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BASS FISHING
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RED SPRING

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Catch a load of spring bass with these tips from the top pro anglers in North and South Carolina. Cover photo by Brian Cope.



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OUTDOOR UPDATE

with **Brian Cope**



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

CWD CONFIRMED IN N.C. SOUTH CAROLINA STILL REMAINS FREE OF THE DISEASE

Bad news came to Carolina hunters last month as the NCWRC reported the first confirmed case of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in North Carolina. The CWD-infected deer was killed in Yadkin County during the 2021 hunting season and samples of it were sent in for testing through a cooperator program set up by the state agency.

With recent confirmations of CWD in southern Virginia about 30 miles north of the VA/NC state line, it seemed only a matter of time before the disease crossed into the Old North State. Of all the deer samples collected by the NCWRC from the 2021 hunting season, about 70% have been tested so far. CWD is a 100% fatal disease and testing is only possible after a deer's death.

An infected deer can go up to 16 months without showing any signs of the infection.

The disease also has no known cure at this time. It spreads throughout deer populations through bodily fluids and can remain active in soil for decades, even surviving fire and freezing temperatures.

So what does this confirmed case of CWD mean for North Carolina hunters? It's unclear at this point, but chances are good that some changes will be in place for the 2022 deer hunting season — within Yadkin

County at least, if not on a wider scale.

This use of baiting sites is of grave concern, and will probably be outlawed within the immediate impacted area. This measure isn't set in stone, but it is listed as one option the agency may use as part of their CWD Response Plan.

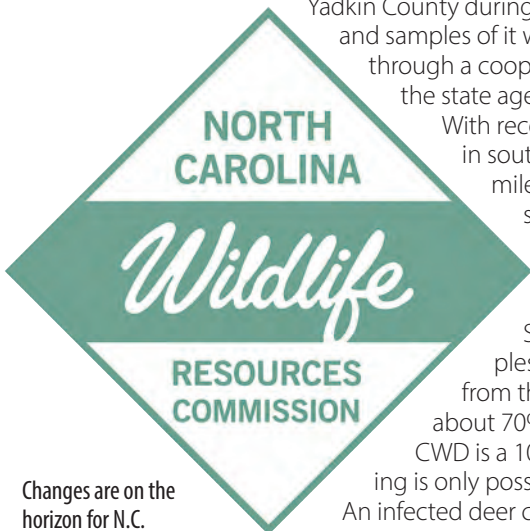
Other possible changes based on that same Response Plan include mandatory testing for all harvested deer in the area, discontinuing injured fawn and elk calf rehabilitation programs, and possibly raising season limits (at least within proximity of the CWD-positive area) to allow for gathering a greater number of samples for testing.

Deer hunters, especially those in Yadkin County, would be wise to hold off on placing orders for automatic feeders and of feed and mineral supplements until the NCWRC makes a statement leading up to the 2022 deer hunting season.

For now, South Carolina continues to be CWD-free. Georgia and Florida also remain free of the disease, and all these state have CWD response plans in place.

Aside from white-tailed deer, CWD can infect mule deer and elk. The first confirmed case of the disease in the U.S. occurred in 1967 among a herd of captive elk in Colorado. It is currently confirmed to exist in 29 states, five Canadian provinces, Norway and South Korea.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "the risk of infection of CWD among humans is extremely small, if it exists at all, and it is extremely unlikely that CWD would be a food-borne hazard." ■



Changes are on the horizon for N.C. deer hunters after a Yadkin County deer sample tested positive for CWD.

BOOK YOUR DREAM TRIP

So it's time for you to schedule your vacation from work before you lose that time off and you'd love to take a bucket-list outdoor adventure. But where do you start? The thought of searching the web and emailing outfitters, guide services and working out all the transportation, gear and other logistics isn't at all appealing to you.

Maybe you're also worried about keeping your family entertained during the trip if they're not into the fishing or hunting adventure you've always dreamed of. The more you think about it, the more you think it's just not worth the time and effort. You're about to book that same beach house or mountain retreat that you've always fallen back on, even though you'd rather branch out.

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Pick your dates, pay online and you're ready to go. The founders include an avid angler/bowhunter and a skier/scuba diver/kiteboarder. They've traveled all over to partake in their favorite pursuits, so they know the thrill of going to new places as well as the hassle that comes with putting those trips together. Their goal was to make it as easy as possible and to provide the tools for others to book those outdoor adventures.

BLUELINE TILEFISH SEASON SHORTENED

NOAA Fisheries has announced the recreational sector for blueline tilefish in federal waters of the South Atlantic will open at 12:01 a.m. local time on May 1, 2022 and close at 12:01 a.m. local time on July 26, 2022.

The 2022 recreational catch limit for the blueline tilefish is 116,820 pounds whole weight. The season is typically open May 1 through Aug. 31 each year. However, if recreational landings for the species reach or are projected to reach the recreational catch limit, NOAA Fisheries will close the recreational sector for the remainder of the fishing year.

