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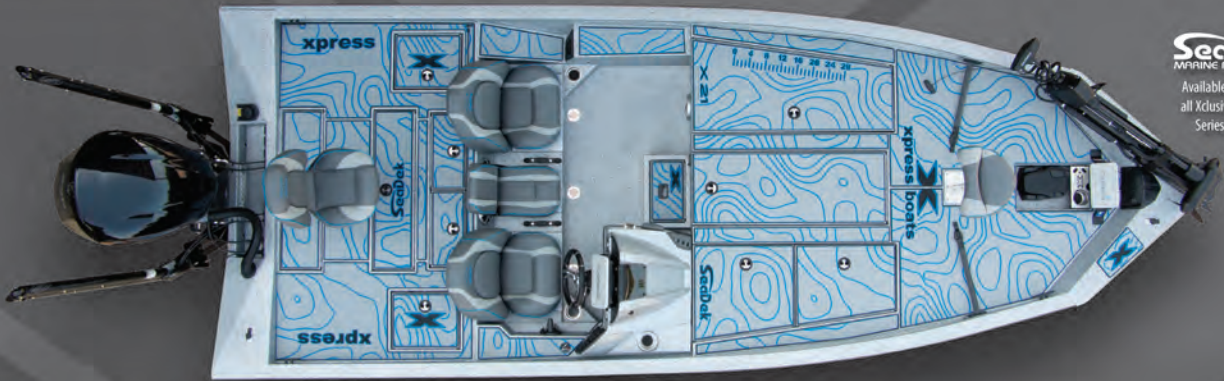
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**10**  
MARCH IS MAJOR FEEDING TIME FOR BASS

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*Carolina*  
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*Carolina*  
**SPORTSMAN**  
www.CarolinaSPORTSMAN.com

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Carolina Sportsman is published monthly by  
**CAROLINA PUBLISHING INC.**

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**CAROLINA SPORTSMAN** (USPS #012969) is 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 and guidelines can be obtained by emailing Brian Cope at brian@sportsmannetwork.com.

**ADVERTISING INQUIRIES:**  
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**FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS OR SUBSCRIPTION ISSUES, CALL 1.855.224.1667**  
Monday thru Friday, 7 am to Midnight  
Saturday & Sunday, 9 am - 6 pm EST

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P.O. Box 1199, Boutte, LA 70039-1199  
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**Volume 29 | No 3**



**ON THE COVER:**

It's BIG BASS time in the Carolinas and they're not the only species biting. Sportsman also take to the woods this month for turkey season.



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# OUTDOOR UPDATE

with **Brian Cope**



**Brian Cope** of Borden, S.C., has been writing about the outdoors since 2006. He's spent half his life hunting and fishing. The rest, he said, has been wasted.

## SANTEE GIVES UP 106-POUND CAT

VERN REYNOLDS CAUGHT THE BIG FISH DURING SANTEE LAKES CATFISH CLUB TOURNAMENT

**T**he Santee Cooper lakes have long been known as a big catfish destination. But the lakes really showed out during the Santee Lakes Catfish Club's first tournament of 2022 on Jan. 15.

Seventeen teams fished the event, which used a three-fish limit for the 1-day tournament. Those 17 teams brought more than 1330 pounds of catfish to the scales. Team Catastrophic Failures won the event with a total of 200.15 pounds, including a 106+ pound blue catfish.

Angler Vern Reynolds caught the 106+ pounder while the team was drifting on the lower lake. They had caught numerous fish up to that point, including a 40+ and a 52 pounder.

### FISH BUSTED HOLDING TUB

At the weigh-in site, the big fish literally destroyed the extra-large plastic tub used to hold fish before placing them into the stainless steel bin to be officially weighed.

Fishing with Mike Durham, a regular on the Santee Lakes Catfish Club trail, Reynolds was filling in for Brad McCall who wasn't able to fish that day. Coincidentally, McCall fished last year's Santee Lakes Catfish Club event in February when he became a member of the 100+ pound club, boating a 103-pound blue catfish while fishing with Durham and winning that tourney.

### ALL FISH RELEASED ALIVE

Team Catastrophic Failures wasn't the only team to break triple digits at weigh-in. Six other teams weighed a total of 100+ pounds.

Les and Angela Pence took 2nd place with 152.67 pounds, followed by David Kingsmore and Andy Spoon's 3rd place finish of 137.86 pounds.

**TOP PHOTO:** Vern Reynolds' 106-pound catfish highlighted his team's total weight of 200.15 pounds.

**RIGHT:** The big catfish destroyed the plastic holding tub before the official weigh in.

As always, all catfish brought to the scales at this event were released alive.

### BIG CAT BRAWL

March 18 and 19 will bring many more anglers together at Blacks Camp for the Santee Big Cat Brawl.

It will be interesting to see if (or how many) other 100+ pounders make it to the scale in these events. ■



# NEW SC RECORD QUEEN TRIGGERFISH

**S**eth Costanzo of Mt. Pleasant, S.C. set the new South Carolina state record for queen triggerfish in December. The SCDNR recently certified the 9-pound, 10-ounce fish as the state's biggest.

Costanzo was fishing about 50 miles offshore of Charleston when the record fish hit. He was fishing aboard the *Somethin' Serious* with Capt. Jack Demsheck and Val Demsheck. They weren't specifically targeting triggerfish, but they caught plenty of them that day. The record fish hit around midday.

"We were targeting grouper, but we caught 22 queen triggers. We also caught some small vermilion snapper and two small grouper," said Costanzo, who was 18-years-old when he caught the fish.

The crew was fishing in about 170 feet of water. They were using squid and cut bait. Costanzo had caught his share of triggerfish before that day, but this was his first day he'd caught queen triggerfish. Once he pulled the fish into the boat, he said they were confident it was a new state record.

"The captain, Jack Demsheck caught one about a pound smaller the weekend before. We knew this one was a state record," he said.

Once back in Mt. Pleasant, they took the fish to Haddrell's Point Tackle and Supply. There, they had the fish weighed and began the paperwork to have it certified as the new state record.

## AVIAN INFLUENZA

Three wild ducks -- two in South Carolina and one in North Carolina -- tested positive for Avian Influenza H5N1 HPAI. The three ducks mark the first three times since 2016 that a wild duck has tested positive for the strain, which is usually harmless to humans, but a grave threat to pet birds as well as flocks of poultry.

All three ducks were killed during hunts. The first South Carolina duck was an American wigeon killed in Colleton County. The second South Carolina duck, killed in the same county, was a teal. The North Carolina duck, a Northern shoveler, was killed in Hyde County.

Samples of the ducks were provided for testing as part of a voluntary program available in both states.

In 2015, H5N1 spread throughout the Midwest portion of the U.S. The strain killed or caused the destruction of 50 million birds.

Hunters are reminded that anytime they come into contact with any wild birds, they should wash their hands thoroughly and clean their clothes, shoes and equipment to help stop the possibility of spreading the disease to domestic or agricultural birds. ■

Due to a technicality in the way state record fish are recorded, Costanzo's fish is listed as a tie with a smaller queen triggerfish that was caught in 2011. That 9-pound, 7-ounce queen trigger was caught out of Georgetown by J.H. Woodberry of Lake City, S.C. ■

Seth Costanzo's 9-pound, 10-ounce queen triggerfish.



“Flathead Luke” Langley  
with his 48-pound catfish.



Timothy Langley

## 7-YEAR-OLD CATCHES 48-POUND CATFISH

**L**uke Langley, 7-years-old from Lancaster, S.C., is a regular sight at catfish tournaments in the Carolinas. And “Flathead Luke” as he’s known by other anglers, isn’t there simply to watch the weigh-ins or cheer on his dad. He fishes the tournaments and hauls his fish to the scales.

The young angler has put many catfish in the boat, and he caught his personal best on the first day of 2022 when a 48-pound blue catfish bit his hook.

Langley caught the big fish on a Hellcat rod by Catch the Fever. The fight lasted quite a few moments, and no one else touched the rod during the fight. The youngster was determined to land the fish on his own, and he did it with a combination of laughter,

determination, and strain.

Mark Coburn, who serves as weighmaster at many catfish tournaments throughout the Carolinas, said Flathead Luke fits in nicely with all the other tournament anglers.

“Flathead Luke is a wonderful kid. He fishes with so much passion. His maturity and attitude is advanced well beyond his young age. The other anglers truly respect him and spectators adore him,” said Coburn.

You can find the youngster sharing his fishing adventures — including a video of him catching the 48-pounder — on the Flathead Luke YouTube channel. ■

# BAG-A-BUCK WINNER

**C**ongratulations to Carolyn Painter Shipman from Sumter, S.C. for winning the Carolina Sportsman Bag-A-Buck Grand Prize for the 2021-22 deer hunting season.

Shipman killed the 12-point buck on Sept. 20 in Sumter County. The deer weighed 211 pounds and was green-scored at 137 4/8.

As the grand prize winner, Shipman was awarded a 2-day deer/hog hunt combo for two hunters at Cherokee Run Hunting Lodge in Chesterfield County, S.C. along with a 3-year subscription to Carolina Sportsman Magazine, a Millennium M25 tree stand, and a package of Carolina Sportsman merchandise.

Our annual Bag-A-Buck contest gallery has become one of the most-viewed sections of our website. It also draws plenty of entrants from our readers.

During the 2021-22 deer hunting season, we had a total of 274 entries in our Bag-A-Buck gallery. This included 17 entrants from August (SC's season opens Aug 15), 26 in September, 41 in October, 114 in November, 71 in December, and five in January. ■



Carolyn Shipman killed this 12-point buck in Sumter County, S.C.

## BAG-A-BUCK GALLERY

Deer season is in the rearview mirror, but you can still check out all the bucks we featured on our Bag-A-Buck Gallery. Point your internet browser to [carolinasportsman.com/bag-a-buck-gallery](http://carolinasportsman.com/bag-a-buck-gallery).

We had a lot of great entrants and hope to have just as many when deer season opens back in the fall of 2022.

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**FORGET THE PRESPAWN;  
BASS ARE FOCUSED  
ON FEEDING.**

**MARCH IS MAJOR** By Dan Kibler  
**FEEDING TIME  
FOR BASS**



# Marty Stone wants bass fishermen across the Carolinas to know one thing:

**“THE WORD ‘PRESPAWN’ IS WAY OVERBLOWN.”**

said Stone, a retired bass pro from Fayetteville, N.C., who is an analyst on Major League Fishing’s television show. “To me, pre-spawn is the week before they go to the bank to lay their eggs. The rest of the time is just a major feeding time.

“When they move up, they aren’t coming up looking for an area to spawn. They’re up for one reason: to feed heavily and often.”

And that colors everything for Stone, who in 20 years as a pro won more than \$1 million and qualified for four Bassmaster Classics and four FLW Tour Championships. The first three weeks of March are one of his favorite times to target bass on lakes around the Carolinas. And that’s because they’ve got nothing but food on their minds. The last week, well, that’s when the spawn starts to enter the minds of plenty of fish.

“To me, this is the time of year you find fish in a big-time transition,” Stone said. “I don’t care what part of the Carolinas you’re fishing. They’re moving out of the deep water where they spent the winter, and they’re traveling to the bank.

“Right now they are coming off the main lake. They are look-

ing to move toward the bank, and they’re looking for bait: bluegill, crawfish and shad. They aren’t picky about what they eat. But they will eat heavily and often.”

## LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Stone said when you find fish in the right area, catching them won’t be too difficult.

“Lure selection is the least-important thing in March. Most important is being in the right area,” he said. “If you aren’t around fish, the best baits you’ve got won’t work. The area is the key. I could take somebody into the right area and give him the worst-looking spinnerbait you’ve ever seen, and he would catch fish. You go into the wrong area, and the best baits won’t work.”

Stone starts by looking in the first third of creeks off the main lake. That’s where the most bass will be, in 2 to 6 feet of water.

“Can a fish swim all the way back in a creek? Sure, but you want to fish where the majority of the fish are. And that’s the first third of creeks,” he said. “Baitfish movement determines everything. The water is warming, and they’re moving to the bank.”

**COVER YOUR BASES >**



Dan Kibler

Anglers should target woody cover, like this area with a letdown and stickups. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Marty Stone uses several bass lures this month, including a 3/8- to 1/2-ounce jig.

## COVER YOUR BASES

When Stone locates good concentrations of baitfish in a certain creek, he starts looking for certain things.

“Bass are going to get on little rocky corners or riprap, lay-downs or boat docks – usually the back corners of boat docks,” he said. “Rock and riprap warm up in March. Big fish live in lay-downs this time of year, and they’ll be on docks. They’re harder to fish. You’ve got to cover a lot of water and fish lots of docks to find concentrations of fish. Grass? It’s almost non-existent anymore in the Carolinas.”

Next, Stone looks for the right depth to fish.

“Water color determines a lot about depth,” he said. “The clearer the water, the deeper the fish will be. If you are fishing Kerr Lake or Lake Norman and visibility is at 5 feet, those fish are going to be 7 feet deep. If you’re at Jordan Lake or Falls Lake and you can see 2 feet, those fish will be at 3 feet. Wherever the clarity is, the fish will be a foot or two below that level.

## TIMING MATTERS

Timing is equally important.

“The best days to fish are the third or fourth days of stable, sunny, warm weather,” he said. “If you get a nice, warm front out of the south, an overcast day, gimme that and I’ll catch ‘em.”

Stability is the key, no matter the temperature.

“I’ve caught a lot of fish at 48 degrees, and I’ve caught zero fish at 55 degrees if the weather isn’t stable. Bass don’t mind cold weather. But they don’t like major temperature changes on the way down. If it’s been 60 or 65 degrees and it drops to 50 or 55, they don’t like it. The opposite, the worst day to fish, would be the second day after a major cold front that drops the temperature 15 to 20 degrees. That’s the drastic kind of change a fish doesn’t like.

“And there’s one more thing; everybody talks about the wind, but until the end of March, the wind is not your friend. Fish don’t like having their heads beat on. So you’re looking for an



Dan Kibler



These three lures — a shallow-running crankbait, a Thunder Cricket and a Bandit 200 are March staples on Marty Stone's rods. **RIGHT:** A crawfish trailer is always a good addition to a jig. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Targeting docks is a good strategy throughout March.

area of stable water on a warming trend. Fish will move in there if there's bait. They're only looking for areas where the baitfish have moved in."

## LURE BASICS

Stone will have a few basic lures tied on rods on his bass boat's front deck. He likes a crankbait that will run 2 to 6 feet deep. Two of his favorites are a Lucky Craft 1.5 and a Bandit 200. He likes a spinnerbait, ½- or ¾-ounce, with either double Colorado blades or a Colorado-willow leaf combination. He said a vibrating jig like a Strike King Thunder Cricket is a given. And he'll have a ⅜- to ½-ounce jig with a crawfish trailer tied on in a black/blue or brown/green pumpkin color combo.

