

*Carolina*

**IT'S GAME  
BIRD SEASON**



# SPORTSMAN<sup>®</sup>

JANUARY 2022

www.CarolinaSPORTSMAN.com

## **LAKE WYLLIE CATFISH**

**CATCH THE COLD  
WEATHER BLUES**

**STRIPER FISHING IS  
HOT IN JANUARY**

**CATCH AN  
INSHORE  
MIXED BAG**

**GO SLOW FOR  
FALLS OF NEUSE  
CRAPPIE**



**CAROLINA  
TROPHY BUCKS**

**COYOTES  
AFTER DARK**

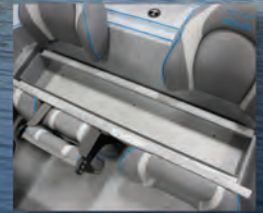
**\$2.99 JANUARY 2022**



INTRODUCING THE ALL-NEW 2022



# HYPER-LIFT CRAPPIE



## YOUR SOLUTION FOR AFFORDABLE CRAPPIE ADVENTURE

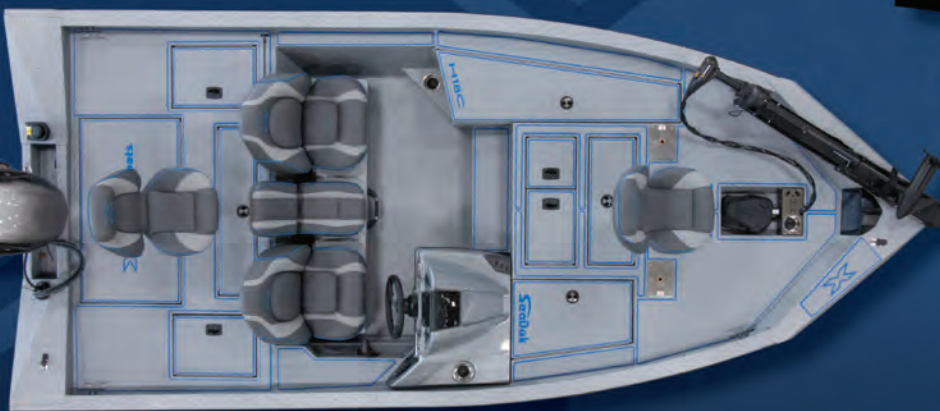
The Xpress Boats all-new Hyper-Lift Crappie Series is built on top of the original, aluminum padded hull design, years of innovation, and the essential features anglers demand, all at a cost-effective price. Available in 17 and 18-foot lengths, this fish chasing machine has an ergonomically designed interior and is stacked with impressive standard features. This fast, dry hull design is your solution to getting to the brush pile and back quickly and safely. Whether you are new to crappie fishing, a die-hard weekend angler or competing in a tournament, the new Hyper-Lift Crappie Series by Xpress is sure to impress!



**H18C**

Shown w/optional Appearance Pkg.

**SeaDek**  
MARINE PRODUCTS  
Available option on the Hyper-Lift Crappie Series



Request your FREE 2022 Xpress Boats catalog at [xpressboats.com/request-catalog](http://xpressboats.com/request-catalog)



Scan this code with your smartphone to explore the all-new 2022 Hyper-Lift Crappie Series.

**xpress boats**<sup>®</sup>  
we build xcitement

199 Extrusion Place, Hot Springs, AR 71901



[xpressboats.com](http://xpressboats.com)





# The 19th Annual OUTDOORSMAN'S BONANZA

**Saturday, March 26, 2022**

Market Station (West Main Street)  
Albemarle, NC

Purchase tickets (cash or check only)  
by mail or at the following locations:

Quality Equipment - John Deere  
Friendly Chevrolet (Albemarle & Troy)  
Tim Marburger Honda (Albemarle)  
Albemarle Outdoor Supply

More than  
**\$200,000**  
in Prizes  
to be given away!

 Follow Albemarle Downtown Development Corporation's Facebook page for updates regarding this event.

## Early Bird Drawings

A John Deere Gator,  
2 drawings of \$2,500 each  
& 7 drawings of \$1,000 each

**ONLY  
3,900  
TICKETS  
AVAILABLE!**

- 11:45 AM Honda Civic 4 door Sedan
- 11:50 AM CZ 1012 12G Shotgun
- 11:55 AM Custom Golf Cart from P.D. Carts
- 12:00 PM Stevens 555 12G Over/Under Shotgun
- 12:05 PM \$1,000 CASH
- 12:10 PM Patio Custom Grill by B.Q. Grills
- 12:15 PM Savage Model 64 .22 LR Rifle
- 12:20 PM \$1,000 CASH
- 12:25 PM \$1,000 CASH
- 12:30 PM Tracker Off Road 450 ATV
- 12:35 PM Remington V3 Field Sport 12G Shotgun
- 12:40 PM \$1,000 CASH
- 12:45 PM \$1,000 CASH
- 12:50 PM 2022 Tracker Marine Pro
- 12:55 PM Savage Rengauge Turkey 12G Shotgun
- 1:00 PM \$1,000 CASH
- 1:05 PM \$1,000 CASH
- 1:10 PM 2022 John Deere Gator
- 1:15 PM Bergara Micro Carbon Rimfire .22LR
- 1:20 PM \$2,500 CASH



- 1:25 PM Tracker Off Road 500s UTV
- 1:30 PM Astoria by Dutchmen 25ft Travel Trailer
- 1:35 PM Remington 700SPS 308 WIN
- 1:40 PM \$1,000 CASH
- 1:45 PM \$1,000 CASH
- 1:50 PM Savage Axis XP Stainless 6.5cm with Scope
- 1:55 PM XL Big Green Egg
- 2:00 PM Remington 700ADL 308WIN
- 2:05 PM \$1,000 CASH
- 2:10 PM \$1,000 CASH
- 2:15 PM Browning Hells Canyon 270WIN
- 2:20 PM Badin Inn: Overnight Stay/Disc Golf Package
- 2:25 PM Stevens 301 Turkey Gun w/Thumbhole Stock 410G
- 2:30 PM \$1,000 CASH
- 2:35 PM \$1,000 CASH
- 2:40 PM John Deere Zero Turn Mower
- 2:45 PM Stevens 301 Turkey Bottomland Camo 12G
- 2:50 PM \$2,500 CASH
- 2:55 PM Bergara Hunter Wilderness 300WM
- 3:00 PM 2022 Chevrolet Crew Cab Silverado RST



## Ticket Price: \$100

Only 3,900 tickets to be sold! Winners need not be present to win!

**Purchase your tickets before/thru February 14, 2022 and be eligible for the Early Bird Drawings!**  
(John Deere Gator, 2 drawings of \$2,500 each & 7 drawings of \$1,000 each) • Doors Open at 10:30am  
Bring Your Own Chair • Drawings Begin at 11:30am • Food • Beverages • Music  
Visit [www.outdoorsmansbonanza.com](http://www.outdoorsmansbonanza.com) or call 704-984-9420 or 704-984-9415 for more info

*All proceeds benefit the Albemarle Downtown Development Corp.,  
the Stanly County Shrine Club & the Stanly Health Foundation*

## OUTDOORSMAN'S BONANZA

Make checks to: ADCC  
Mail to: PO Box 1633  
Albemarle, NC 28002

## OUTDOORSMAN'S BONANZA

Please Print Clearly

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Number of tickets requested \_\_\_\_\_ x \$100 = Amount Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_



**32**  
THE GRANDEST CAROLINA  
GAMEBIRD

**18**  
SING THE BLUES OF A  
WYLIE WINTER

Carolina  
**CONTENTS**

Volume 29 | Number 1 | January 2022

FEATURES:

**18 SING THE BLUES OF A WYLIE WINTER**

Burgeoning population of blue catfish at this lake on the border between the two Carolinas has made January more than just a post-holiday month.

> By Terry Madewell

**32 THE GRANDEST CAROLINA GAMEBIRD**

The ruffed grouse is limited to the mountains of extreme western North Carolina and upstate South Carolina. Find places with the kind of habitat it needs, and you'll find these feathered bombs.

> By Pete Rogers

**38 QUAIL HUNTING REMAINS A REALITY IN THE CAROLINAS**

Grand Southern pursuit still possible thanks to sound management by wildlife agencies.

> By Taylor Pardue

**44 WANT A WOODCOCK?**

North Carolina guide, dog trainer, shares his tips for taking Carolina timberdoodles.

> By Justin Goethe

**48 SONGS OF THE DOG**

With deer season on it's way out, it's time to do some predator control.

> By Phillip Gentry

OUTDOOR UPDATE:

- 6 NEW YEAR, NEW CHANGES**
- 10 BIG BUCK GALLERY**

FISHING HOTSPOTS:

- 24** Mountain Island
- 60** Lower Cape Fear
- 61** Georgetown
- 62** Neuse-Trent River System
- 63** Broad River/Lake Hartwell
- 64** Falls of the Neuse

COLUMNS:

- 26 LUNKER LINES** By David Fritts
- 28 SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY** By Phillip Gentry
- 30 SANTEE STRINGER** By Terry Madewell
- 42 ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN** By Pat Robertson
- 54 GREENER PASTURES** By Jeff Burleson
- 56 COOKING ON THE WILD SIDE** By Capt. Jerry Dilsaver
- 58 SOUND & SEA** By Chris Burrows

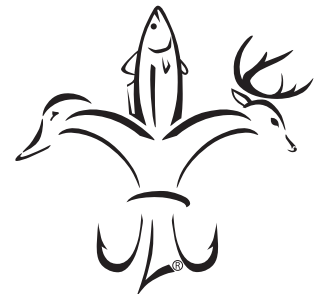
DEPARTMENTS:

- 51** SC Hunting regulations
- 55** NC Hunting regulations
- 65** Advertiser Index



ON THE COVER:

January is a great month for Carolina catfish, including trophy-sized blues like this one Julia Shillinglaw tamed.



Carolina  
**SPORTSMAN**

www.CarolinaSPORTSMAN.com

**PRESIDENT:** Lisa Lottinger Cuccia

**PUBLISHER:** Jonathan Menard,  
jonathanm@lasmag.com

**MANAGING EDITOR:** Brian Cope,  
branc@sportsmannetwork.com

**ASSISTANT PRODUCTION MANAGER:**  
Desiree P. Lewis

**ART DIRECTOR:** Kevin Orgeron

**GRAPHIC DESIGNERS:**  
Jeff Cashio, Alissa Zeringue

**CONTROLLER:** Juanita Guidry

**NC ADVERTISING SALES REP:** Peter Church  
504-722-4078, peter@carolinaspportsman.com

**SC ADVERTISING SALES REP:** Bret Holten  
843.442.7250, breth@carolinaspportsman.com

**ADVERTISING SALES:**  
Asa Faulkner, Mark Boyd, Burton Angelle,  
and Mark Hilzlim (National Sales)

**CIRCULATION DIRECTOR:**  
Mitch Eby 919.602.3862, mitchebyn@gmail.com

ADVERTISING INQUIRIES:

advertising@CarolinaSportsman.com  
985.758.7217

FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS  
OR SUBSCRIPTION ISSUES,  
CALL 1.855.224.1667

Monday thru Friday, 7 am to Midnight  
Saturday & Sunday, 9 am - 6 pm EST

**CAROLINA SPORTSMAN** (USPS #012969) is published monthly by Carolina Publishing Inc., Allen J. Lottinger, Founder, 14236 Highway 90, P.O. Box 1199, Boutte, LA 70039. Mailed at periodicals postage rates and paid at Boutte, La., and additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Carolina Sportsman, PO Box 37030, Boone, IA 50037. All rights reserved. Reproduction of contents is strictly prohibited without permission of Carolina Sportsman. **EDITORIAL** information number is 336.416.9631. Editorial guidelines can be obtained by writing Carolina Sportsman, 433 Hollinswood Ave., Winston-Salem, N.C. 27103. Carolina Sportsman is not responsible for the loss of queries, manuscripts or other materials.

P.O. Box 1199, Boutte, LA 70039-1199  
800.538.4355

**Volume 29 | No 1**

# The Big One Is Back



Compare prices and quality. Talk to experts. Learn what's new. The largest agricultural exposition in the Carolinas and Virginia is your opportunity to get ready for the coming growing season. Over 400 companies with the latest and best farm equipment, supplies and services.

Indoor and Outdoor Exhibits  
Ag Meetings

Landscape and Construction  
Equipment

Lumberjack Show presented by  
**STIHL**®

---

## February 2-4

NC STATE FAIRGROUNDS • RALEIGH, NC

---

Free Admission and Parking | 9am to 4pm Daily

[www.SouthernFarmShow.com](http://www.SouthernFarmShow.com) 

# OUTDOOR UPDATE

with  
**Brian Cope**

Long-time Carolina Sportsman Magazine editor Dan Kibler has retired. This photo is from his "software training session" with new editor Brian Cope last month.



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

## NEW YEAR BRINGS NEW CHANGES

WE HAVE A FEW CHANGES IN STORE FOR 2022

**W**ith the new year comes new changes at Carolina Sportsman Magazine. We're hoping those changes have minimal impact on our readers.

many bumps. I'm continuing with the website too, so that's one area that will remain a constant.

Throughout those years, he and I have worked closely together, spending numerous hours on video conference calls, helping sign up subscribers at boat shows, sharing space in dove fields and in boats while casting to stripers, speckled trout, redfish, crappie, catfish and bass. Hopefully I can live up to the same standard he has been setting for the magazine for decades.

If I stumble, we can blame it on columnist and feature writer Jeff Burleson, who took us fishing in between Kibler training me on the magazine's software. And well, it's possible that we spent a little more time reeling in speckled trout that week than we did sitting at the computer. I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

It's been a blast, Dan. Enjoy your retirement and save some fish for the rest of us.

### NEW COLUMNISTS

Another change readers will note is our Sound and Sea column, which I wrote for about 8 years, is now in the capable hands of Chris Burrows, who has written for us as a freelancer in the past.

Burrows has a wealth of knowledge about many aspects of saltwater fishing and the fishing world in general.

Larry Ross, who has also written numerous articles for us, is taking over the Head for the Mountains column which Bob Satterwhite wrote for a long time before hanging up his pen and fly rod last year.

Ross is an avid angler and all-around sportsman who ties his own flies and makes all sorts of other hand-made hunting and fishing gear. You won't see that column in this issue, but look for it next month. ■



Brian Cope can be found chasing all types of fish when not editing the magazine or website.

Most notably, it's time to say goodbye (sort of) to our long-time editor Dan Kibler, who retired at the end of November. I say sort of because he'll still do some writing for us on a freelance basis, so his words will still appear in our pages, just in different spots.

Kibler gave me a crack at writing for the magazine's website in 2006 as a field reporter and freelancer. A few years later he tapped me as the fishing tournament columnist, then as a saltwater columnist. And in 2014, he recommended me as the full-time editor of our website. I've worked in that job ever since, so hopefully my transition to the magazine will come without too

# WHITE DEER WINS NOVEMBER BAG-A-BUCK

**M**ichael Hall of Stokesdale, N.C., had a white buck on his radar for two seasons. He finally got it in his sights the afternoon of Nov. 15.

Hall, who was hunting in Forsyth County, dropped the unique buck, which carried a 9-point, typical rack, shortly after noon.

"I saw the buck early that morning chasing does. I went back in at 12 p.m., planning to sit until dark. When I reached my stand, I heard deer chasing immediately. Within 5 minutes, I could see white running through the woods. He was chasing does again," he said.

At 75 yards, Hall put a slug from his .50-caliber Thompson muzzleloader through the buck, which dropped on the spot.

"When I reached the deer, I knew I had something I'd never imagined," he said.



Michael Hall won our November Bag A Buck contest with this white deer.

A couple of days later, Thompson entered the buck in Carolina Sportsman's Bag-A-Buck contest, and on Dec. 1, he was drawn as the winner of the monthly contest for November.

Hall's prizes include a 1-year subscription to Carolina Sportsman and a Sportsman prize package that includes a True knife and other goodies. He, 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 Sportsman prize package that includes a Millennium M25 Hang-On tree stand and other goodies.

Hall was hunting an area that featured hardwoods joining a swampy area.

With deer hunting season over as of Jan. 1 in both Carolinas, cure your withdrawals by checking out all the deer in our Bag-A-Buck gallery online at [CarolinaSportsman.com/bag-a-buck-gallery/](http://CarolinaSportsman.com/bag-a-buck-gallery/). ■



James McCaskill's first bear weighed 665 pounds.

## PFAFFTOWN HUNTER BAGS 665-POUND BEAR

James McCaskill of Pfafftown, N.C. was hunting with Berry's Bay Hunting Club in Tyrell County on Nov. 17 when he killed a 665.1-pound bear. It's the first bear McCaskill has ever killed.

McCaskill shot the bear with a 12-gauge shotgun loaded with slugs. His first shot was from 20 feet away. His final shot was from 5 feet away.

Send your hunting and fishing photos to [images@carolinasportsman.com](mailto:images@carolinasportsman.com). ■

## NCWRC rescues bear cub

In late November, concerned citizens of Asheville alerted the NCWRC of a bear cub with a clear jar stuck on its head. The agency was able to locate the cub and remove the jar. They released the cub into the wild where it energetically ran off.

If you see wildlife in distress, contact the NCWRC's Wildlife Helpline at 866-318-2401. ■

# STATE RECORD FISH

**M**atthew Parr of Wilmington, N.C. set the new North Carolina state record for red hind this past fall. The NCDMF certified the 7-pound, 1.6-ounce fish at the beginning of December.

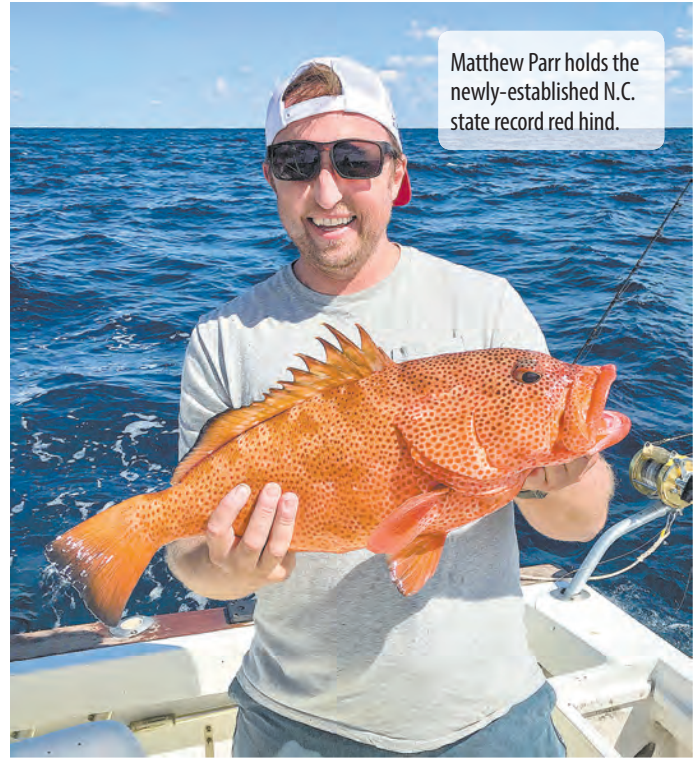
Parr was fishing off of Cape Lookout on Oct. 1, 2021 when he caught the record hind. It measured a total length of 21.5 inches and had a girth of 17.5 inches.