NOAA Fisheries projects the catch limit will be reached by July 26, 2022 and is closing the fishery to prevent the catch limit from being exceeded.

During the closure, the recreational bag and possession limit for blueline tilefish in or from South Atlantic federal waters is zero.

For full regulations, visit the Federal Register at www.ecfr.gov/current/title-50/chapter-VI/part-622/subpart-I. ■

And if you're a fishing or hunting guide or run an outfitter service, you can also use Outguided to make your life easier. You're already swamped with emails, text messages and social media messages. Direct all those queries to your account at Outguided. The platform can take care of payments, messaging, scheduling and more. Forget the mundane paperwork and administrative hassle. Get back to doing what you love — guiding clients on unforgettable trips. ■

Book your dream outdoor adventure at Outguided.com.



SUBCALIBER ADAPTERS EXPAND FIREARMS USAGE

They say necessity is the mother of invention, and George and Wendy Tatum might just agree with that statement – they know from experience.

About a year ago, the couple opened a machine shop on their Oxford farm, featuring subcaliber multicaliber adapters designed by George to allow the .303, .30-06, .308 and the 8 mm Lebel to use pistol rounds and maintain accuracy. The team of Tatums have turned that invention into success, with a wide range of customers finding varying uses for the product.

Chamber adapters use the rifling in a firearm to stabilize the bullet, making them excellent tools for target practice, downing small game and eliminating unnecessary meat destruction.

The idea spawned from an unlikely source: coyotes. Specifically, a few too many unwanted visits from them.

“We had a coyote problem here,” said Wendy. “If you have the long-range rifles like .303s and .30-06s, you can’t really use them in any kind of enclosed area. My husband has a .303, and the neighbors were pretty close. You want to be able to take out the coyotes with precision, but without affecting anyone’s home.”

The coyotes were a constant threat to the farm’s livestock, as well as the Tatums themselves and their neighbors. The bullets from a .303 travel too far to fire safely upon the intruders, though. An engineer, George got to work, making the first of what became several different subcaliber multicaliber adapters.

For the coyotes, it did the trick. But George explored a little more with the idea.

“Many folks who do military reenactments couldn’t get 9 mm blanks last year or blank adapters, so we made blank adapters,” Wendy said. “Someone else contacted us about a .30-06 with a kick. So, he made an adapter from an 8 mm Lebel to a 9 mm blank.”

Thus, the machine shop at OKT Farms, LLC was born, the product displayed on the OKT Farms website and selling via PayPal. “It’s become something we do together. He makes the product,



and I do all the shipping and customer service,” Wendy said. “It’s interesting how we ended up. Both of us like farming, he likes the garden stuff and I like the animals. We were both tired of having his garden and my animals eaten up, and here we are.”

Said George, “We’re working toward expanding our gunline. Right now, we’re taking it nice and slow.”

It was never intended to be the business it became, only a shared hobby. But more and more people learned of the product and its many potential uses.

There are the small game hunters who have found that hunting game with a .327 federal magnum round out of their .303 helps out plenty because the bullet, while still supersonic, doesn’t damage the animal’s pelt.

There are also .303 aficionados that simply have a hard time getting ammo for it. With the adapter, one can always find ammo.

Then there are the veterans who collect old war guns and find their shoulders wearing down due to the kick from each shot. That group requested the Blackout rounds, which out of a .303 feels more like shooting a .32 as far as the kick goes.

It’s also a great way to teach marksmanship. With a .32, one can shoot all day long and do so accurately with the cost of ammunition significantly reduced.

“It doesn’t change the weapon at all. You can always load up a 30-06 behind an adapter, but teaching kids or folks new to shooting and being able to do it on a real weapon really makes the process a lot better,” George said.

Finally, others have found great use at the indoor range. “One had the idea to bring his H&R Magnums and shoot them in his .303,” George said. “They didn’t have a problem with it so long as it’s a pistol round. So, here he is at the pistol club, shooting at 75 feet. Of course, no one could beat him. You just can’t beat the accuracy of a .303.”

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**FISH LIKE A PRO WITH
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**BASS FISHING TIPS
FROM THE
CAROLINA
PROS** ■ By Phillip Gentry

Phillip Gentry

ONCE THE SPRING SPAWN IS OVER,

weekend bass anglers who were catching fish on nearly every cast start to struggle as bass fishing regresses into the post spawn and later, summer fishing patterns. Bass tend to become less predictable. And different variables, other than the need to reproduce, dominate their behavior.

Professional bass anglers face the same situations as any other angler. But what tends to separate the pros from the rest of the field is a deeper understanding of what's going on in the entire world of bass, not just during the spring, but year-round.

Here's a few tips from some of the Carolinas' best anglers that can help you find your way next time you're out on the water.

MATT AREY FISH THE SHAD SPAWN

Bass Elite angler Matt Arey from Shelby, N.C. explained that many bass anglers are aware of the opportunities of the "shad spawn" but are doing it at the wrong time of day and in the wrong places.