"I like crankbaits with light-wire treble hooks because they penetrate better," Stone said. "Bass in March are the heaviest they'll be all year. And for a short burst, they're the most powerful they'll be all year." ■



**Dan Kibler** of Winston-Salem, N.C., has been covering the outdoors since 1985 as outdoors editor of the Winston-Salem Journal and later as managing editor of Carolina Sportsman until his retirement last fall.



Dan Kibler

## LANDING BASS >

March is major feeding time for bass

# LANDING BASS: TAKE IT EASY

Davy Hite of Ninety Six, S.C., is one of two professional bass fishermen to win the trifecta – the Bassmaster Classic, BASS Angler of the Year and FLW Tour Championship – and plenty of the fish that have come over the side of his bass boat over the years have had a crankbait or jerkbait lodged in their jaws.

Landing a fish that has a lure bristling with treble hooks hanging out of its gaping mouth takes a little preparation. Hite, who retired several years ago to become a host of the Bassmaster Live television (and internet) show, said that starts about the time you know you've got the fish hooked. With so many prespawn fish caught on shallow-running plugs or jerkbaits, it's extremely important in March.

"I've talked to people about landing bass my whole life," Hite said. "On the Bass Elite Series, you're not allowed to use a landing net, so you have to have a plan before you hook the first fish."

"I know that a lot of guys screw their reel's drags down, bring the fish in as fast as they can and swing them right into the boat, but you run the risk of straightening out one of those little treble hooks and losing him."

"But me, I think you really need to let your reel's drag work for you and play the fish to exhaustion before you get it right beside



Dan Kibler

Davy Hite said it's important to let your fishing reel's drag help when landing big bass this month.

the boat, then land it. When I hook a fish on a Shad Rap, I take it easy and let my reel's drag system tire the fish out, and I've had great success landing fish that way.

"I'll tell you, most of the reels we have now, especially the Lew's reels that I use, the drag systems really work. When I get a fish hooked on a crankbait, I'll back off, especially if I can get her out in open water and let her pull drag. I landed an 11-pound fish in a Bass Elite event on Clear Lake in California on a jerkbait with little No. 6 treble hooks. I just let that fish pull drag until she tired out." ■

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**A**nglers have used spoons to catch bass for decades, if not centuries. This style of lure has endured the test of time, and for good reason. They are effective and very versatile. Here's two Carolina lakes where they shine, along with two ways to use them for hooking bass.

■ By Mike Marsh **TWO WAYS TO SPOON-FEED BASS.**

# HIT 'EM WITH HEAVY METAL

Mike Marsh

## SUTTON LAKE: CASTING SPOONS

Dawn was only an idea when the flip of a shad disturbed the calm water. The next sound was the click of a spinning reel bail followed by a metallic tinkling then another splash as a casting spoon hit the water.

Reeling the spoon within a few inches of the rod tip, Bruce Trujillo loaded the rod and made another cast.

“Catching schooling bass is challenging,” Trujillo said. “Just because you see them doesn’t mean you are going to get bites. At Sutton Lake, where bass get pounded daily by every type of lure, you have to be persistent.”

He retrieved the spoon with steady rhythm for a few casts. When nothing struck, he switched to a stop-and-go retrieve. His rod shot up and the tip arced toward the water.

“That’s him!” he shouted. “Now, the trick is to keep him hooked.”

As the bass neared the boat, it tried to leap. Trujillo thrust his rod tip into the water.

“If the fish jumps, he’s gone,” he said. “Sutton Lake’s water is so clear that you have to use low visibility lines. I use 6- or 8-pound fluorocarbon. This is a 3/8-ounce spoon. A bass can’t stand that metal dangling from its jaw, making him want to jump to dislodge it. The weight of the spoon makes it easier for him to spit out if he clears the water.”

## PERSISTENCE IS THE KEY TO SPOON FISHING

It was a good 2-pound Sutton Lake largemouth. Trujillo used a

net to land the fish before releasing it.

“Sometimes I use a 1/4- or 1/8-ounce spoon,” he said. “If you try to lip-land a bass hooked on that tiny treble hook, it can bend or break.”

Sutton Lake is one of North Carolina’s warmest. That means bass are chasing surfacing baitfish year-round. The Sutton plant’s discharge or “Hot Ditch” attracts bass in March, when some of the biggest bass of the year are landed.

The Hot Ditch hosts amazing displays of bass chasing shad. However, it is no longer open for anglers. Nevertheless, bass chase shad from the Hot Ditch mouth to anywhere in Pond 1 or 2, so anglers should cruise around until they see fish.

“It’s a conundrum,” Trujillo said. “You like to see schooling fish. Then, you can’t catch them when you find them. Most anglers give up too soon, going back to their favorite submerged patterns. They will make 100 casts to fish they can’t see and not catch, but not 100 casts to fish they can see and not catch.”

Bass kept chasing shad. Trujillo kept making precise casts. Every now and then, he hooked a fish.

“I start with a gold spoon, then vary the color and size,” he said. “Sometimes you hit a combination that catches a fish and you think you have it right. Then you make another 100 casts without a bite. The best thing you can do is make accurate casts. That fish is chasing shad and will be gone in a second. If you are making blind casts or landing the spoon too late, you’re wasting time. Wait for him to show himself, then clunk him on the head with the spoon.”

## LAKE WYLIE: JIGGING SPOONS >



The biggest bass will strike the smallest spoons. The trick is to “match the hatch” - selecting a spoon of the same size and color as the baitfish the bass are chasing. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Mike Marsh caught this Sutton Lake largemouth bass on a Kastmaster style spoon.

## LAKE WYLIE: JIGGING SPOONS

Deep jigging is a great way to spoon feed bass in colder lakes. Chris Nichols ([thecarolinaangler.com](http://thecarolinaangler.com), 704-860-7951) lays some heavy metal on Lake Wylie's bass.

"March is a great month for catching bass with jigging spoons," Nichols said. "Early in March, when the water temperatures are in the low 50s, the fish will be in deep water. I look for them at 15 to 25 feet, using my electronics to find schools of threadfin shad and bass feeding on them. The water can warm suddenly in March. So you may have to look shallower during a warm spell. But, if a cold front hits, the fish return to their deeper water pattern."

Using his electronics, Nichols begins searching for fish in creek mouths then moves shallower until he finds them. When he finds a school, he plunks down a spoon.

### SPOONS CATCH MANY SPECIES

"I use a ¾-ounce or 1-ounce Hopkins spoon with no dressing," he said. "It can be smooth or hammered and my color preference is gold. I think gold stands out as different from the silver-



and-gray shad. However, if the water is dingy, I use a chartreuse spoon. There's something about chartreuse that really lights them up when the water is stained. I think it's visibility, but, whatever the reason, they hit it when they won't strike anything else. The lower half of the lake has better spoon fishing because the water is clearer than the upper half."

Nichols uses 7-foot medium-heavy All Star spinning and baitcasting rods, Bass Pro Qualifier reels and 8- to 10-pound monofilament Bass Pro Excel line. Lightweight lines allow the spoon to flutter and help detect strikes.

"You can watch the spoon dropping on your screen," he said. "I let it sink on a slack line and allow it to flutter while I'm watching the line. The strike usually comes as the spoon falls. At the

Mike Marsh used a spoon to catch this Sutton Lake largemouth.



Mike Marsh

Mike Marsh



strike, I reel in the line and lift the rod, setting the hook hard. If the spoon gets past the fish, I pop it up 3 to 5 feet off the bottom, let it sink on a slack line and allow it to flutter back down.”

Nichols said many species strike spoons — crappie, catfish, white perch and others. Spotted bass are suckers for a spoon, more so than largemouth bass.

“Spotted bass are more aggressive in deeper water and react to spoons better than largemouth bass in spring,” he said. “One of the best places to fish is Buster Boyd (N.C. 49) Bridge. The channel is 45 feet, but some pilings are in 25 feet and that is the perfect depth for jiggling a spoon.” ■

### LUNKER LINES >

On some days, bass might hit any spoon you cast to them. On others, the fish will be more picky so it's best to have a variety of colors, styles and sizes on hand. **BELOW:** Numerous manufacturers offer spoons with a variety of finishes, styles, weights and sizes.



Mike Marsh is a freelance outdoor writer in Wilmington, N.C. His latest book, *Fishing North Carolina*, and other titles, are available at [www.mikemarshoutdoors.com](http://www.mikemarshoutdoors.com).

## SPOONS COME IN MANY STYLES

The Acme Kastmaster-style spoon works well, with casting distance its claim to fame. Nevertheless, many other spoons work well for schooling bass, whether they are feeding on the surface or deep down below.

The Hopkins style is a flat spoon, the Little Cleo is a warped style and the Silver Minnow is a concave style. All of these spoons can be cast, jigged or trolled and have their own unique wobbles. They come in different finishes, and may have tail dressings of bucktail or other materials. Gold or silver metal spoons give off the flash or shine of baitfish. However, as the years have gone by, manufacturers have added many other color schemes to their spoons. A spoon can have a finish that resembles anything from a baitfish to the colors of a circus clown. Some spoons have hammered or dimpled finishes to increase flash and vibration. ■



Mike Marsh



In March, bass will gather around rocks or any other type of riprap as they move into spawning range.

## IT'S TROPHY TIME

MARCH IS WHEN THE BIGGEST BASS BITE

**I** start to get excited about bass fishing in February. And when March rolls around, I know that I'm just one cast away from the biggest fish of my life.

March is one of those months when you can actually find and catch fish with your baits the way we used to. It's nice to have the electronics we have on our boats. But in March, all you need is the mapping tools for the lake you're fishing, so you can find places where deep water comes in close to shallow water. And it's nice that I can see these places on my Lowrance Hook HDS 12, instead of having one big map laying in your lap like we used years ago.

This year, with all the cold weather we've had, March might really be good. I think the fish will be fairly shallow, but still close to deep water. The first part of the month, depending on the weather, might be slow. But that's going to change.

If it's been super cold and it's just starting to warm up, I will be fishing close to a creek channel or a deep swing. I've never been one to fish all the way back in a

creek. I'll be about half-way back. That's part of figuring it out.

### THE BASICS:

You want to be sitting in 20 feet of water, throwing to the bank. Bass will come out of 20 feet of water to hit a bait like a Berkley Bad Shad or Frittside. Fish are looking up in March. When you get to mid-February, they start looking to the surface. And the clearer the water, the farther they'll come up to hit a bait.

I want to find the clearest water I can. March is a month to fish a crankbait or a jig. A crankbait works best in clearer water where a fish can see the bait's action.

I want to be fishing around rocks. How many tournaments in March have been won on riprap? You can't count them all. If you know a little rocky place, a little rocky point or bank that doesn't really show at the surface, that's an ace in the hole. And if there is a piece of wood nearby – a laydown, a stump or a brush pile – that makes it even better.

Now, by the end of the month, you'll see fish starting to move up on the flats

instead of staying out in open water on a drop. The fish will start to spread out after the water has been warming up for a couple of weeks. Instead of sitting in 20 feet of water casting to the bank, you're sitting in 7 or 8 feet of water, making long casts to the same kinds of cover: rocks and wood.

You aren't going to be catching 10 fish by making the same cast – in either situation. You might catch two or three, but mostly you'll be moving a little and covering water. They gang up much better after the spawn than before it. But the first part of March is still the best time to catch a real giant.

### CRAWFISH COLORS

I'm going to be fishing a crankbait, or sometimes a jig. The No. 1 color in



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, Lewis, Lowrance, Power Pole and Berkley.

## SLOW IT DOWN:

Many anglers make one big mistake when using crankbaits – they fish too fast. That might work during some months, but March is not one of them. Use a reel with a slow retrieve ratio, and when you think you're reeling slowly enough, slow down a little more.

March, nationwide, has to be some shade of crawfish: reds and browns. I've never said that before, but it's been such a dominant color. You've got to have crawfish and shad colors tied on – not so much chartreuse, but if there's color in the water, you can throw chartreuse.

I am going to be fishing these baits on one of my Lew's David Fritts Perfect Crankbait rods, probably the 6-foot-8 model. I use that rod to throw a No. 5 Frittside. A lot of times, you're throwing up into 2 or 3 feet of water, around rocks, and the bites you are getting are about halfway between the boat and the place where the crankbait hits the water. I want to fish a shorter rod so I can be more accurate with my casts. I'll fish it with a Lew's BB1 Pro reel, the slowest retrieve ratio I can get.

One thing to leave you with. In March, you probably don't want that bait really digging the bottom. It's probably better if the bait doesn't touch the bottom. Those fish are looking up for their food, and they'll really come up to get a bait – going down, not so much. ■

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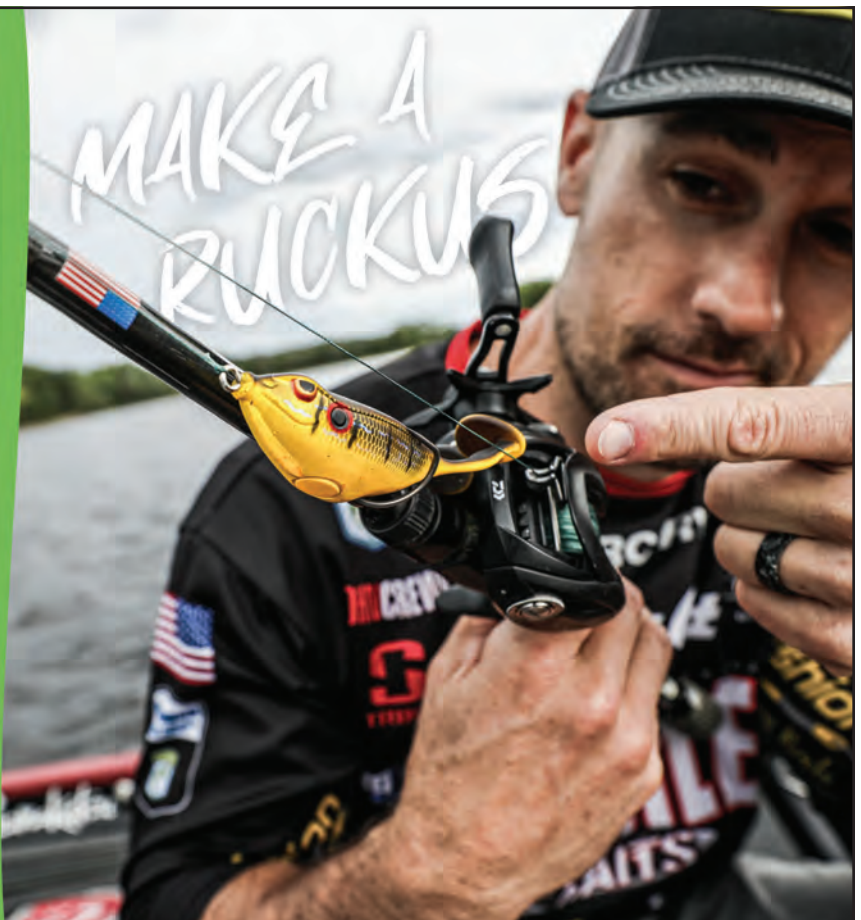


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March is a big breakout month for numerous fish species on Santee, including largemouth bass.