The big fish bit a piece of cut bait that Parr was using on 80-pound test line spooled onto a Penn Senator 113N reel which was mounted on a Star Aerial heavy powered jigging rod. Parr was fishing with Salt Air Ventures and Capt. Charles Stewart Merritt.

The red hind is a species of grouper managed under the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. The recreational season runs May 1 - Dec. 31.

Before Parr's catch, North Carolina did not have a state record for red hind. Because this was an exceptionally large specimen of the species, NCDMF established the category, then certified the fish as the new record.

If you think you've caught a state record fish, contact Carole Willis at [carole.y.willis@ncdenr.gov](mailto:carole.y.willis@ncdenr.gov). ■



Matthew Parr holds the newly-established N.C. state record red hind.

An advertisement for the PG AND BOATGIRL OUTDOORS PODCAST. On the left is a logo featuring a circular emblem with a silhouette of a person fishing, a deer head, and a fish. Below the logo is the text "PG AND BOATGIRL OUTDOORS PODCAST" and the website "PGANDBOATGIRL.COM". Below that, it says "BROUGHT TO YOU BY" and features the "PALMETTO BOAT CENTER" logo with the website "palmettoboatcenter.com". On the right, a photograph shows two hosts, a man and a woman, both in camouflage gear and caps, sitting in a boat and talking into microphones. Below the photo is a white box with the text "Get the latest Outdoor News, Talk and Hunting and Fishing Reports." and the website "pgandboatgirl.com". At the bottom of the white box are three icons for listening on Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, and Spotify.



## S.C. HUNTER KILLS 6-POINT DOE

**J**enny Franklin of Johnston, S.C. killed a unique, 6-point doe on Oct. 31, 2021 in Laurens County. She shot the antlered doe from 20 yards away with a Savage Axis .30-06.

It's a deer that Franklin was familiar with through trail camera photos. And it's one she had questions about. It was a small-bodied deer and had velvet late into the season.

"We had seen this deer on trail cameras many times at a different stand on the property. The deer was still in full velvet two weeks prior, and it had velvet hanging off her antlers when harvested," said Franklin.

Hunting from a tree stand overlooking a thick wooded area, she watched the deer as it walked, waiting for a clear shot.

"It walked up a trail in a thick wooded area in front of me. And I took the shot at 20 yards when it was in an opening between some trees. The deer dropped when shot," she said.

Franklin was happy to finally get an up-close look at the deer, where her questions about the 6-pointer were answered.

"The first thing we did was check to see if it was a stag because we had seen it in velvet so late in the season. I love the way her brow tines are both curved," she said.

Because of the unique creature's characteristics, Franklin said she has an uncommon way of commemorating the hunt.

"I am extremely proud of my antlered doe. And a pink camo skull mount seems appropriate," she said.

She took the deer to Jackson's Deer Processing in Johnston, where they weighed the deer before processing it. It weighed 103 pounds. ■

**BIG BUCK GALLERY >**

**“** I am extremely proud of my antlered doe. And a pink camo skull mount seems appropriate.

Trusted By Sportsman For 30 Years

### Sarah Judy's

## INSURANCE AGENCY

**BOAT - MOTORCYCLE & ATV - CAMPER & RV  
HOME - AUTO - RENTAL - FLOOD - LIFE**

*Personal Service Guaranteed*

**3090 Jefferies Hwy • Walterboro SC**  
Phone **843.538.5856** • Fax **843.538.5282**

[www.sarahjudysinsurance.com](http://www.sarahjudysinsurance.com)

**SAFETY FIRST**

## ATTENTION

### Mine Operators & Independent Contractors

### Your Complete Mine Safety And Compliance Resource

- MSHA Training
- Compliance Audits
- First Aid/CPR Training
- Respirator Fit Testing

FIRST AID

CPR

OSHA

U.S. Department of Labor  
Mine Safety & Health Administration

**Palmetto State Training**

**843-569-6872**

*When You Need it...Where You Need it.*

[www.PalmettoStateTraining.com](http://www.PalmettoStateTraining.com)

# SPORTSMAN'S BIG BUCK GALLERY



Claire Tucker killed this 10-point buck that grossed 152 inches.



Jody Cann killed this Anderson County 9-point, full velvet buck on Oct. 24.



Brad Edwards of Fountain Hill, N.C. killed this Anson County buck on Nov. 6, 2021.



Ethan Cox killed this Guilford County buck during a 5-minute hunt.



Chantz Campbell of Madison, N.C. killed this 10-point buck on Nov. 18 in Rockingham County.



Casey Warren of Alamance County, N.C. killed this main-frame 8-point, 159-inch whopper on Oct. 30.



Jordan Jessup of Westfield, N.C. killed a Stokes County 10-pointer on Nov. 7.



Paul Wade of Red Oak, N.C. dropped this 11-point Edgecombe County swamp donkey on Nov. 3.



Justin Anderson of McBee, S.C. killed this huge buck in Kershaw County on Nov. 3.



Don Hawkins of Greensboro, N.C. stuck this trophy Rockingham County 9-pointer on Oct. 5.



Brittany Godwin of Timberlake, N.C. dropped this Person County 12-pointer on Nov. 3.



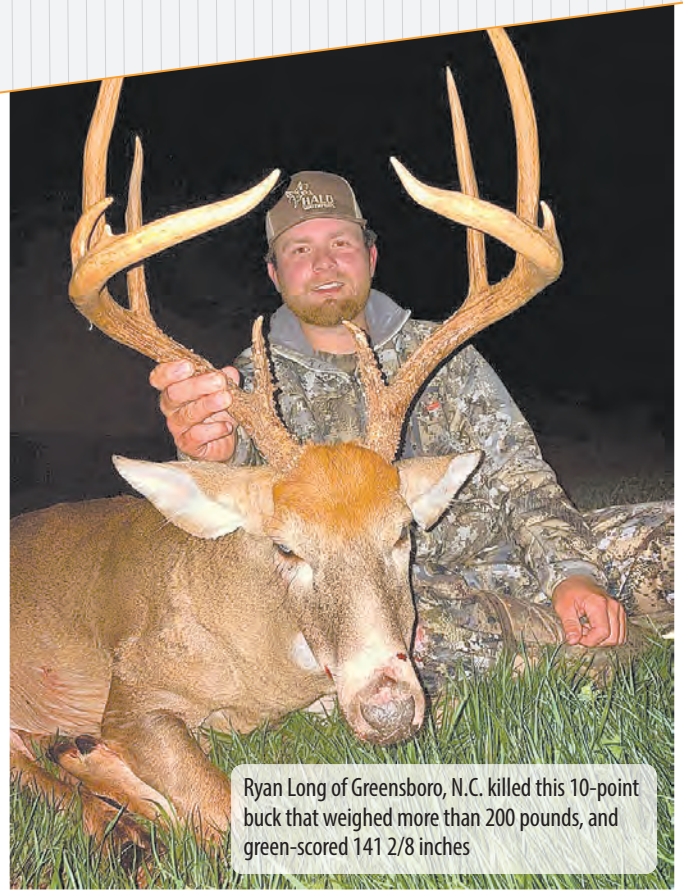
Rockingham County hunter Kollbe Russell killed this brute on Nov. 7.

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

# SPORTSMAN'S BIG BUCK GALLERY



David Thomas killed his "blueberry patch" buck in Yancey County on Nov. 16.



Ryan Long of Greensboro, N.C. killed this 10-point buck that weighed more than 200 pounds, and green-scored 141 2/8 inches



Mark Winfree of Stokesdale, N.C. dropped this Rockingham County giant on Oct. 30.



Chad Gaines of Siler City, N.C. killed two October giants during the 2021 hunting season.



Emily Catoe of Lugoff, S.C. killed this Kershaw County 8-point buck on Nov. 14.



Madison Squires of Allendale, S.C. killed this big 8-point buck in Allendale County on Nov. 14.



Lathan Peterson killed this 19-point buck in Caswell County, N.C. on Oct. 26.



Lawson Ballard of Greenville, S.C. dropped this 8-point buck in Laurens County on Nov. 5.



Fortune smiled on Chesney Luck, who got a second chance at this 8-point buck on Nov. 3.



Skip James of Marshville, N.C. killed this 16-point buck in Union County on Nov. 14.



Michael Hall killed this white 9-point buck in Forsyth County on Nov. 15.

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

# SPORTSMAN'S BIG BUCK GALLERY



Dylan Jones of Timberlake, N.C. killed this big buck in Person County.



ON THE COVER

Savannah Banner killed this huge Person County 13-point buck on Oct. 30.



Zack Satterfield of Reidsville, N.C. killed this trophy buck in Rockingham County on Oct. 30.



Spann Brabham, 77-years-old from Bamberg, S.C., killed a calico buck in Bamberg County on Oct. 18.



Bud Long killed this 140-class buck on Nov. 21.

Landen Parker killed this buck in the Hartsville, S.C. area in October.



Steve Woody of Burnsville, N.C. killed this 15-point moose-like Mitchell County buck on Nov. 23.



Ashley Nevins killed this Granville County bruiser on Nov. 6.



Andy Starnes killed this 21-point buck in Peachland, N.C. on Nov 20.



Conner Smith killed this 10-point Guilford County monster in late November.



James Cox scored this 150-class buck in Stem, N.C. on Nov. 21.



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

# SEE YOUR LOCAL DEALER FOR SPECIALS

OFFERED BY



**A.K. MCCALLUM CO.**  
715 Ramsey St  
Fayetteville, NC 28301  
(910) 483-6804  
akmccallumco.com

**ANGLERS MARINE NC**  
842 Ocean Hwy West  
Supply, NC 28462  
910-755-7900  
anglersmarinenc.com

**ANGLERS MARINE NC**  
13578 US-70 Bus  
Clayton, NC 27520  
919-585-7900  
anglersmarinenc.com

**BAY RACER MARINE**  
213 US Highway 70 West  
Havelock, NC 28532  
252-447-2277  
bayracermarine.com

**BERKELEY OUTDOORS**  
2955 S. Live Oak Dr  
Moncks Corner, SC 29461  
843-761-2628  
803-333-9992  
803-505-8727  
berkeleyoutdoors.com

**BOAT DOCK MARINE**  
5981 NC Hwy 8  
Lexington, NC 27292  
(336) 357-5906  
boatdockmarinenc.com

**BOATER'S MARINE**  
1309 Skyway Dr.  
Monroe, NC 28110  
(704) 282-0967  
boatersmarinenc.com

**BRAZDA MARINE**  
2645 Highway 24  
Newport, NC 28570  
252-240-1600  
brazdamarine.net

**BROAD CREEK MARINA**  
18 Simmons Road  
Hilton Head Island, SC. 29926  
843-681-3625  
broadcreekmarinahn.com

**BROWN'S MARINE INC**  
1825 Anthony Rd  
Burlington, NC 27215  
336-229-5784  
brownsmarinenc.com

**BROWN'S RV SUPERSTORE**  
30049 Hwy 151  
McBee, SC 29101  
(833) 209-7274  
brownsvsuperstore.com

**CAPE ROMAIN MARINE**  
10129 Hwy. 17 N.  
McClellanville, SC 29458  
843-887-3330  
caperomainmarine.com

**CAROLINA INBOARD**  
1225 Bickley Road  
Irmo, SC 29063  
803-781-1024  
carolinainboard.com

**CAROLINA OUTBOARD**  
220 NC Hwy 210 West  
Hampstead, NC 28443  
910-319-0506  
carolinaoutboard.com

**CHARLOTTE SKI BOAT**  
1206 Brawley School Rd  
 Mooresville, NC 28117  
704-525-6006  
charlotteskiboats.com

**CHATLEE BOAT & MARINE**  
2615 Jefferson Davis Hwy.  
Sanford, NC 27330  
919-775-7259  
chatleeboats.com

**COASTLINE RV & MARINE**  
2340 S. Highway 17  
Murrells Inlet, SC 29576  
843-458-3999  
coastlinervrentals.com

**COLLINS INC.**  
4620 US 70 Bus Hwy East  
Smithfield, NC 27577  
919-934-3143  
Collinsboating.com

**COUICK'S MARINE**  
3613 Providence Rd S.  
Waxhaw, NC 28173  
(704) 843-2155  
couicksmarine.com

**COVE 2 COAST MARINE**  
1821 Lake Murray Blvd.  
Columbia, SC 29212  
803-814-1514  
cove2coastmarine.com

**COVE 2 COAST MARINE**  
2476 Savannah Hwy.  
Charleston, SC 29407  
843-212-3915  
cove2coastmarine.com

**DOC'S MARINE**  
5803 Icard Ridge Rd  
Hickory, NC 28601  
(828) 598-0637  
docsmarinenc.com

**DOSS MARINE**  
1720 Chapin Road  
Chapin, SC 29036  
803-345-1001  
dossmarine.com

**DOWN EAST MARINE**  
455 Highway 70 Otway  
Beaufort, NC 28516  
252-728-5817  
downeastmarine.com

**ED WATKINS MARINE**  
3333 Hwy 16N  
Denver NC 28037  
704.483.2628  
edwatkinsmarine.com

**FORT MACON MARINA INC**  
417 E FT Macond Rd Pob 370  
Atlantic Beach, NC 28512  
252-726-2055  
fortmaconmarina.com

**GRAHAM MARINE**  
318 W Harden St  
Graham, NC 27253  
336-227-8711  
grahammarinesales.net

**GREENVILLE MARINE**  
3600 Greenville Blvd. N.E.  
Greenville, NC 27834  
(252) 758-5938  
greenvillemarine.com

**GREG'S OUTBOARD CTR INC**  
1105 E Ocean Rd  
Holly Ridge, NC 28445  
910-329-0040  
gregsoutboard.com

**GUNNELLS MARINE**  
102 Rock Church Rd NW  
Greenwood, SC 29649  
864-223-2275  
gunnellsmarine.com

**J & J MARINE**  
2530 Badin Road  
Albemarle NC 28001  
704-983-867  
jandjmarinesales.com

**JET JOE'S MARINE SALES AND SERVICE**  
565 Satterwhite Point Rd.  
Henderson, NC 27537  
252-430-6209  
jetjoesmarine.com

**JIMMY'S MARINE**  
6685 Beach Drive SW  
Ocean Isle Beach, NC 28469  
910-575-3600  
jimmysmarine.com

**JOHNSON'S MARINE & OFFROAD**  
1782 Old Edisto Dr.  
Orangeburg, SC 29115  
(803) 531-1655  
johnsonmarineandoffroad.com

**LONG'S FISHING & MARINE**  
5401 HWY 24  
Anderson, SC 29625-6020  
864-287-9064 • Fax 864-287-2965  
longs-marine.com

**LONG ISLAND MARINA**  
8400 Long Island Road  
Catawba, NC 28609  
828-241-4877  
longislandmarina.com

**MARINE 360**  
1925 Johnson Marina Rd  
Chapin, SC 29036  
803-749-2360  
marine360sc.com

**MARINE SERVICE PRO, INC.**  
8210 River Road SE  
Southport, NC 28461  
910-363-4725  
marineserviceprosinc.com

**MARINE WAREHOUSE**  
6921 Market Dt  
Wilmington, NC 28411  
910-799-1277  
marinewarehousecenter.com

**MARINE WAREHOUSE CENTER**  
3881 Savannah Highway  
Johns Island, SC 29455  
843-974-5353  
marinewarehousecenter.com

**MARTIN'S PERFORMANCE BOATING**  
9345 Macedonia Church Rd  
Prosperity, SC 29127  
803-364-2162  
martinsmarine.com

**MERRITT MARINE**  
1804 NC-86  
Hillsborough, NC 27278  
919-732-7377  
merrittmarine.com

**NORTH POINT WATERSPORTS**  
112 Doolie Rd.  
 Mooresville, NC  
704-799-1994  
northpointwatersports.com  
info@npwatersports.com

**PERFORMANCE EAST**  
604 Corporate Drive  
Goldsboro, NC 27530  
888-503-8900  
ncpowersports.com

**PRECISION MARINE INC**  
5201 US Hwy 70 E  
Goldsboro, NC 27534  
919-751-1199  
precisionmarineinc.com

**RADCLIFFE MARINE**  
865 US-264 Bypass  
Belhaven, NC 27810  
(252) 943-3923  
radcliffmarine.com

**ROCK OUTDOORS**  
7440 NC Hwy 8  
Lexington, NC 27292  
336-793-8710  
rockoutdoors.com

**ROGUE MOTION BOAT SALES, SERVICE & STORAGE**  
65 Sycamore Ave  
Charlesont, SC 29407  
(843) 633-1433  
roguemotion.com

**SEA ISLAND MARINE**  
1105 Rodgers Street  
Beaufort, SC 29902  
843-524-7272  
seaislandmarinebeaufort.com

**SEEL'S OUTBOARD, INC.**  
1937 Savannah Highway  
Charleston, SC 29407  
(843) 556-2742  
seelsoutboard.com

**SOUTHPORT MARINE MART**  
4711 Long Beach Rd  
Southport, NC  
910-457-6350  
marinemartnc.com

**SOUTHPORT WATERSPORTS**  
4888 Coastal Drive  
Southport, NC 28461  
910-477-6681  
southportwatersports.com

**SOUTHSIDE OUTDOORS**  
1077 Clarence Coker Hwy  
Turbeville, South Carolina 29162  
(843) 659-2628  
southsideoutdoors.com

**STRICKLAND MARINE CENTER**  
4520 Hwy 24  
Anderson, SC 29626  
864-225-0145  
stricklandmarine.com

**STROUD AND SON MARINE SALES**  
1897 Ocean Hwy  
Edenton, NC 27932  
252-482-8938  
stroudandson.com

**SUTTON MARINE**  
914 park avenue southeast  
aiken, sc 29801  
803-648-6141  
suttonmarine.com

**THE BOAT RACK**  
7565 E NC 150 Hwy  
Sherrills Ford, NC 28673  
(828) 478-2222  
theboatrack.com

**THE GREAT OUTDOORS**  
112 A North Cherry St.  
Cherryville, NC 28021  
704-445-8848  
teagreatoutdoors.com

**TRI-COUNTY MARINE**  
1203 Premier Road  
Granite Falls, NC 28630  
828-728-4845  
tricityboats.com

**TWIN LAKES MARINE, INC**  
265 Satterwhite Point Rd  
Henderson, N.C. 27537  
252-431-0416  
twinlakesmarinenc.com

**UNIVERSAL MARINE**  
144-A Wayne Drive  
Morehead City, NC 28557  
252-723-1577  
universalmarinenc.com

**WEBSTERS MARINE INC**  
5974 N Okatie Hwy  
Ridgeland, SC 29936-8248  
843-987-6663 • Fax 843-379-2628  
webstersmarine.com

**YOPP BROTHERS INC**  
883 Hwy 210 W Pob 849  
Sneads Ferry, NC 28460  
910-327-2831  
yoppbrothersmarine.com

Not all North Carolina and South Carolina American Suzuki Motor of America Inc. marine dealers are represented in this advertisement.



