNCH EFFICIENTLY, GET OUT OF THE WAY

Once you're on the ramp, launch your boat as quickly and safely as possible. This is not the time to check air pressure in your trailer tires or put your cooler in the boat. Whether you have a friend with you or you're doing this alone, keep in mind that others are waiting.

Other boaters realize it may take a little longer when you're alone; no one will mind. But if you're sitting on the ramp, checking your spark plugs, adding your lunch box or other almost-forgotten items into the boat is the wrong move. Back down the ramp, remove the winch strap, secure the boat to the dock, and pull your truck out of the way and park it.

When tying your boat to the dock, make sure it is out of everyone's way. Remember that other boaters need enough room to back their trailer AND to back their boat off the trailer.

### BONUS TIP NO. 1

When you're at a remote boat landing with no painted lines for parking spaces, don't pull up the ramp in a straight line and park so you're lined up to back down the ramp when you return. If you do, you're blocking the ramp. Other boaters need that space to back their own boats.

Now that your boat is in the water and your truck is out of the way, you can load any items you may have forgotten before you backed down the ramp.

Be just as mindful when retrieving your boat

Once your day on the water is complete, it's time to retrieve your boat. Keep in

mind, once you're on the ramp, your only goal is to fasten your boat to the trailer. Back your trailer down, load the boat, fasten the winch strap and pull your truck out of the way of the ramp. Only then should you do anything else.

You'd be surprised — or maybe not if you've used some of the same boat ramps I have — to see how often someone will pull their boat out of the water, park at the top of the ramp, then proceed to unload their boat, toss out their unused bait, bag their trash and walk it to the trash can, check their tire pressure, all while parked at the top of the boat ramp preventing anyone else from using it.

### BONUS TIP NO. 2

Some folks are just oblivious. Maybe they're new to boating and don't realize they are in everyone else's way. Some of the most-courteous people can seem rude because they just don't understand boat-ramp etiquette.

When you see these things at the boat ramp, stay calm and help educate those who don't realize their behavior is blocking the ramp. Anytime I've heard another boater say something like "Would you mind moving out of the way so we can use the ramp?" It's always been met with a surprised look of realization, followed by "Oh, sorry. My bad," or something similar. ■



**Brian Cope** of Edisto Island, 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.



# HUNTING/FISHING SCRAPBOOK

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**Brent Meche**

Brent Meche of Fort Mill, S.C., caught these Lake Wylie blue catfish on May 19. They weighed 9¼ and 10 pounds.



**Andrew Whitley**

Andrew Whitley, 11, killed this 9-point buck in Pitt County, N.C., at 200 yards with his 6.5 Creedmoor.



**Carson Bradsher**

Carson Bradsher of Cedar Grove, N.C., harvested this 12-point buck on Nov 4, 2020, with a muzzleloader.



**Grayson Swain**

Grayson Swain, 3, caught his first fish, this bass, from a farm pond near Kernersville, N.C.



**Dallas Brooks**

Dallas Brooks of Siler City, N.C., caught this 5-pound, 22-inch flounder near Wrightsville Beach on Oct. 1, 2020.



**Kayo Auge**

Kayo Auge, 11, from New Bern, N.C., caught this striped bass in the Neuse River.



**Kenny Hughes**

Kenny Hughes caught this nice Lake Hartwell striper on live herring on April 11.

## SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY

Phillip Gentry

A fall float along a scenic river or stream can be a real treat — and put you in some great fishing, too.



# FALL FLOAT TRIPS? FANTASTIC!

Phillip Gentry

A KAYAK GETAWAY CAN MAKE FOR A MEMORABLE FISHING EXPERIENCE

**K**ayaking and kayak fishing finds its appeal, in a large part, by allowing an angler to “get away from it all.”

In many cases, that means getting access to fish that don't see a bait as often, as well as putting yourself in surroundings well off the beaten path. Float-tripping during the fall accomplishes both of these, often in spades.

Theoretically, float-tripping could take place on any body of water: an inland lake, a stretch of coastline or simply putting in at one end of a pond and paddling to the other. Most common, however, float-tripping involves moving water, like a large creek or river, where it's easier to go with the flow than float down and paddle back.

Whichever venue you choose, there are a few common factors to keep in mind to make your trip more enjoyable, more productive and safer.

## DON'T FLOAT ALONE

Float with a friend or two. The logistics of putting in at one location and taking out at another almost always involves

two vehicles. Drop one at the take-out point and head back to the starting point in the second vehicle.

Because the distance in between is no-man's land as far as any exit is concerned, it's better to have a buddy in case something goes wrong, be it a small or large calamity.

It's hard to cover both sides of a river when you're constantly moving in one direction. Like any fishing grounds, there will be some areas that are more productive than others, and having a companion will help you cover more water and show the fish more presentations. If one of you lands on a hot spot or a hot bait or presentation, you can share information.

## BE STILL

Have a way to anchor. You may float an entire section of water and never encounter the need to fish one spot, but it's better to have it and not need it than need it and not have it.