# SKINNY WATER BASSIN'

Terry Madewell

IT'S SHALLOW WATER TIME FOR SANTEE'S BIG BASS

**M**arch is the most eagerly awaited month of the year for Santee Cooper bass fishermen as big bass flood into the shallows in pre-spawn mode. And by the end of the month spawning is in full swing.

Kyle Austin, professional bass tournament pro and USCG licensed guide, said March is prime time for catching big bass throughout the Santee Cooper lakes. "A lot of the biggest bass move shallow

early in the spawning cycle in March," Austin said. "I spend as much time on the water as I can at this time of the year."

He said weather patterns have a lot to do with where bass will be. So coping with frontal systems is part of the bass fishing process.

Austin said he'll focus on pre-spawn patterns first when fish are staging slightly deeper than when in spawning mode. He'll focus his efforts near spawning areas but early in the month he'll

begin at or near the mouth or entrance to the shallow spawning flats.

"I start fishing in water around 6 feet deep and begin searching and eliminat-



**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.

ing unproductive water," he said. "I may find fish shallower. But especially after a front, this is my basic starting point."

Austin said most any type of cover is potentially productive with brush, trees, weedbeds and logs all good bass contact points.

"But it's not always a woody or weedy target where bass are found," he said. "Bass relate to ditches, deeper holes and any bottom contour changes that provide slightly deeper water near spawning areas. They'll stage here until conditions are right to get into the really shallow spawning flats."

Austin said anglers are successful throughout both lakes. But his favored target area during March is the lower end of Lake Marion, from the I-95 bridge and downstream.

"That's a large area but it provides me with multiple options to deal with external factors such as fronts and wind and still have prime fishing opportunities," he said. "Sometimes wind can be a positive factor for bass fishing. It's not always negative. I work out of Blacks Camp but I'll trailer my rig to where I feel I have the best advantage for the conditions."

Austin said multiple lures are effective for working the pre-spawn areas including crankbaits, swimbaits, Rat-L-Traps, Chatterbaits and spinnerbaits.

"As the month progresses and the water temperatures rise, the bass move toward shallower water," he said. "Bass want to go shallow. And back-to-back warm days can impact bass enough for them to move from the 6-foot water depth to skinny water. And when they move, they'll often go as far back as they can go."

The downside to this shallow fishing is dealing with the cold snaps at the end of a warm trend, he said. The fish may retreat back to the deeper water in this case, but likely still staged near the shallow flats.

"Big fish are still caught. But finding them is the trick," he said. "They're not as aggressive as they were after the warm spell. I may slow my presentation down and use a Carolina rig with soft plastics or another slow-moving bait."

Austin said the timing of the full moon has a dramatic impact on the bass during March.

"A full moon in March coupled with warming water means the bass are going to the spawning areas in shallow water," he said. "They get shallow in 1 to 2 feet of water, and the blackwater ponds that warm up quickly are a great target. Bass prefer a hard sandy bottom when they move to the shallows so that's a key to finding the right area."

Austin said sight fishing is a popular pattern to locate spawning bass. But he also looks for situations where bass can be shallow that are not purely sight fishing targets.

"I fish objects I can cast to from long distances to ensure I don't spook fish in ultra-shallow water," he said. "Isolated

## LOOK TO THE SHALLOWS

Bass are on the move this month. They'll start off in the mouths of creeks, then move further into those creeks as the month progresses. The more time you can spend on the water this month, the better, as the fish are feeding heavily before they spawn.

targets such as singular, small cypress trees and isolated stumps or a small pocket of weeds can hold big bass."

Austin said covering plenty of water is a key to success but anglers must fish targets effectively and thoroughly.

"March is prime-time to find red-hot pockets of bass fishing and that's the goal every day," he said. "I fish fast but I'm still disciplined enough to ensure I don't zip right past one of these hot spots by fishing too fast or without a purpose."

"I employ all the lures in my tackle box if necessary to ensure I'm effectively fishing my target," he said. "This is prime big bass time and that's why I'm on the water as much as possible." ■


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For kayak anglers, March Madness means it's time to chase pre-spawn bass.



Phillip Gentry

## PADDLE FOR PRE-SPAWN BASS

KAYAKS AND CRANKBAITS ARE KILLER COMBOS

**T**he month of March kicks off the pre-spawn for bass across the Carolinas. If you are a largemouth, smallmouth, or spotted bass fan — or perhaps all three — it's a good time to catch them, and often big ones. Bass fishing brings its own form of March madness when fish move shallow, followed by a lot of fishing pressure.

Bass fishing shares similarities with public land hunting in many respects. With expanses of public water being fair game, those who put in the time and effort to get close to the quarry reap the biggest reward.

Fishing larger rivers for bass is a great way to catch lots of big largemouth bass on a year round basis, but especially in March. By fishing where other boats can't, it's just a matter of figuring out the best pattern.

The early stages of spring feeding means targeting big bass and often finding lots of them. Find deeper holes and

slow roll a large bladed spinnerbait and trailer off the up-current side of the drop off, or hold them suspended in the pool at the bottom of current just above the deepest slack water.

### TRY SMALL LAKES

March is also an epic time to target smaller state lakes for bass fishing. Both Carolinas give kayak anglers plenty of choices to fish. This includes a large selection of smaller waters that provide some great, almost untapped bass fishing.

Don't forget man-made state lakes which often are specifically managed for easy access, catch-and-release. And they often host some giant-sized black bass.

Even when fishing larger bodies of water that are also within the reach of power boating anglers, the stealth of a kayak gives kayak anglers a distinct edge over bigger boats.

Kayak fishing is deadly silent. This kind of stealth along with the low-to-the-

water sight angle allows closer presentations to fish. So it's no contest who's going to get the bigger fish.

Rather than looking at a big impoundment as one body of water, kayak anglers should break it down into smaller segments where they can learn and pattern the fish without feeling the need to run all over the lake.

Kayak anglers who pay attention to what the fish want definitely have some advantages this month. With the water temperatures warming and bass moving shallow, it's a great time to be on the water in a kayak. ■



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

## BEST BETS

### NORTH CAROLINA

**WHAT** — Largemouth bass

**WHERE** — Shearon Harris Lake

**HOW** — Find areas so densely choked with brush or cut off from the main lake that powerboat anglers can't reach them. Or fish the same backs of creeks and pockets that everyone else will be fishing, trying to pick fish off the beds. Take your pick of creature soft plastics, paired with jigs or jig heads to bounce around on the bottom.

**LAUNCH** — Shearon Harris Lake (Unimproved Access) off New Hill Holleman Rd., Hollemans Crossing, and Cross Point Landing are the standard launch sites. See more at [ncwildlife.org](http://ncwildlife.org).

**INSIDER TIP** — Work deeper areas when targeting pre-spawn bass. Larger bass will spawn deeper than the rest of the population. Any submerged timber in less than 10 feet of water is a good bed.

### SOUTH CAROLINA

**WHAT** — Largemouth bass

**WHERE** — Dreher Island State Park on Lake Murray

**HOW** — Throw soft plastics, and jig and pig around boat docks. Lake Murray is a known herring lake so topwater and swimbaits in herring colors and patterns are also good bets.

**LAUNCH** — Lake Murray has numerous public and private access. Info at <http://www.lake-murray.com/boat-ramps-public-access-areas/>

**INSIDER TIP** — Look for shad to congregate around boat docks with suitable cover.

### NORMAN HYBRIDS >

## DON'T JUST CRANK IT

Despite the name, there's more to fishing a crankbait than just cranking it in.

Most manufacturers list the rated depth the bait will dive to. Speed of retrieve is also a factor. Some baits were born to burn while others work best doing nothing at all. A crankbait may be designed to have a slow, wide wiggle or a tight, fast wiggle.

These facets are built-in by the manufacturer, but here's a few suggestions to get more from the crankbait based on your actions at the other end of the rod:

**Stop & Go** — A stop & go may be better achieved using the rod in a pumping action versus using the reel to wind and stop. Bass typically hit during the pause, which can vary in length.

**Bump & Run** — A bump & run is achieved by shallow diving baits in shallow water or by deep diving or sinking baits in deeper water. While retrieving the lure, bump it into some type of cover then pause the retrieve. This mimics injured or disoriented prey, creating strikes.

**Deflection** — Deflection can be accomplished by reeling the bait hard to your right with the rod tip pointed perpendicular to your body, then pause, swap the rod to the other side, and reel hard to that side. An up or down deflection can be created by letting a sinking bait drop on a slow retrieve, then lift the rod tip and crank the bait to make it rise. A floating crankbait on a slow retrieve will rise, then dip when the speed is increased while raising or lowering the rod tip.

**Barn Burner** — This "grip it and rip it" retrieve can work when bass are lethargic or in a negative mood. The idea is to not give the fish a chance to eyeball the lure. The retrieve is so fast it triggers a reactionary strike. A great alternative to the barn burner is to burn the lure at top speed, then pause in the middle of the retrieve, allowing the bass to freight train the lure. ■

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# HYBRIDS ON NORMAN

## Mussels are the key to hot hybrid fishing

**G** By Tony Garitta  
 us Gustafson of Lake Norman Ventures flexes his “mus-  
 sels” whenever he guides for hybrid bass at Lake Norman.  
 Gustafson said local fishermen have figured out how to catch  
 hybrids.

“Until recently, most anglers fished for hybrids the same way they used to fish for stripers,” said the veteran guide. “Though they caught some hybrids, they didn’t realize they were overlooking the best bait for hybrids. While hybrids will hit spoons, jigs, swimbaits, lures and live shad, either cast or trolled, hybrids crave mussels which thrive at Norman.

“Mussels are inexpensive and packages of them are available at Food Lion and Walmart,” said Gustafson. “You don’t have to waste fishing time catching them with a net like you do with shad and then have to worry about keeping them alive.”

Mussel fishing has some downsides.

“A mussel is very delicate and comes off a hook easily when cast. So vertical presentations work best,” said Gustafson. “You’ll also get nuisance bites from white perch, which also feed on mussels.”

For mussel fishing, Gustafson uses a light medium-action 7-foot spinning rod and reel. The reel is spooled with 10-pound test line holding a weight and bead. The line is connected to an 8-foot,



Guide Gus Gustafson displays a quality hybrid caught on Lake Norman.



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20-pound leader holding a No. 1/0, 1 or 2 bait hook. It’s basically a downsized Carolina rig.

“The leader is required because hybrids are spirited fighters that can snap light line with their antics,” said Gustafson.

Besides the C-rig, Gustafson may vertically fish a Texas rig or drop shot rig.

Whichever rig he chooses, he keeps the bait at least a foot off the bottom.

Gustafson locates hybrids by employing his electronics, by looking for birds and surface disturbances, or by noting boats bunched in one area.

Once he finds a school, he gives a spot 15 to 30 minutes to produce, then moves on.

During March, Gustafson said hybrids school in 25 to 50 feet of water, but will occasionally bust the surface, which is why he always has a topwater bait ready to throw. ■

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PLENTY OF GOOD TURKEY HUNTING LAND IS AVAILABLE TO CAROLINA HUNTERS.

## PUBLIC LAND TURKEY HUNTING

**P** By Terry Madewell  
ublic land hunting offers turkey hunters a huge selection of lands and habitats to hunt in the Carolinas. These lands are a fantastic resource. The public land opportunities in both states will offer excellent turkey hunting in 2022.

Hunting on public lands in either state does come with responsibilities for the hunter. Hunters must ensure they meet all license requirements and know all specific rules and regulations for the land being hunted. Different public lands can have vastly different rules and regulations. They're not all the same. Private lands adjoin these public areas so hunters are responsible for knowing exactly where they are when hunting public lands. Commercial maps and apps for phones are one option to explore for detailed mapping.

The bottom line is the hunter is responsible. But it's not difficult and all the information required is available from the appropriate state agency.

North Carolina Game Lands are managed by the NCWRC ([www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org)). South Carolina's public lands are managed by SCDNR ([www.dnr.sc.gov](http://www.dnr.sc.gov)).

## NORTH CAROLINA SOUTH MOUNTAINS GAME LANDS

The South Mountains Game Lands consist of 22,575 acres in Burke, Cleveland, McDowell and Rutherford counties.

Paul Thompson, the Southern Mountains Wildlife Biologist for the NCWRC, said the South Mountains Game Lands has a bit of everything in terms of habitat for wild turkeys.

“For openers we’ve got steep mountain terrain and closed canopy hardwoods,” Thompson said. “But a lot of habitat diversity exists with substantial acreage on a regular controlled burn rotation. Burns provide excellent turkey habitat and many small openings exist too. Some are planted food plots and others are fallow fields.”

He said plenty of creeks and drainages are found in the bottoms. And high ridges serve as hunter travel routes while listening for gobblers.

Thompson said access is good. And opportunities exist to enable those seeking to get far from other hunters that opportunity.

“We have major roads through the area leading to overall good access. And one area I’d like to point out is Roper Hollow Road off of Hwy. 64,” he said. “Hunters need a good map, of course. But this road leads to the access of the CCC Road, providing gravel road access for many miles. Along this road hunters can park and hunt on foot in the northern part of these game lands. For hunters wanting to get into less pressured lands, this is certainly an excellent option to consider.”



## CROATAN GAME LANDS

The Croatan Game Lands (Croatan National Forest), comprise 162,220 acres in Carteret, Jones and Craven counties in the coastal sector of the state.

Chris Kent, District Two Wildlife Biologist, said the last 2 years have produced high harvests for turkey hunters. And the outlook for 2022 is good.

One big plus is that along with the large size of the property, the Croatan Game Lands has tremendous habitat diversity,” Kent said. “The land has lots of creeks and swamps throughout. In the east and southern portions, pine plantations offer plenty of open areas.”

Kent said that the west and north areas are made up of mixed hardwood and pine stands and have plenty of the bottomland turkey hunting habitat favored by many hunters.

“Compared to some of the game lands in the western portion of the state, not a lot of topographical change exists. Hunters can find some topographical relief, but usually only a few feet,” he said.

He said access is good but the impact from the 2018 Hurricane Florence is still creating some access issues in certain designated areas.

“I’ve noted that the first part of the season turkey hunters pressure the area hard. But the last couple of weeks much less hunting pressure exists,” he said.