■ HOOKED ON™ SUZUKI TECHNOLOGY



METICULOUSLY ENGINEERED  
**TO BE BETTER**

**SUZUKI'S LEAN BURN TECHNOLOGY**

The system predicts fuel needs according to operating conditions, allowing the engine to run on a leaner, more efficient air/fuel ratio. It delivers its benefits over a wide operating range, providing significant improvements in fuel



**THE  
ULTIMATE  
OUTBOARD MOTOR**

15 YEAR LIMITED WARRANTY applies to qualifying purchases of Suzuki outboard motors sold and delivered to the retail purchaser, for pleasure (non-commercial) use only, from April 1, 2021 through March 31, 2022. See Suzuki Limited Warranty for additional details. The Suzuki "S" and model names are Suzuki trademarks or ®. Don't drink and drive. Always wear a USCG-approved life jacket and read your owner's manual. © 2021 Suzuki Marine, USA, LLC.

A man wearing a camouflage hat, sunglasses, and a tan vest over a black jacket is holding a large blue catfish. The background shows a body of water and a clear blue sky.

# SING THE BLUES OF A WYLLIE WINTER

**BURGEONING POPULATION OF BLUE CATFISH AT THIS LAKE ON THE BORDER BETWEEN THE TWO CAROLINAS HAS MADE JANUARY MORE THAN JUST A POST-HOLIDAY MONTH.**

■ By Terry Madewell

Terry Madewell

# THE WATERS OF LAKE WYLIE

**flow through North Carolina and South Carolina and are a great year-round catfish destination, but the cold months of winter are consistently productive.**

January weather can be brutal, but the potential reward is enjoying an outstanding catfish bite.

Guide Rodger Taylor of Rock Hill, S.C., said January is a prime time for trophy blue catfish as well as excellent numbers of fish. He should know. He's been guiding full-time on Wylie for 15 years.

"Winter is a favorite time for catching big blue catfish, but it's also excellent for numbers of fish in the 6- to 14-pound class," he said. "It's an ideal combination of quality and quantity of catfish"

Taylor said January catfish patterns vary depending on where anglers fish.

"The lower end of Lake Wylie is a big-water, open-lake type of fishery with lots of humps, points and ledges as well as the deep water of the main Catawba River channel," he said.

"This is a prime area for many anglers in January. The upper end of the lake produces excellent fishing but is more of a river-fishing environment, and some tactics are slightly different for winter fishing."

Taylor typically begins his fishing day in the lower end of the lake. "The lower end fits my style of winter fishing," Taylor said. "I have more targets such as deep water and plenty of points and humps that go from shallow to deep water quickly."

He will generally start fishing deep early in the day, with deep defined as 25 to 40 feet of water. He drifts and anchors, depending on the specific circumstances. He'll be graphing for forage and catfish, and typically, he'll find an area with plenty of fish between Crowder and Allison creeks on the lake's southwestern shoreline.

"Wind direction and speed varies, and I'll adapt to what we have, but I love a north wind about 7 miles per hour," he said. "I can drift fish for up to a mile and consistently catch quality blue catfish. If we go a while without getting bit or seeing what I want on the graph, we'll pull the rods and make that drift again and typically get back into fish."

"At this time of the year, catfish can get concentrated into a general area of the lake and be quite depth-specific," he said.

"That depth varies daily but my January sweet spot depth to begin the day would be 30 to 35 feet deep."



Guide Rodger Taylor of Rock Hill, S.C., has been catching big blue catfish at Lake Wylie for numerous Januaries.

**T**aylor searches other areas if the action slows, and he drifts where he finds fish. As mid-afternoon approaches, he'll check points and humps in the lower end of creeks including Big Allison, Little Allison, Crowders and some smaller ones. He'll also fish areas where he finds bird activity.

"I trust cormorants and gulls to show me where shad are located by where they're feeding," he said. "My ideal technique is to anchor on a point or hump in about 9 feet of water, then fan-cast baits from deep to shallow water until I get a depth pattern.

"On some afternoons, the fish move into these areas in big numbers, and we'll enjoy wild catfish-catching action," he said.

Taylor said another January situation is a strong breeze blowing from a consistent direction for several hours, piling shad into a windblown bank or area. Gulls and cormorants congregate to feast on the forage.



**Terry Madewell** of Ridgeway, S.C., has been an outdoors writer for more than 30 years. He has a degree in wildlife and fisheries management and has a long career as a professional wildlife biologist/natural resources manager.



"The birds will find the forage, and I'll capitalize on that," he said. "I drift through this area, and it's one time I'll use suspended baits. I'll deploy regular drift rigs behind the boat but also use a couple of rigs with big corks on a slip-float rig set to fish about 15 feet deep, if I'm in 25 to 30 feet of water, for example. A lot of hefty catfish will feed higher in the water column with shad stacked up, and we'll catch them suspended."

Taylor said a productive area may be small, so he'll often have to re-drift the area.

"It's worth it," he said.

Taylor defines the upper end of the lake upstream from the spot where the South Fork and Catawba rivers merge.

"That's a good landmark, and some of the lower-lake tactics are appropriate in the upper end," he said, "but other factors should be considered."

Current flow is usually more significant in the upper end, and it can play a major role in where to find catfish.

"I prefer to have current flow in the main portion of either of the rivers; it makes the fish more active," he said. "Creek and river junctions, deep holes in the river channel and the deep holes of outside bends in the old river channel are prime targets."

Taylor said current flow is dictated by rainfall, but for him, not all current is created equal.

"I like to fish the upper end in cold weather right after a big rain, but after a long, steady current flow, the bite slows," he said. "I think the fresh water and other material flushing through helps for a while, then that factor diminishes."

At times, heavy rain creates muddy water in the upper end, and he said the South Fork can be particularly good during these conditions.

Terry Madewell

Terry Madewell



## DESTINATION INFORMATION

**HOW TO GET THERE** — Lake Wylie is on the Catawba River chain, southwest of Charlotte, N.C., and north of Rock Hill, S.C. It is easily accessed from I-85 and I-77. Buster Boyd and Copperhead ramps at mid-lake are popular public boat landings. On the lower end, Allison Creek, Nivens Creek and Ebenezer Park give anglers access to that half of the 13,400-acre lake

**WHEN TO GO** — Fishing for blue catfish is great on Lake Wylie from December through February

**BEST TECHNIQUES** — Start on the lower end and graph humps, points and ledges with your depth finder, looking for concentrations of baitfish and/or catfish. Watch for birds picking at the surface; there will be baitfish below. Drift or anchor and fan-cast baits at various depths. Cut shad, white perch and bluegill are top baits on Wylie.

**FISHING INFO/GUIDES** — Rodger Taylor, Catfish On! Guide Service, 803-517-7828, [www.catfishon.com](http://www.catfishon.com). See also Guides & Charters in Classifieds.

**ACCOMMODATIONS** — Lake Wylie Chamber of Commerce, 803-831-2827; York County Visitors Center, 803-329-5200, [www.visityorkcounty.com](http://www.visityorkcounty.com); Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority, 704-339-6040 [www.charlottesgotalot.com](http://www.charlottesgotalot.com).

**MAPS** — Kingfisher Maps, 800-326-0257, [www.kfmmaps.com](http://www.kfmmaps.com).

“Catfish feed well in muddy water, and I’ll often find them in water less than 10 feet deep in this situation,” he said.

The warm water discharge at the Allen Plant Steam Station, a coal-fired electricity generating facility located in South Point, N.C., is a prime area to fish.

“During the winter, the warm-water discharge into the South Fork attracts lots of forage, and the catfish follow,” he said. “I typically fish the edge of drops in the warm-water discharge and have baits at multiple depths.”

Taylor uses 7-foot Ugly Stik rods with ABU reels loaded with 20-pound main line and a 36- to 48-inch leader of 50-pound test, with a 2½-inch float above a 6/0 to 8/0 circle hook. He uses a 1½-ounce sinker unless strong current in the river dictates more weight.

Gizzard shad is Taylor’s primary bait; he catches his own bait using a cast net.

“I like gizzard shad in the 4- to 7-inch class, and with a 7-inch shad, I’ll cut it in half; that’s great size for big fish,” Taylor said. “The 4- to 6-inch size can be used either whole or cut into smaller chunks, and a half-dollar-size bait is quite effective. You don’t have to have a big bait for big fish. I believe fresh bait is superior to frozen, and I will use white perch and bluegill at times.” ■

**GO SHALLOW FOR BIG CATS >**

# GO SHALLOW FOR BIG, WINTER CATS

Shallow-water catfishing is an option many anglers don't consider in January, but guide Rodger Taylor loves it.

"One of my favorite ways to hook big catfish during the winter is fishing shallow water," Taylor said. "This may seem strange, but it's a reliable pattern for fast action and huge catfish when I find the right combination of factors."

Taylor said on sunny days the shallow water in the bays in the back of creeks or coves will warm quickly, and that attracts shad — and the forage attracts catfish. He'll begin to check shallow bays and flats in the mid-afternoon.

When he finds an area that's been sunlit and sheltered from the wind, he looks for his winter-time spies: birds.

"If gulls and cormorants are active, it's a positive sign," he said. "I look for blue herons, the best fishermen on the lake, stalking the shoreline. If they're active, odds are good the area is loaded with forage, and it's an ideal spot to ambush big catfish."

Taylor anchors in about 6 feet of water and casts baits all around his boat. If an old ditch or channel exists, he targets it with a couple of baits.

"It depends on the specific setup but I may have baits 2 to 8 feet deep in this setup," he said. "The great thing is, it doesn't take



Guide Rodger Taylor nets a big, wintertime blue catfish from Lake Wylie.

## PIG COOKERS, PATIO GRILLS, SMOKERS CUSTOMIZED BBQ TRAILERS



CUSTOM BUILT  
QUALITY  
OUTDOOR  
BBQ PRODUCTS  
SINCE 1989



MORE INFO? 1-252-236-4464 | WWW.BQGRILLS.COM | 6043 HWY 301N, ELM CITY NC

long to find out if I've guessed right. Blue catfish are there to feed, and in the shallow water, their bite is aggressive. It's common to have multiple fish hooked at the same time. If action slows, I can move 100 yards and often get back on biting fish.

"Big fish are commonly caught in this situation, setting up some great fights in this shallow water," he said.

"This situation doesn't occur every day, but it happens enough that it's always on my catfish-finding-radar in terms of patterns I'll fish during the afternoon," Taylor said. "And this pattern can occur anywhere on the lake." ■

# A BIOLOGIST'S VIEW ON LAKE WYLIE BLUES

Blue catfish have become a great fishery on Lake Wylie over the past decade, and it doesn't take big baits to catch them.

Biological data supports what fishermen like Rodger Taylor already believe.

David Goodfred, a biologist with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, said data accumulated in recent years documents the explosion of blue catfish in Lake Wylie and the big fish factor.

"We utilize a lot of different data, but the data from 9 years of catfish tournament catches on Lake Wylie illustrates the impact of the blue catfish well," Goodfred said. "Results demonstrated the mean tournament weights of catfish increased by 267% during this period, with blue catfish representing 79% of large-fish tournament winnings over the 9-year period. Tournament catch data indicates the large catfish fishery in Lake Wylie is now dominated by blue catfish."

Goodfred said the honeymoon "boom" phase enjoyed for a decade or more may be ending, but the fishery seems to be stabilizing at a high level.

"This is normal for a fishery to rapidly increase then level off," he said. "But Lake Wylie is a very nutrient-rich lake, and I don't expect a big decline, just that the blue catfish fishery is beginning to stabilize, based on the data we now have." ■



Terry Madewell

## MOUNTAIN ISLAND CATS >

## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Plan your trip, check flows, and weather conditions. Share your plans with others.

River conditions can change quickly and unexpectedly. Visit [safewaters.com](https://safewaters.com) to learn more.

**Brookfield**  
Renewable U.S.



**WEAR IT**  
A program of the National Safe Boating Council

Dieter Melhorn fishes many lakes across the Carolinas. Mountain Island is his favorite in January.



# MOUNTAIN ISLAND CATS IN THE COLD

This winter hot hole is full of blue cats

**D** By Tony Garitto  
Dieter Melhorn considers diminutive Mountain Island Lake on the Catawba River as his favorite winter hole for blue cats.

At only 3,281 acres, the lake's size enables fishermen to locate treasured catfish structures without sophisticated side-scan units and without motoring long distances in the cold.

"Not many fishermen want to run around a lake the size of Lake Norman in bone-chilling weather, even if it has bigger cats," said Melhorn ([www.dietermelhornfishing.com](http://www.dietermelhornfishing.com)).

Besides, Mountain Island is no slouch for an occasional trophy blue. In 2015, a Charlotte angler hoisted a 70.83-pound blue from the lake.

Melhorn likes to fish Mountain Island when waters are released from Cowans

Ford Dam creating a steady current.

"For every inch that Norman is lowered, Mountain Island rises one foot, creating an almost riverine fishery that is driven by current and water flow," said Melhorn. "This can be a good thing if you are there when water is released from Cowans Ford Dam. But if water is moving through the lake for several days, it can make fishing tough."

## START EARLY

Melhorn arrives at the lake early because that's the time the water is released.

During the morning hours, he targets mid-lake rock outcroppings, ledges and points where blues seek refuge from the current.

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

Melhorn's favorite baits include white

perch and spotted bass. He slices them into fillets and then chunks. The heads are reserved to attract huge cats.

Melhorn utilizes stout gear. He employs medium/heavy Big Cat Fever casting rods holding Ambassadeur 5000 and 6000 reels spooled with 30-pound Ande Monster monofilament in conjunction with a Santee rig for anchor fishing or drifting.

Slow-trolling is an option when no current is running.

"Speed is critical; you can't go too slow, but you can go too fast. I go 0.6 mph or slower," he said. ■

**LUNKER LINES** ➤

## OKUMA HAKAI DT BAITCASTING REEL

Okuma has had a series of low-profile baitcasting reels on the market for years. But its latest offering, the lightweight Hakai DT, is a reel that was literally built from the bottom up.

The LiteCast magnesium frame and a corrosion-resistant coating on the frame and side plates gets things started. The reels start at 5.9 ounces with a 6BB+1RB precision stainless-steel ball-bearing drive for smooth casting and a Quick-Set anti-reverse bearing for solid hooksets.

Okuma introduces its Flite Spool with patented Flite Shaft hollow, stainless-steel main shaft and C-40X carbon injected star, offering the ultimate in free spool and castability.

Six of the 10 models in the Hakai DT line have gear ratios of 6.2:1, 7.3:1 and 8.1:1. Two additional pitching reels come in at 6.2:1 and two finesse reels with an 8.1:1 gear ratio. A universal line diameter indicator lets you know what line you have on the reel at all times.

**MSRP: \$169.99-  
\$184.99**

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



## DAIWA J-FLUORO SAMURAI FLUOROCARBON

Fluorocarbon is here to stay. There was good reason for the line's explosion on the market. Saltwater anglers were first to discover its advantages over mono, including smaller diameters, improved sensitivity, abrasion-resistance and invisibility. Freshwater anglers piled in for the same reasons.

Daiwa has jumped into the market with its J-Fluoro Samurai fluorocarbon, which comes in 13 different sizes between 2- and 25-pound test, for anglers chasing anything from bream to

bull reds.

Line from 2- to 12-pound test was formulated stouter for better sensitivity, while 14- to 25-pound test was formulated softer for better spool management.

The 220-yard filler spools are marked with a DVEC sticker at the midway point, giving you an exact count when spooling two reels.

J-Fluoro Samurai main line brings invisibility, strength, reliability, and unrivaled overall performance to anglers of all walks.

**MSRP: \$20.99-\$23.99**

**For more info, visit: [www.daiwa.us](http://www.daiwa.us).**

## SPRO POCKET TAIL MINNOW

Lots of soft-plastic swimbaits look alike, but the similarities end there.

SPRO has offered fishermen a unique, boot-tail swimbait, the Pocket Tail Minnow, which is a great choice to thread onto the back of a jighead or fished on a weighted swimbait hook.

At 3¾ inches long, the Pocket Tail Minnow comes in 16 colors and is made from a highly resilient elastomer and infused with Amino Bite Scent, which mimics the smell and taste of a baitfish and creates a scent trail that bass, redfish, speckled trout, snook and flounder can key on.

The hard-thumping tail contains a small pocket that provides a different sound profile than any other lure. And the heavily ribbed body pushes a ton of water. So it calls fish from a distance, in clear water and dirty water alike.

**MSRP: 5-pack, \$6.99**

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



Bridge pilings and other rock formations hold heat during winter, attracting hungry bass.

# SLOW DOWN FOR JANUARY LUNKERS

ROCKS AND CLEAR WATER ARE KEYS TO LANDING COLD WEATHER BASS

**I**t gets cold in January, sometimes bitterly cold. But mild weather in the Carolinas means it's warm enough for bass to put on their feed bags when the opportunity presents itself.

Basically, you can't plan ahead too many days. If you're going fishing, you want to decide at the last minute after you see what the weather is going to be.

If you get a few warm days, fishing can usually be pretty good. Fish will be up in the creeks if the weather stays warm. That happens every few years, but mostly, you'll be fishing around the mouth of creeks and the main lake. You probably want to be in places where you're sitting in 20 to 25 feet of water, casting to the bank.

Warm days will cause the shad to move up out of deep water. Fish the mouth of creeks first, then move into the creeks a little. Riprap and bridge pilings are probably the best structure for holding

bass, because the rock and the concrete will absorb a lot of the heat and the surrounding water will be a degree or two warmer, which means a lot.

## FIND STRUCTURE

January used to be when we planted our brush piles and went out on the lakes that were drawn down and found structure: brush that other fishermen had put out. Now, our electronics are so good, you find it with your Lowrance unit.

You need to be throwing a moving bait in January. I want to be throwing one of three Berkley baits: a Frittside 5, a Cutter jerkbait and a Bad Shad No. 8. It's a good time to be cranking or jerking a bait down and letting it suspend, then move it, then stop it, then bring it back slowly.

If you catch a warming trend, those bass will move up. They could be in 2 or 3 feet of water. That's what's been going on when all of those January tournaments were being won on a Frittside the

past couple of years. Run into fish that are moving up, and you can catch them on that Frittside 5.

You want to find a combination of things: fish anywhere that a channel is running close to the bank where you can sit deep and throw shallow, find some rock and find clear water.

## FISH ROCKS, CLEAR WATER

You need to stick with rock; that's your No. 1 structure when it's cold.

You've gotta be fishing clear water; don't fish dirty water. That's pretty dang important. Fish aren't going to be real aggressive anyway, and they won't bite



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

if they don't see the bait. You aren't going to get any bites because a bass can "feel" a bait coming. Watch water temperature, but don't rely on it; don't let it throw you for a curve. I won a tournament one time when the water temperature was 47 degrees. But you need to be fishing areas where fish are active. You can be around the most fish in the lake and not catch any.