"First you need to decide which baitfish spawn you are fish-

ing," said Arey. "In the Carolinas, a lot of our lakes are herring lakes. When you see guys pulling up to long shallow points and making casts across the points, it's the herring pattern. Herring roam those points and spawn in the clay and sand.

"On the other hand, shad, and I'm talking about threadfin shad here, may spawn in shallow water. But they want deep water close by. Or they may spawn on shallow structure over deep water. Shad also want some kind of structure to rub their eggs on," he said. "You can tell you've been in the right place for spawning shad if eggs are stuck to the bottom of the boat when you load up. That stuff is like glue."

When asked how he decides which pattern to fish when both bait species are spawning, Arey said it depends on where the bigger fish are holding on the lake. As a general rule on lakes that have an equal number of both prey, herring will stay in the lower 1/3 of the lakes where the terrain is more conducive.

Shad are more drawn to upper sections of the lake where structure and deeper water mix – creek arms, deep water docks, bridge pilings and deep water rip-rap.

MARTY ROBINSON >

BASS pro Matt Arey said fishing the shad spawn is a great way to fish in May, but you need to understand which "shad" you're keying on. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Post spawn and summertime bass fishing can be feast or famine, tips from these Carolina pros will help you set the table.



Phillip Gentry

MARTY ROBINSON LOOK FOR ISOLATED COVER

MLF pro Marty Robinson, from Lyman, S.C. said one of his most dependable post-spawn into summer patterns involves targeting isolated cover. To Robinson, isolation means anything that sticks out as an oasis in otherwise generic landscape. He's also going to look for deeper water areas but that doesn't always mean he's going to fish deep.

"When I'm talking about an isolated piece of cover, that might be a lone brush pile where bass suspend in the top of it or it might be an old roadbed or rock pile. It might even be a lone dock or set of boat docks in the bend of a creek channel," he said.

To find these areas, he's going to look about halfway back in a

major tributary where the water is deep enough to be comfortable to the bass to escape, or fall back to, during the middle of the day.

"I love to throw a medium running crankbait in the top of a brush pile that's off by itself," said Robinson.

Robinson said he's more likely to find the right combination of stained water and depth about ½ way back in a creek. And those are also the most likely places to find old road beds, isolated brush piles or natural rock piles.

"In this situation I'm going to rely on my electronics a lot more than I would in the back of the creek or chasing schooling bass on the surface out in the lake," said Robinson. "If I can see something I like hanging on the edge of a channel, then it's time to go deep and work on them."

Marty Robinson said bass treat isolated cover like an oasis in the desert, and each piece is usually good for a bass or two during the summer. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Bryan Thrift bass fishes any way he can catch them, but loves to throw topwater when conditions are right.



Phillip Gentry



Phillip Gentry

BRYAN THRIFT THROWING TOPWATER

Who doesn't like fishing topwater for bass? For FLW-turned-MLF pro Bryan Thrift, from Shelby, N.C., topwater fishing during the spring and summer months is not only fun, but also a great way to put good fish in the boat.

When looking for good topwater areas, Thrift will motor to shallow water areas, which might be near the mouth of a tributary or might be further back in a tributary, then cut the motor off and spend 5 – 10 minutes observing the area around his boat.

"I'll just sit quiet. I'm really not even watching the graph, just looking at the surface of the water watching for a couple of shad to flip or to see some of that nervous water that indicates a school of bait is just below the surface," he said.

Once he's convinced the area has the potential for a good topwater pattern, he's going to pick up a rod with a buzzbait and another with a walking bait. His preference is a Damiki Rambler topwater walking bait and a Damiki MTB Noisy buzzbait. These two baits allow him to cover a lot of water.



Phillip Gentry of Waterloo, S.C., is host of "The Outdoor Show," a weekly radio podcast at www.pgandboatgirl.com and on WZLA FM, 92.9, in Greenwood/Abbeville, S.C.



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Bass pros spend a lot of time on the water in all kinds of conditions, so finding post-spawn bass isn't much of a problem. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Andy Montgomery fishes docks nearly year round and looks for resident bass to hang out on a good dock every month of the year.

Phillip Gentry

"I'm going to use a white buzzbait and a shad-colored walking bait," he said. "I'm targeting schooling bass, the first ones that are reacting to the bait moving up.

His typical scenario is to start in the shallows near the mouth of a tributary creek and work his way back. He said the bass he catches on the topwater lures are often fickle fish but also bigger fish.

"Topwater fishing is such an exciting way to fish. Even as a pro, fishing pro tournaments, I get excited seeing a bass blow up on a topwater bait," he said.

In this excitement, many anglers, and Thrift includes himself in this group, tend to set the hook too quickly, which is one reason he spools with monofilament line on his topwater rods. With braid, the hook set is instantaneous, often leading to lip hooks rather than a jaw hook because the line doesn't stretch.