## SANDY MUSH GAME LANDS >



Calling a gobbler into gun range on public lands is often the result of lots of scouting combined with good calling.  
**OPPOSITE PAGE:** Hunters must research the appropriate game lands but excellent hunting is found on many public lands.

Terry Madewell

## SANDY MUSH GAME LANDS

Sandy Mush Game Lands consists of 2,795 acres in Buncombe and Madison counties.

David Stewart is the North Mountain Region Wildlife Biologist working the Sandy Mush Game Lands. This productive game land area features excellent turkey hunting habitat, he said.

“A good population of turkeys are found at Sandy Mush,” Stewart said. “A lot of unique habitat features exist including a considerable amount of early successional growth that includes controlled burn areas as well as lots of planted openings.

“The turkey harvest at Sandy Mush on a per square mile basis is excellent, although the overall size of the area is small compared to some game lands in the mountains,” he said.

Stewart said Sandy Mush is made up of several different tracts of land in the general area.

“It’s spread out. And that means hunters must rely on maps more than usual because private lands exist between the various segments of the game lands,” he said.”

Stewart said another positive habitat situation for turkey hunters is that when this land was acquired by NCWRC as game land property a lot of open farmlands were nearby.

“The goal is to keep that open land open. So plenty of fallow fields with native warm season grasses are found throughout the area,” he said.

## UWHARRIE GAME LANDS

Uwharrie Game Lands comprises 52,252 acres in the Piedmont region of the state and lies in Davidson, Randolph and Montgomery counties.

Greg Queen is the Troy Team Leader for the NCWRC that oversees the Uwharrie and other game lands in this area. Queen said the property offers a blend of habitat with the southern part of the game lands being flatter with some sandy areas and longleaf pine vegetation. In the northern portion, the forest is an oak-hickory hardwood forest, and that region is much steeper with more topographic relief.

“A good population of turkeys are found throughout the Uwharrie game lands. And we have about 100 food plots ranging from 1 to 10 acres each scattered throughout the area,” he said. “In addition, 3000 to 4000 acres are managed with controlled burns annually.”

Queen said two major rivers flow through the lands: the Uwharrie and the Little rivers.



Terry Madewell



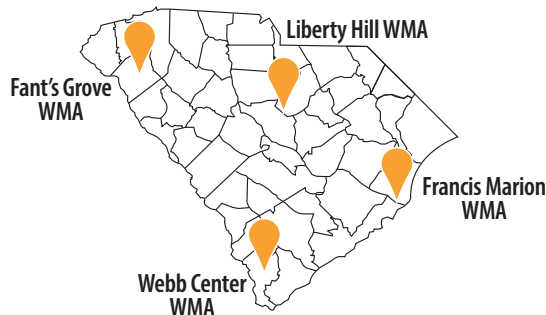
Use the natural cover to help hide when hunting public lands.  
**OPPOSITE PAGE:** Good calling skills are crucial on public lands because gobblers hear lots of calls from other hunters.

Terry Madewell

“These two areas provide the bulk of the permanent water sources of the area and are highly productive and popular with turkey hunters,” he said. “It’s important to know that some of the northern areas have only wet-weather water available. So in some years dry conditions will limit game species availability.

Queen said Uwharrie consists of scattered tracts of land of various sizes, giving hunters plenty of options.

Access is good and he said campgrounds from rustic to modern are available for hunters to use.



## SOUTH CAROLINA

### LIBERTY HILL WMA

Charles Ruth, Deer and Turkey Project Supervisor for the SCDNR, said Liberty Hill WMA is one of his top picks for turkey hunting because of its size, ease of accessibility and land diversity.

“Liberty Hill WMA is an 8000-acre tract of land that’s literally ideal for turkey hunting,” Ruth said.

Ruth said the property is comprised of a combination of SCDNR owned and leased properties located on the Kershaw/Lancaster County line from Singleton Creek on Lake Wateree to the Cedar Creek Boat Access Area on the Catawba River.

“The property is dominated by mature loblolly and shortleaf pines on the upland ridges, mixed pine-hardwoods along the lower hillsides and mature hardwoods along the creeks and coves of the shoreline,” Ruth said. “Several acres of wildlife openings exist on the property, all providing habitat for numerous wildlife species, including turkeys.

Ruth said the topography is hilly, rising from an elevation of 225 feet at the shore to 500 feet on the hilltops.

“Selective timber harvests and prescribed fire are the primary management tools utilized to improve habitat conditions and this is ideal management for wild turkeys,” he said. “Management activities include managing the openings and meadows to provide early successional habitat and supplemental wildlife forage.”

Ruth said access inside the area is good. But hunters have the opportunity to back into areas that are not hunted frequently if they are willing to put boots on the ground and go.

“With the diversity in terrain and excellent turkey habitat, it’s an ideal place to hunt turkeys throughout the day,” he said. “Plenty of land exists from the lakeshore to the ridgetops to locate gobblers any time of the day.”

## FANT'S GROVE

Fant's Gove WMA consists of 8540 acres and the vast majority of the property is owned by Clemson University, with one other private landowner part of the WMA. Primarily located in Anderson County with smaller portions in Oconee and Pickens counties, this WMA provides an excellent turkey hunting opportunity in South Carolina's upstate.

Fant's Grove is favored by Ruth because of the size and diversity of hunting opportunities at this WMA, which lies around Lake Hartwell.

"Mature hardwood ridges and bottoms are common along with mixed hardwood and pine. And plenty of openings and clearings exist providing an excellent diversity of habitat types for turkeys," he said.

Ruth said turkey hunting opportunities vary on this property and hunters can drive by vehicle to gated areas by road, then park and walk in to hunt. The use of boats to reach some of the remote peninsulas of the WMA around the lake is permissible.

"Some gates on the property leave only a short walk to prime turkey habitat. But these are usually hunted hard early in the season," he said. "With a little research hunters can find areas that require long walks. Those willing to hoof long distances can find less pressured areas.

As is always the case when hunting WMAs, Ruth said due diligence is required to study the WMA maps and know exactly which

lands are open for turkey hunting and the boundary lines to private property.

## WEBB CENTER COMPLEX

Ruth said the Webb Center Complex is a huge area with a wide diversity of potential turkey habitat.

"When referring to the Webb Center Complex we're talking about the three separate WMAs of Hamilton Ridge, Palachuacola and Webb as a package," Ruth said. "They are contiguous properties and comprise a large tract of prime public hunting for turkeys."

Ruth said the three WMAs combine to offer 25,000 acres of diverse turkey habitats.

"The habitat varies significantly and includes bottomland hardwoods, creek drains, oxbow lakes and various types of wetlands as well as numerous pine stands," he said. "Several miles of Savannah River frontage are part of the property. Wildlife openings and food plots are scattered throughout the WMA.

Terry Madewell

Locating the right habitat, such as open fields, is often the key to success on public lands turkey hunting. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Gobblers are hunted hard on public lands, but by putting in extra effort hunters can get close to a longbeard.



This habitat diversity creates some of the best overall public land habitat in the state for turkeys. And the large size offers ample opportunity for hunters to hunt.”

Ruth said for hunters to be consistently successful they need to do their due diligence in scouting and be prepared to put in legwork.

## FRANCIS MARION WMA

The Francis Marion National Forest consists of 258,000 acres of lands segmented into five WMAs to manage the highly diverse habitats.

Ruth said the five sub-units are the Santee, Hellhole, Northampton, Wambaw and Waterhorn WMAs.

“Different areas of this property may have special uses. So always check the regulations,” Ruth said. “But the overall habitat situation for turkeys is excellent and the population is good. But with an area this large, the individual turkey hunter has to put in the legwork and scout to be consistently successful.”

Ruth said while a lot of the timber management activities are good for turkeys, hunters can’t rely on old information to be accurate from one year to the next. Habitat conditions change quickly with clearing, thinning and controlled burns all part of the management process.

“The prescribed burning practices now employed at the Francis Marion property significantly enhance turkey habitat,” he said. “These controlled burn sites change annually. So hunters need to find them via windshield tours on open roads as



Terry Madewell

well as walking into remote areas.

For questions about the Francis Marion National Forest, Ruth said the Dennis Wildlife Center in Bonneau at 843-825-3387 is an excellent source. ■



**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.

## GREENER PASTURES ➤

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# HIGH-TECH HUNTER

CELL PHONE APPS USEFUL FOR HUNTING AND FOOD PLOTS

**L**ife in the 21st century is much different than it ever has been. Everything people do and how people accomplish daily tasks and goals involves some form of technology.

Surely people can still find their way to the market without a GPS. And we can still grow big and juicy beefsteak tomatoes without any fancy computer application or sophisticated online aid. But even the old timers are toting a smartphone everywhere they go and some even subscribe to dozens of Instagram pages.

Technology has changed the way we go about life. And in most cases, these technological tools have shortened the learning curve and made us better at reaching our goals.

Hunters and property managers are not immune to these changes. Most hunters have incorporated these updates to our hunting culture. Cell phones lacking the smart features are practically obsolete.

While some smart phone apps are just time killers, some are very helpful applications that can help hunters and property managers improve their experience.

Weather apps can show predictions on wind, temperature, and a real-time radar. And the basic mapping apps can be helpful for showing locations etc. But developers have created apps dedicated to the hunter and food plot developer that are truly helpful tools.

Dozens of hunting apps are available, and many of them contain similar tools for showing topography lines, creeks,

weather, solunar tables and feeding times, aerial photos, property lines, and property ownership. Many of these apps also allow hunters to add waypoints and routes for specific locations of tree stands, bedding areas, travel corridors, and food sources. And the measurement tools offer hunters the ability to measure distances and areas as well.



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



Hunters can use numerous apps on their cell phones to help them learn all about the land they're hunting.

Jeff Burluson



Jeff Burluson

**MAPS ARE GOOD, APPS ARE BETTER:**

Maps like this one at the entrance of a North Carolina Game Land are great, but hunters can have all that information and more in their pockets as long as they have the right cell phone app.



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# GREENER PASTURES

continued

Cell phone apps can show you a wealth of information about land, including who owns it.



Just to name a few, OnX Hunt, HuntWise, Go Hunt Insider, Base Map, Gaia GPS, and many other apps are available. Some of these apps contain similar features. And some are more for mapping and trail identification for hikers.

Most of these apps aren't free though. But the cost of the annual or monthly subscription can be negated when their usefulness is realized.

OnX Hunt is arguably the most popular app used by hunters in the country. This app has a wide range of functionality with lots of useful features for today's hunter. In addition to map-

ping, measurement, aerial photos, topography, and weather tools, OnX Hunt shows property boundaries, owner address, game zone, and a link to the state hunting regulations for that area. Hunters scouting new properties in new areas can gain valuable intelligence from this easy-to-use phone app.

Property boundaries for hunting on private land isn't the only useful advantage either. Many hunters take advantage of the public hunting options.

North Carolina has 2.1 million acres and South Carolina has 819,000 acres of public hunting land. State wildlife maps can be

fairly accurate for identifying property boundaries and the lines on the ground will always be well marked. But having these boundaries on a GPS-enabled app can help hunters navigate into these interior areas of the public land units to find those big bucks or duck roosts in real time. And who doesn't want to visit the 1.3 million acres of public lands in Ohio and Illinois to get a shot at a farm belt Boone and Crockett trophy. OnX Hunt can assist hunters in these other states to unravel the details of these public land options to come home with a trophy. ■

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## USEFUL ONLINE APPS

In 2019, Oklahoma State University created an app called "Wildlife Food Plots" to assist landowners for choosing what types of food plots to plant. The free app enables hunters to select a wildlife species and season, then the app will offer a list of potential planting varieties along with the planting specifics with respect to seeding rate, etc. While this app was created for Oklahoma properties, it can be used to help hunters in the Carolinas narrow down plantings with some specific planting guidelines in one place.

Another useful food plots app is an online application on Pennington Seed's website. They call it their food plot calculator ([www.pennington.com/foodplot](http://www.pennington.com/foodplot)). Users can draw out food plots by using their mapping feature. Then, they select their target species and the program selects food plot options with the number of bags needed to plant the food plot area. And each choice has a link that gives specifics on the product and planting instructions. While they don't have a phone app, this application can be accessed via the internet on the phone or from a traditional home computer.

Hunting deer and other wildlife has some common features that will never get replaced with technology. But the new technological advancements over the last two decades are definitely assisting hunters and landowners for obtaining goals more achievable in their outdoor aspirations. ■

## COOKING ON THE WILDSIDE ➤



When hunters learn to use cell phone apps like OnX and others, success comes a little bit easier.

Jeff Burleson



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## COOKING ON THE WILD SIDE

Jerry Dilsaver

# TEX-MEX PORKER RICE

FERAL HOG SAUSAGE, RICE, AND A LITTLE SPICE

### TIP!

Feral hog sausage is very lean, so add a little oil when cooking to prevent it from sticking to the frying pan.

Wild hogs are nuisance animals in the wild, but they are fun to hunt and their meat is great for recipes like this Tex-Mex rice dish. **INSET:** You can add as much rice as necessary depending on the size of your dinner crowd.

**R**egular readers know I enjoy rice dishes, like jambalaya, gumbo, paella, dirty rice, perloo and such and that was what I wanted to do with this. After looking through past notes and my recipe files, I decided on this recipe that isn't one of the previously mentioned rice dishes, but relies heavily on rice. This dish uses spicy feral pork sausage, yellow rice, peppers, onions, corn and beans to create a mixture that appeals to the eye while filling the stomach. Since it really isn't one of the previously mentioned dishes and has a rather robust flavor, I simply call it Tex-Mex Porker Rice.

March is a unique time for sportsmen in the Carolinas. Mother nature is yawning and stretching, but hasn't fully risen from her winter slumber just yet. Fishing options include small streams near the Blue Ridge Mountain and peaks all the

way to the cobalt blue water of the Gulf Stream above the Continental Shelf. Predator hunters can still have a go and extended snow goose season is in. This is the last month of the extended season for controlled hunting preserves. Turkey season will open in a few locations during the last week of the month. Feral

pigs are legal game all year and smaller porkers make excellent table fare. This recipe uses a pound of feral pig sausage as its central ingredient. ■



# PORKER RICE

Feral pigs are a nuisance in many states and have been classified as vermin with wide open hunting seasons. They multiply as quickly as rabbits and are extremely destructive to their habitat. They can also destroy a field in a few nights. As bad as they are, they have some good points — primarily their mild flavored, lean meat.

I was introduced to feral pig hunting about 25 years ago and have enjoyed it since. They are smart animals and worthy adversaries. Most of them taste good too.

I always have some of my feral pig meat made into sausage. It is so lean we usually have to add some fat to keep it from scorching while cooking and still spray the pan with non-stick spray. This is the reason for the little bit of oil to begin cooking.