The most-effective anchoring system will depend on the topography you are floating. If it's generally shallow, open water with a sand bottom commonly

found in coastal regions, a stake-out pole and anchor trolley may fit the bill. If you're fishing areas with lots of overhang and/or downed trees along the way, you may anchor with nothing more than a length of rope tied off to a stickup or tree branch. Deep water with current may require more line and a decent-sized anchor to hold the boat in place.

## EXTRA NEVER HURTS

Be well supplied. Continuing with the thought of no turning back, be sure to supply yourself with enough bait, tackle food and water to make the trip, plus some in the event the trip goes longer than expected. Make sure those supplies include additional clothing and safety gear in a dry storage container.

Spend a little time planning how to store the additional provisions, since



Phillip Gentry of Waterloo, S.C., is host of “The Outdoor Show,” a weekly radio podcast that can be seen at [www.pgandboatgirl.com](http://www.pgandboatgirl.com) or heard on WZLA FM, 92.9, in Greenwood/Abbeville, S.C.

your load may be more than what you are normally accustomed to carrying on a non-float trip.

File a float plan. This may sound repetitious and cliché, but let someone besides the other paddlers know where you're putting in and taking out and how long you expected the trip to take. Your non-kayaking friends or relatives may not be familiar with the waters you'll be traveling, so a map of your float could save hours of time and effort if someone needs to come look for you.

If you doubt this, go back and rent the movie *Deliverance* off the internet and watch it. ■

## BEST BETS

### NORTH CAROLINA

**WHAT** — Black bass

**WHERE** — The New River and its tributaries along the North Carolina-Virginia border in Ashe and Alleghany counties.

**HOW** — Primarily noted as a smallmouth bass fishery, a few largemouth will show up in its lower reaches. Baits will vary depending on the species, but it's hard to beat a bright-colored trick worm, rigged weightless and weedless, for catching both species.

**LAUNCH** — <https://www.ncwildlife.org/boating/where-to-boat/>

**INSIDER TIP** — Sections along of the New may contain swifter water than some kayak anglers care to navigate. Class I and II rapids are possible, especially in the upper areas. Port these areas unless you're sure of your boat, skills, and water.

### SOUTH CAROLINA

**WHAT** — Rainbow trout

**WHERE** — Saluda River

**HOW** — You can float from the Shoals Park to the Lower Shoals ramp or go even further towards Columbia. There are a number of dump-in sites along the way.

**LAUNCH** — Saluda Shoals Park or Hope Ferry Ramps, both located a mile or so downstream from the Lake Murray Dam

**INSIDER TIP** — Don't overlook tiny "creature" crankbaits for trout fishing in flowing water. Crawfish, grasshopper and frog-imitating baits will catch a lot of trout when worked diagonally across the current, especially at the upper and lower ends of a large pool.

## ESTIMATE FLOAT TIME

If you plan on floating a stretch of water you've never floated before, there are a few ways to make an accurate assessment of the time it will take.

First, go to an aerial mapping site like Google Earth or one of a myriad of others that allow you to calculate distance and see how far it is from the put-in to the take-out. Make sure you measure all the twists and turns and don't just measure a straight line.

The average kayaking speed for flowing water is 3 miles per hour. If water levels are low and the flow rate is less, you'll need to adjust that down to maybe 2½ miles per hour.

The next point in time calculation is obstacles. If there is a low-head dam, shoals or some other obstacle that will require portage, take that into consideration. Some portages are as simple as dragging your boat across a sandbar, while other may require you to take out and go around by road or trail. You might want to reconsider floating such a pathway, but if you do, take along a set of wheels if they make sense.

If you are planning a full-day float trip, you'll need to include break times along the route. If the trip is half-scenic and half-fishing, you may need to allow additional time.

Finally, you need to calculate the fishing variable. We all know, if we get on a hot bite, catching good fish every cast, we might stay in one place until dark. Short of that, you might consider fishing time on flowing waters at a rate of 1 mile per hour. That may seem fast to some and slow to others, so you'll definitely need to calculate how you'll be fishing into that equation.

If it's primarily a casting artificial baits trip for scattered fish, you may move faster. If it's a catfishing or anchor-and-fish type trip, the miles don't go as fast.

Calculate a time variable. This is more important for the people with whom you filed a float plan than yourself. This allows for unforeseen delays or obstacles and may be as short a half-hour to several hours.

Last, if you have a long stretch of water to cover and don't want to be in a rush, consider an overnight trip, if such a thing is possible. Floats through public land or that have designated camping areas along the way might be the answer to getting in all the distance and fishing your heart desires. ■



If your intended float seems like it might be a bit long for one day, locate a spot and throw up a backwoods campsite.

Phillip Gentry

## SANTEE STRINGER

Terry Madewell



# GO DEEP FOR BIG BREAM

SLAB-SIDED BLUEGILLS HANGING AROUND DEEP BRUSH IN NOVEMBER

Stacy Weatherford

**T**he deer rut is in full swing in the Santee Cooper area, and while many outdoorsmen are hunting, others are enjoying the incredible fall fishing typical of November.