I remember fishing one tournament on Lake Wylie in January. It was so cold. The best water temperature we could find was 45, so we went up in the Hot Hole in the South Fork. In there, the water was 52 to 53, but the water had a lot of color, and we didn't catch a thing. We went back to fishing deep banks and points in clear water and caught fish.

## SLOW DOWN

I've always been successful in January throwing moving baits. But the colder it is, the slower you have to make your retrieve. You really need to wind it so slow. Fifty is the magic number; if the water temperature is 50 degrees, you can fish with a more normal retrieve. If it's lower than 50, you've gotta slow down. When you fish a Cutter jerkbait — Hank Cherry, the Bassmaster Classic champion, is designing a new one for Berkley — you need to pause longer between jerks. When you're fishing a Bad Shad or a Frittside, you need to wind it very slowly. Shad colors are going to be the best.

One thing you can do to help fish the bait slowly is fish a baitcasting reel with the slowest retrieve ratio you can find. I like the Lew's BB1 Pro, which is a 5.8-to-1 retrieve. You bring in 23 inches of line on one turn of the reel. So you've already slowed down some just by winding that reel instead of a faster one.

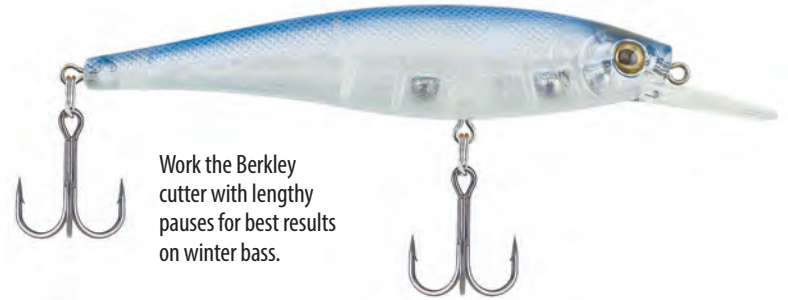
## MULTIPLE CASTS

The sunshine can affect the bite. If the rocks absorb the sun and get the surrounding water a little warmer, fish the sunny side. The fish won't all move over there, but the ones that are already there will be more aggressive. The other thing is, sometimes, you've got to trigger them into biting. You might have to make multiple casts to one rock or bridge piling, when you'd only make one cast in warmer water.

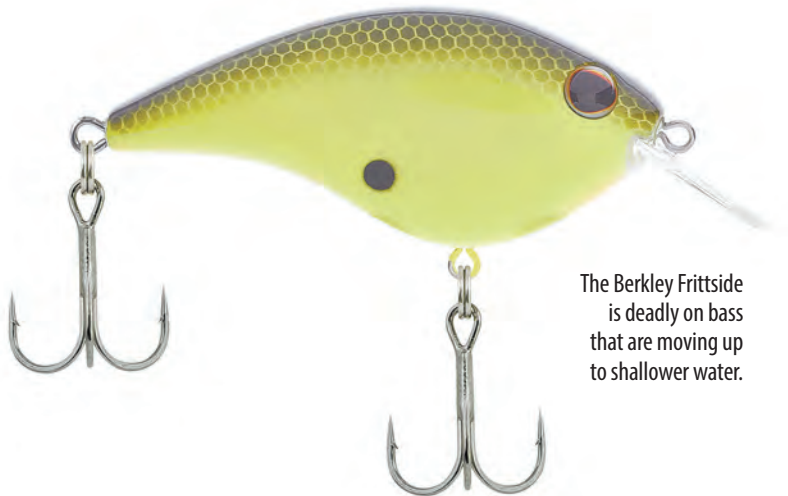
You can do plenty of things to make a January bass-fishing trip worthwhile. After all, you can put in and find only so many brush piles in a day. You've got to wet a line sometime. ■



The Berkley Bad Shad is a great choice for winter bass fishing.



Work the Berkley cutter with lengthy pauses for best results on winter bass.



The Berkley Frittside is deadly on bass that are moving up to shallower water.

## SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY ➤

# BE A PART OF HISTORY IN THE MAKING!

# GAMBLER BASS BOATS ARE BACK!

**New Santee, South Carolina Manufacturing Plant Seeking "SKILLED" workers**

- Lead gel coater
- Lead mold fabricator
- Experienced Laminators
- Experience REQUIRED for top salary positions.
- Cash signing bonus after 90 days
- Long-term career opportunity with growth potential
- Friendly, team oriented work atmosphere

**CALL US TODAY**  
**803-215-0456**  
**or 803-599-3169**

**Hat Creek Marine Corp. | 721 Hannah Dr | Santee, SC 29142 | USA | [GamblerBassBoats.com](http://GamblerBassBoats.com)**

Kayak anglers can extend their season into the winter as long as they layer up for warmth.



## DRESSING FOR WINTER KAYAK FISHING

Phillip Gentry

STAY SAFE AND WARM ON THE WATER BY LAYERING UP

**A**nglers who would gladly step aboard a luxury powerboat during winter can hardly fathom paddling the kayak out for wintertime fishing. The excuse when the weather turns cold is they don't want to — or are afraid of — getting wet.

Dressing for winter kayak fishing is as simple as combining layers of clothing that can be added or subtracted as conditions warrant. A winter kayak angling outfit is broken into three layers — base, mid-level, and outer garments. When layering clothing, it's always best to use several thinner layers than one or two thicker ones.

**Base layer:** The layer closest to the skin should be lightweight, wicking, and made of anything but cotton. Cotton kills, and has been called the "Death Fabric" when worn on the water due to its loss of insulating ability when it gets

wet, as well as its absorption of water. Polypropylene or wool undergarments are much better. They retain their insulating qualities when wet, either from sweating or immersion.

### FLEECE AND WOOL

**Mid-level:** Mid layer clothing should be made of fleece or wool garments. Blue jeans are a definite no-no. They are cotton, and lose their insulating qualities when wet. They also hold moisture to the skin, sucking away body heat.

Good choices include products from Patagonia and North Face. A wool sweater also does the trick. Items referred to as "fleece" may be either wool, synthetic, or a blend. Any of these will work.

**Outer wear:** Good outer garments include those with waterproof shells that still allow circulation of air. This lets heat

out while paddling. Most paddling dry suits are made for extreme conditions rarely seen in the Carolinas. But some Gore-tex garments fit the bill nicely in our milder climate.

Finally, do not forget the head, hands and feet. Extremities are the most likely to be in the water when paddling. And more heat is lost from the head than the rest of the body combined.

Insulated boots are essential and should have linings of wool or synthetic. Most boots are rated for insulation — 400 for moderate cold and 800 for extreme cold. Calf-length footwear can



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

## THE 100-DEGREE RULE

Winter is a great time to fish. The weather, though colder, is more stable than during the spring and fall. And of course there's a whole lot less traffic to worry about compared to the summer.

However, a summertime spill in the water isn't much concern. But it can be a serious event if it occurs during the colder months. To judge how serious a threat, the US Coast Guard has a rule of thumb which is referred to as the 100-degree rule.

Add the water temperature and the air temperature. If the two of them don't equal at least 100, then there's a serious threat of exposure to hypothermia if you wind up in the water. You can tack on another 50, by saying if you aren't wearing a life preserver when this happens, there's at least a 50/50 chance you won't make it back out of the water.

PFDs, emergency kits, and float plans are necessities no matter what time of year you paddle, but become mandatory, at least for the sake of safety, when the conditions are below the 100-degree rule.

On the subject of safety, it's a good idea to pack a waterproof bag with some dry clothes in case the kayak angler does wind up in the water. The bag can be stored below deck to ensure it remains dry and out of the way. In the bag, contents suggestions include a dry fleece hat, wool socks, a spare set of base layer garments, and some hand/body warmers to help restore warmth, along with the usual first aid and safety gear. ■

## BEST BETS

### NORTH CAROLINA

**WHAT** — Crappie

**WHERE** — Lake Waccamaw

**HOW** — Drift live minnows under corks around offshore structure. Crappie may be suspended above structure, so make sure you're not fishing too deep.

**LAUNCH** — Lake Waccamaw State Park on the East side or the NCWRC ramp on the West bank.

**INSIDER TIP** — Lake Waccamaw can get bumpy because of the wide open and flat terrain. Look at the wind direction and launch from the side that offers the best protection on days with wind.

### SOUTH CAROLINA

**WHAT** — Redfish

**WHERE** — Copahee Sound and Gray Bay, near Mt. Pleasant

**HOW** — Redfish school up tight and hold in extremely shallow water to avoid predation by dolphins. Cast small plastic baits out in front of the schools. Try not to cast directly into the school or you'll spook the fish. Cast ahead and let them work their way to your bait.

**LAUNCH** — Kayak access to Copahee Sound is from the public ramp located off Gadsonville Rd. east of Hwy 17.

**INSIDER TIP** — Winter conditions frequently cause murky water conditions so always fish with scented or scent enhanced baits in murky water.



Dressing in layers is the best way to stay warm and dry on the water.

Phillip Gentry

help when launching whenever briefly stepping in water is necessary. Wool and fleece socks that don't restrict circulation are also necessary.

Top it all off with a fleece or wool toboggan and you're all set. Outer garments with integrated hoodies create a solid layer between the chest and head, and often incorporate a lining that can be used as a face shield. ■

**SANTEE STRINGER >**

Big slab crappie are there for the taking on the Santee Cooper lakes in January, if you can “jump stumps.”



Terry Madewell

# STUMP JUMPING FOR JANUARY CRAPPIE

DON'T WAIT FOR SPRING TO TANGLE WITH SANTEE'S GREAT SLABS; TRY THIS METHOD

**T**urning the fishing page to 2022, it's time to fulfill our New Year's resolutions to catch more and bigger fish, but we don't have to wait until March or April to begin carving those notches of success into our reel seats.

January is an excellent time to catch slab crappies on the Santee Cooper lakes. Gear up for cold weather and big fish.

## STUMP JUMPING

Despite the cold weather, some super slabs are caught at Santee Cooper, and one of the most dependable methods is stump jumping.

Kevin Davis, owner of Blacks Camp on the Diversion Canal, said his primary target for stump jumping is the lower end of Lake Marion, and the process is aptly named.

“Much of Lake Marion is littered with standing trees, with many broken off right at the water's surface,” Davis said. “This woody cover is ideal for holding crappie, especially during the winter. Crappies have access from deep water to

shallow water vertically in the water column, an ideal situation for winter fishing.

“The basics are simple: get out into the flooded timber area of Lake Marion and start fishing these trees,” he said. “I fish all the standing trees and those broken off near the water level. I approach the target quietly with an electric motor and fish all the way around the object, generally circling at least three times.”

Davis (843-312-3080) maneuvers around the trees while constantly checking different depths. The depths where crappie will hold can change significantly from one trip to the next and are often weather-dependent, with warm, cloudy days more likely to produce shallower action. And on cold, bright days, crappies typically retreat deeper.

“Determining the best depth is like eating a bowl of hot grits,” Davis said. “I start at the edge of the bowl and slowly work my way into the middle so I don't get burned. With stump jumping, I'll start shallow and gradually fish deeper as I work the tree. On each pass I increase the depth until I find fish. Once I've

worked the tree from shallow to deep, I move to the next tree.”

## WEEDING OUT TREES

Davis said not all the trees hold crappie, so this is a process of covering a lot of trees, but fishing them effectively.

“I don't fish fast, because winter crappies aren't aggressive,” he said. “I'll hold the jig steady, slowly swimming it around the target. I may give it a light ‘pop’ occasionally. But a slow, steady presentation is best. I'll spend a few minutes on a tree then move. If I catch a crappie or two, I can begin to pattern the depth.”

Davis said the process is most successful when an angler works multiple trees during the course of a trip.

“It's a numbers game,” he said. “It's a one-or-two-fish per tree type of fishing



**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.

on most days, but occasionally, we'll catch multiple crappies off a single tree. If I fish 40 to 50 trees and catch a couple of fish on several of them, I'm likely going to have a limit of crappie. And odds are good they'll be slabs."

Davis said not all trees are created equal for holding crappies, and it's a learning process as you fish multiple days. Some trees are simply configured better to attract crappie. And some have been enhanced by fishermen attaching brush to them.

The lower end of Lake Marion is easily accessible, and Davis targets that area. But the entire lake has the potential to produce this type of fishing success.

## RIG FOR SUCCESS

He said the fishing rig is important for consistent success during January.

"The water is usually clear at this time of the year, and light line is crucial," he said. "I'll use ultralight braid attached to a 10-foot section of 6-pound test fluorocarbon. The braid relays even the most sensitive bites. That's important, because the bite is often subtle. I'll use a 1/16- to 1/8-ounce jig, and I won't hesitate to tip it with a minnow during the winter. I like a light-tipped rod about 8 to 10 feet long."



Kevin Davis, owner of Blacks Camp on the Diversion Canal, catches plenty of big crappie in January by 'stump jumping' in the lower end of Lake Marion.

Davis said the stump-jumping tactic has been around a long time but seems to be enjoying a resurgence in popularity.

"The more I fish this pattern, the more 'go-to' consistently productive trees I find, and that shortens the process," he said. "Go now and go often to take advantage of this fishing. And it helps that we have an almost endless number of trees to fish in Lake Marion." ■

*Your Pontoon Restoration Specialist*

Ryan Stewart  
366 Neeley St.,  
Sumter, SC 29150  
**803-720-4105**  
www.ToonTimeSC.com  
rstewart@toontimesc.com  
f @ToonTimeSC

**Too Cold To Fish? NOT IN SANTEE COOPER COUNTRY**

**SANTEE COOPER COUNTRY** CALL FOR OUR TRAVEL GUIDE  
803-854-2131 FOLLOW US ON f  
FISHSANTEECOOPERCOUNTRY.COM



# **THE GRANDEST CAROLINA GAMEBIRD**

**THE RUFFED GROUSE IS LIMITED TO THE MOUNTAINS OF EXTREME WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA AND UPSTATE SOUTH CAROLINA. FIND PLACES WITH THE KIND OF HABITAT IT NEEDS, AND YOU'LL FIND THESE FEATHERED BOMBS.**

■ By Pete Rogers

**The truck barely rolled to a stop when the whimpering could be heard from the dog box in its bed. Preacher, my Boykin spaniel, was eager to get going on this cold, Carolina morning.**

**We parked along the edge of a gravel road in the Nantahala National Forest in western North Carolina, and we would spend the day scouring the hills and hollers for what is affectionately known as “the grandest of game birds” –**

## **THE RUFFED GROUSE.**

The ruffed grouse is referred to as “the grandest of game birds” for many reasons. As Mike Neiduski, the director of regional development for the Ruffed Grouse Society, said, “Grouse is the greatest of game birds, because he is a native bird to the United States, the level of difficulty to hunt them and because they are indicative of what the landscape should be.”

Neiduski said that where you find grouse, you find a healthy forest.

Finding suitable habitat in the Carolinas is the biggest challenge in hunting grouse, which need a “heavy stem density” — otherwise known as thick cover — to protect them from avian predation. The thicker the cover, the better.

“Grouse, more so than with prairie species, demand that you get intimate with them,” Neiduski said.

You must go where the birds are to find good hunting.

Both North Carolina and South Carolina incorporate the most-extreme southern range of the ruffed grouse. This alone makes it a challenge, but then you have to find where the few birds are living. The Nantahala and Pisgah national forests have more than a million acres of huntable habitat. In South Carolina, the Jocassee Gorges Wilderness Area and Watson Cooper Heritage Preserve are your best bets for finding grouse.

Again, the bird demands suitable habitat.

### **TIMBER MANAGEMENT NEEDS >**



The lordly ruffed grouse is one of North America's most-beautiful gamebirds, especially its unmistakable fan.

The Ruffed Grouse Society

## TIMBER MANAGEMENT NEEDS

A healthy forest needs to have about 14% of the land cut on a regular basis to provide suitable habitat for grouse, when, in fact, only 1% of these forests are cut.

“The issue is that many people do not understand that to have a healthy forest, regular rotation of trees, undergrowth and vegetation is necessary to keep not only the forest healthy but also the wildlife that call it home,” Neiduski said.”

Most of the timber in the Nantahala and Pisgah is 80 to 120 years old. So the diversity just isn't there. The same is true of Jocassee Gorges and Watson Cooper. Although this is changing slowly, it still is a difficult sell to people who love old-growth forests.

Having painted a bleak picture, let's spruce it up a bit.

Neiduski said that suitable habitat is available and a huntable population of grouse does exist in all of these areas.

“We just have to get out there and find it,” he says.



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

Today's technology of satellite photos and mapping software enables hunters to locate areas that have been cut most recently, and to key in on those areas. You may have to walk a bit to get to it,

but the land is available.

“A 10-mile day is common when hunting grouse,” Neiduski said, true regardless of where you are hunting.

## CLOSE-HUNTING DOGS

Most grouse hunters deploy dogs of some sort. Flushing dogs and pointing dogs dominate the landscape. Common breeds include the pointing breeds: German shorthair, German wirehair, English pointers, and English setters. The English pointers are less popular due to their desire to hunt one or two counties ahead of you; grouse hunters need a close-working dog, very close-working. If you cannot see your dog, he is ranging too far.

As one grouse hunter said, “I want to see my dog and feet at the same time.”

While that may be a bit too close for many, you get the gist.

Among the flushing breeds, spaniels dominate, with Brittanies and Springers being the most-popular. Recently the Boykin has gained popularity among grouse hunters. These smaller dogs can get into the cover the birds like and depend on.

“Look for areas with thick multiflora roses, greenbrier, blackberries, and the like to find the grouse,” Neiduski said. “You want cover thick enough that if your hat gets knocked off your head, it won't hit the ground.”

Rabbit hunters are used to this kind of cover, but in the mountains of the Carolinas, it's home to ruffed grouse.



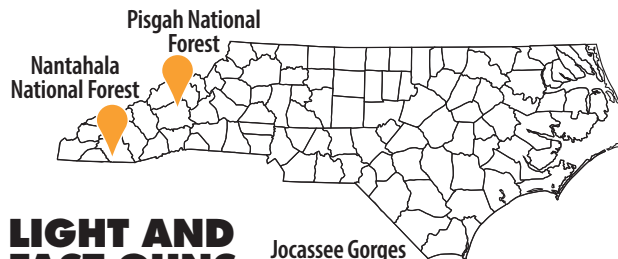
Dogs used in grouse hunting need to be close-working, pointing dogs that can sniff out a grouse before getting too close and bumping the bird.

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** Grouse found in the mountains love the thickest cover available, especially areas that have been timbered and regenerated.

Pete Rogers

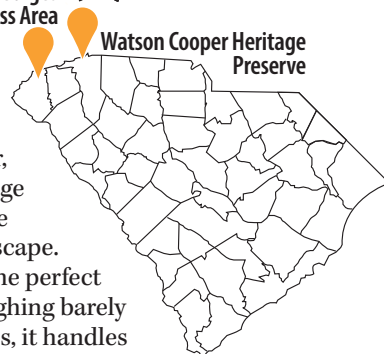


Pete Rogers



## LIGHT AND FAST GUNS

Jocassee Gorges Wilderness Area



Watson Cooper Heritage Preserve

Choosing a shotgun for grouse is essential. The classic side-by-side is a favorite. All gauges are represented on a hunt. However, it does seem that the old 16-gauge and a personal favorite 28-gauge side-by-side dominate the landscape. The CVA Bobwhite is perhaps the perfect grouse and woodcock gun. Weighing barely 5½ pounds with screw-in chokes, it handles fast and accurately. And with close shooting being the norm, improved cylinder is great in both barrels. Carrying it 7 to 10 miles a day, the light weight and fast handling are crucial to prevent extra fatigue and to connect on the shots that present themselves.