This cooks well in a large wok. I have a Fire Disc cooker, which I refer to as a cowboy wok and use outside over an open flame. I usually prepare this in it, but this batch was made during the late January ice storm and I cooked it inside in a large cast iron pot. This did well and is a

## PREPARATION:

1. Chop the onion, scallions, baby bell peppers and jalapeno peppers pretty finely. (If you are going to use cilantro, it cuts well with scissors.)

2. Drain the cup of beans.

3. Heat the oil in a large skillet and brown the sausage.

4. When the sausage begins to brown, add the frozen corn, onions, bell peppers, scallions and jalapenos.

5. Stir in the taco seasoning, plus salt, red pepper flakes and black pepper (all to personal taste).

6. Cook at a low-medium heat until the vegetables are tender, but still crisp.

7. Stir in the rice and mix it in well.

8. Add the Worcestershire sauce, Cha sauce, lime zest and lime juice.

9. Stir often, being careful not to let anything stick, until the mixture is nice and warm throughout.

10. Serve while everything is warm.

11. Options are to garnish with cilantro and/or salsa and have extra Cha sauce, red pepper flakes and spices on the table for those with really robust palates.

This is Tex-Mex style cooking and should be flavorfully spicy without being overly hot. However, by adding another jalapeno, more red pepper flakes, pepper or Cha sauce, it can be kicked up a notch or three for folks who enjoy a bit more heat in their food.

Those folks who like to end a meal with

good substitute for folks that don't have a wok.

I don't often recommend brands, but make an exception for the Texas Pete Cha Sauce. It is spicy without being ridiculously hot and has a nice sweet and smoky flavor.

The lime zest and juice definitely brighten the flavor a bit. Lime isn't my favorite taste, but definitely works in this recipe. If you like the flavor of lime, add the zest from the complete lime. There is a slight difference in taste.

I suggest cilantro as an option. It makes for an attractive presentation if you're serving this at home for dinner. The dollop of chunky salsa is a good touch too and adds a little something, especially for those who prefer this in its milder form.

The other thing to remember is that this is a bit like elephant stew. It's very hearty and thick and if you have more friends arrive than you were expecting, you can always add another couple of cups of rice to stretch it a bit. This was all my pot would hold and allow me to stir without spilling. Don't bother to ask - it was all gone by the time everyone left. ■

dessert should find a slice of apple or peach pie or cobbler, with a scoop of vanilla ice cream, finishes this off just right. ■

## INGREDIENTS:

**1 Pound** spicy feral pig or venison sausage,

**1 1/2 cups** frozen yellow corn kernels,

**4 Cups** cooked and cooled yellow rice,

**1 Cup** seasoned or spicy chili beans,

**1** Sweet onion,

**3** Baby bell peppers (assorted colors),

**2** Jalapeno peppers,

**4** Scallions,

Zest of 1/2 lime,

Juice of 1 lime,

**2 TBL** canola oil,

**1/2 package** taco seasoning,

**1 TBL** Worcestershire sauce,

**2 TBL** Texas Pete Cha Sauce (more or less to taste),

Red pepper flakes (to taste),

Smoked sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste,

Optional: Chunky salsa and chopped cilantro.



Garnished with cilantro and salsa, this dish looks as appealing as it tastes.



**Jerry Dilsaver** of Oak Island, N.C., is a free-lance 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).



# RED HOT WHITING

**WHITING ARE BITING  
ALONG THE COAST.**

■ By Mike Marsh

## With cold winter days ending anglers are itching to go fishing. A great way to begin the season is hitting a red-hot whiting bite.

*HEAD TO THESE AREAS AND YOU'LL BE CATCHING A LIMIT IN NO TIME.*

### MOREHEAD CITY

Most folks know Richard Ehrenkauf as “Dr. Bogus.” He is a multimedia personality focused on fishing in the Emerald Isle area. His Morehead City-based Doctor Bogus radio program has aired for 22 seasons.

“It’s tongue-in-cheek because I cover Bogue Banks, Bogue Pier and Bogue Sound,” Ehrenkauf said. “I fish from the surf and the piers mostly. When Bogue and Oceanna piers open in mid-March, whiting are biting. The best bite is at night, when the lights are on and it’s so much fun to catch them.”

For boaters, the whiting bite fires up as well. Anglers anchor up, dropping two-hook bottom rigs baited with shrimp or Fish Bites. Another local favorite rig is a Sam’s Gitters, a modified speck rig that has two jigs plus a sinker on a bottom dropper.

“Nearly everybody uses a standard two-hook bottom rig baited with shrimp or Fish Bites,” he said. “But, by tying your own rigs you can spread the hooks apart for better results. Another trick is digging sand fleas in the fall and parboiling and freezing them. They cook up like lobsters or crabs and turn orange. They are also firmer, so they stay on the hook better.”

Pier anglers who fish for whiting in March may find the companionship sparse. While a March whiting run doesn’t draw anglers like an October spot run, whiting can still fill a cooler. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Capt. Butch Foster of YEAH RIGHT Charters caught this whiting in the mouth of the Cape Fear River.

Bottom fish like sand fleas that are egg-bearing, which is why the orange color gets their attention. Anglers often use a bright orange bead right above the hook that attracts fish for the same reason. I usually use a No. 2 or No. 4 long shank hook. The long shank makes it easier to remove the hook from the fish.”

At the piers, the best bite begins at the ends where king mackerel anglers take over during summer. The fish gradually move to the surf, then back into the inlets and ICW.

“A great place to catch them is off the jetty near the lighthouse at Barden’s Inlet,” he said. “Outside the inlet on East Shackleford Banks, the Dead Tree Hole is a whiting hotspot. The tree for which the area is named is long gone, but the fish are still there.”

In Beaufort Inlet, the fish bite from Marker 18 all the way inside to the beach and turning basin area at the State Port. The best time to fish there is two hours either side of slack tide.

“The tide can really get ripping in that area,” Ehrenkauf said. “If you time your trip to coincide with two hours either side of high tide or two hours either side of low tide, you are going to catch some nice fish.”

### SOUTHPORT ▶



## SOUTHPORT

Capt. Butch Foster of Yeah Right Charters whips up a batch of whiting near Southport from his 22-foot Riddick Bay Boat. The Cape Fear River mouth holds plenty of fish.

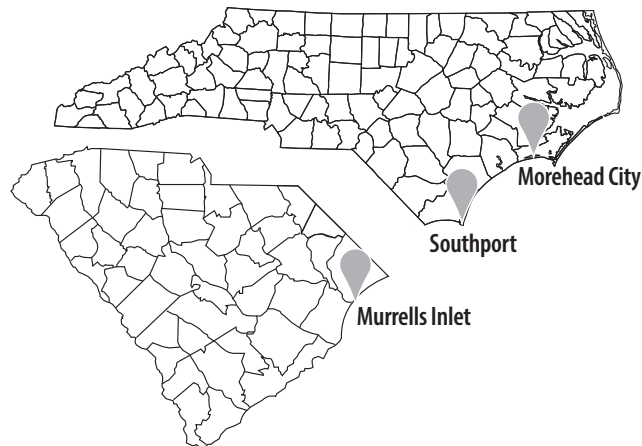
“I usually fish the area from Striking Island to Battery Island and southward to the Bald Head Island entrance channel,” Foster said. “I use my depthfinder to locate the drop-offs such as the mouth of Cape Creek, which falls to about 18 feet. The fish are usually at the bottom of the drop-offs. But, if the fish aren’t biting deep, you should try fishing the shallow side.”

Foster drops two-hook bottom rigs baited with shrimp, Fish Bites or cut pieces of Berkley Gulp lures. He anchors and fishes, moving when the fish stop biting. The slack tide periods and the rising tide are not the best times to fish, so he times his trips for falling tide.

“Sometimes they are harder to find,” he said. “That’s when I start power drifting until I locate a feeding school. The best tide to fish is the falling tide. When the water is going out it helps me cover more territory while I steer the boat with the engine to orient it. That helps spread out the baits across the bottom.”

If the fish aren’t biting in the river, Foster moves to Caswell Beach. He fishes from the point of the river mouth westward along the beach to the Oak Island Lighthouse.

“If you don’t have luck there, you can try the ICW,” he said. “If you see anglers in anchored boats between the river and the N.C. 133 Bridge, you have found the fish.”



## MURRELLS INLET

Lucas Unger grew up at Nags Head, N.C., where he fished for whiting at Outer Banks Pier. He found his dream job when he became the first Pier Master of Springmaid Pier when it reopened in 2020. He said piers have some of the hottest whiting action in South Carolina.

“When I moved to South Carolina, I heard fishermen talking about ‘bull whiting,’ which are fish 12 inches or longer,” Unger said. “After a winter layoff, those bigger fish start biting in late February. At Springmaid Pier, there were 40 or 50 guys fishing for whiting a couple of days each week, especially Saturdays. Whiting action is also good at Apache, Myrtle Beach State Park and Cherry Grove piers.”



About 3.5 miles south of Murrells Inlet, where Surfside Pier is being rebuilt, Unger fishes just offshore. When he launches his 22-foot Bayliner Trophy center console at Murrells Inlet public boat landing it also opens other options.

“I fish the humps and natural bottoms about 400 yards offshore of Surfside Pier with a high-low rig baited with shrimp or Fish Bites. The small sea robins will steal your bait so you need a lot. The north and south inlet jetties also hold plenty of whiting. The outsides of the jetties provide excellent fishing for anglers in small skiffs and johnboats because they break the force of wind and waves. The best bite happens when the tide is running. Whiting hide in the rocks during the slack water of high and low tides.”

Just south of the south jetty, Unger fishes at Huntington Beach State Park, drifting baits along the flats just offshore. Whiting concentrate in shallow holes.

“Another good spot is located 1.5 miles north of the inlet, where Marlin Quay Marina marks good fishing,” he said. “When you can see the boats in the marina, start fishing 200 to 400 yards off the beach. The bottom is broken and you can find structure with your depth-finder. It’s a great place to catch a cooler full of bulls.” ■



**Mike Marsh** is a freelance outdoor writer in Wilmington, N.C. His latest book, *Fishing North Carolina*, and other titles, are available at [www.mikemarshoutdoors.com](http://www.mikemarshoutdoors.com).

**TEPID TEMPS  
JUMP-START THE  
HOT BITE** ➤

Bloodworms were once the go-to baits for catching whiting on piers. They still are, if you can find them. Most anglers use shrimp and Fish Bites artificial baits. **CENTER:** When the whiting run is in full swing, swinging them over the side of the boat two-at-a-time is a common occurrence. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** The author shows off a whiting he caught near Bald Head Island.

# TEPID TEMPS JUMP-START THE HOT BITE

"I have been taking water temperatures since 1995 and they show that the whiting bite from 48 to 86 degrees, which essentially means all year long," said Richard Ehrenkauffer (aka Dr. Bogus).

The water temperature starts out the year in the low 50s. As the weather warms, so does the water. By late March or April, it's right in the middle of the active range for whiting at 65 degrees. Ehrenkauffer said this is the "Goldilocks" temperature, which of course means it's just right.

For more information, visit [ncoifc.com](http://ncoifc.com), which has temperature information showing preferences of various species of fish or send an email to [drbogus@drbogus.com](mailto:drbogus@drbogus.com).

## WHAT IS A WHITING?

"Whiting" is only one name for the Carolinas' three

This whiting is a Gulf kingfish, a common catch in the Carolinas.



kingfish species. Runs of these fish typically consist of one species but sometimes catches include a number of the other species. Other names for the whiting include sea mullet, Virginia mullet and tiger mullet. The name whiting is a reference to their white meat, which rivals flour-der in flavor and texture.

The southern kingfish (*Menticirrhus americanus*) has a lighter back and sides than the northern kingfish and has brown or bronze markings. The northern kingfish (*M. saxatilis*) has a darker back and sides, with darker markings that can be almost black and the first spine of the dorsal fin is elongated. The Gulf kingfish (*M. littoralis*) is silvery gray with no distinct markings. ■

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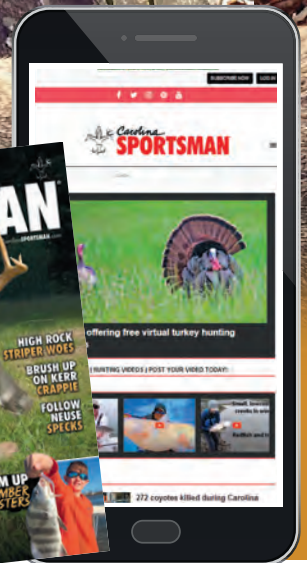
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Anglers should take full advantage of good-weather windows to get offshore this month.



Chris Burrows

# BE A BLUEWATER HERO

BLUEBIRD DAYS ARE SACRED THIS MONTH

**T**his time of year, an offshore trolling trip under the right conditions can offer determined anglers opportunities for some of the biggest wahoo of the year, and sometimes tuna as well. Even though March is often thought of as the beginning of spring, the majority of the month is still winter weather. But don't let that deter you from a great time. An early season trip to the deep can be very rewarding.

Being successful this time of year means picking the right day. The most important weather chart to consult is one that shows isobars. The greater the spacing between those little all-knowing lines, the better. Wind reports are also important. You want a day with 10 knots of wind or less, preferably from the south or west, or somewhere between those two cardinal directions. Beware any day

where multiple forecasting tools show a sustained northerly wind.

Make sure that your ditch bag is good to go and has an EPIRB or PLB (personal locator beacon) with the battery within its date range. Check flares and have a handheld VHF fully charged and ready to go as well. Dress in layers, with the outermost being waterproof.

You'll have to wear everything in your wardrobe as you are headed offshore early and when you come home. But as soon as you get in the warmer water offshore you'll come out of your gear layer by layer. But be sure to keep everything dry for later.

## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

A great tool for deciding when and where to go offshore in the "off" season is a satel-

lite surface temperature shot. Information is often the most important tool in the fishing world. What I don't want to find when I get offshore is that I am chasing good water all the way to or past 100 fathoms. If the shots show 61-degree water at 20 fathoms and well offshore of that, I'm more likely to stay home and clean the garage.

However, if we can find 68-degree water in that same depth and it looks like it is warming fairly quickly, it's time to put fuel in the boat. A hard temperature break rather than blended water



**Chris Burrows** began his charter fishing career out of Charleston and Georgetown, SC, but moved to Brunswick County, NC in 2005. He currently runs Wing & Fish Company in Shallotte and is involved with fisheries management at the federal level, but still fishes recreationally whenever he gets a free second.

makes the prospects of success all the more appealing. Many a wahoo, and most of the truly giant ones I have seen have come from water that has not quite hit the 70 degree mark. Yellowfin and blackfin tuna aren't scared of that temp range in the least either.