The rut is comparatively short-lived, so it's difficult to miss this once-a-year opportunity, but the rewards of fishing include excellent action on slab crappies and trophy catfish.

But if you're into incredibly fast-fish-catching action, you may want to sample the sensational deep-water bream fishing, with action that perhaps trumps bed fishing during warm weather.

## DEEP-WATER BULLS

Stacey Weatherford of Moncks Corner, S.C., fishes for bream year-round, and while he's a master of catching them on the beds, he said the deep-water fishing in the fall and winter is actually even more productive.

"It's the fastest fish-catching experience that I've found," he said, "and it typically

results in limits of huge bream when you understand the technique. Deep-water brush piles are the key, but some of the best winter bream fishing on the lakes is around the many public fish attractors. I also fish brush piles I've placed for bream fishing."

Weatherford, 48, said bream can still be caught in multiple depths at this time of the year, but water in 15- to 40-foot depths is his preference. His favorite spot is in 36 feet of water and consists of brush and debris that rises 5 feet off the bottom at a public fish attractor site.

"I prefer deeper water, because I'll typically catch bigger bream," he said. "The key is simply getting the bait down to the big bream, because they're deeper in the water column, usually around the actual brush and a few feet above it. The smaller bream will hold shallower in the water column, beginning at around 5-foot deep in 30-plus feet of water. A lot of these are decent-sized bream, but not the huge bream I target.

## GET PAST DINKS

"If you drop a cricket or worm down on a typical bream rig, these smaller fish will maul it before it gets halfway to the bottom," he said.

To target the biggest bream, Weatherford uses a Zebco 33 spincast reel spooled with 10-pound line and a ½-ounce sinker on the bottom in drop-shot fashion. He attaches an 8-inch leader about a foot from the sinker and ties on a No. 4, light-wire hook. The heavy weight enables him to zip the bait past the smaller fish and get it down to the big bream.

"Sometimes, so many bream are suspended high in the water column I have



**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 PAGE:** By November, big bream are ganged up in deep water and can provide some extremely fast fishing. **RIGHT:** Guide Dave Hilton gets a nice blue catfish into the net from a November 2019 trip on Lake Marion.

to thread a red worm on the hook, because they'll snatch crickets off the hook as it free-falls through the mass of fish," he said. "Once it's near the brush, it usually only takes a second or two for fish to load on, whether I'm using worms or crickets.

"Big bream can be found higher in the water column, but the smaller fish are too numerous and quick on the bite to catch them consistently. These are the same huge bream we target on the beds. It's truly sensational fishing and ideal for taking a youngster fishing."

Weatherford said a graph is essential to pinpoint the clouds of fish above the brush. Even on the public fish attractors, he uses his electronics to pinpoint fish before dropping a bait down.

"And this action stays hot right on through the winter," he said.

## BIG CATS, SLABS ON THE PROWL

Trophy catfish are taken throughout the year, and November is a focal point for anglers targeting big fish.

Kevin Davis at Black's Camp said November is a prime time for trophy catfish, and multiple factors combine to create this opportunity.

"The lakes are full of this year's forage fish, and the cooling water compressing the forage into big pods are factors," he said. "The forage moves a lot in November, and catfish follow. Find the forage, and drift-fishing for catfish, especially huge blues, can be sensational.

Davis said crappie fishing is consistent throughout November on deep brush using small jigs or minnows on a tight-line.

"I target brush in 20 to 40 feet of water, and I move a lot until I find slab crappie," he said. "Typically, November is prime time to catch slabs, and the size rivals what we catch during the spring."

The outdoors action at Santee Cooper is not all about fishing in November, so take advantage of the rut for deer hunting, but save a few days to enjoy the fabulous fall fishing. ■



Terry Madewell

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## COOKING ON THE WILD SIDE

Jerry Dilsaver

Who in the South doesn't like barbecued ribs? How 'bout king mackerel ribs? This tasty recipe may surprise you. **INSET:** Kingly ribs off the grill and ready for the plate.

**F**all fishing is excellent in the Carolinas, and one species many folks catch quite often is king mackerel. Unfortunately, there aren't a lot of ways to cook kings. Two of the more popular are to grill steaks or fillets and to deep-fry breaded nuggets. I really like king mackerel and am always looking for different ways to cook it. This recipe sounds odd, but it's really good.

King mackerel moved in along the beaches during October but were spread out a bit. As the water cools, they move to deeper water, begin to school and feed heavily. This is the time when finding a school typically results in filling limits quickly — and with mainly medium to large fish. I suggest releasing all the large kings that are in condition to survive, as these are almost all female and the most productive breeders in the fishery.

Unfortunately, not all big kings are in good shape after a long fight and wouldn't survive, even if released. Then, there are others that, for a number of reasons, a fisherman wants to take home or hang on a set of scales. This recipe began as a different way to prepare kings, especially larger ones, and has become a favorite for us using the belly meat and rib bones. It tastes good using other parts, too.