"In the excitement of the moment, we all tend to set the hook hard, and on braided line, a hard hookset can tear holes in the fish's mouth," he said. "I just feel like the combination of these two things makes me lose too many fish that I would not have lost on mono." ■

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ANDY MONTGOMERY'S TIPS ON FISHING BOAT DOCKS

To say MLF pro Andy Montgomery from Blacksbug, S.C. likes to fish docks is an understatement. Montgomery doesn't have to pick and choose his days for fishing docks like he may have to for fishing, say a wind-blown point or an open water hump. He said docks are good nearly 24/7 and 365 days a year, but especially in the late spring and summer.

"Typically, sunny conditions are better for dock fishing," he said. "But it seems like every lake we fish is going to have a resident population of bass that find everything they need on a particular boat dock and that's pretty much where they stay all the time."

A bit of a surprise, the noted jig-slinger will forego a jig and trailer this month in favor of a Texas-rigged plastic. He said the T-rig on a 5/16-ounce weight, which he typically does not peg to the hook and line, gives him the payload to get the bait where he needs it around the dock while the soft plastic gives him good buoyancy.

"Plastics is a big deal around boat docks," he said. "My favorites would be a Strike King Rage Bug or a Rage Lizard. You're pitching plastics at them and you have to work it to get a bite. You're going to use the same stuff. I like to use natural colors, green pumpkins, black and blue, anything but white. Plastics are, by far, the number one bait."

Many times bass may be visible cruising boat docks, especially in clear water. But that's really the last thing Montgomery wants to do around a boat dock. He will categorically eliminate clear water creeks and cuts till he can find an area that has stained water so he can't see the fish, and more importantly, they can't see him.

"I'm fishing dirty water," he said. "Pitch back in there 2 or 3 times, you're going to get a bite. When he bites it, you set the hook. That's typical dirty water fishing, it's going to be a pretty good bite. It's not going to be a light bite. It's nothing like sight fishing. You just pitch in there and you catch him." ■

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LUNKER LINES ➤

This month, bass anglers can catch fish on just about any type of lure they prefer.



BASS ANGLER'S DREAM MONTH

CATCH 'EM ON ANY LURE YOU LIKE RIGHT NOW

May and June are two of my favorite months to fish, and they should be yours, too, because you can catch bass with just about anything you want to. Whatever you like to fish, have at it: topwater baits, jerkbaits, jigs, worms, spinnerbaits, crankbaits – just about anything you want to fish.

The only variable is where you're fishing. Depending on where you're fishing in the Carolinas, fish can be in all phases of the spawn in May, from lakes in South Carolina where bass have finished spawning, have recovered from the spawn and are starting to move out, to lakes like Buggs Island and Gaston on North Carolina's border with Virginia where maybe only 50% of the bass have spawned.

You might go to a certain lake and hit it at a down time, an in-between time, when fish are still recovering from the spawn. But by the end of May, most

everywhere you fish, bass will be starting to get over their sickly stuff related to the post-spawn.

That said, in general, most of our lakes will have a good topwater bite early and late in May. It could be a buzzbait, a walking-type bait, just any kind of moving bait that makes a racket. There are two reasons. First, bass will become real aggressive when they get totally recovered from the spawn, and they need to feed up and get their strength back. And second, there's the blueback herring spawn. Many of our lakes now have blueback herring. And when they spawn, it kicks off a great bite on bass, particularly an early and late topwater bite.

I like to look for what we call "blow throughs" – places where you've got a little bit of current – man-made or wind – that's running between two islands or a long point and an island. Bluebacks will get on those kinds of places in May. They

get up on shallow flats, on long points, and they're spawning. Find one of those places – and most of them will be holding bass – and you can catch 25 pounds on topwater early. You can actually catch a big bag all day if you can find them stacked up.

When I'm fishing this kind of situation, I really like to fish a General – Berkley's version of the Senko. I'll fish it with a 4/0 or 5/0 wide-gap hook, on 15-pound Trilene fluorocarbon. I like to rig it weedless. And a big key is, I like to push a little nail into the head of the bait about a half-inch below the hook, aiming toward the back. I'll just use a little nail, like a



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, Lew's, Lowrance, Power Pole and Berkley.

finishing nail, and sometimes, I'll break it in half. It probably won't weigh more than 1/16 ounce. But it gives you just enough weight to be able to cast it easily. You can rig a General wacky-style, but it hangs up a lot more. And the way I rig it, you can catch multiple fish on one bait.

I'll fish this if I run into a bedding fish – just throw it in the bed and fish it real slow. Most of the time, however, I'm casting it, letting it sink, then double-pumping it up and letting it sink again. I'll make two little snatches of the rod and let it fall down again. It's good because they can't see that fluorocarbon, and you'll usually have a little color in the water.