Grouse hunting in the Carolinas is not for the faint at heart, but as a friend, Bill Miller, put it, “What better way to spend an autumn day than walking through the woods with friends and a good dog, while pursuing the grandest of game birds.”

It’s hard not to agree. ■

**TWO BIRDS FOR ONE** ➤

THE NEW **ARGO 2021**

**AURORA 950 SX 8x8**

IS HERE.



**GO**  
ANYWHERE



© 2021 ARGO XTV. Riders must wear an approved helmet, eye protection, protective clothing and when operating in water always wear a personal flotation device. Use handholds and stay completely inside the vehicle. Never engage in stunt driving. Along with concerned conservationists everywhere, ARGO® urges you to respect public and private lands. Ride only on designated areas or trails. Preserve your future riding opportunities by showing respect for the environment, local laws and the rights of others when riding.

VISIT **BOST ARGO ATV SALES**

6540 HWY 152 EAST • ROCKWELL, NC 28138 • 704-279-5736 • WWW.ATVARGO.COM



Pete Rogers

# TWO BIRDS FOR ONE

Woodcock are commonly found in the same areas as grouse, as long as the ground is soft.

One of the advantages of grouse hunting is that the season — Oct. 18-Feb. 28 in North Carolina and Nov. 25-March 1 in South Carolina — coincides with the migration of the woodcock, a favorite of many small-game hunters.

Woodcock migrate from the northern states to the southern states as the weather pushes them. These odd-looking gamebirds are usually found in the same thick cover as grouse — as long as the ground is damp. Woodcock feed exclusively on earth-

worms, and they need moist ground to find these slimy delicacies.

Easy to identify, the woodcock is small, barely weighing 4 to 5 ounces with a bill that is 3 to 4 inches long. They are fast and agile but not good fliers for a migratory bird. Typically, woodcock will fly straight up to clear the understory and then take off. Shotgunners should wait until they reach their apex of height before pulling the trigger. Holding tight, it is not uncommon for woodcock to flush within inches of your feet. ■

**MARCH**  
WATER LILIES PLANTED

**JULY**  
ADULT LILIES FULLY GROWN

**OCTOBER**  
POND FULL OF DUCKS

*“My son and I followed Mr. Hills’ instructions for planting the shipment of banana water lilies...And within 5 months, we had new ducks feeding in our pond” - Chris B.*

See Us On Amazing Banana Water Lily, Reborn.mp4

DYNAMITE DUCK FOOD (843) 240-0530

www.BANANAWATERLILIES.com

www.FROSTWATERFOWL.com

The Wake County Wildlife Club Presents the...

41<sup>st</sup> Annual

# DIXIE DEER CLASSIC



**Don Higgins**  
HIGGINS OUTDOORS



**Roger Raglin**  
TV PERSONALITY



**Tom Miranda**  
ADVENTURE BOWHUNTER

**WE ARE BACK!**

**Carolina DockDogs**  
Jumping Competition



~WIN A NEW~  
**2022 ATV**

Sponsored by:



**Carolina DockDogs**  
"Where Dogs Get Excited!"  
www.carolindockdogs.com



All proceeds will fund  
WCWC Wildlife Conservation and Education programs.

- NC State Championship Turkey Calling Contest
- Get Your Trophy Deer Scored and Displayed on the "Bragging Boards"  
[Deer must be scored by 5pm Saturday to be eligible for awards. The DDC will only score deer that were harvested in compliance with the B&C and P&Y fair chase position statements.]
- Now Scoring Bear Skulls

THE VENISON CHILI CHAMPIONSHIP will feature up to 20 teams producing homestyle venison chili for competition.



- Scoring Deer Heads from the 2020 and 2021 Seasons
- Educational Courses for both Beginners and Seasoned Hunters
- Trail Cam Contest
- Youth Scavenger Hunt

**FRIDAY ONLY**

\$10 Admission for:  
military, first responders,  
women, youth 13-18, and 65+

**NC STATE FAIRGROUNDS**  
1025 Blue Ridge Road • Raleigh, NC 27607

**919.782.5333**

**Entry Price is \$15<sup>00</sup>**

That price includes **ENTRY ALL 3 DAYS** to all Workshops and Exhibits, Free Online Subscription to the Dixie Deer Classic Magazine and Entry to Win a large variety of hunting products. Kids 12 & Under are FREE.



[www.dixiedeerclassic.org](http://www.dixiedeerclassic.org)





**GRAND SOUTHERN PURSUIT  
STILL POSSIBLE THANKS TO  
SOUND MANAGEMENT BY  
WILDLIFE AGENCIES.**

**QUAIL HUNTING  
REMAINS A** ■ By Taylor Pardue  
**REALITY IN THE  
CAROLINAS**

Quail hunting with a side-by-side shotgun was the standard throughout the golden age of the sport. Today, over-and-unders are common.

# IT'S THE ICONIC CAROLINA SPORT: CHASING QUAIL WITH A TRUSTY SHOTGUN BEHIND AN EQUALLY TRUSTY BIRD DOG.

Mr. Bob once provided enough opportunities for the elite as well as the everyman. But his numbers have dropped considerably since those good old days. Land usage and management changes have led to a steep decline in bobwhite populations over the last 50 years. But bird hunters can still enjoy the grand old pursuit in North and South Carolina. They just have to know where to look.

## NORTH CAROLINA

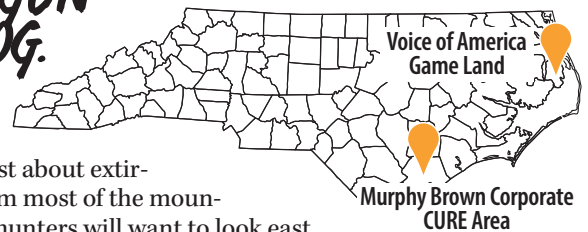
Christopher Kreh, former upland game bird biologist for the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) and the current assistant chief of its Game and Furbearer Program, said hunters in the Old North State have several options for pursuing bobwhites, although some are better than others.

“Quail populations are at their lowest point ever in North Carolina,” Kreh said. “They’re still fairly common in the coastal plain. And they’re getting pretty scarce in the Piedmont, and

they’re just about extirpated from most of the mountains. So hunters will want to look east of I-95.”

Fewer people, more active forestry management and agriculture mean the coastal plain can still hold these relatively high populations of quail. Hunters have several game lands to choose from here. Kreh recommends the permit-hunting options at the Voice of America Game Land and Murphy-Brown Corporate CURE Area. The deadline to apply for these permits is Oct. 1. So plan accordingly next season.

Historically, the Piedmont was the best bet for North Carolina bird hunters because of its soil quality and the number of small farms that dotted the landscape. Increasing urban development has changed that. But quail hunters can still find success in this region, too, if they do their homework.



## LEAVE SOME FOR TOMORROW >



Hunting preserves offer quail hunters the option of taking pheasants and/or chukars as well, adding even more excitement to the pursuit of Mr. Bob.

## LEAVE SOME FOR TOMORROW

While quail numbers are certainly low in the mountains, Kreh said some grouse and woodcock hunters will occasionally harvest a bobwhite if the habitat is right. Be sure to leave a few birds if you do happen across a covey in order to keep it going for future seasons.

Regardless of which game land you hunt, NCWRC makes it a point to manage each of them for a wide variety of species, including quail.

“We do a lot of habitat work on all of our game lands,” Kreh said. “A lot of prescribed fire, a lot of active timber management for low basal area and good herbaceous ground cover. That’s particularly true on the game lands in the eastern part of the state, where we’ve got a lot more row pines.”

For more information on quail hunting in North Carolina, visit [ncwildlife.org](http://ncwildlife.org).

## SOUTH CAROLINA

The Palmetto State has also seen a drop in quail populations over the years because of urbanization and changing land management. But it is currently seeing a resurgence thanks to a major investment in the species. In December 2014, the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) began work on the South Carolina Bobwhite Initiative. This program was designed to improve quail habitat on several public hunting areas across the state through controlled burning, tree thin-

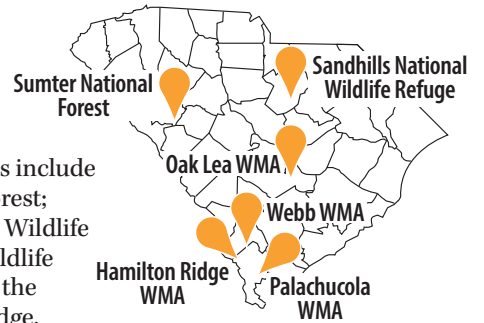
ning, and more.

These focal regions include Sumter National Forest; Sand Hills National Wildlife Refuge; Oak Lea Wildlife Management Area; the Webb, Hamilton Ridge, and Palachucola Wildlife Management Areas. And in September 2021, one was added on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers land in McCormick County.

The initiative’s goal is twofold: better the quail habitat on these public areas while also showing landowners how to do the same on private acreage. Michael Hook, SCDNR quail coordinator and Small Game Program leader, said the results have been very encouraging.

“We didn’t take ‘good’ quail habitat; we took what most people were dealing with here in South Carolina,” Hook said. “The idea was to show people you could do the work and the birds will respond.”

“In each one of these focal areas,” Hook added, “we have Farm Bill biologists, and their job is to go out into private individuals’ pieces of property, talk them through it, show them how to do it, find the cost-share monies that are available to do this work, and then implement it on their own property. So, you’re changing the whole landscape for quail — sort of a hub-and-spoke deal, where the focal areas — the public lands — are the hub and the private lands around them are the spokes.”



Quality quail hunting requires quality quail habitat, which includes thick, grassy, and weedy edges along fields and forests. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Quail numbers in North and South Carolina have fallen dramatically in the last 50 years, but each state is working to turn the tide through effective land management techniques.



## THINGS ARE LOOKING UP

It has taken the state a few years to begin to see the fruits of this initiative. That's understandable given the time needed to acquire permits for management on the various lands and then actually conduct the burns, thinning, etc. But two of the properties had record years in 2021 for spring counts, whistle counts, and fall covey counts.

"It's simple," Hook said. "In a pine system, you open up the pines, let some sunlight hit the ground, and then you maintain that weedy, nasty, grassy [ground cover] that we used to create by accident, and the birds will flourish. It takes thinning and burning — the two biggest keys."

The best part? These are native quail that already exist on the landscape, albeit in limited numbers. Hook said transplanting birds can speed up the process. But given the right habitat, wild birds will respond accordingly and repopulate the areas on their own.

"We'll go out to someone's property who hasn't seen a quail in years, and they'll ask you, 'Where did these birds come from?'"



Hook said. "I'll say, 'Look, you build it, they'll show up, and they're going to come.' You'll get a look of disbelief, but if they do the work, inevitably, in a couple of years, you'll get a phone call, 'Mike, you will not believe what I heard today. I heard a bird whistling on my property. I saw one run across my road.'"

For more information on the South Carolina Bobwhite Initiative, visit [scbobwhites.org](http://scbobwhites.org). ■



*Taylor Pardue is a freelance outdoor writer from Raleigh, N.C. He graduated from N.C. State with a degree in fisheries, wildlife and conservation biology, and is a former newspaper reporter. He is an avid duck hunter and runs a waterfowl-focused hunting blog titled "River Fowler."*

## PRESERVING THE PURSUIT

Chasing wild quail is considered the ideal hunting scenario by many, but hunters can still enjoy the thrill of rising birds through the numerous hunting preserves located across both states. These often have the added bonus of letting you use one of the lodge's trained bird dogs in lieu of your own, as well as prepping and packaging the birds for you after a hunt. Many preserves also offer clay shooting as a warm-up before the hunt.

Preserves let you add other species on to your hunt, too, including pheasants and/or chukars. These can give you different game meats to enjoy, a little more color in the bag, and a new challenge for your bird dog if they have never encountered these game birds.

Hunting preserves have maintained the legacy of quail hunting throughout the last few decades of population decline. And



Make sure that your bird dog is up for the challenge before a hunt, as you don't want to squander any chances on the coveys still available to you.

Taylor Pardue

while it is exciting to hear of the management efforts taking place across North and South Carolina, it remains to be seen if quail can ever fully reclaim the numbers they have lost since then. In order to protect these limited hunting opportunities, preserves will likely continue to be the best option for introducing youth to the sport or regularly working a new bird dog for the foreseeable future. ■

**ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN** ➤

## ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN

Pat Robertson



Eric Stout prepares tracking collars for the hunt.

Pat Robertson

# TRACKING COLLARS KEEP DOGS SAFE

## HUNTING DOGS NEED TRACKING COLLARS

**W**hile rabbit hunting last year Erik Stout realized one of his best beagles was not running with the pack. His GPS tracking monitor showed the dog was more than 300 yards from the pack – and not moving.

“I knew something was wrong,” Stout said.

He followed the GPS signal and as he got close to where it showed his beagle was located, he could hear sounds of distress.

“She sounded like she was choking. When I got to her I could see she had got her collar tangled in some vines and as she struggled to get free the vines were choking her so bad her eyes were almost bugging out.”

Stout rushed in and freed the beagle from the vines and soon she was back in the pack, giving chase to a rabbit.

“If I had not had that GPS collar on her and been able to get to her in time, I don’t know how bad that might have turned out,” he said.

After years of hunting deer and turkey about 15 or 16 years ago Stout returned

to the sport he had enjoyed as a youngster from the time he was 8-years-old until his teen years — rabbit hunting. He began meticulously building his beagle pack.

## TRACKING COLLARS SAVE THE DAY

The beagle breed shares one standout characteristic. Used primarily for hunting rabbits, they will give chase to any animal with a strong scent. Some will run after deer, others after foxes. They will even trail a flock of turkeys or a covey of quail. And sometimes they can’t find their way back to their pack once the thrill of that chase has waned.

“I had an older female that hunted out from the pack and got lost,” Stout said. “I spent four days straight hollering and calling her. I left my hunting shirt and even put a dog house there,” he said, noting that a dog sometimes will return to the last place it had been before going astray and will stay with the clothing holding the hunter’s familiar scent.

“On the seventh day a fellow called me and said ‘I have your dog. I got your phone number off the collar.’”

If he’d had a tracking collar on that dog he likely would have found her the same day she strayed from the pack. Determined to avoid losing any of his dogs, Stout first tried a couple of shock collars, using them to break dogs from chasing off on other game and teaching them to come to a tone emitted through the collar. He soon moved up to the Garmin Alpha Tracking System collars which have a shocking system and a tracking system all in one collar.

Tracking collars are now part of the regular equipment for many rabbit hunters, coon hunters and even bird hunters and waterfowl hunters, depending on



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.

the game and the terrain being hunted.

## KEEP TRACK, KEEP SAFE

Not only can he keep up with his pack when they are in full chase, Stout said, the collars provide an extra level of safety for the dogs.

“Population is increasing and there are more roads and more traffic close to places we have to hunt. If the dogs get close to a road, I can see exactly where they are and run out and get them away from the road.”

Other dangers are inherent in hunting and the collars have helped save his and other hunters’ dogs, he said.

“A friend was hunting when the signal from one of his hounds disappeared. A question mark on the monitor showed the spot where the signal was lost,” Stout said.

“He went to that spot and found his dog had fallen into an abandoned well. Without that GPS collar there would have been no way for him to have ever found his dog.”

Stout recalled another hunt where one of his older dogs suddenly left the pack and took off.

“I had just seen some coyotes when I noticed my dog had dropped out of the pack and was moving in the opposite direction. I think he saw those coyotes and got spooked,” Stout said. “Using the GPS, I found him hiding under a creek bank more than half a mile from where we had been hunting. If not for the GPS I would never have found him.”

Stout has been using the tracking collars for about eight hunting seasons. His beagles don’t leave the truck without wearing them. ■



Pat Robertson



# NEW YEAR! NEW GEAR!

FIREARMS • AMMUNITION • KNIVES • SAFES  
HUNTING • FISHING • GOLF & HUNTING CARTS  
CWP CLASSES • FIREARM SAFETY CLASSES  
CLOTHING • FOOTWEAR • SUNGLASSES  
GRILLS • COOLERS AND MORE!

1980 Mount Holly Road, Rock Hill, SC 29730 • I-77 Exit 73

[www.NicholsStore.com](http://www.NicholsStore.com) • 803-328-9792





**A**sk a 5-year-old what he wants to be when he grows up, and you'll get answers like astronaut, fireman or maybe even police officer.

This is just another example of why we don't let children vote. Because if these kids had any sense, they would know that the real dream job — the pinnacle of professional achievement — is to be a woodcock guide and dog trainer. Getting paid to traipse through shoulder-high patches of cane, knee-deep in a boot-sucking swamp chasing woodcock behind a brace of fine English setters is heaven on earth.

There's no doubt about it.

## **NORTH CAROLINA GUIDE, DOG TRAINER, SHARES HIS TIPS FOR TAKING CAROLINA TIMBERDOODLES.**

■ By Justin Goethe

# **WANT A WOODCOCK?**

# ENTER CASEY TRANTHAM.

Trantham and his wife, Mackenzie, live in Linwood, N.C. with their dogs: three English setters, two Boykin spaniels, and a French Brittany. For the past 2 years, when he is not working full-time driving a truck or training the next generation of pointers and retrievers at his kennel, Cedar Grove Gun Dogs, he's leading a lucky few hunters on guided woodcock hunts.

Why did he pursue the life of a woodcock hunting guide?

"That's simple. The bird honors the dog. If the bird is pointed by the dog, they hold tight until you walk in to flush, unlike pheasants out west or a lot of other birds that tend to move around after being pointed," Trantham said. "Also, I love the woods. I'm a woodsman at heart. Not many birds love the woods. Most are 'edge birds' around prairies or ragged edges around farmers' fields. Woodcock are different. You can enjoy a nice walk in the woods with your dogs and watch great dog work all at the same time."

It's not every day someone with his "dream job," shares his ideas about finding and flushing more woodcock with "lesser men." Here are five tips straight from the man himself:

## FIND GOOD "STEM DENSITY"

According to Trantham, "You want to find habitat with good stem density that provides a clean forest floor for them to move under the canopy. So they're protected from predators."

Be wary of thick habitat such as some privet patches that are so thick at the bottom you have difficulty moving through them. If you can't move your feet, it's likely that a woodcock can't move his, either. This is what makes cane such a great woodcock attractant. It grows straight up with leaves extending in all directions providing cover at the top and an open understory that allows birds to move around.