Not everyone gets excited about eating king mackerel. Some folks like them as much as my family, others like them a little, still others say they eat it occasionally and some have no desire to ever have king mackerel on their dinner table. This recipe may change that. It really is surprisingly tasty.

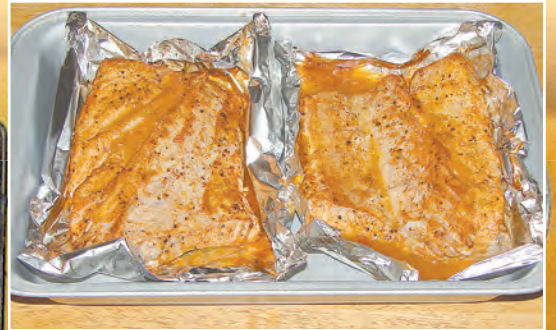
This recipe tastes good and makes the meal fun. The ribs aren't like beef or pork and could easily be removed, but since this is being barbecued, they're left for visual effect. Some folks also think the meat immediately along the ribs is a little sweeter. Give it a try and see for yourself.

Folks with milder palates shouldn't let the hot sauce scare you. At this small amount and mixed with the 7Up, you won't taste it. Folks who like to kick the spice up a notch or three can add more hot sauce when served.

To ensure your meal is from the best fish possible, begin by putting them in the fish box and covering them with ice as soon as they hit the deck. Then, when cleaning them, take the time to remove all the red meat, skin and gristle so what remains is prime meat. This takes a few more minutes, but it's time well spent. ■

## KINGLY RIBS

HERE'S A NEW SLANT ON A MUCH-MALIGNED MACKEREL



# KINGLY RIBS

I understand that not everyone appreciates the taste of king mackerel. They have grayish meat and what some consider a strong taste. Some say it's an acquired taste, and maybe it is, but I like it — and this preparation may help you realize you like it, too.

I grew up in a commercial fishing family, and we often ate what wouldn't sell. The milder-flavored fish, like flounder, trout and drum, were usually sold, and we were left with fish that had more robust flavors. That wasn't an issue with me though, as the real taste of these fish isn't easily overpowered by the marinade, spices or breader used when cooking them. I had been enjoying eating king mackerel for many years when scientists determined their Omega 3 fatty acids are beneficial to our health.

The main part of this recipe was borrowed from my favorite way to prepare mullet. We have barbecued them in Carolina Treet Barbecue Sauce since I was a kid, and some years back, I tried it with king mackerel and liked it. If you can't find Carolina Treet, a similar, vinegar-based barbecue sauce should work, but I wouldn't try this with a sweet barbecue sauce. I believe your favorite pig pickin' sauce mixture might also work well, but I haven't tried it.

This recipe uses the meat from around the rib cage. It is good using other parts of the king, but we thought barbecuing was for ribs, so that's where this started. The ribs are pronounced and clearly visible on a larger king, and there is a lot of meat around them. It isn't quite a fillet, but it's a nice piece of meat.

The 7Up and hot sauce serve as a tenderizer and enhance the flavor. I use a freshly opened 2-liter bottle, as it has the most carbonation, and this helps it penetrate the meat. The citrus juices

## PREPARATION:

Clean the fish so there is no red meat remaining except next to the skin, and leave the ribs. Wash the fish, pat the pieces dry and place them in a Ziploc bag. Fill the Ziploc bag to cover the fish with 7Up. Pour in the tablespoon of hot sauce and swish to mix it well. Be sure the mixture reaches all the fish. Work all the air out of the bag and seal it. Marinate this covered in ice or in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes and up to several hours.

Tear a piece of aluminum foil for each piece of fish, roll up the edges and spray with non-stick spray. Remove the fish from the Ziploc, allow them to drip, and place each on a piece of aluminum foil with the skin down and ribs facing up.

Preheat grill to medium. Rub the fish with the pepper — to taste. Brush the fish with Carolina Treet and put a little Carolina Treet around the fish on the aluminum foil. Place the fish on the grill on the aluminum foil pieces. Cook the fish 10 to 14 minutes; this will vary depending on thickness of fish and heat of grill.

Brush the fish with the Carolina Treet that has run off and be sure there is still a little on the aluminum foil. Turn the heat to medium high for 4 to 6 minutes to finish cooking the fish. Be careful not to overcook the fish. Remove and serve hot.

Have some Carolina Treet, hot sauce, salt and pepper on the side for those wishing to add any of them.

This combines well with a variety of vegetables. Potatoes

in 7Up help break down the meat and mellow the flavor.

I don't know exactly how the hot sauce reacts with the citrus juices and carbonation, but it does something. Even though you won't taste any spice or heat at this amount, the flavor of the fish isn't the same without it.

The kind of hot sauce is important. This works best with a Texas Pete, Louisiana or similar, vinegar-based hot sauce. Tabasco and the Mexican-style hot sauces work well on some things, but not this.