If I have gotten everything I can out of a topwater bite, I'm going to be looking for bass moving out, fish that have recovered from the spawn and are starting to feed again. That's when a crankbait can be a deadly tool, anything from a No. 5 Frittside to a Dredger 14.5. When fish come off the beds, they'll move out deeper than any other time of year. But they won't feed when they're out there. If you can't reach 'em with a Dredger 14.5, if they're deeper than that, they won't bite. You want the fish that have moved back up out of that deep water. When they do, they're really aggressive; they're ready for

the buffet.

I'm going to be looking from mid-creek on out. The backs of the creeks are where the last spawning fish will be. If you want to catch spawning fish, go way back up in the creeks. Those fish you'll catch from the mid-creek areas on out, they're ready to bite. You might catch some in pockets on the main lake, shallow pockets, where they'll be on the corners. When they start biting again, they'll usually be in 5 or 6 feet of water. But depending on where you're fishing, you might find some in 10 or 12 feet of water.

One thing to remember: fish still love rocks in May. That's the main kind of structure they'll be on. So keep an eye out for them on your electronics. ■

SANTEE STRINGER >



Crankbaits like a Berkley Frittside or Dredger are great options once bass come off the beds.



The Berkley General fished weedless is deadly on bass throughout May and June.

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SANTEE STRINGER

Terry Madewell

Guide Kyle Austin said May bass fishing is highly productive for quantity and quality fish.



Terry Madewell

FROM PANFISH TO GIANT FISH

EVERYTHING BITES AT SANTEE THIS MONTH

May brings prime weather conditions and excellent fishing for several species of fish at Santee Cooper. Fishing action occurs from very shallow to deep water depending on the species.

Bream action perks up with good bluegill and shellcracker fishing in shallow water. Bass action remains good in the shallows with fish moving back toward the cypress and gum trees and holding in water slightly deeper than the spawning areas. Striper action is typically excellent with fish now caught throughout both lakes.

SHELLCRACKER ACTION IS STRONG

Shellcrackers typically spawn earlier than bluegills on the Santee Cooper lakes and these huge panfish offer some sensational fishing in late April and May. Weather and water temperature are important, but with the right conditions,

shellcrackers will get into shallow water and bed.

The Santee Cooper lakes have a world-class population of shellcrackers, including big fish.

Most anglers targeting shellcrackers use worms as bait, however they can be caught on crickets.

Shellcrackers often bed in ultra-shallow water early in the season. So working edges of weeds, grass and any form of natural cover on hard bottom substrate such as sand or gravel is a good option. More specifically, target the small pockets and openings along these areas.

Bluegill are also found in the shallows during May and with the full moon being mid-month this year, good bedding action may occur for both bream and shellcrackers.

Crickets are the best live bait for bream. But for sheer fun, anglers working small Beetle Spin lures around shallow water cover with ultra-light equipment can

make excellent catches.

Mayfly hatches often occur this month, so those are natural hotspots for bream of all sizes. It's a great opportunity for getting youngsters hooked on fishing.

BASS ON THE TREES

Largemouth bass have been in the forefront since mid-February and with the bulk of the spawn now complete, the favored bass targets have changed.

Kyle Austin, a tournament professional and bass fishing guide, said his favored patterns at this time of the year are still in shallow water.

"I'll start most days in shallow water, usually 2 to 3 feet deep working grass



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.

beds early with topwater lures,” Austin said. “I’ll use Pop-Rs and frog-type baits looking for active bass.”

Austin (843-209-3726) said one key to the fishing is to be around baitfish in the shallows.

“Usually, we have a shad spawn around this time and also some bream will be bedding,” he said. “These shallow-water food opportunities get bass into the shallows and feeding in low-light times of the day. And big bass will certainly eat big bream.”

Austin said later in the morning he’ll back off this shallow water pattern and he’ll fish isolated cypress and gum trees with weightless Senkos and similar baits.

“I’ll fish as much wood as possible,” he said. “If I’m working a clump of trees I’ll cast past the target and work it back, keeping it as close to the wood and covering as much of the area as possible on each cast. Simply casting it straight into the tree only covers a small area. It can work, certainly. But at this time of the year make each cast cover as much as you can.”

The best opportunity to catch a true trophy bass, a 10-pound class fish, may have been earlier during the spawn. But Austin said it’s still an excellent time to hook trophy fish.

“Big bass are caught this month and the numbers of quality fish caught are excellent during May,” he said. “The weather is typically awesome. And it’s a fun and exciting time for bass fishing.”

STRIPERS ON LIVE BAIT

Going up the ladder of incrementally larger fish and fishing deeper water, striper action is excellent throughout the lakes.

On the lower end of Lake Marion and in Lake Moultrie, live bait around the deeper drops and ledges offers great striper catching opportunities. In addition, the Diversion Canal offers flurries of excellent activity when good current flow exists, with live bait, as well as bucktails, cast around underwater rock piles.

Leroy Suggs (910-995-1168) is a fulltime striper guide who targets this species year-round. Suggs said live bait, especially blueback herring, is hard to beat during May.