My first plan of attack when I get to "fishy" water offshore this month is generally to high-speed troll for wahoo, especially when 68 plus degree water pushes into the 20-30 fathom range. This means trolling some of the heaviest gear you have with lures that you know will stay in the water at 12-15 knots.

## BE PREPARED FOR ANYTHING

Heavy shock leaders, heavy cable hook sets, and trolling weights are your friends at this point. I use No. 64 rubber bands (often several on each rod) to secure lines to either release clips or to the back of the reel seat to flatten the angle the line goes into the water and to provide an excellent strike alarm. This way, you are not only fishing, but you are also prospecting. I troll from rock to rock, often over some of the deeper grouper holes I fish in warmer weather looking for bait concentrations. If you find that bait, or if you happen to get a more obvious sign of activity, like tunas busting up top, then it's time to switch gears.

Known tuna activity means breaking out 60-pound fluoro-carbon crank-on leaders, Sea Witches, and ballyhoo, or even switching to jugging tackle if the tunas are suspended down

deep. Whatever you run across, starting off with the high-speed route enables you to cover a lot more water while you are still actively fishing. Of course, if the wahoo are chasing down the fast plugs, you can just keep doing that all day long. The sound of three big rubber bands snapping simultaneously followed by an 80-pound class wahoo smoking down a reel with 20 pounds of strike drag is a great way to beat the winter blues.

## BE FLEXIBLE

To be fair, just like any time of year, the trolling bite doesn't always cooperate. Since you are already in the deep, if you want something to take home for dinner, it's not a bad time to jig up a good catch of big black sea bass. The fish in these depths, just inside the break, are generally the biggest you will catch, and winter is prime time to score on some keepers. Be mindful of the limits, however, as they seem to be ever-changing with the black fish.

You can't set your calendar for winter offshore fishing. You have to be able to go when the weather allows it. Make sure you have a plan, and a backup plan. Above all, plan for anything that Mother Nature can throw at you and don't push your luck on a marginal day. If you stay within your limits, you may be pleasantly surprised at what you find when you head to the blue water on one of those bluebird days. ■

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# SEEING RED

## Redfish are abundant in Murrells Inlet in March

**G** By Jeff Burleson  
 Guide Jordan Pate of Carolina Guide Service ([www.carolinaguideservice.com](http://www.carolinaguideservice.com)) said March is a transitional period and the redfish move into a spring-like pattern. And Murrells Inlet, he said, is a great place to ambush them.

"You can expect redfish to begin breaking out of their large winter schools," said Pate (843-814-7900). "I'm often finding fish roaming in smaller packs of three to five fish this time of year."

While the large winter schools are favored by many, the smaller packs of fish will be more spaced out offering more opportunities to find these fish in a greater number of creeks and tidal flats. Typically, the reds are still patrolling the creeks though and will switch back from the front to the rear of many of the creeks depending on the tide and water temperature.

"We often experience big tides and windy days in March. But if your timing is right between the big moon tides and cold fronts, you can have some of the best red-fishing of the year in our area," he said.

Conditions can change drastically day to day. But the real drastic change is from the beginning of March to the end of March.

"Expect water temperatures to fluctuate by 5 to 10 degrees from the beginning of the month until the end of month. Be prepared to change tactics until you find a pattern since the fish may be held up in deep pockets when it's cold and then roaming on shallow mud flats when it warms up significantly," he said.

Pate primarily uses scented baits such as Z-Man and Berkley



As the March weather warms the water temps in Murrells Inlet, the redfish move into a spring-like pattern.

Gulp. But he will also use shrimp-flavored Pro-Cure on other non-scented lures to get the fish's attention. Natural bait can also bring fish to the boat in a hurry.

"It's an excellent month to dead stick cut mullet, frozen shrimp or chunks of blue crab," he said.

Pate also will utilize a technique coined by the late Capt. Lynn Fore of Georgetown for tempting spring reds into chewing.

"He used frozen shrimp just a few feet under a popping cork, under a couple of split shot on a circle hook. Float them along a grass edge or over submerged oyster bars and they can't resist them. You fish the popping corks less aggressively than you would an artificial shrimp. But it surely does the trick this time of year when you have the frozen shrimp handy," he said. ■

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# LOWCOUNTRY REDS

## Target redfish under docks

**M** By Brian Cope  
 arch is a huge transition period for inshore fishing in South Carolina's lowcountry, with characteristics of both winter and spring showing throughout the month. Capt. Ben Powers of Reel Time Charters in Charleston, S.C. said one of the most consistent bites comes while fishing under docks.

The big schools of redfish will begin to break up soon, but they're still on a mission to stay safe from dolphins, who continue to feed heavily on them until the spring influx of other fish offers more to their diet.

"This time of year, fishing tight to dock pilings, especially at low tide, is a great option. The redfish will hide under those docks and stay close to the pilings.

They're trying to stay warm and to hide from the dolphins," said Powers (843-475-9660).

Powers uses his shallow water anchor to hold him in position so his anglers can make casts deep under docks. He suggests using live mud minnows or live shrimp, and he hooks them on Ralph Phillips jigheads.

### GIVE 'EM TIME

"Carolina rigs are more difficult to fish under the docks and around those pilings. Casting is more difficult because of the way the weight is positioned so far above the hook. But with the bait hooked onto a jighead, it's much easier to cast," he said.

He prefers a slow retrieve, and often allows the bait to just sit on the bottom for several seconds without reeling at all.

"This gives those redfish time to sense the bait and to pick it up. But you have to stay ready because as soon as a redfish feels any resistance, he's going to immediately try to wrap you around the pilings and break your line," he said.

Powers said anglers need to be fairly aggressive then, doing everything they can to guide and power the fish from those pilings. And he said anglers will sometimes pick up a bonus species or two when fishing under docks this time of year.


"You'll definitely catch your share of redfish, but it's not uncommon to hook into a black drum or sheepshead also. These docks are great spots. Just be there at low tide, use live bait on jigheads, and cast as tight as you can to the pilings. Then be ready to muscle them out when they bite," he said. ■



Brian Cope

Throughout March, lowcountry anglers catch plenty of redfish by probing docks, especially during low tide.

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HOTSPOTS

This youngster landed a pretty black drum during the spring at the Cape Lookout Rock Jetty.



# CAPE LOOKOUT BLACK DRUM

## Rock jetty holds hordes of black drum this month

**N** By Craig Holt  
oah Lynk, a Harkers Island-based guide said most of the March fishing along North Carolina's central coast is for red drum in the ocean. But he said you can find black drum any place you find structure.

The primary bottom feature that lures Lynk onto the water in March is the Cape Lookout Rock Jetty. Extending into the waters of Barden Inlet about a half-mile northwest from Cape Lookout National Seashore, the man-made jumble of rocks attracts baitfish, sport fish and hearty salt-water anglers.

"Black drum and sheepshead will be around the jetty until the water warms up," Lynk said.

Once a spot for large winter spotted seatrout, specks have migrated from CALO to Delaware Bay in recent years.

Catching black drum is pretty simple, too, and these fish have a wonderful taste that's attracted even more anglers who have discovered the jetty's non-stop action and the taste of black drum.

Lynk fishes with medium-powered rods fitted with 3000-series reels spooled with 15- to 20-pound test braid and a Carolina-rigged section of 30-pound test fluorocarbon leader with a live-bait hook that holds a piece of frozen shrimp.

"It's just a basic outfit, not too heavy or too light," he said. "You wouldn't want ultra-light tackle with 4- to 10-pound test leaders.

"Casting at the jetty also means a lot of hangups on rocks and where the bottom is covered by broken lines, lures and anchors."

Division of Marine Fisheries daily catch limits are 10 black drum per angler in a 14- to 25-inch slot. But Lynk's largest black drum at the jetty weighed 56 pounds.

"Most drum range from 1 to 10 pounds," he said. "But it's best to go to the jetty during a north to northeast wind. The water will be slick because the land knocks down the wind and waves. Trying to fish out there with a south or southwest wind is tough."

"They're decent to eat," he said. "I'd rather have black drum than trout, and they're always out there in winter."

The main concern in boat fishing at the CALO jetty is to be watchful and avoid the tops of rocks that can be just beneath the surface.

One of the easiest fish recipes to prepare is cast-iron black drum. Place a cast-iron frying pan on a stove top and heat olive oil and melted, pasteurized butter. Add Old Bay seasoning and lemon juice to drum filets, then cook them until meat flakes easily with a fork. ■

The red drum and black drum fishing really picks up once the calendar turns to March.

# SPOTS AND STRIPES in Brunswick County

By Jerry Dilsover

**B**runswick County is North Carolina's southernmost saltwater in North Carolina. The creeks and marshes in the southern part of the county are the first to wake up as spring arrives.

Usually, the red drum and black drum, plus a few hearty specks, get off to a strong bite when the water temps begin warming in the spring. This year spring begins on Sunday, March 20, a week after Daylight Savings Time begins. Fish still have the advantage, but the balance shifts a little more to fishermen.

Many years, winter begins losing its grip on Southern N.C. by late February with stretches of warm sunny days. This begins in earnest by early March and the water also begins to warm. It only takes a week or so and drum, both red and black, begin to feed more regularly and more aggressively. A few speckled trout may respond to this initial preview of spring. But the real stars are red and black drum.

Capt. Austin Kerr of Fellowship Charters (336-941-7292) in Ocean Isle Beach said this is when fishing becomes steadier. When the spring drum bite begins firing off, his phone begins to ring. It also makes fishermen more comfortable when the winter weather breaks and more sunny and warm days prevail.

Kerr fishes from the Shallotte River to Little River Inlet, just a few hundred yards across the state line in South Carolina. He said the fish get more active, but aren't summer active yet. So he likes to fish the change of the tide for a few hours, when the current isn't running strong. He believes water clarity is a key and checks the Shallotte River, Calabash River, Intracoastal Waterway, and the larger creeks off these for cleaner water.

"During this time, I concentrate on oyster beds and docks in the creeks and waterway and sometimes fish the jetties in Little River Inlet," Kerr said. "Both drum eat pieces of shrimp, and red drum are more aggressive and will chase down mud minnows. We generally fish pieces of shrimp on jigheads, but switch to Carolina rigs to fish mud minnows.

"Red drum will also chase soft plastics," Kerr said. "I like the D.O.A. 3- and 4-inch paddletails and fish them slowly on light jigheads. Most



days they will bite these, but sometimes they get very particular about the color. I have everyone on the boat begin with a different color and keep changing them until we find a color they like that day. It may have been different the day before and may be different again the next day." ■

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# TROLLING FOR LAKE MARION'S **SPECKLED GIANTS**

MARCH IS TIME TO  
LONG-LINE FOR CRAPPIE ON  
SANTEE'S UPPER LAKE.

■ By Jeff Burleson



THE SPRINGTIME IS CHERISHED BY EVERY CRAPPIE ANGLER IN THE COUNTRY.

# IT'S SPAWNING SEASON!



The warm breezes raise water temperatures in every creek, river, and reservoir. And the biological clocks start ticking away in unison with a cascade of spawning species beginning to make their way to their spring spawning grounds. Black and white crappie are part of the early spawners that prefer a cooler spawning temperature.

In the Carolina rivers and reservoirs, March is prime time to target crappie in their spawning rooms. And S.C.'s Lake Marion is one of the best lakes in the country to find big crappie in the spring season. For anglers with a boat, trolling motor, and a handful of long rods, it's time to put fish in the boat at a fast pace.

Santee Cooper is known for its excellent fishing and is nationally known as one of the best freshwater lakes in the country

to catch record-sized catfish, crappie, shellcrackers, largemouth bass, and white perch, including several state and world record catches. In fact, P.E. Foust's 5-pound black crappie out of Santee Cooper continues to hold the state record. But the lakes' record catches aren't just a fluke either. The Santee Cooper Lakes continually produce a large strain of fishes and the black and white crappie populations aren't lacking in size or quantities.

TC Lloyd of Southern Angling Guide Service out of Hartsville, S.C. is a guide and professional crappie angler. He fishes crappie tournaments from Florida to North Carolina. According to Lloyd, the Santee Lakes are full of large fish.

## QUANTITY AND QUALITY >



Driftmaster Rod Holders keep rods spaced out properly when long-line trolling for crappie. OPPOSITE PAGE: Guide TC Lloyd shows off two Lake Marion slabs.

## QUANTITY AND QUALITY

"I fish all over the country for crappie and the Santee Lakes are some of my favorite places to catch both quantity and quality crappie," said Lloyd (843-307-6678). "The average-sized fish are just bigger than many other lakes around the country and there are a ton of them in these lakes."

Lake Marion is part of the Santee Cooper Lake System. Lake Moultrie, its sister lake to the south, is connected by a seven-mile diversion canal. Often referred to as the upper lake, Lake Marion is fed by the Santee River and several small to mid-sized creeks along its northern and southern banks.

According to Lloyd, these creeks are key locations for finding spring crappie.

"Every lake in South Carolina will have crappie in the creeks in March. From the mouth to the back of the creek will have crappie either spawning or staging to spawn in the creek channel," he said.

Crappie typically begin spawning when water temperatures reach 59 degrees. They spawn on woody brush everywhere from right on the bank in less than a foot of water out to 3 or 4 feet deep. The upper end of these creeks typically warm first. So they are ideal locations for crappie to start spawning. But as Lloyd said, the majority of the crappie population moves into the



creeks on their way to spawn and they can be caught in the main creek channels or along shelves just off the creek channels.

Crappie typically travel in large schools during this time. And they're eager to feed on small minnows and minnow imitations. Lloyd utilizes a solid technique this time of year to start catching crappie in a hurry.

### TIME FOR THE LONG LINE >

March is a great time to take kids crappie fishing because the action is faster and more predictable than other months. **ACROSS SPREAD:** When long-line trolling for crappie, it's best to use the longest rods at the front of the boat.



## KEY TROLLING EQUIPMENT

Spring is the ideal time to troll for crappie in the creeks with four to 24 rods out the back and front of the boat. And the depths aren't always consistent. A smart trolling motor and clear electronics are required equipment.

Trolling for crappie typically involves double-digit rod set ups and with small diameter, 6-pound line. Wind, underwater obstructions, and other factors can send boat trajectories on a collision course. The last thing you want is to allow the lines to go too shallow over a tree top with 20 rods getting hung up at the same time. A smart trolling motor that uses GPS and course correction is a must when trolling for crappie.

Professional crappie angler and crappie guide, TC Lloyd uses a smart trolling motor and wouldn't even attempt to troll for crappie without it.

"A (Minn Kota) Autopilot trolling motor is key equipment. Not only can you control your speed to a T, it will also keep you straight regardless of the wind and any currents," he said.

Secondly, a good chart plotter that shows depth and speed is very helpful.

"You need something that shows depths, location, and your speed. You can't measure speed in tenths by watching a lily pad go by.