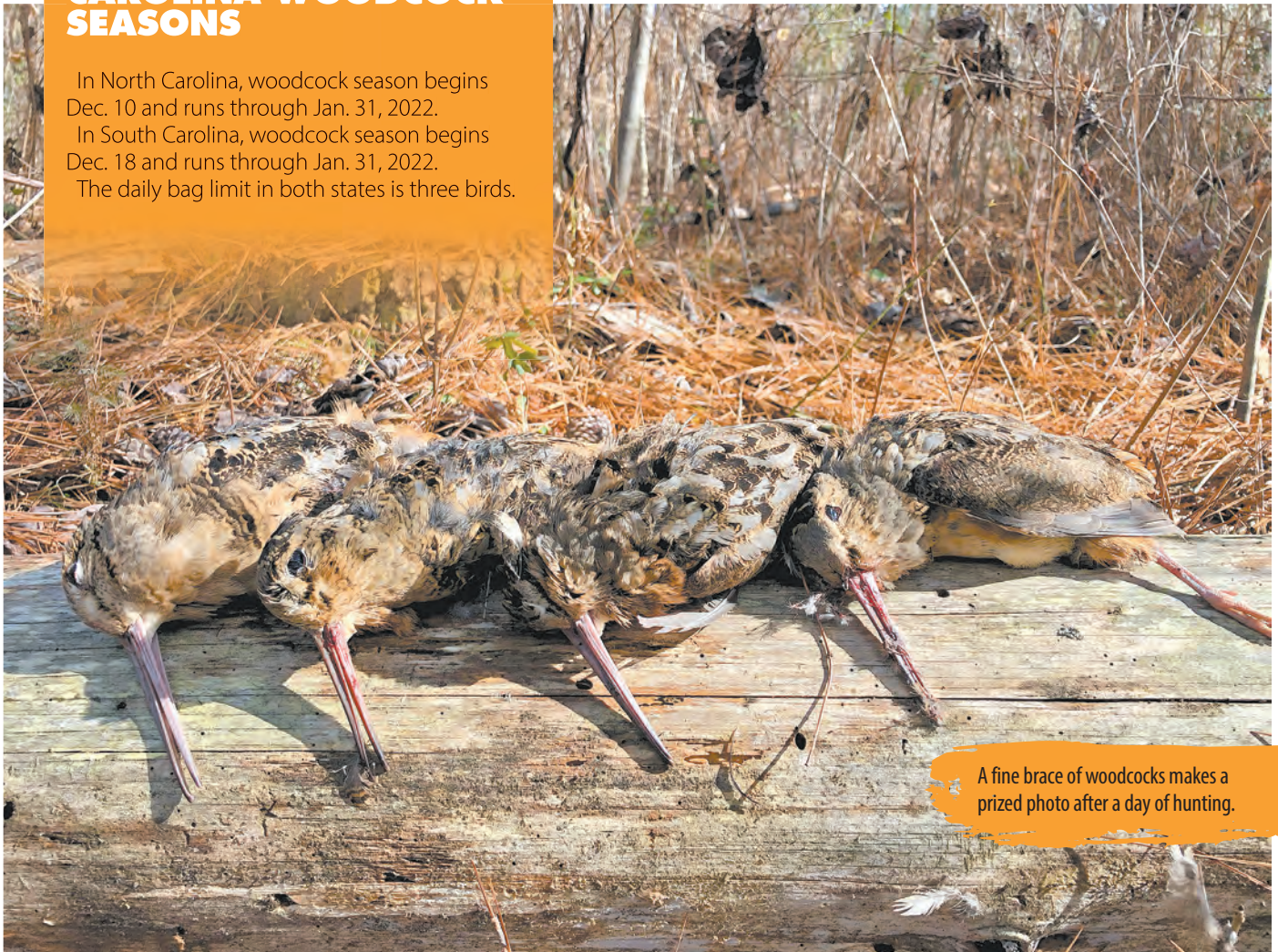
## HUNT DRAINAGES WHEN COLD ➤

### CAROLINA WOODCOCK SEASONS

In North Carolina, woodcock season begins Dec. 10 and runs through Jan. 31, 2022.

In South Carolina, woodcock season begins Dec. 18 and runs through Jan. 31, 2022.

The daily bag limit in both states is three birds.



A fine brace of woodcocks makes a prized photo after a day of hunting.

## HUNT DRAINAGES WHEN COLD

Ask any fisherman worth his salt and he'll tell you, if you aim to catch fish, you've got to watch the weather.

The same goes for woodcock.

These little migratory birds are constantly riding the freeze line up and down the coast in the winter, moving south to warmer climates when the cold winds begin to blow and moving back north as the cold fronts inevitably recede.

But knowing when the birds will begin moving into your area is only half the battle. To find them requires a bit more specialized knowledge.

For example, on mornings when the temperature dips below the freezing mark, you want to hunt around drainage ditches holding moisture in pine thickets.

"Needles hold moisture underneath. Look for skidder paths or old logging roads, anything that holds moisture so they can use their beak to pick worms," Trantham said. "However, when there is plenty of moisture from wet weather, try a hillside adjacent to covers that catch the morning sunlight. This type

of habitat is best hunted with close-working pointer breeds: Brittanies, French Brittanies, setters or flushing dogs like an English Springer spaniel."

In other words, worms will be attracted to wet soil that is maintaining a bit of warmth, and the birds will be attracted to the worms.

## NORTH-TO-SOUTH STREAMS

Similar to ducks, woodcock rely on a lot of factors to help them make their way south in the winter. The weather is a significant motivator to start them seeking warmer climates. But geographic landmarks also help them chart their course from the great snowy north to Palmetto-lined beaches of the Carolinas.

"Woodcock coming from the north love to use these north-to-south river systems to navigate at night," Trantham said. "I like to find a river or stream that sort of flows north-to-south and then look for a smaller tributary off of that main river. These smaller tributaries seem to consistently hold woodcock."

Casey Trantham's passion lies in hunting woodcocks and training dogs to do the same.



## MORE THAN JUST CANE

This may come as a shock to many hunters, but woodcock can be found in mature forest environments as well.

"I also like to look for short pines in between mature pines," Trantham said. "If you have some mature pines and a lot of short pines between 5 and 6 feet tall or other early growth near water or soft soil, you're going to more than likely be in birds."

"There's nothing wrong with some mature cover as long as the young growth is there as well. It only becomes a problem when there is **only** mature cover sucking out the nutrients and turning the soil acidic."

So, on days when your traditional coverts just aren't producing the way they should, don't hesitate to mix it up and look for timberdoodles in places that you may pass up for one reason or another but still have some of the prerequisites to keep woodcock fat and happy.

## MOVE AROUND

Did you notice a new covert on the way to the woods that looked like it might hold moisture? Give it a shot. It is surprising how many people hunt the same spots over and over. We all have our favorite coverts. But if you're going to learn to consistently find birds, you can't be afraid to try new places. You might be surprised at what other tips and tricks you may discover in the process.

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing and expecting different results. If you find yourself in a bird-hunting rut, check out that other public land in the neighboring county instead of the one just down the road. It might prove to be worth the trip. ■

*To reach Casey Trantham about guided woodcock hunts, call 336-239-6550.*



**Justin Goethe** of Summerville, S.C. is an industrial engineer and freelance writer who regularly tags along behind his wife, two kids and Brittany spaniel, Gladys.



Woodcocks prefer overhead cover with open ground areas underneath. **ABOVE:** Watching the dogs work is a big part of Woodcock hunting.

A man with a beard and a camouflage cap is kneeling in a field at night. He is wearing a camouflage jacket and has a rifle slung over his shoulder. In front of him lies a dead wolf, its head resting on the ground. The scene is illuminated by a bright light source, possibly a flashlight or a spotlight, creating a high-contrast, dramatic effect. The background is dark and indistinct.

WITH DEER SEASON  
ON ITS WAY OUT, IT'S  
TIME TO DO SOME  
PREDATOR CONTROL.

■ By Phillip Gentry

# SONGS OF THE DOG

# Gene Wisnewski of Simpsonville, S.C., had just finished adjusting the third leg of the tripod that supported his 6.5 Grendel predator rifle when the

## FIRST DOG SOUNDED OFF IN RESPONSE TO HIS CALL.

Unlike most call and response hunting, be it deer, turkey, ducks or whatever, Wisnewski wasn't surprised. He'd already scanned the area and saw, literally, that there was a pack of coyotes milling about down in the draw to his left.

What did surprise him was that only one responded. He flipped his wrist and depressed a button on the remote control of his electronic calling system while maneuvering the rifle on the pod. A series of estrous chirps erupted from the loudspeaker he'd placed between himself and the draw.

That did the trick. He both saw through his hand-held thermal scanner and heard what was at least two and possibly as many as five coyotes begin to file rapidly up the slight incline where he held the high ground.

The dogs weren't going to like what they found at the top of the draw. But by then it would be too late. It was getting ready to go down.

### PEAK SEASON

Wisnewski said night hunting for predators, specifically coyotes, will be reaching its peak in the next two months as the mating season ramps up. More so than at any other time, coyote hunting will be most effective using only coyote vocalization calls. It's also a time to drop the run-and-gun strategies that he uses most of the year and pick a spot and make the 'yotes come to him.

"January is when I kill most of my coyotes," said Wisnewski. "It's easier to do if you understand the language of the coyotes. The females make a lot of sounds — calls, yips and chirps — and a guy who has a lot of the proper responses on his electronic caller and knows his remote by feel can kill a bunch of them."

Coyote hunting has become a very technologically advanced pursuit. Wisnewski employs the latest predator-hunting gear when pursuing coyotes after dark. At the heart of this gear is his electronic caller. He said the better systems will come pre-loaded with the basic calls and allow you to add vocalizations that meet your specific needs.

"I use a model made by ICOTec, which allows me to play two sounds at once and gets more responses from the coyotes," he said. "Plus, any new sounds they come out with are free to download."



Phillip Gentry

A coyote's body language often communicates as much as its vocalization.

### MATING CALLS >

## MATING CALLS

Wisnewski relies on only mating calls in January. No prey calls are used because, similar to deer hunting during the rut, all attention is focused on mating rather than eating. He'll also pick a spot to hunt, based on what he's experienced in the past several days and what he already knows about the lands he's hunting, and make his stand.

He picks his hunting areas based on location, where he can see long distances. If he sends out an invitation and gets a response from far away, he has the option of trying to get closer. But most nights, he'll make a mental note and get closer on his next outing and move on to another property rather than trying to move in closer in turkey hunting fashion.

His effective killing range is out to 250 yards. But a normal shot will be in the 100- to 150-yard range. He'll place the electronic caller about 50 yards in front of his setup and maybe to one side so he can get a good angle for the shot or shots when coyotes investigate.

## CALLING STRATEGIES

Wisnewski has a gamut of calling strategies but must be able to adapt, based on both the responses and the body language of the coyotes as seen through his thermal vision scanner.

"I use some howls with barks mixed in," he said. "Challenge calls, and I'm talking about both males and females here,

because the females will come in to protect their territory from another female. And the males will come in to breed or watch a female dog fight."

Another strategy may involve the whole pack if he can identify and knows one pack's territory from another. The right calls can spark a border war. Such a scenario will have the hunter switching pre-sets back and forth from mating calls to challenge calls to howls, which fill the night sky with sound.

"It's important when you're communicating with coyotes to vary the levels of aggression in your calling," said Wisnewski. "Start with lower and move up, from double-dog dare to triple-dog dare you."

## VARY YOUR TIMING

That said, hunting under the wrong conditions or making some critical mistakes can ruin a hunt. And the hunter may not even realize why.

"I hunt several properties for coyotes, but I try to vary the times of night that I hunt them," said Wisnewski. "You don't want the coyotes to pattern you at all. I may hit four or five properties in a night, and I always reverse



**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.



Gene Wisnewski



Phillip Gentry

Both males and females will respond to estrous calls and chirps signalling a new female is ready for breeding. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Tricking predators into a territory border confrontation is a good way to make multiple kills in one sit.

order from the last time I hunted so I'm visiting that particular property at a different time of night."

Wisniewski also pays close attention to the moon when he's hunting. He wants to be in the dark as much as possible and never hunts when the moon is greater than 50% visible in the sky.

"On nights that have more than 50% moon, you can still hunt, but I look at the moonrise and moonset times and only hunt before the moon rises or after it sets for the night," he said. ■

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE ➤

### 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 Game Zone 2 Game Zone 4 (Georgetown, Horry, Marion and Williamsburg counties)	Oct. 17-23 (still hunting only) Oct. 24-30 (dogs) Oct. 17-30 (still hunting only) Oct. 17-30 (still hunting only)	
Rails	Sept. 8-12, King & Clapper Sora & Virginia Gallinules (common/purple)	Oct. 4-Dec. 7 15 25 15	45 75 45
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
<b>Youth Days:</b> 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

# TOOLS OF THE TRADE

The tools that Gene Wisnewski uses for predator hunting at night are all top-of-the-line equipment, each with varying degrees of expense. In his opinion, it's best to go with the best manufacturers and work your way up their product line as you get deeper into the sport, rather than starting with inferior equipment.

## THERMAL SCANNER: ATN OTS MONOCULAR

The ATN OTS-XLT Thermal Imaging Monocular was designed for observation, highest temperature target tracking and distance measurement.

The high-sensitivity, built-in thermal detector provides a clear view, even in total darkness. The OTS-XLT works well in many

outdoor settings such as law enforcement, patrolling, hunting, hiking and traveling. More info at [atncorp.com](http://atncorp.com)

## NIGHT VISION SCOPE: ATN X-SIGHT NIGHT VISION SCOPE

Increase the versatility of your rifle with an ATN X-Sight Day/Night Rifle Scope kit that enables you to shoot day or night. This advanced digital scope utilizes an advanced Obsidian IV Dual Core — a highly specialized computer, featuring a high-resolution sensor with distinct night vision capability. An integrated smart rangefinder estimates the distance to your target, and by taking just two readings on your target, the scope not only estimates the range but also adjusts your reticle's point of impact instantaneously.

Some X-Sight models also take full HD video clips so you can share your hunting experiences with friends. The Recoil Activated Video (RAV) system automatically records video starting just before the trigger is pulled. Wi-Fi streaming allows you to use a smartphone/tablet as a viewfinder. It easily mounts to firearms using standard 30mm rings. More info at [atncorp.com](http://atncorp.com)

Gene Wisnewski



**ELECTRONIC CALLER:**  
*ICOTEC GEN2 ELECTRIC GAME CALL*

The ICOTec Gen2 Electric Game Call offers outstanding remote technology with a 300-yard range, with no line-of-sight required between the remote and the speaker unit. The game call comes with up to 200 prerecorded sounds depending on the model. The remote features a large screen font, a backlit button on/off switch, decoy activation button and a pause-call button. Programmability is made easy as calls can be loaded and played directly from a standard size SD card. Any custom audio file saved as an .mp3 or a .wav file format can be played in this electric game call.

ICOTec has an exclusive, free audio call library that's accessible from the website. The ICOTec Gen2 Electric Game Call is a lightweight, compact unit that is easy to carry and quick to set up. Speaker unit runs on four AA batteries, and the remote runs on one 9V battery. The unit has an external speaker port and a decoy port and includes a remote sync cable and computer USB connection cable. More info at icotec.com. ■

**GREENER PASTURES** ➤

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** Gene Wisnewski recommends starting with quality equipment and advancing your way up the line as your interest in the sport grows.

**CHEROKEE RUN**  
Hunting Lodge  
Hunt deer, wild boar & turkey in the wilds of South Carolina

Trophy Managed  
Whitetail on the  
Great Pee Dee River

HOME OF THE 600 LB  
"GREY GHOST"

**NIGHT HOG: JAN 1 - AUG 31**  
**SC RIFLE DEER: SEP 1 - JAN 1**  
**SC WILD BOAR: YEAR ROUND SEASON**  
**SC TURKEY: MAR 22 - APR 30**  
DEER/BOAR OR TURKEY/BOAR COMBOS

Located on the border in beautiful Chesterfield County SC, one hour from Charlotte, NC. Comfortable lodging including satellite TV, pool table, bass ponds, rifle & 3-D archery range.

704-301-7950 • eatsleephunt.com

**Black's Camp**  
on the  
Santee Cooper Lake System

**Deep Water Access to Diversion Canal and Both Lakes...**  
Boat Launch is Protected From Wind and Current.

**THE STRIPED BASS ARE BACK!**

**Bait • Ice • Fuel Available**

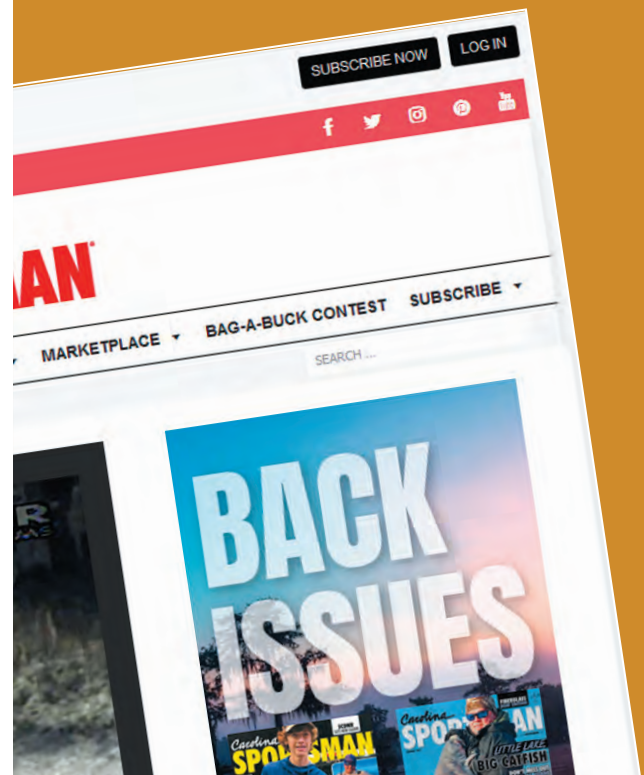
**FOOD TO GO, ORDER ONLINE**

Please Call Us For  
Campground  
Lodging &  
Guide Service  
Availability

Cross, South Carolina 29436  
**(843) 753-2231**  
www.blackscamp.com

**ARE YOU A SPORTSMAN SUBSCRIBER?**  
then you are already a member!

Simply log in to get full web access on all smart devices and our monthly print magazine



**GO SPORTSMAN:**  
**CAROLINASPORTSMAN.COM**



January is a great time to find out which bucks are still hanging out on your hunting land.



Jeff Burleson

# TIME FOR POST-SEASON SCOUTING

HUNTERS CAN LEARN A LOT ABOUT THEIR DEER HERD THIS MONTH

**M**ost Carolina hunters have dedicated months in a tree stand or ground blind to chase their favorite four-legged targets. From carefully studying trail camera footage to crucial time on stand, hunters have put a great deal of effort into their favorite sport.

Some hunters have shot the buck of their dreams. Others have a logbook full of follies or just absent opportunities. Regardless, when Jan. 2 rolls around, deer hunters are finally forced to take a rest from pursuing deer. But January is the perfect time to gather post-season intelligence and figure out what they have been missing.