The amount of pepper and Carolina Treet to use are personal preferences. I like a lot of pepper and a little more than light, but not too heavy, with the Carolina Treet. You can always add more once on your plate, but it's impossible to take any away. I don't add any salt to this as there is plenty in the Carolina Treet, but it may be added to personal tastes.

The cooking time varies significantly depending on the heat of the grill and the thickness of the meat. My grill is a little cooler than some, and the meat was thick, so it took longer to cook. I went about 14 to 16 minutes before rebasting and about 8 minutes after. The sauce gathering in the foil beside and under the fish kept it from overcooking. However, if you see the sauce crusting, check the fish immediately.

Remember, fish dishes are best with fresh fish you caught that day. This adds the experience to the flavor and makes it special. ■

## INGREDIENTS:

2 king mackerel rib sections

1 bottle of 7Up

1 TBL hot sauce, unopened

Carolina Treet Barbecue Sauce

Coarse ground black pepper and salt

Non-stick cooking spray

Ziploc bag

Aluminum foil



are a favorite side and they can be baked or fried. I served

this meal most recently with baked sweet potatoes, butter beans and hot, fresh bread. A fresh green salad or lettuce wedge is a great way to begin. ■



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

Guide Rodger Taylor spends most of his time in November looking for big blue catfish on the lower end of the lake.

# SPORTSMAN FISHING HOTSPOTS

## WYLIE'S BLUES CLUES

Find big catfish on lower end of border lake as Thanksgiving approaches

**W**hat makes November a prime time for catfishing at Lake Wylie on the North Carolina-South Carolina border near Charlotte?

Rodger Taylor of Rock Hill, S.C., who operates Catfish On! Guide Service said there are three very good reasons:

"Less boats on the water; the weather is usually very tolerable; and fish are feeding up."

Although catfish are scattered from one end of 12,455-acre Wylie to the other in November, Taylor (803-517-7828) said it may pay off to fish the deeper, lower end as the odds will be better with more hungry fish in a known location.

"Blue cats will usually move to the lower basin of Lake Wylie in numbers as temperatures start to drop, days shorten and bait moves toward deeper water. The fish will follow," said Taylor, who usually starts out drift-fishing so he can cover large areas of deeper ledges on both the main-river channel and the creek mouths that join it.

"I like to probe some of the deepest depths, from 25 to 45 feet, around sharp river and creek ledges," he said. "Using a

trolling motor is a plus when the wind isn't blowing hard, because it allows me to place baits more precisely on the ledge. If winds are moderate, I like to use a large drift sock and allow the wind to propel my boat. Keeping drift speeds around one-half mile per hour is optimal."

### DRIFT OR ANCHOR?

While drifting is his primary technique in November, Taylor said he will fish from anchor if conditions dictate.

"Anchoring is a good bet when we have received heavy rainfall and the waters are on the rise," he said. "When freshwater is moving into the lake, it always pays to check out the bottom bite where water flows into major creeks on the lower end of Lake Wylie."

In November, Taylor will target the backs of creeks in 5 to 15 feet of water to anchor.

"You're looking at fan-casting baits from 5 to 20 feet to get a good coverage from shallow to deep water while anchored midway back on secondary points that run out into the creek in large creeks like Allison and Torrence on the lower end of the lake," he said.

The very backs of creeks are a good bet also when afternoon temperatures warm the shallow waters and baby shad school up in those areas. Late afternoon often is the best time for this tactic, he said: "Often the bite can be hot right at dark as days get shorter."

Taylor prefers gizzard shad for bait when available, but white perch are a good substitute, he said.

### BAIT CHOICES

"Gizzard shad start to get a little difficult to locate as the water cools down. Best times to find them are in the afternoons when the wind is calm and waters have warmed back in the creeks," Taylor said. "White perch are readily available and easy to catch on rod and reel, bottom-bumping with a Sabiki rig baited with worms or cut shad."

Taylor said on a good day in November, anglers can expect to hook up with a dozen or so blue catfish ranging from about 6 to 18 pounds, but odds are also good for a bonus catch.

"Some of the biggest catfish of the year are caught this time of year," said Taylor. ■

# BROAD RIVER REDS FEAST LIKE PILGRIMS

## Big schools starting to show up; clearing water makes sight-fishing a dream

**W** By Brian Cope  
With shorter days and cooler temperatures at hand, the redfish in South Carolina's Lowcountry begin to gorge on baitfish and shrimp. They're feeding up for the winter, and they're also beginning to gang up in large schools.

Charlie Beadon of Beaufort Fishing Adventures said this is probably his favorite month to catch reds.

"Between now and December, this is my favorite time of the year to fish," he said. "The crisp, cool temperatures make a day on the water more enjoyable, and the fishing is as good as it gets. These short days get the redfish feeding heavily, preparing for the winter when bait will be scarce in comparison."

Some of Beadon's favorite places to target redfish in November include the mud flats off of the Broad River between Paris Island and Hilton Head Island.