The chart plotter gives you your exact speed in tenths. And that is required to be successful at long-lining," he said. "It also helps to be able to mark your location where you caught the fish because sometimes it is hard to pinpoint a location in the main part of the creek."

For many types of fishing, electronics and smart trolling motors aren't always necessary. But when long-line trolling for crappie, these sophisticated electronics are required equipment to consistently put fish in the boat with ease. ■

## TIME FOR THE LONG LINE

“The best way to catch crappie in spring is long-lining. Anybody can catch crappie long-lining with jigs in the main creeks. There will be some fish in the main lake still. But most of them will be in the creeks preparing to spawn. Almost every creek will be holding crappie in March if they are spawning or not,” he said.

Lake Marion is fed mainly by the Santee River. But many tributaries enter the lake on the northern and southern banks. Wyboo Creek, Eutaw Creek, Jack's Creek, Taw Caw Creek, Church Branch, and Potato Creek, to name a few, are excellent places to find crappie staging in March. And the smaller creeks such as White Oak Branch off Potato Creek will also be holding fish.

In March, depending on water temperature, crappie will be at various locations from the mouth of the creek all the way to the shallow banks in the headwater reaches.

“Different schools of fish will be staging in deep water and then some in the shallower water already spawning. They don't all spawn at the same time. I like to start at the mouth and move toward the back. Keep checking areas of the creek until you find them,” he said.



The author caught this slab crappie last March on Lake Marion, also referred to as the Upper Lake. ABOVE: TC Lloyd prefers Jenko Curly Fry and Southern Pro Hot Grubs over the numerous brands of crappie jigs.

Lloyd likes to long-line with more than a dozen long rods tipped with jigs.

His set up and trolling technique is fairly simple, but very effective. He deploys a set of rods out front and then out the back to cover a lot of ground and with a lot of lure possibilities.

## SLOW AND STEADY

“I like to pull with the shorter rods at the back and stagger them so they don’t get tangled. If you have four, six, or 15 rods out, just keep the longer rods at the front,” he said.

Lloyd keeps his lure choices simple and uses standard jig heads from 1/32 to 1/8 sizes. He will typically employ 1/32 and 1/16 sizes in water less than 10 feet deep. He utilizes 1/8 in deeper places when he is trying to get down 20 feet. Typically, the fish will be less than 10 feet below the surface regardless of the depth. He controls his depth on the lighter jigs by casting length and trolling speed.

“I typically pull between 0.8 to 1.2 mph and I generally will use 1/16-ounce jigs in spring. I will adjust my depth by changing my speed between 0.8 and 1.2 mph over changing jig sizes. You can quickly change depths of lures with the trolling motor. The faster you go, the shallower the baits will run and vice-versa. Sometimes the fish will be near the surface and other times they will be a little deeper. When you find that sweet spot, you can wear them out,” he said.

Lloyd has used a wide variety of soft plastic brands over the years, but he prefers two lure manufacturers over others.

## DON'T FRET OVER COLOR COMBINATIONS

“I really like the Jenko Big T 2.25-inch Curly Fry and the Southern Pro 2-inch Hot Grubs. Both of these baits have good action and they hold up well after dozens of fish,” he said.

Crappie jig colors come in hundreds of color combinations. A crappie angler can

catch fish on a myriad of them. Crappie are feeding prior to spawning and will often reaction-strike when the baits are trolled by them.

“Crappie will bite about any color in the spring when they are feeding. But you can’t go wrong with black/chartreuse and white/chartreuse. These two color combinations will always catch fish in any body of water in the country,” he said.

Crappie can surely be targeted every month. And crappie can come home with an experienced angler after any fishing trip. But during spring, crappie are vulnerable to the long-lining technique in the creeks. With a trolling motor, a dozen rods in rod holders, and a sack full of crappie jigs, any angler can leave the lake with a limit of speckled delicacies. ■

## HEAD FOR THE MOUNTAINS ➤



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

Trout fishing this month means downsizing your flies and enjoying time on the water.



L. Woodrow Ross

## ICE IN THE GUIDES

SHAKE OFF THE COLD WITH THESE TROUT TIPS

**D**on't let the March chill keep you off the trout streams. This can be one of the most enjoyable times of the year.

It is a time of more leisurely fishing, after the sun has warmed the water and activated the desire of the fish to feed. This is "lazy man's fishing." Sleep in, catch a second cup of coffee and then enjoy a great day on the water.

The location where we live is not near a lot of trout streams. We are, however, within reasonable driving distance to some great fishing. After the closing of the closest fly shop in Greenville, SC, I was delighted when Dodson Fishing Company opened a shop in Travelers Rest, SC. They are about 15 minutes from my location and have a full-service shop.

In addition to stocking the latest and best in equipment and flies, they offer classes in fly tying, casting and provide a wealth of information to the novice, as well as the seasoned fly fisherman. Drew Malone – Store Manager and guide,

Steve Grose or Jeff Furman will be there to help you answer any question you may have about fly fishing.

John Conits is the owner of Hare's Ear Fly Fishing and works with Dodson to plan trips for fly fishermen looking for guide service or to help them find productive water. He has five guides working with him and specializes in finding wild trout and smallmouth bass that will offer a challenge to the fisherman. Hare's Ear focuses on wild trout fishing in the Pisgah Forest streams, but he also books trips into east Tennessee, on the South Holston River.

John guides on many of the rivers that are familiar to me. These include the Davidson, French Broad, South and North Mills Rivers and the Green River. John is conscientious and has great respect for these rivers and strives to protect the resource. Hare's Ear Fly Fishing offers half day and full day wade trips and only full day float trips.

If you are interested in excellent service,

contact Hare's Ear Fly Fishing or Dodson Fishing Company and you will not be disappointed.

## PISGAH FOREST

Pisgah Forest is a treasure of the North Carolina fly fishing waters and incorporates more than five hundred miles of fishable trout water. In 2014, trout fishing contributed more than \$338 million to North Carolina's economy. It is home to native brookies as well as rainbows and brown trout. One of the most famous streams is the Davidson and it produces fish up to 30 inches. They are, however, very educated. As former fly shop owner Bill Penland used to say, "They know the name of every fly pattern, and can prob-



L. Woodrow Ross lives in South Carolina's Upstate, where he enjoys traditional archery hunting, fly-fishing and fly-tying, along with many other outdoor pursuits. He has written more than 500 newspaper columns, numerous magazine articles as well as 32 books available on Amazon Kindle.

ably tell you who tied it!”

If you are one of the brave souls that will be on the water in this coldest part of the year, you will need to target mid-day as the best time to fish. This will allow the water to warm up and trigger activity. Plan on using small flies in the range of size 18 to 22.

Good choices for the season are blue wing olives, midges, soft hackle pheasant tail, Adams, golden stone, elk hair caddis and light Cahill. Some streamers may be successful, and it is always good to have a few terrestrials in your box

### STOCKERS

If you enjoy fishing in North Carolina on one of the 23 delayed harvest streams, they were last stocked in November, and the next stocking will be in March. We enjoy these streams and have had excellent success on the North Fork Mills River and the

East Fork French Broad River with fish averaging around 10 inches, but occasionally up to 18 inches.

### BASIC TIPS TO REMEMBER ➤



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## HEAD FOR THE MOUNTAINS

continued

### BASIC TIPS TO REMEMBER

- If the fish are “looking” but rejecting your fly, go smaller by a size or two. Often, that is the ticket to success.
- Don’t dwell in one area too long. If the fish are not responding, move on to another spot.
- Dry fly fishing is great, but remember, subsurface flies are usually more successful and the fish are usually bigger.
- Sometimes a dry fly with a dropper of a bead head nymph

is the solution to getting the cranky fish to cooperate.

- It is good to practice “catch and release” and to observe some fundamentals such as using barbless hooks, releasing fish while in the water or at least wetting your hands if you pick it up for a photo. Land fish as fast as possible to avoid stress and revive fish by holding in current, facing upstream. ■

### LAZY FISHING

Fly anglers should approach March fishing with a different attitude. This is the time of year to sleep in, drink an extra cup of coffee, and expect the fish to be lazier than they will be in a month or two.

The Davidson River has its share of big trout, but they are educated fish, so make careful presentations.



# SPRINGTIME SLABS

## Catching crappie on Clarks Hill Lake

Chris Simpson loves to catch Clarks Hill Lake's crappie during March.

**C** By Pat Robertson  
Chris Simpson is a well-known catfish/striped guide on Clarks Hill Lake. But he relishes the memories of going to the lake to fish for crappie with his grandfather when he was growing up. So now, in the springtime, if a party wants to fish for crappie he is perfectly willing to help them fill a cooler with slabs.

"Most of the crappie fishing I do this time of year is from the mouths of creeks to the backs, pulling multiple long lines," Simpson said. "I don't fish structure, just specific depths. For instance, if I am marking fish at 10 feet, I want my jigs running at 10 feet or shallower because the fish usually feed up instead of swimming down to get a bait."

Simpson pulls from a dozen to 16 long lines with 1/6-ounce and 1/8-ounce jigs in multiple colors, holding the boat speed between .8 mph and 1.2 mph. Sometimes he double rigs the jigs, spacing them a foot or more apart on the line.

"As the water warms up the crappie will move shallower in the water and more to the backs of the creeks," he said. "The lighter jigs work better then as they run a little higher in the water column."

Simpson said he only tips the jigs with small minnows if the crappie are not feeding aggressively. If they are in a hungry mode, he said, the jigs work just fine without anything added.

A typical day will produce 40 to 80 fish from 3/4 pound to 1 1/2 pounds, Simpson said, and probably with a couple of 2-pound slabs in the bunch.

"The biggest we have caught was 2 pounds, 13 ounces. But a lot of 3-pound crappie are caught in Clarks Hill every year," he said.

Simpson fishes for crappie from February when winter is still holding on with chilly days to April when the sun is shining and warm for the most part. Once crappie season is over for him he switches to guiding for stripers and then later moves on to catfish.

Simpson guides for crappie, striped bass and catfish on Clarks Hill Lake. To book a fishing trip, call him at (864) 992-2352. You can check out his website at: [www.fightindab-lues.com](http://www.fightindab-lues.com). ■



Pat Robertson

**SNAGGING SHAD >**

# SNAGGING SHAD

## Triple-digit days are possible at Weldon

**W** By Dusty Wilson  
 eldon is a special place on the Roanoke River for a lot of anglers. Although striped bass receive most of the fanfare, hickory shad will arrive a month earlier in March and offer some of the liveliest fishing of the year. Guide Greg Griffin of Apex, N.C. will be there for all the jumps, double hookups, and triple digit days with one of the most underrated sport fish around.

"In March, I'm keeping an eye on the water temperature," said Griffin (919-434-4183), who runs Greggofish Guide Service. "I'm trying to find when it's in the low 50s. That's when they really get on the upper Roanoke near Weldon. That's the hotspot. I have caught them as early as March 6, but last year it was the 20th before they were there in good numbers."

Once Griffin is on location in Weldon, his focus is on the shorelines. Here, he's looking for eddies or slower moving water where shad can rest on their upstream travels. These can be formed by bends in the river, laydowns, or any underwater obstruction that breaks up the normal flow of water. Griffin doesn't sweat the depth of water, noting that hickories will reside in the top 2 to 4 feet of water regardless of how deep it is. At times, some of the larger rocks closer to the middle of the river will have shad bunched on their downstream side.

### DOUBLE UP

"Most anglers — including myself — will be using a double rig," said Griffin. "The shad dart and spoon combination is a very popular rig. But I've had so much success with the Shineee Hineee jigs that I don't usually use them. It's a hair jig with a foil trailer and a sickle hook that is less likely to be thrown when they jump. I'll use the 1/16 or 1/8-ounce size. They make them in a lot of colors, but my favorite is the orange head, silver foil body, and chartreuse bucktail. It's just unbelievable the way it outfishes other baits. A lot of anglers will use 1 1/2- to 2-inch curly tail grubs on jigheads in a variety of colors and a Nungesser spoon tied in the back. I tie my rig with a dropper loop for one jig and then another jig tied about 18 inches behind.

"They usually want it just below the surface. So you're basically

Double hookups are common when the shad arrive in the Roanoke River.



Dusty Wilson

making a quartering cast upstream and letting the rig just disappear before starting your retrieve. If the water is high and the current is strong, I'll add a split shot or two about a foot above the rig to get it down a little faster. When you see them start to flash on the bait, you know you're doing it right." ■

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The package also includes a camouflaged hat and a high-quality tote made of Ottertex canvas waterproof fabric with an interior crafted of 70 denier ripstop nylon. Use it to pack your calls and other hunting essentials and you'll be ready to hit the woods.

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# 2022 SOUTH CAROLINA FISHING REGULATIONS

Not an official document. Refer to SCNDR's official fishing regulations pamphlet or [www.dnr.sc.gov](http://www.dnr.sc.gov).

# 2022 NORTH CAROLINA FISHING REGULATIONS

Not an official document. Refer to official fishing regs at NCWRC and NCDMF websites.

## SALTWATER

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

FISH SPECIES	Minimum Lengths	Creel Limit (per person)
Greater amberjack	28" FL	1/day
Blue marlin	99" LJFL	1/day
White marlin	66" LJFL	1/day
Sailfish	63" LJFL	1/day
Sharks	%	%
Cobia	36" FL	1/day&
Bluefish	None	15/day
Black drum	14" minimum 27" maximum TL	5/day
Redfish (red drum, channel bass)	15" minimum 23" maximum TL	2/day
Flounder (state waters)	16" TL	5/day, 10 per boat
Groupers (black and gag)	24" TL	1/day
Red, scamp, yellowfin, yellowmouth	20" TL	3/day
Speckled hind/Warsaw grouper	closed	closed
Red porgy (aka silver snapper, pinky)	14" TL	3/day#
King mackerel	24" FL	3/day
Spanish mackerel	12" FL	15/day
Sheepshead	14"	10/day (30 per boat)
Spadefish	None	20/day (agg. grouper)
Black sea bass	13"	7/day
Dolphin	20" FL	10/day (60 per boat)
Yellowfin tuna	27" CFL	3/day
Bluefin/Bigeye tuna	Contact NMFS ( <a href="http://www.nmfspermits.com">http://www.nmfspermits.com</a> )	
Tarpon	77" FL	1/day
Spotted sea trout (speckled)	14"	10/day
Weakfish (gray trout)	12"	1/day
Wahoo	None	2/day
Gray, yellowtail, queen, cubera, dog, mahogany, schoolmaster snapper	12" TL	10/day#
Red snapper	closed	closed
Mutton snapper	16" TL (federal waters)	10/day
Vermillion snapper	12" TL	5/day

% For shark seasons, bag and size limits, contact NMFS Highly Migratory Species Division, 888-872-8862 or [hmspermits.noaa.gov](http://hmspermits.noaa.gov). # Check with the SAFMC at [www.safmc.net](http://www.safmc.net) or 843-571-4366. & Cobia, 1 per person per day up to 6 per boat. Closed May 1-31 south of Jeremy Inlet, 1 per person, up to 3 per boat, after June 1 south of Jeremy Inlet. # No more than 6 redfish per boat.