Most deer hunters invest time, energy, and a sack full of money into their hunting aspirations. Any educated analyst would frown on the cost per ounce of venison acquired after the dollars and hours invested. But anybody that understands hunting realizes the cost

per ounce of protein isn't what hunting is all about. It is really about the art of the chase. Venison in the freezer and on the table is just an added benefit.

## GET IN THE WOODS

Hunters spend countless hours thinking about hunting deer on their properties. But if a mature buck is on their radar, spending lots of time in the woods during the season is a definite no-no. Hunters must study their deer from afar with the least amount of human interference as possible during the season. Frankly, mature bucks don't survive through the four-month deer seasons by acting stupid. And if they survive their brief periods of poor judgment during the rut, they will elude most hunters for another year.

The post-season can be the optimal time for hunters to strap up their boots and venture into the protected woodlots to gain intelligence and check off a few

boxes on their list of unknowns.

Now is the perfect time to trample the woods to find those rub lines, scrape lines, and just basically uncover where the deer have been living for the past few months. Deer generally follow the same patterns on most properties. But they will make changes from year to year when food, pressure, or something changes.

January is the perfect time to figure out what deer have been doing for the last four months to make changes for next year. It also doesn't hurt that it's cool, leaves are gone, and the travel patterns of the deer are presently active.

Hunters should take the opportunity to make stand adjustments as needed. Or



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.

maybe even set up a new stand in an area with high activity for the following season.

Getting out on foot and inspecting the interior of the property is a crucial act this month. But camera surveillance is also a great post-season scouting tool. Deer experience some of the coldest temperatures of the year in January at a time when many natural foods are scarce.

For deer lucky enough to have a landowner with a thriving food plot of winter wheat, triticale, oats, or brassicas, ample nutrition can be available. But for most deer, its low-quality browse and maybe a few leftover red oak acorns. Supplemental feeding in January and February is a highly effective method to concentrate deer in certain areas. Deer will let their guards down and will feed as long as the food is available.

Trail cameras set up at these food plots can easily provide a post-season inventory of all the bucks utilizing the property. And many of these bucks that are present right now typically call this area home. So it is a good indicator of next season's stock.

January is an ideal time to gain crucial intelligence of the deer's movements, activity, and then the surviving bucks on the property. From using trail cameras over supplemental feed to putting boots on the ground, these post-season activities will give dedicated hunters a better understanding of their deer herd on their hunting properties. ■



**COOKING ON THE WILD SIDE ➤**

**HUNTING SEASONS**

**DEER**

<b>Western</b>	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
<b>Northwestern</b>	Bowhunting	Sept. 11-Nov. 5
	Muzzleloader	Nov. 6-19
	Gun	Nov. 20-Jan. 1, 2022
<b>Central</b>	Bowhunting	Sept. 11-Oct. 29
	Muzzleloader	Oct. 30-Nov. 12
	Gun	Nov. 13-Jan. 1, 2022
<b>Northeastern/ Southeastern</b>	Bowhunting	Sept. 11-Oct. 1
	Muzzleloader	Oct. 2-15
	Gun	Oct. 16-Jan. 1, 2022

**BEAR**

<b>Oct. 18-Nov. 20 &amp; Dec. 13-Jan. 1, 2022:</b>	In and west of Surry, Wilkes, Caldwell, Burke and Cleveland counties
<b>Nov. 13-Jan. 1, 2022:</b>	Alamance, Anson, Cabarrus, Caswell, Chatham, Davidson, Durham, Granville, Guilford, Lee, Mecklenburg, Montgomery, Orange, Person, Randolph, Rockingham, Rowan, Stanly, Union counties
<b>Oct. 16-Jan. 1, 2022:</b>	Franklin, Harnett, Hoke, Johnston, Moore, Richmond, Scotland, Vance, Warren, Wake counties
<b>Nov. 20-Jan. 1, 2022:</b>	Alexander, Catawba, Davie, Forsyth, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Stokes, Yadkin counties
<b>Nov. 8-Jan. 1, 2022:</b>	Bladen, Brunswick, Carteret, Columbus, Cumberland, Duplin, New Hanover, Onslow, Pamlico, Pender, Robeson, Sampson counties
<b>Nov. 13-28, Dec. 11-26:</b>	Dare, Hyde, Tyrrell counties
<b>Nov. 13-21, Dec. 11-26:</b>	Beaufort, Bertie, Craven, Hertford, Jones, Martin, Washington counties
<b>Nov. 13-21 Dec. 12-27:</b>	Camden*, Chowan*, Currituck Gates, Pasquotank*, Perquimans (*Seasons open Nov. 12 by local laws)
<b>Nov. 20-Dec. 19:</b>	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

Jerry Diltsaver

## VENISON AND BLACK BEAN SOUP

FILLING AND WARMING ON COLD WINTER DAYS



Make more than you think you'll need, especially if cooking at hunting camp or large gatherings.

**W**e don't have continuously freezing weather in the Carolinas, but for folks used to wearing shorts and flip-flops, it's cold. We still hunt and fish, but we crave something to warm us up after our forays into the cold. Some folks could eat a big, steaming bowl of soup or stew for just about every meal during the cold months and not complain.

I prefer something with fish or game in it, but that's not always appealing to children, wives, girlfriends and hunting and fishing buds. After the second day, venison chili gets old to them and they want something different.

This thick, hearty, winter soup recipe isn't quite as robust as venison chili. But it still shoos that chill to the bone away. It tastes good too.

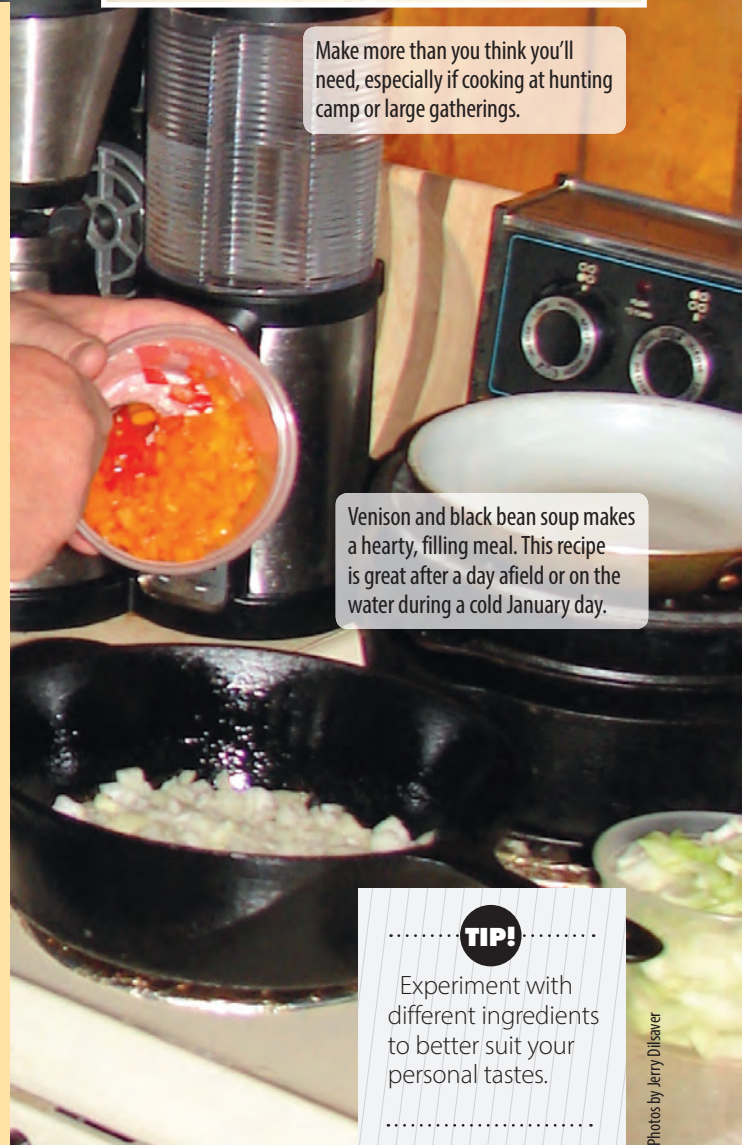
The main ingredients in venison and black bean soup are ground venison and black beans. Add some diced tomatoes, onions, a little garlic and some baby bell peppers and it begins to get interesting. Including green chilies and bok choy is a combination you probably haven't used before.

This is ideal for warming up during those cold days in January. Deer season has passed, but sportsmen are still in the woods, fields and duck swamps, mountain streams and coastal marshes. Whatever the outside activity, this soup will fill you up and warm your body. It's also mild enough for a family lunch or dinner on a lazy winter day.

So far, I've only made this on the stove top or over an open burner. But it's almost perfect for simmering in a crock pot. Once all the ingredients are sauteed and mixed, it could be spooned into a crock pot and left on low or warm to be ready to eat when you return.

I generally make this with plain ground venison, but occasionally use venison sausage to add a little more spice.

If you prepare this for a Saturday lunch at the hunting club, it would be wise to at least double and maybe triple the recipe. This is a good amount for a family or a few friends. But cold hunters and fishermen are usually packing big appetites and it's not good to leave anyone hungry. Any of them may like it enough to volunteer to provide the venison if you'll make another batch. ■



Venison and black bean soup makes a hearty, filling meal. This recipe is great after a day afield or on the water during a cold January day.

### TIP!

Experiment with different ingredients to better suit your personal tastes.

Photos by Jerry Diltsaver

# WARM THE SOUL WITH THIS RECIPE

I like venison, black beans and soup, so it was only natural to combine them. I prefer hearty, thick soups to thin ones. This one fills that bill. It is filling and warming and is just the ticket for a meal or snack on a cold day. This version is mild, but can easily be made more robust by using venison sausage, a Rotel blend instead of plain tomatoes, adding jalapeno peppers and hot sauce.

My wife prefers it with tortilla chips, specifically the blue ones. I like it with saltines and oyster crackers. One of my friends adds a second cup of broth and serves it with a scoop of rice, like gumbo. Another says it is best with a dollop of sour cream on top. And yet another likes to sprinkle it with cheese. There are undoubtedly other options too and I suggest you try them. If something really stands out, please let me know.

Some folks will think the preparation steps are out of order and that browning the venison should be first, then sauteing the vegetables in

the drippings.

I mix my venison burger and sausage very lean with almost no drippings. It's so lean I spray the pan with non-stick even when cooking burgers. For this recipe, I simply sauté the vegetables in the buttery, non-stick spray and then mix the venison in so any drippings from it will be absorbed into the onions and bok choy.

Don't ask about the teaspoon of bacon grease. It's a secret ingredient and just understand that it works!

I have a stock pot, but prefer to cook this in a cast iron pot. Cast iron distributes heat well and eliminates cold spots out at the edges and hot spots over the burner rings. I have a deep cast iron frying pan that used to be used for frying fish and chicken that is well-seasoned and cooks just right. These ingredients fill that pot absolutely full and that was intentional.

Enjoy! ■

## PREPARATION:

1. Chop the onion, bok choy, and bell peppers.
2. Use the non-stick cooking spray to cover the bottom of the cast iron pot.
3. Sauté the onions, garlic, bell peppers and bok choy to soften them and break the glaze on the onions while sprinkling in a teaspoon of pepper.
4. When almost done, add the teaspoon of bacon grease and stir to mix it in.
5. Add the venison and more pepper (to taste) and stir frequently until the venison is lightly browned.
6. Add the cup of chicken broth, undrained black beans, undrained tomatoes and undrained green chilies and stir them in well.
7. With the burner on medium, bring the mixture to a light boil for 2 minutes, stirring frequently.
8. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.
9. Reduce heat to warm and serve.

This goes well with a green salad or lettuce wedge to begin. Serve it accompanied by tortilla chips, oyster crackers or saltines. Those that like to add dessert will find it hard to beat a bowl of fresh out of the oven bread pudding to top things off. ■

### TIP!

Bok choy adds texture and a smooth taste that offers a little something extra to this dish.

## INGREDIENTS:

- 1 Pound ground venison,
- 1 Can seasoned black beans.
- 1 Can diced tomatoes,
- 1 Can green chilies,
- 1 Large sweet onion,
- 2 Heads baby bok choy,
- 4 Baby bell peppers (assorted colors),
- 1/2 TSP granulated garlic,
- 1 Cup chicken broth,
- 1 TSP bacon grease,
- Coarse ground black pepper,
- Tortilla chips/oyster crackers/saltines
- Buttery flavor non-stick cooking spray,
- A large pot – preferably cast iron.



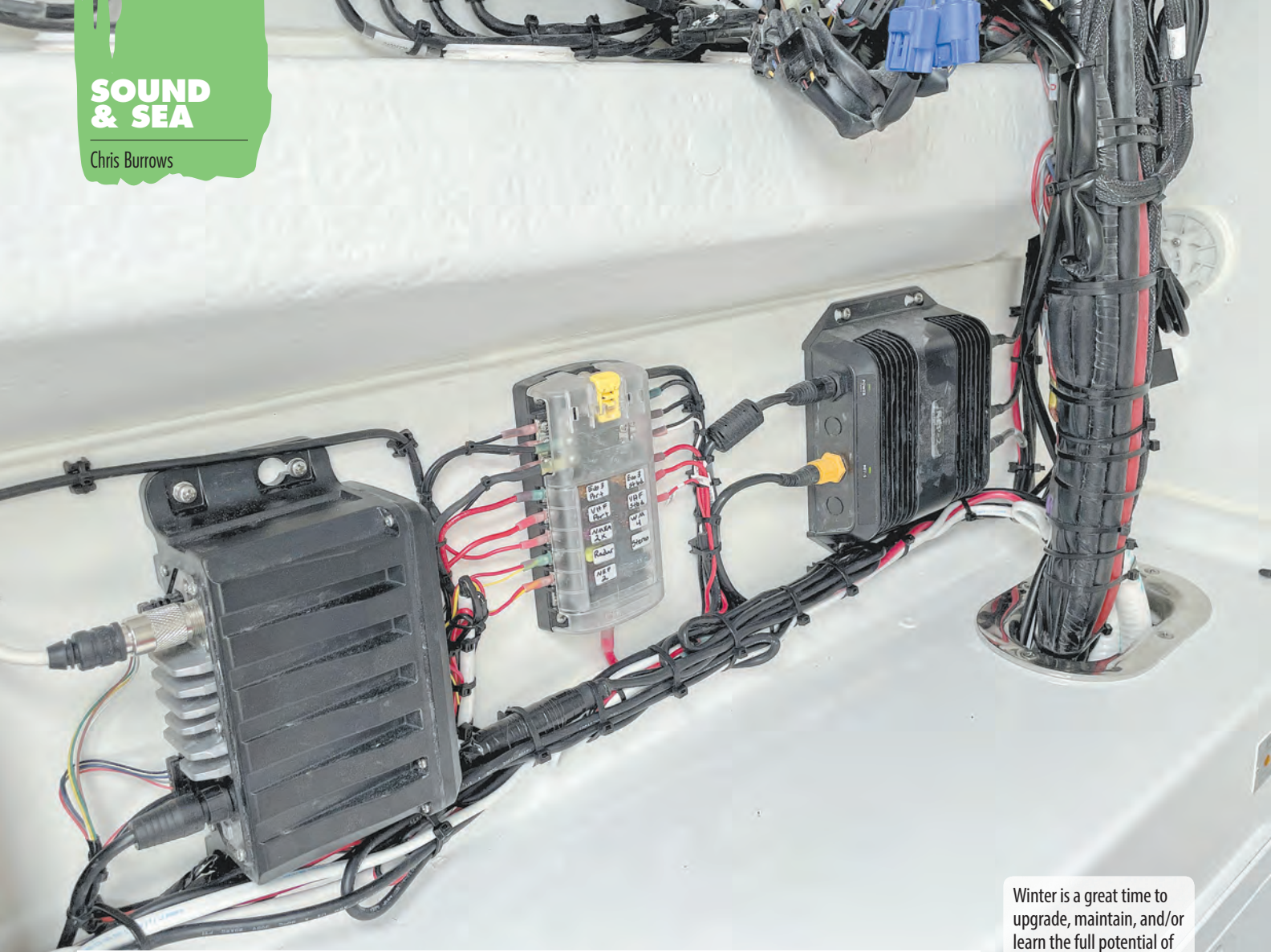
Oyster crackers and tortilla chips go well with this hearty recipe.

### TIP!

Double the ingredients when making this recipe at hunting camp or large gatherings.



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



Winter is a great time to upgrade, maintain, and/or learn the full potential of your boat's electronics.

Chris Burrows

# TAME YOUR ELECTRONICS GAME DURING WINTER

USE TIME OFF THE WATER TO LEARN YOUR ELECTRONICS' FULL POTENTIAL

**J**anuary can be a depressing month for saltwater anglers in the Carolinas. Sure, bluebird days can occur, allowing us to sneak out on the water. But the vast majority of the species that we target here are in very short supply compared to the warmer months. The days are short and can be brutally cold for weeks at a time. Using the forced break to elevate your electronics game is one key to avoiding winter depression, and to staying on top of your game.

Having both fished for a living and been a seller/installer of marine electronics, I am astounded at how much technology has advanced in this field in the last 10 to 15 years. When I started charter fish-

ing, Loran-C was being quickly phased out by GPS systems. Those GPS units represented a quantum leap forward in the industry. But compared with what we have now, they were extremely clunky and cumbersome. Now, a fairly inexpensive GPS antenna has 32 channels, allowing it to be infinitely more precise and faster than a generation ago. NMEA 2000 has become the standard in networking for on board systems. And it is much more user friendly than the old NMEA 0183 devices. Building your own NMEA 2000 networked system that allows your chartplotter, radar unit, autopilot, bottom machine, engine gauges, VHF, and even stereo to all "talk" to each other can be accomplished by even a novice do-it-

yourself, just by following the manual. This was not even close to the case with the NMEA 0183 devices. Perhaps the most impressive advance, however, has been that of transducer technology. The old transducer "cone" still exists, but has been heavily augmented with units that scan to the side or scan down in much greater detail. CHIRP technology allows the use of multiple frequencies at the same time for better bottom detail,



**Chris Burrows** of Shallotte, N.C., has fished out of Charleston and Georgetown, SC, but he has lived in Brunswick County, N.C., since 2005. He runs Carolina Wing & Fish Company in Shallotte but still fishes whenever he gets a free second.

especially in deep water. At the end of the day, fish are in more danger than ever.

If you have an older boat and you are considering an electronics upgrade, the winter is definitely the time to pull the trigger. This past season's units are definitely on sale by this point, making room for the new sets. As always, do your research before you buy. If the next year's upgrade is simply a change in cartography, it might be a good time to save hundreds of dollars. However, if the change to a new unit means a faster processor or more sonar options, then it might make sense to go ahead and spend extra for the latest model.

If you are having a shop or your dealership install the unit, the wait time is going to be a lot less in January than it will be in April, when good installers can get a month or two behind due to high volume. If you're doing it yourself, you can take your time and not fret about losing time on the water during the upgrade.

Even if you are not in the market to upgrade, take the opportunity to go through the systems that are in place and make sure that you are set up for success for the season.

Check your electrical connections and fuses to make sure no corrosion will knock out your unit when you least expect it. If you see green on the fuse block, clean it all and use dielectric grease to keep it from building back up.