"These schools are great for fly-fishing, but they are just as good for live baits, as well as artificial lures like soft plastics on jigheads," said Beadon (843-592-0897, who) prefers targeting these schooling fish as the tide is falling through dead-low tide, when redfish are forced out of the grass.

The water is usually clearing up considerably in November, which makes the reds feel vulnerable to predators like dolphins. They seek safety in numbers, which is one reason they school so tightly.

"At low tide, they're forced to stay in the shallowest parts of the creeks and rivers," Beadon said. "Otherwise, they'll become dolphin food. So it's easy to find them at low tide. Even if you don't see the fish, you'll see signs of them, like rippling water on the surface or big V-shapes as they push along."

Once anglers find the schools, it's just a matter of keeping your distance and making casts to the front of the school.

"You want to stay as far away as you can, while still being able to make a cast to the lead fish in the school. Casting into the middle will break up the school, and then you'll have to find them again," Beadon said.

When it comes to lures, Beadon said it's tough to beat a 3-inch Gulp! shrimp on a ¼-ounce jighead.

"Once you make the cast, you want to fish it slowly, so slowly that you'll think you can't slow down anymore," he said. "And then, slow down even more. It's usually one of the lead fish that will pick it up, but if they swim past it, as long as you're just barely moving it, one of the fish farther back will often grab it."



Guide Charlie Beadon can't think of a better time to target redfish than November and December.

Brian Cope

When that happens, it can cause an eruption that will shock even the most experienced anglers.

"Hooking into one farther back in the school can disrupt them, but that's not as bad as casting into the middle. When you cast into the middle, they'll break up, and you won't hook anything," he said.

And if they do break up, just move on down the bank, looking for another school. "Those that break up will slowly filter back together. And these fish are hungry, so they're going to bite," he said. ■

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\*Digital images must be sent in jpeg format. High-resolution images (taken on your camera's highest setting) will work the best. All images (physical and digital) become property of Carolina Sportsman and cannot be returned.



Tony Garitta

## HIGH ROCK STRIPERS ON FIRE

### Cooling water kicks off great fall bite on Piedmont NC lake

High Rock Lake doesn't spit out great numbers of stripers, but quality fish are regularly caught.

**F** By Tony Garitta  
 or about 10 years, the Ole North State Line Siders have held their annual benefit striper tournament at North Carolina's High Rock Lake in November — and with good reason. "November is one of the better months for striper fishing at High Rock," said guide Jerry Hill of Triad Fishing & Guide Service. "The water temperature is dropping with the cooler weather, and the stripers are feeding up for the winter. The fish will be in the main river from High Rock Dam to Crane Creek, wherever there are balls of forage."

Hill (336-247-1265) said stripers become active when the water temperature ranges from 60 to 65 degrees and will bite until it drops below 55 degrees.

"The clearer the water, the better," said Hill, "but they'll strike in dingy water, too. High Rock is never clear; there's always some color to it."

Hill likes the lake level down several feet, but not more than 8. Navigation becomes treacherous with extremely low lake levels.

When conditions are favorable, participating teams at the benefit striper tournament have brought in impressive 2-fish tournament limit catches.

"One year, I had two fish totaling 24 (pounds), 6 (ounces) and lost to live-baiters who weighed in two that went 31 pounds," Hill said. "High Rock has never been a numbers lake for stripers, but the fish caught in November tournaments have ranged from 8 to 12 pounds, with several fish in the teens."

Unfortunately, November can be a dud as well if cold rains,

trashy water and high winds are present.

"We have had events in terrible conditions where only two or three fish came to the scales," Hill said. "That's why it's called fishing."

November stripers are taken by trolling and live-baiting.

Hill is an avid troller who doesn't like to waste time catching and messing with live bait. His trolling spread consists of a combination of downriggers and leadcore line outfits. He uses 8-foot medium and medium-heavy rods paired with Penn Squall reels.

He fishes 36-pound leadcore line, typically letting out three to four colors to cover depths from 16 to 20 feet. His downriggers place his baits 14 to 20 feet deep.

Hill's outfits feature 3-way swivels tied to the main lines with 3- and 8-foot leaders connected to the remaining two swivels. His baits include 3-inch Sassy Shad in chartreuse/green or white and ½-ounce green or black bucktails with green and black plastic worm trailers. The Sassy Shad go on the 8-foot leaders; the bucktails go on the 3-foot leaders.