“We get into some dependable striper patterns in deep water at this time of the year and it’s an excellent time to catch limits of keeper stripers in short order,” Suggs said. “Plus, we’ll typically enjoy plenty of catch and release opportunities.”

In the upper reaches of Lake Marion stripers are also caught in good numbers as the late spawners are heading back down the river. Pack’s Landing is an ideal place to find good striper action using live herring as bait both in the river and the adjacent flats. ■



Leroy Suggs said blueback herring may as well be called “striper candy” during this time of year.

JORDAN BASS, LAKE HICKORY STRIPERS ➤

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Jonathan Phillips said Jordan Lake's bass catch a second wind this month as they recover from the spring spawn.



A SECOND WIND FOR JORDAN BASS

Post-spawn bass are feeding heavily to recover their strength

By Dusty Wilson
Bass fishing at Jordan Lake will catch its second wind in May as post-spawn fish try to replenish their strength with easy meals. Whether fishing the shad spawn, bream spawn, or catching the first fish to seek out deeper water in an early summer pattern, tournament angler Jonathan Phillips of Pittsboro, NC will be there to sample all that Jordan Lake has to offer.

"We have a lot of fish that remain shallow after they come off the bed," said Phillips.

"One reason for this is the shad spawn that is going to happen on rocky points, rip rap, and red clay and chunk rock banks. Some of the lesser-used boat ramps can also be great. The bass spawn at night, so the first couple of hours in the morning you can capitalize on it. They'll be in

a couple of feet of water blowing shad out of the water. You can take a ½-ounce white jig and swim that on them or a white spinnerbait. If they're not keying in on the white, I'll swim a craw pattern jig with a green pumpkin trailer to stand out from all the shad."

Another reason bass stay shallow is to bust spawning bream and forage the shallow willow grass. Phillips finds bream beds in the shallow pockets of the creeks either visually in clear conditions or by side scan sonar.

Here, he throws a craw-colored jig and green pumpkin trailer, noting that the bass will be sitting just in front of the beds in the slightly deeper water. The often nearby willow grass is a bass magnet and best fished with a buzzbait.

Phillips prefers a Truesouth V-Twin, but rather than choosing a traditional skirt, he

dresses it with a Horny Toad soft plastic trailer to allow the bait to ride higher in the water column and increase the hook up ratio.

"In the later part of May, we'll start getting the first push of fish going offshore, usually in the 8- to 15-foot range," said Phillips. "When they start to get into their summer pattern, the biggest fish will get there first. Hard places like road beds and stumps and rocks on long points will be good places to find them.

"That's when I'll start throwing a crankbait like the Strike King 5XD or a Rapala DT 10 in a citrus or natural shad color. After I catch what I can on the crankbaits, I'll throw a craw pattern jig or a big pumpkinseed worm to catch any other fish hanging around." ■



Fishing guide Colt Bass shows off a post-spawn striped bass caught at Lake Hickory.

LAKE HICKORY'S POST-SPAWN STRIPERS

Deep water is the key

May marks the post-spawn period when Lake Hickory's stripers move from shallow to deep water triggering action for the fishermen who find them.

"A lot of fish this month are going to be coming off the spawn and moving from shallow to deep water. So I'll be looking for places with shallow water with quick access to deep water," said guide Colt Bass (www.coltbassfishing.com). "If my electronics reveal pods of baitfish at these places, so much the better."

Bass searches for stripers at these places by trolling bucktail jigs on downriggers and lead-core lines mounted off the sides and back of his boat.

His trolling gear consists of 7½-foot medium-heavy Shakespeare Ugly Stik rods holding Abu Garcia 7000 reels.

"I'll troll down-lines and planer boards at different depths rigged with live bait," said Bass. "I'll make passes through shallow water and then through deep water. If I don't get any bites, I'll try similar places and repeat the process."

His live-bait tackle features 7-foot medium Ugly Stik rods teamed with Abu Garcia 6500 reels spooled with 20-pound Big Game line. His spread features four to six down-lines fished off the sides of his boat at various depths.

The down-lines hold Carolina rigs with ½- to 2-ounce weights dictated by wind strength and current and 3- to 4-foot leaders of 17-pound fluorocarbon line connected to No. 1 to 4/0 circle hooks based upon bait size.

"I'm a firm believer that a circle hook causes less damage to fish. Plus all my clients have to do is reel the rig in to set the hook," said Bass.

For bait, the veteran guide employs 4- to 7-inch gizzard and threadfin shad and herring, constantly experimenting with sizes, cuts and shapes to cater to the whims of stripers.

"I'll also have Original Clear planer boards off each side of the boat pulling live baits," said Bass.

If Bass has previously found the fish, he fishes down-lines and planer boards from the get-go.

Having a pre-rigged rod to cast to breaking stripers isn't a bad idea, either. Bass once caught a 16-pound striper with a Red Fin crankbait.