## FRESHWATER

FISH Species (Inland waters)	Minimum Size Limit	Creel Limit (per day)
Crappie/Panfish +	None	30 bream (15 red-breast), 20 crappie
Largemouth, smallmouth, spotted, redeye, bass%	none largemouth 12" smallmouth	5 lg/sm/r, 15 spots
Channel catfish	No restrictions	None
Blue catfish	Only 2 fish longer than 32 inches per day	25 fish per day
Flathead catfish	No restrictions	None
Striped bass or hybrid bass	Varies by location&%	Varies by location&%
Mountain Trout	+	5
White bass	None	10 (except Sav. River)
Walleye and sauger+	None	8

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

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

% For lake-specific regulations, see the SCDNR's Regulations Digest or visit [www.dnr.sc.gov](http://www.dnr.sc.gov). Keeper season in the Santee Cooper system is Oct. 1-June 15.

& In Lake Russell and its tributaries, the daily creel limit is two fish, only one of which may be more than 34 inches long.

## SALTWATER

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

FISH SPECIES	Minimum Lengths	Creel Limit (per person)
Greater amberjack	28" FL	1/day
Blue marlin	99" LJFL	1/vessel/trip
White marlin	66" LJFL	1/vessel/trip
Sailfish	63" LJFL	1/day
Sharks	%	%
Cobia	36"	1 per day*
Bluefish	none	& 3/day 5/day
Red drum (channel bass, puppy drum)	18" min., 27" max.	1/day
Black drum	14" min., 25" max.	10/day
Flounder	Closed	Closed
Dolphin (mahi-mahi)	none	10/day
Groupers (black and gag)	24" TL	1/day
Red, scamp, yellowfin, yellowmouth	20" TL	3/day
Speckled hind/Warsaw Grouper	closed	closed
Wahoo	none	2/day
Red porgy (aka silver snapper, pinky)	14" TL	3/day
King mackerel	24" FL	3/day
Spanish mackerel	12" FL	15/day
Sea bass (north of Hatteras)	12.5" TL	15/day
Sea bass (south of Hatteras)	13" TL	7/day
Yellowfin/Bigeye tuna	27" CFL	3/day
Bluefin tuna	Contact NMFS ( <a href="http://www.nmfspermits.com">http://www.nmfspermits.com</a> )	
Spotted sea trout (speckled)	14"	4/day
Weakfish (gray trout)	12" TL	1/day
Snappers: Gray (mangrove), yellowtail, queen, cubera, dog, mahogany, schoolmaster	12" TL	10/day in federal waters
Sheepshead	10"	10/day
Red snapper	closed	closed
Mutton snapper	16" TL (federal waters)	10/day
Vermillion snapper	12" TL	5/day
Striped bass ^	28"-35" TL max (ocean)	1/day
Hickory shad	None	10/day
American shad	closed	closed

^ see NCWRC/NCDMF regs for inshore Management Area limits. % Contact NMFS Highly Migratory Species, 888-872-8862, visit [hmspermits.noaa.gov](http://hmspermits.noaa.gov). % 5 bluefish per day for recreational anglers on for-hire or charter vessels; 3 bluefish per day otherwise. \* 1 cobia per day, two per vessel for private vessels. 1 per day, up to 4 per vessel for-hire.

## FRESHWATER

FISH Species (Inland waters)	Minimum Size Limit	Creel Limit (per day)
Crappie +	None +	None +
Largemouth, smallmouth, spotted bass +	14" (2-fish exception)	5
Channel catfish	No restrictions	None
Blue/Flathead catfish	No restrictions	None
Striped bass, hybrid (Bodie) %	20"	4 %
Sauger	15"	8
White bass	None	25
Walleye#	None	8
Muskellunge	42"	1
Kokanee salmon	None	7
Red drum	18" min., 27" max.	1
American and hickory shad	None	10 (1 American shad)
Spotted sea trout	14" min.	4
Flounder	Closed	Closed

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

+ See specific lake exceptions in NCWRC regulations digest or [www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org)

% Striped bass creel limits and size minimums vary by lake. See NCWRC regulations digest or [www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org).

# Lake James, minimum size is 15 inches. Lake Gaston, minimum size is 18 inches, creel limit 5.

@ Hook-and-line and flounder giggers restricted to 4 fish per day per trip, 15-inch size minimum.



# HUNTING/FISHING SCRAPBOOK



**Paul Windley**

Paul Windley caught these two bass in the Tar River near Rocky Mount, N.C., on May 29. They weighed 6 and 2 pounds.



**James Phelps**

James Phelps of Wilmington, N.C., had a great day of catch-and-release fishing for red drum out of Southport with Yeah Right Charters.



**David Harris**

David Harris of Sumter County, S.C., killed his first turkey gobbler this past spring in western Oklahoma.



Randy Weavil boated this 70-pound wahoo on April 8, fishing around the Big Rock off North Carolina's Cape Lookout.

**Randy Weavil**

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



# HUNTING/FISHING SCRAPBOOK



**Cale Horton**

Cale Horton, 16, of Heath Springs, S.C., killed this turkey on his first turkey hunt last spring.



**Gabe Fowler**

Gabe Galloway Fowler, 6, showed fine form at Honey Hill Hunting Preserve on Feb. 7, 2021 near Hallsboro, N.C.



**Hunter Stone**

Hunter Stone of Wilson, N.C., took these squirrels with the help of dogs, on a hunt along the Roanoke River.



**Reed Dawson**

Reed Dawson of Zebulon, N.C., killed his first rabbit on Jan. 23, 2021, with a .410 shotgun.



**C.J. Strickland**

C..J. Strickland, 9, killed his first mallard on Feb. 6, 2021, hunting near Thomasville, N.C.

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

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



**Jennings Erwin**

Jennings Erwin, 7, of Raleigh, used a .410 to kill a woodcock on Jan. 27 along the Roanoke River near Scotland Neck, N.C.



**Aubree Freeman**

Aubree Freeman, 16, from Plckens S.C., killed her first deer, this nice buck, in Anderson County on South Carolina's first youth day on Sept. 11, 2021.



**Colby Branham**

Colby Branham, 12, from Lugoff, S.C., killed her first turkey gobbler this past season.



**George Steele**

George Steele boated this 23-pound blue catfish at Santee Cooper this past summer.



**Ronnie Stewart**

Ronnie Stewart, 82, caught this nice sheephead on July 16, fishing near Manns Harbor, N.C., with son Chuck Stewart.



**Dwight Seal**

Dwight Seal killed this 11-point, 163-inch buck in Surry County, N.C., last Thanksgiving morning.



**Rachel Henry**

Rachel Henry, 12, took her first deer with her .308, hunting in Clinton, N.C., with her father, Keith, and brother, Reid.



**Ricky Turner**

Ricky Turner of Burlington, N.C., caught this great red snapper in 140 feet of water off Morehead City on June 6. Caught on a live pinfish. Bottomed a set of 25-pound scales.



# HUNTING/FISHING SCRAPBOOK

## GOT PHOTOS? WE WANT 'EM

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

[images@CarolinaSportsman.com](mailto:images@CarolinaSportsman.com)

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

Bryan Buckner of Saluda, N.C., caught this awesome brown trout in South Carolina's Saluda River last Dec. 30.



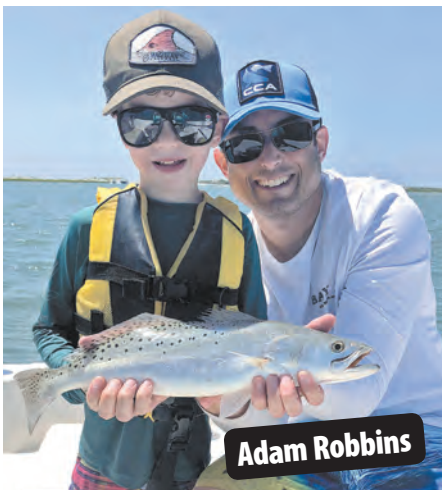
Joey Goss of Bladenboro, N.C., killed this rare barnacle goose on Jan. 13 near Bladenboro.



Jeff Lospinoso killed this big coyote on Dec. 20, 2020, on Jordan Game Lands, hunting with daughter Kaitlin of Cary, N.C.



Jamie Brooks of Siler City, N.C., caught this 13-inch Jordan Lake crappie on March 12.



Adam Robbins, 4, of Chinquapin, N.C., shows off a 19-inch speckled trout caught off Masonboro Island.





**Josh, Edwin, Haskell**

Joshua Mitchell and Edwin Burnett from Oak Island, N.C., and Haskell Whitaker of Rock Hill, S.C., boated this 130-pound tarpon near Southport. They were fishing with Billy Goss of Long Bay Fishing Company.



**Felicia Taylor**

Felicia Taylor caught this 3-pound crappie on May 26, 2021, out of a farm pond in Stokesdale, N.C.



**Molly Fulton**

Molly Fulton landed this bass on May 31, 2021, in a Stokes County, N.C. pond, 3 weeks before her fifth birthday.



**Jeff Chapin**

Jeff Chapin of Salisbury, N.C., caught and released this 8.3-pound bass at a pond in Rowan County on June 18.



**Lennox Furr**

Lennox Furr, 5, from Stanfield, N.C., reeled in these two nice speckled trout last summer on the Outer Banks.



**Sam Steele**

Sam Steele caught this nice catfish from the Santee Cooper lakes.



**Mitch Burgin**

Mitch Burgin from Lincolnton, N.C., had a huge day bass fishing on Badin Lake last June 24. His five-fish limited weighed 14.68 pounds, anchored by a 4.69-pound big fish.



**David Schroeder**

David Schroeder of Southport, N.C. caught this 23-inch speck fishing with Yeah Right Charters.



**Bryan Buckner**

Bryan Buckner of Saluda, N.C., caught this 6-pound small-mouth from Lake Jocassee on Sept. 8, 2021.



**Craig Arnette**

Craig Arnette, 12, killed his first drake wood duck on Jan. 23, hunting near Lumberton, N.C.



**Oakley Wolfe**

Oakley Wolfe caught this nice bass in a farm pond near Madison, N.C., in August 2021.



**Kylie Spence**

Kylie Spence tagged this 18-pound gobbler with a 10-inch beard in Orangeburg County, S.C.



**Walker Carr**

Walker Carr, 7, from Mount Pleasant, S.C., killed his first turkey gobbler in Ravenel on March 21, 2021.



**Ethan Tew**

Ethan Tew landed this 48-pound flathead catfish near the NC 87 ramp on the Cape Fear River south of Fayetteville on June 7.

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2022 MAR					BEST DAYS				LUNAR PERIODS				TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED	
	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	VALUE	MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT						
Tue 1				58	6:24 am	11:04 am - 12:20 pm	5:08 pm	11:29 pm - Midnight						New
Wed 2				66	6:59 am	11:45 am - 1:21 pm	6:16 pm	Midnight - 12:45 am						
Thu 3				58	7:30 am	12:23 pm - 2:19 pm	7:21 pm	12:10 am - 1:46 am						
Fri 4				50	7:58 am	12:59 pm - 3:15 pm	8:24 pm	12:48 am - 2:44 am						
Sat 5				42	8:25 am	1:33 pm - 4:09 pm	9:26 pm	1:24 am - 3:40 am						
Sun 6				39	8:52 am	2:07 pm - 5:03 pm	10:26 pm	1:58 am - 4:34 am						
Mon 7				41	9:21 am	2:43 pm - 5:55 pm	11:26 pm	2:32 am - 5:28 am						
Tue 8				42	9:53 am	3:22 pm - 6:48 pm		3:08 am - 6:20 am						
Wed 9				48	10:29 am	4:05 pm - 7:41 pm	12:25 am	3:47 am - 7:13 am						
Thu 10				58	11:09 am	4:52 pm - 8:34 pm	1:23 am	4:30 am - 8:06 am						High
Fri 11				48	11:56 am	5:42 pm - 9:24 pm	2:19 am	5:17 am - 8:59 am						
Sat 12				44	12:48 pm	6:33 pm - 10:15 pm	3:11 am	6:07 am - 9:49 am						
Sun 13				44	2:46 pm	8:29 pm - 12:01 am	4:57 am	6:58 am - 10:40 am						Begin DST
Mon 14				43	3:46 pm	9:23 pm - 12:45 am	5:39 am	8:54 am - 12:26 pm						
Tue 15				52	4:48 pm	10:17 pm - 1:27 am	6:15 pm	9:48 am - 1:10 pm						
Wed 16				61	5:52 pm	11:14 pm - Midnight	6:48 am	10:42 am - 1:52 pm						
Thu 17				72	6:55 pm	Midnight - 2:04 am	7:18 am	11:39 am - 2:29 pm						
Fri 18				75	8:00 pm	12:10 am - 2:40 am	7:46 am	12:35 pm - 3:05 pm						Full
Sat 19				63	9:05 pm	1:07 am - 3:15 am	8:14 am	1:32 pm - 3:40 pm						
Sun 20				50	10:13 pm	2:06 am - 3:52 am	8:44 am	2:31 pm - 4:17 pm						Spring
Mon 21				38	11:23 pm	3:05 am - 4:31 am	9:16 am	3:30 pm - 4:56 pm						
Tue 22				32		4:07 am - 5:15 am	9:53 am	4:32 pm - 5:40 pm						
Wed 23				31	12:34 am	5:10 am - 6:06 am	10:36 am	5:35 pm - 6:31 pm						Perigee
Thu 24				34	1:44 am	6:14 am - 7:00 am	11:28 am	6:39 pm - 7:25 pm						Low
Fri 25				43	2:51 am	7:18 am - 8:00 am	12:27 pm	7:43 pm - 8:25 pm						Half
Sat 26				32	3:50 am	8:17 am - 9:03 am	1:34 pm	8:42 pm - 9:28 pm						
Sun 27				28	4:40 am	9:11 am - 10:07 am	2:43 pm	9:36 pm - 10:32 pm						
Mon 28				29	5:23 am	10:00 am - 11:08 am	3:53 pm	10:25 pm - 11:33 pm						
Tue 29				40	6:29 am	10:43 am - 12:09 pm	5:01 pm	11:08 pm - 12:34 am						
Wed 30				52	6:58 am	11:21 am - 1:07 pm	6:06 pm	11:46 pm - Midnight						
Thu 31				65		11:56 am - 2:02 pm	7:09 pm	Midnight - 1:32 am						

25 50 75  
AVERAGE

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

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