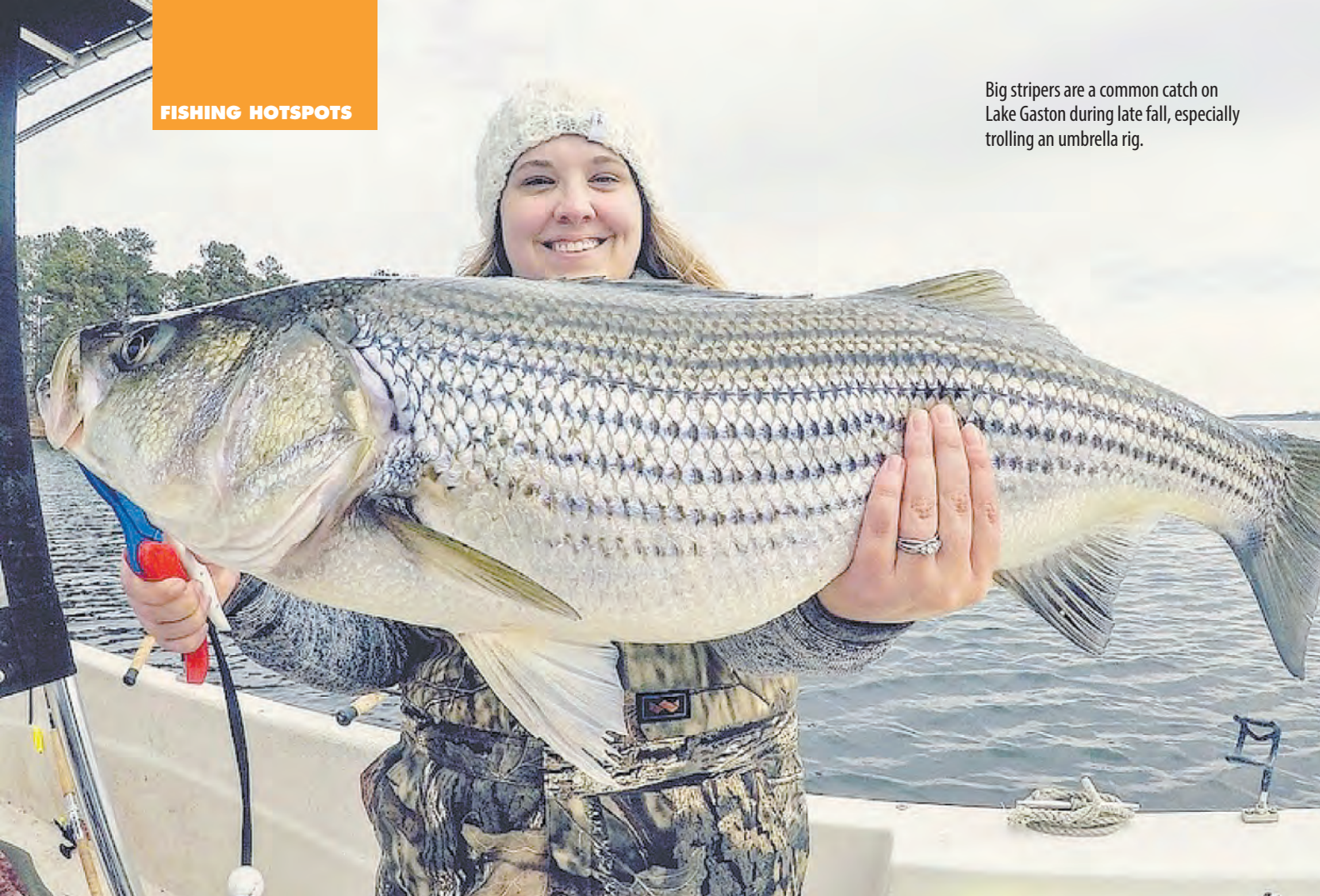
He usually trolls the mouths of Abbotts and Crane creeks and Sailboat Neck, targeting underwater high spots at these places.

Hill said live-baiters catch stripers by either pulling, down-lining or free-lining with large gizzard shad.

He offers one important observation.

"This season, the stripers have been holding in water deeper than usual," he said. "I've caught some as deep as 29 feet. Usually, they're in 14 to 17 feet." ■

Big stripers are a common catch on Lake Gaston during late fall, especially trolling an umbrella rig.



Zakk Royce

## LAKE GASTON STRIPED BASS ARE GREAT FALL SURPRISE

Birds give away presence of feeding fish on lower end of lake

**L**y Dusty Wilson  
Lake Gaston, a 20,500-acre reservoir on the Roanoke River along the North Carolina-Virginia border, is well known for a wide variety of gamefish, from largemouth bass to world-class blue catfish.

But it's the lesser known, yet vibrant, striped bass population that really hits high gear in November. This is when catfish guide Zakk Royce of Gasburg, Va., pulls double duty as a striper guide.

"November is when fishing starts to get a lot easier for stripers," said Royce (919-724-2474), who runs Blues Brothers Catfish Guide Service. "The biggest thing is that the birds show up. The seagulls and loons that hone in on fish-feeding activity are the best fish-finder a man could have. Even if they're not actively diving on baitfish that are being driven to the surface by stripers, you know that a large group of birds are there, because something has happened recently or is happening on a regular basis."