Typically, Bass said May stripers at Hickory average 7 to 9 pounds, though trophy fish up to 20 pounds are a possibility.

Ideal fishing conditions for striper fishing this month are water temperatures from 60 to 75 degrees and clear water. ■

LAKE RUSSELL STRIPERS ➤



Pat Robertson

AFTER THE SPAWN

Lake Russell's stripers feed heavily this month

T By Pat Robertson
he annual attempt by striped bass to spawn in Lake Russell is about over in May, according to veteran guide Preston Harden, but the fish are still up shallow and they feed hard on blueback herring, especially early in the day.

"They have not grouped up and moved out to deeper water in May. That transition will come in June and that pattern pretty much holds true for all the big lakes like Hartwell, Russell and Clarks Hill. That's when the thermocline starts to form in the shallower creeks and pulls them out into the main lake."

Harden said May striper fishing is primarily down line fishing, but he also always keeps out a couple of freelines with live blueback herring for bait. It's also an excellent time for topwater artificials, he added.

"By May I put away my flukes and bucktail jigs and tie on a Lucky Craft Sammy in ghost minnow pattern and I keep that Sammy tied on until the end of October. Anytime you see something blow up on the surface you need to have that topwater plug ready."

Preston Harden mainly fishes down lines to catch Lake Russell's stripers this month, but he said topwater lures can also be effective.

When the water is calm, Harden said he "walks the dog" with the Sammy. But when the surface is choppy he switches to a Lucky Craft Gunfish which features a cupped mouth that allows for splashing and spitting action to attract a strike in the rippling water.

"The blueback herring are the key. And you want your artificials to imitate a blueback as much as possible," Harden said. "The ghost minnow pattern looks just like a blueback herring."

By the end of the month and into June the fish will be moving out on the main lake and schooling in deeper water to escape the warming temperatures, he said. The down line pattern will prevail then right on through the summer.

Harden guides on Lakes Russell and Hartwell. Check out his website <https://bucktailguideservice.com/> and his Facebook page. To book a trip, email him at wprestonharden@gmail.com or call him at (706) 255-5622. ■

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BAG YOUR LATE-SEASON GOBBLER WITH THESE TACTICS. ■ By Dan Kibler

TURKEYS ON DEADLINE

AN IDIOT, it's been said, is someone who keeps doing the same thing, over and over, expecting a different outcome.

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF LATE-SEASON TURKEY HUNTING.

With South Carolina's season ending April 30 in most of the state and May 10 in several Upstate counties, and with North Carolina hunters ready to trade shotguns and mouth calls for baitcasting rods and spinnerbaits after May 7, it bears noting that, well, some hunters might qualify as idiots. Having hunted the same turkey, or turkeys, for the better part of a month, showing up at the same time, in the same place, blowing or striking the same call, what's going to make that turkey suddenly turn stupid, come running in and drop down in a strut within shotgun range?

Yeah, probably nothing short of a major miracle.

So hunters who have a tag left to use, or who want to call a bird in for a hunting buddy, had better draw up a new game plan if they want to put that wild butterball on somebody's Thanksgiving table.

"If it hasn't worked the first part of the season, what makes you think it's going to work the second part of the season?" asked Mitchell Johnson of Purllear, N.C., owner of Dead End Game Calls.

"You've got to change what you do toward the end of the season," said Brandon Rich of Pfafftown, N.C., a pro-staff member of Hanks Game Calls. "The key is finding ways to do things different when you get ready to set up."

Here are some tips Johnson and Rich have for hunters with a tag to fill and only a few days to do so.

DON'T GIVE UP >



Those strutting zones you identified in the early season come back into play during the last week or two. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Andrew Kibler bagged this gobbler by changing up some of the tactics he used in the early days of the season.

Rick Small

DON'T GIVE UP

Johnson said that a frustrating early season can often cause a hunter to question just how much he wants to get up early enough to be in the woods before 0-Dark-30, waiting for the owls or crows to crank up a gobbler.

"A lot of it is the desire to go," he said. "A lot of hunters give up after the first two weeks. You hear them every year. They're done. But the last two weeks are when I kill my very oldest, biggest birds – because they're the ones that are left.

"They get done breeding all the hens, and they're looking. They're roaming around, trying to strike up one more hen," Johnson said. So willing toms are available.

With fewer hens roaming the woods, clucking, yelping and purring to their suitors, gobblers can get, well, randy when it comes to putting another notch in their spurs.

CHANGE YOUR CALLS

"You have educated, pressured gobblers out there," Rich said. "Most of them have been shot at, or seen their buddies die. So

the key is finding ways to do something different: the way you call, the calls you use. This is when trumpet or tube calls really work, because by late in the season, birds have heard every pot call, every box call, every mouth call there is.

"It might be something as simple as changing the striker you use with a pot call. A change in the tone of a call might be enough to set one off."