Check your cables and make sure they are secured neatly inside the console and the bilge so they don't work themselves loose and get damaged.

Back up the waypoints in your chartplotter onto an SD card or even your phone, just in case you ever need to reinstall them. Most units also take periodic software upgrades. These can usually be downloaded for free from the product's website. Ultimately, you want to have everything shipshape and ready just as soon as the weather gets right.

Finally, the winter doldrums present the best opportunity for a fisherman to fully learn the capabilities of their electronics.

I will openly admit that just like my cell phone, I used about ten percent of my elec-

tronics' potential.

Derek Treffinger, who owns Fully Loaded Marine in Shallotte, NC (704-616-1615) specializes in installing new electronics configurations in boats of all sizes. Part of his business is teaching his customers how to use their new systems most efficiently, ultimately so that they catch more fish!

Treffinger is even planning an electronics class where attendees can learn not only at a display stand, but also on the water. That's not a bad way to jump start your fishing season.

However you choose to go about it, don't let the winter's window of opportunity pass you by. Get ahead on your electronics game. It will serve you well when the weather warms and it's time to get the boat dirty. ■

**ON A TRAILER OR LIFT...  
WE KEEP YOU COVERED!**

REMOVABLE SAND BAG WEIGHTS AVAILABLE

**1-800-334-8277**  
2330 Womble-Brooks Rd.  
Wilson, NC 27893

**O'BRIAN**  
CUSTOM BOAT COVERS



## SPORTSMAN FISHING HOTSPOTS

### LOWER CAPE FEAR Reds, blacks and specks

**T** By Jerry Dilsaver  
he Cape Fear River is the only large N.C. river that flows directly into the ocean. The strong flow spreads out in the lower river. Red drum, black drum and speckled trout manage well in the bays, creeks and marshes away from the colder winter water and stronger currents of the shipping channel. In many places, the water doesn't exchange entirely on every tide cycle. These places are typically a degree or two warmer. And that's a beacon to the bait and fish wintering in the Cape Fear River system below Snows Cut.

Much of this area is shallow water, requiring shallow draft boats and lots of knowledge or slow navigation. Ramps are present at Carolina Beach and Fort Fisher on the east side of the river and at Southport on the west side. The tide change is approximately 4 feet on an average day and can approach 7 feet on a lunar tide. This amount of change definitely moves any bait remaining in the creeks and marshes, but doesn't always move it far. It also affects navigation through the marshes and creeks.

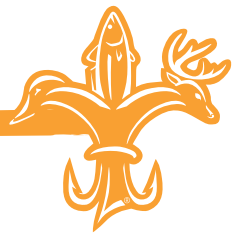
Captain Jeff Wolfe and his son, Captain Christian Wolf ([www.seahawkinshorefishingcharters.com](http://www.seahawkinshorefishingcharters.com), 910-619-9580 or

910-619-5053) fish this area year-round and enjoy good catches of specks, reds and black drum during the winter months.

#### GET AWAY FROM THE CROWD

Christian Wolf said everyone has heard of the Basin, Second Bay and Buzzard Bay and they can get crowded on a nice day. He and his dad like to run past them, deeper into the marsh, where many folks won't go. The fish aren't as spooky away from so many boats running over them and they are usually in a mood to bite. Folks unfamiliar with the marshes and creeks should move slowly and be aware of the tides to avoid being stranded. It can be a long cold wait for the tide to come back in.

Wolfe said speckled trout and red drum will usually hit lures, just not with the same enthusiasm as in warmer water. Black drum don't seem to like lures as much, but will occasionally hit them. Soft plastics, fished slowly on light jigheads are their go-to choices for this fishing. Black drum usually prefer pieces of shrimp or cut bait and their red cousins will eat them too. A Carolina rig works well for fishing natural bait. ■



# GEORGETOWN REDS ARE SCHOOLED UP

## Catch them with scented soft plastics

By Jeff Burleson

**F**or redfish anglers, the wintertime bite can be off the chain this time of year. And the marshes near Georgetown, S.C. historically bring excellent winter action for reds with the right types of bait.

Redfish can provide bumper days on the water at any time of year. The winter months often provide above average days, sometimes from the same staked-out position in the marsh. This time of year, redfish school up into large groups in the back-country marsh areas and keep warm on mud flats near a slightly deeper creek bend. They may not eat as readily as they do in October or June, but a well placed bait or lure can still bring heavy action.

In the Georgetown area, Guide Greg Holmes of Fish Skinny Charters lives up to his name and fishes the skinny waters around the region.

"Redfish school up in the back of the creeks," said Holmes (843-241-0594) "They're in large schools, sometimes with over 100 fish in them."

Holmes usually finds them in some of the same creeks year after year. And he targets them at low tide when the fish are corralled

in the limited water available on this tidal stage.

"Reds in these areas are sometimes lethargic. But they can surely be enticed to eat the right bait. It's hard to beat a live mud minnow or even a fresh chunk of mullet or shrimp," he said.

Scented artificial lures are a good option and typically Holmes' go-to choice for wintertime redfishing.

"Any kind of scented bait is about as good as live bait. Live bait is hard to come by in January and the scented plastics are excellent," he said.

Holmes will either use soft plastics infused with scent like Berkley Gulp or he will spray an attractant on his soft plastics like Procure. Scents are more effective on some species than others.

Holmes uses soft plastics that have screw tails. They activate with little movement in the water.

"The reds will be sluggish this time of year anyway. And any bait would be as well. But that little movement in the tail is sometimes just what is needed to get them to commit," he said. ■



Wintertime redfish school up in huge numbers in the Georgetown area, and they can't pass up scented soft plastic lures.

# NC STRIPERS, SPECKS BITING STRONG

Neuse-Trent system is winter hotspot for stripers and specks

**W** By Craig Holt  
 ith central N.C. coastal fishing locked down by winter, two species remain active in the Neuse-Trent river systems.

"But (the bite) is water-temperature dependent," said veteran guide Gary Dubiel of Spec Fever Guide Service (252-514-3484).

Plenty of striped bass and spotted seatrout should be available in January because of higher salinity and tons of baitfish.

"A lot of salty, clear water has pushed to New Bern and upstream," Dubiel said.

Winter stripers hold at channel ledges in the Neuse and Trent and at bridge support structures and the railroad trestle that spans the Neuse.

"Best times to search for fish are during warm, sunny afternoons," Dubiel said. "I'll drift with the current until I locate fish, then repeat that portion of a drift."

This technique also is effective when searching channel edges and flats where topwater bites may ignite.

His tackle includes 7-foot medium-light and medium-strength rods, 2500 Series reels spooled with 15-pound test braid and 20-pound test mono leaders. "If it's sunny, and the surface water temperature rises to the low-to-mid 50s that's a good time for topwater," Dubiel said.

Trout also collect in both rivers' feeder creeks during winter.

The Neuse and Trent flow so far inland at New Bern they aren't affected by ocean tides. But wind can have similar effects.

"Wind has a lot to do with locations a person can fish," Dubiel said. "Northeast winds push water higher, and the opposite happens on a west wind when (anglers) have to shift down."

In most instances, stripers and trout orient at the edges of channels or creeks on the deep (stripers) or shallow (trout) sides.

His favorite lures include 3-inch Storm shads in white or white-and-chartreuse colors threaded onto ¼- or ⅛-ounce jigheads.

"You don't want to throw big lures in winter," he said. "At times I'll drop down to 2 inch sizes." ■

Guide Gary Dubiel caught this average-sized Trent River striped bass during January.



# RIVER WONDERLAND

## Broad River smallmouth bite all winter

**T** By Brian Cope  
he Broad River is a winter wonderland for anglers seeking smallmouth bass to cure their cold-weather blahs. But with its shallow shoals and limited public access, it's not the first place most people think of for fishing in January.

But Capt. Justin McGrady of SC River Guide in Columbia, S.C. is so fond of fishing here that he purchased a boat with a jet drive outboard specifically for fishing the Broad. And during winter, he often has the whole river to himself. And the smallmouth? They don't mind the cold. In fact, it often triggers them into feeding heavily, much to the delight of anglers looking for a tug.

"The Broad River can look daunting to folks in anything other than a kayak or canoe. But a jet drive boat is perfect for this river," said McGrady.

This river is known as a hotspot for small-craft anglers who don't mind wading for fish in the warmer months. But even with waders, a fall in this river during cold weather can be dangerous. So many kayak/canoe anglers wait out the winter.

McGrady's unique boat gives him access to areas of the Broad that would surprise many anglers. That's one thing that appeals to his clients, who want to reach smallmouth territory that goes untouched for months.

### IT'S A NUMBERS GAME

"A lot of folks are surprised at how safe it is to run a boat like this in this river. And it gets us in places that would take too long and be too uncomfortable for most paddlers to reach this time of year. And the fishing here can be top-notch in winter," he said.

When it comes to lures, McGrady (803-569-9473) said anglers need to be prepared with a variety of offerings.



Brian Cope

Capt. Justin McGrady catches Broad River smallmouth on a variety of lures during winter.

"We can go from freezing temperatures one day to 70 degrees the next," he said. "And even during the most stable weather patterns, these fish can be aggressive one day and picky the next."

McGrady likes to have a small Alabama rig tied on, a topwater plug, and a Texas-rigged soft plastic. He's always got a spinnerbait tied onto one rod as well. Some days he catches smallies on all four. Other days, the fish will only touch one.

"You want to fish around structure this month. Downed trees are good targets. The many shoals are too. Eddies and current seams are also great areas to cast. It's a numbers game this month. The more targets you present lures to, the better your chances of hooking up," he said. ■

# FALLS OF NEUSE

## is a haven for winter crappie

**J** By Dusty Wilson  
anuary might mean cold weather, but it also means a concentrated, deep-water crappie pattern at Falls of the Neuse Lake. Along the river channel, crappie wait out the winter with an abundance of shad, fattening up for the spring spawn. And tournament angler Freddie Sinclair of Clayton, N.C. will be hitting the hotspots with a tight-line trolling rig.

"In the mouths of coves and creeks that come close to the main river channel is where you're going to want to be," said Sinclair. "Inside those areas, I'll target ledge drop-offs, deep brush piles and deep wood, like laydowns. The upper end of the lake will have more stumps. But the lower end will have more brush piles and lay downs. The water depth that you fish will also vary from the upper end of the lake to the lower. On the upper end, I'll target water in the 10- to 12-foot range. And I'll be fishing water in the 15- to 25-foot range on the lower end."

### FALLS OF NEUSE >



Tournament angler Freddie Sinclair shows off a Falls of Neuse slab.

FALLS OF NEUSE continued >

Sinclair said the upper end of the lake can be hard to beat, with the mouth of Ledgerrock Creek all the way toward I-85 as well as the Eno River end being prime areas. On the lower end, the mouth of Horse Creek and the mouths of the coves where the creek channel is deep are good starting points.

**SLOW TROLLING IS THE KEY**

Once on location, an angler's sonar equipment will be imperative to finding the hotspot within the cover and contour breaks. Also, Sinclair said that fish can be anywhere from hugging the bottom to 2 feet below the surface. Successful fishing will mean placing those baits slightly above where the fish are marked. However, when in doubt, it is always better to be too far above

the fish then below them.

"Most of the anglers that are vertically tight lining will be using a double minnow rig set up," said Sinclair. "The wind will dictate the size of the egg sinker I use. But it will be in that ¼ to ½-ounce range. I'll be using 12- to 16-foot rods to get the baits away from the boat and trolling at a speed of 0.5 to 0 if I know I'm over fish. I'll use my Livescope to present to individual fish whenever possible.

At Falls, I like to use a red or white jighead for the bottom hook or as a soft plastic. If the water is particularly clear, black and blue are good. But if it's murky or stained, I like pink, chartreuse, or orange." ■

**HARTWELL STRIPERS**  
Follow bait for winter striper limits

By Pat Robertson

Fishing for stripers in Lake Hartwell in the fall and winter is all centered around bait, "and Lake Hartwell is not hurting for bait," said veteran guide Chip Hamilton (lakehartwellfishingcharters.com).

"Wherever the bait is that is where the fish will be," Hamilton said. "This time of year they will be in about 35 feet of water to 45 feet of water so that's a good depth to stay in. Although sometimes they might be a little deeper or a little more shallow."

Hamilton said this pattern kicks in when temperatures begin to drop in the fall and will hold right through January all the way into February.

"There will still be a few fish out in the main river channel. But a lot of fish will have started up the creeks this time of year, but they won't be all the way up. The pattern will be about the same in the river and the creeks. You will need to key on clean structure such as an underwater ridge or a long tapering point."

He said there will also be deep water nearby — 55 to 70 feet deep in the creek channels and up to 100 feet or more in the river channel.

"The bait likes to hang out in those areas, sometimes on the edges of the channel. And sometimes the bait will move out to the center of the rivers. And if they do, the fish will go with them," he said

"I start every morning from mid-November until the beginning of February on those ridges and tapering points. As long as I am marking bait in 35 to 45 feet of water I'll put out my lines. But if I don't mark any bait I don't stop to fish."

Hamilton said for him it is almost all down lining this time of year with live blueback herring, fishing just off the bottom.

"It's also a good time for a jigging spoon. January is one of the best jigging spoon months of the year," he said. "You want the spoon to match the bait size, no more than three inches long."

"We do more of the sit still approach. But the umbrella riggers do well, too, working their rigs down the ridges and then

Chip Hamilton said the key to catching winter stripers on Hartwell is to follow the bait, which is abundant here.



Pat Robertson

swinging out into deeper water, then coming back across."

One added benefit to striper fishing on Hartwell this time of year, he said, is that you don't have to get started so early in the day. The best bite takes place from late morning to late afternoon from December through January and into February. ■

# GUIDES & CHARTERS

## Display Ads

1/16 Page BW .....\$70/mn\*

1/8 Page BW ..... \$120/mn\*

\*Based on Pre-Paid 12 Month Contract

To place an ad in Guides & Charters  
**David (NC) - 919.395.1214**  
 or dhughes@hughespublishing.com

**Bret (SC) - 843.442.7250**  
 or breth@carolinasportsman.com

## INSHORE

### UNASHAMED ADVENTURES



### REDS • TROUT FLOUNDER



**CAPT. STEPHEN FLOOK**  
 McClellanville, SC  
**864-430-8830**

  WEBSITE:  
**UnashamedAdventures.com**

## ADVERTISE

Your Charter Boat or Guide Service here!

Reach 1000's of potential customers each month starting at

**\$70**

Call for details at  
**252.299.2138**

## FRESHWATER

# BLACK'S CAMP

**Deep Water Access to Diversion Canal and Both Lakes... Boat Launch is Protected From Wind and Current**

**FOOD TO GO, ORDER ONLINE**



**Come Catch Some Fish!!**

Please Call Us For Campground, Lodging & Guide Service Availability

Cross, South Carolina 29436  
**(843) 753-2231**  
[www.blackscamp.com](http://www.blackscamp.com)

## HUNTING



**CHEROKEE RUN**  
 Hunting Lodge

Hunt deer, wild boar & turkey in the wilds of South Carolina



Trophy Managed Whitetail on the Great Pee Dee River



HOME OF THE 600 LB "GREY GHOST"

**NIGHT HOG: JAN 1 - AUG 31**  
**SC RIFLE DEER: SEP 1 - JAN 1**  
**SC WILD BOAR: YEARLY AROUND SEASON**  
**SC TURKEY: MAR 22 - APR 30**  
 DEER/BOAR OR TURKEY/BOAR COMBOS

Located on the border in beautiful Chesterfield County SC, one hour from Charlotte, NC. Comfortable lodging including satellite TV, pool table, bass ponds, rifle & 3-D archery range.

**704-301-7950 • eatssleephunt.com**

## Need Food Plots?

Let us do the chores of building and maintaining food plots so you can hunt.



**WeBuildFoodPlots.com**  
 704-904-3851

# CLASSIFIEDS

Up to 25 words **\$19.95/mn** or \$45 for 3mn. Add a photo for \$10/mn

To place a classified ad  
**Call 1-800-538-4355**  
 Mon-Thurs 9-6 • Fri 9-2



# BECOME A MEMBER

Get FULL web access on all your smart devices *and* our monthly print magazine

**\$2<sup>99</sup>** PER MONTH

VISIT: [WWW.CAROLINASPORTSMAN.COM/SUBSCRIBE](http://WWW.CAROLINASPORTSMAN.COM/SUBSCRIBE)



ALBEMARLE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT CORP..... 3	FROST WATERFOWL TRUST, LLC..... 36	SARAH JUDY'S INSURANCE AGENCY ..... 9
BLACK'S CAMP ..... 53, 65	GAMBLER BASS BOATS ..... 27	SOUTHERN FARM SHOW..... 5
BOST ARGO..... 35	MARINE WAREHOUSE ..... 67	SUZUKI MOTOR OF AMERICA, INC..... 16, 17
BQ GRILLS ..... 22	NICHOLS STORE, INC. .... 43	TOON TIME, LLC..... 31
BROOKFIELD BRP CANADA CORP. .... 23	O'BRIAN TARPING SYSTEMS ..... 59	UNASHAMED ADVENTURES..... 65
CAROLINA COMPOSITES, LLC..... 68	PALMETTO STATE TRAINING..... 9	WAKE COUNTY WILDLIFE CLUB ..... 37
CENTRAL CAROLINA HABITAT SOLUTIONS ..... 65	PG & BOATGIRL SHOW ..... 8	XPRESS BY ALUMA-WELD, INC. .... 2
CHEROKEE RUN HUNTING LODGE ..... 23, 65	SANTEE COOPER COUNTRY ..... 31	<b>Subscribe Today and SAVE ..... 53</b>

**LIMITED QUANTITIES  
WHEN THEY'RE GONE,  
THEY'RE GONE!**

*Carolina*  
**SPORTSMAN**  
**BACK ISSUES**

[shop.sportsmannetwork.com/collections/carolina-sportsman](http://shop.sportsmannetwork.com/collections/carolina-sportsman)

WITH  
MARINE  
WAREHOUSE  
CENTER



YOU'LL BE SURE  
TO ENJOY LIFE  
ON THE WATER.



With two boat dealerships serving the  
Wilmington, NC and Charleston, SC area,  
we're your one-stop shop for all your marine  
needs. Visit us today to find everything you  
need to get out and enjoy the water!



TRAILERS



OUTBOARDS



ACCESSORIES



SERVICE

910.799.1277

6921 Market St  
Wilmington, NC



843.974.5353

3881 Savannah Hwy  
Johns Island, SC

MARINEWAREHOUSECENTER.COM

FROM OUR  
FAMILY TO  
YOURS,



WISHES ALL  
THE SPORTSMEN  
A VERY

# HAPPY NEW YEAR!

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU AT THE 2022 SHOWS!



For more information, go to

[PioneerBoats.com](http://PioneerBoats.com) • [AvengerBayBoats.com](http://AvengerBayBoats.com) • [BullsBayBoats.com](http://BullsBayBoats.com)

Call **843-538-6604**

Like us on **Facebook** for the latest available information.

POWERED BY