Along with bird beacons that give away their locations, Royce also said that November is probably the best month for stripers to be feeding aggressively. In this case, Royce doesn't use live bait because he believes it unnecessary, noting that the fish will hit almost any lure if properly placed. Since Royce's preferred fishing

method for stripers is trolling, this allows him to move at a much-faster pace than live-bait trolling — up to 2 or 3 mph — and put his favorite bait in front of that many more fish.

"Stripers will absolutely kill an umbrella rig in November," he said. "It goes right along with what they're doing that time of year — attacking balls of bait. I use Captain Mack's umbrella rigs in natural colors, sometimes with a chartreuse trailer. But you have to figure out the depth of the fish. They could be near the surface, down 10 to 15 feet, or even down to 30 or 40 feet. That's when using your fish finder is important — determining where you're marking stripers or bait.

"Always make sure you're trolling above the fish. If the fish are down 30 to 40 feet, using a downrigger will help keep the umbrella rig in the zone or you can use Mann's Stretch 30s."

According to Royce, many of Lake Gaston's stripers migrate down the lake in the summer and fall and spend the winter on the lower end. All the major creeks in this area are prime for striper action in addition to the main lake. Bottom structure plays second fiddle to bait presence and bird activity, but Royce said that points that jut into a channel are good places to find stripers. ■

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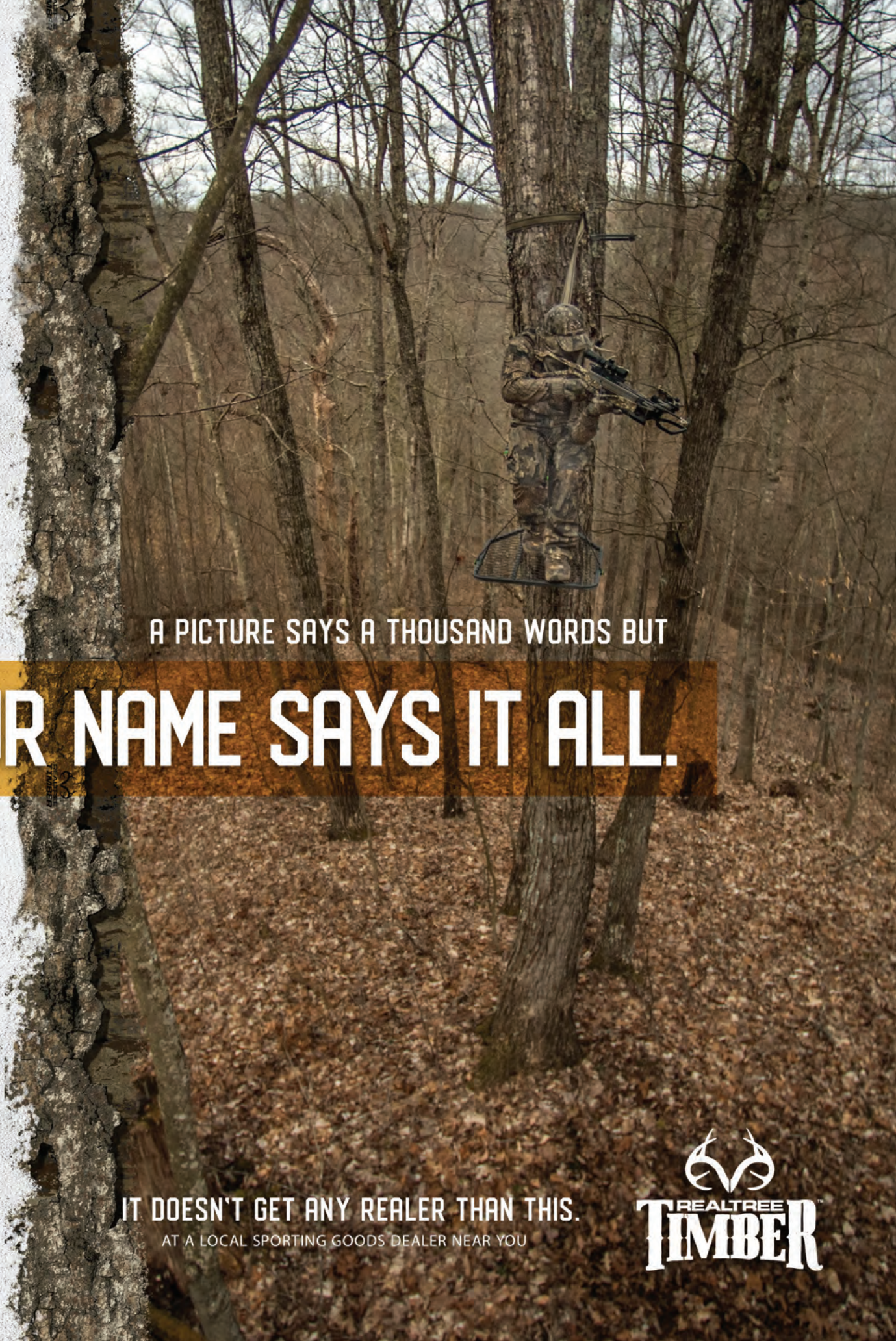
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