CHANGE YOUR APPROACH

Johnson remembers a hunter who had been frustrated over and over by one gobbler asking him to come call the bird in for him. When he surveyed the hunter's set-up, it took only one big change to put the turkey in range.

"This guy was hunting a field, and he had a makeshift blind set up watching this field," Johnson said. "I took him, and we went to the opposite side of the field and set up in a new place. And the bird came into the field, strutted right across the field, right to us, and he shot him."

Changing something as simple as the striker on a pot call can make a big difference late in the season. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Get yourself out of the rut of hunting the same way you've done all season if you want to bag that last-minute gobbler.



Dan Kibler



Dan Kibler

Rich said heavily pressured birds will often move to completely different areas after two or three weeks of hearing hunters yelp, cutt and cluck in their direction.

“I think if they’re pressured, they’ll move and change their patterns,” he said. “If they hear a guy with an owl call at the same place every morning, if they hear somebody check them with a box call at the same place, it gets to them. So I try to come in from a different way. A lot of public land is around lakes. So a boat or a kayak can give you a great way to approach a bird from a different direction.”

Johnson said that the strutting zones you’ve located on pre-season scouting trips that were great places to set up the first week of the season are worth giving another look the last week of the season.

“You need to go back and hunt those strut zones you identified early in the season,” he said. “When the gobblers get off the hens, that’s where they’ll go. And you can call turkeys in anywhere they already want to go.”



Dan Kibler is the former editor of Carolina Sportsman and now a freelance writer.

**STAY LATER,
BE PATIENT >**

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Go back to strutting zones you identified during the early season for a shot at a late-season bird.

STAY LATER, BE PATIENT

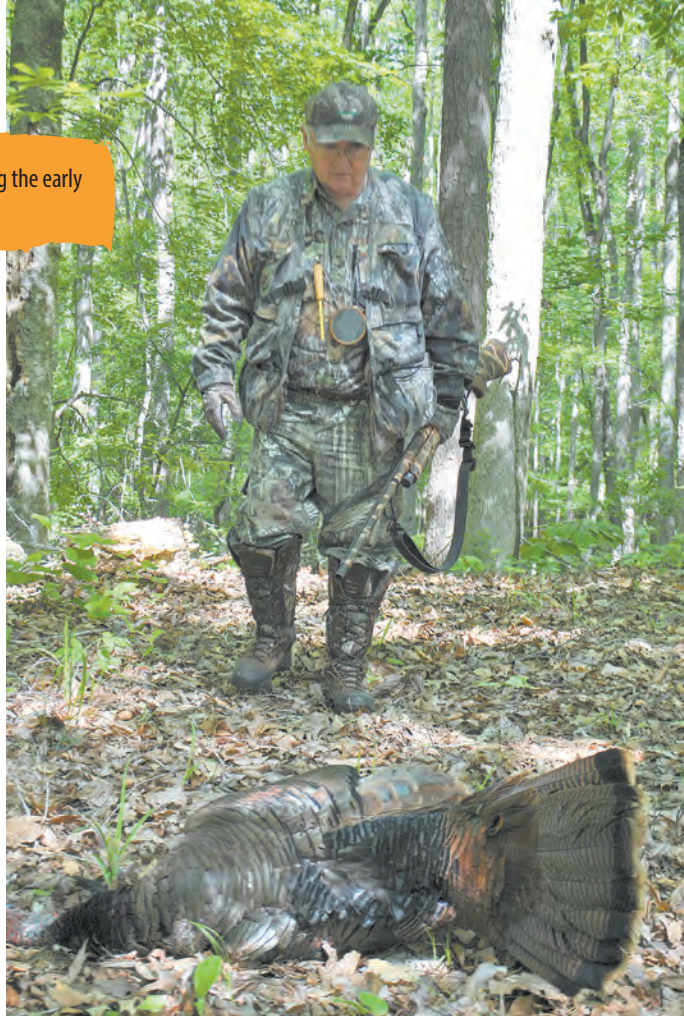
Rich said that the mid-morning and early afternoon are always great times to be in the woods, especially as the season wanes.

"I have a lot more luck in midday in the late season, because the hens are getting scarce and going to the nest. And the gobblers are out looking that time of day," he said. "If you catch a gobbler by himself, late in the season, odds are, you'll be able to call that bird in.

"But you have to be patient. A lot of these birds will come in silent. You might get them to gobble coming in when the season first starts. But by now, they might gobble at you once or twice, but they won't gobble again as they come to your setup. You might have to wait on them a little longer."

Johnson said that, all in all, you have a better chance, percentage wise, of killing a bird that you get to gobble as the season's end approaches than on opening day.

"You have to keep after 'em," he said. "You might not hear as many turkeys gobbling late in the late season, but when they do, they're coming. Also, you have to gauge the bird. It depends on the bird. Some of them will gobble their heads off, and some of them will gobble two or three times and shut up. You have to have more patience. He's maxed-out on hunting pressure, and pressure has got them quiet." ■



Dan Kibler

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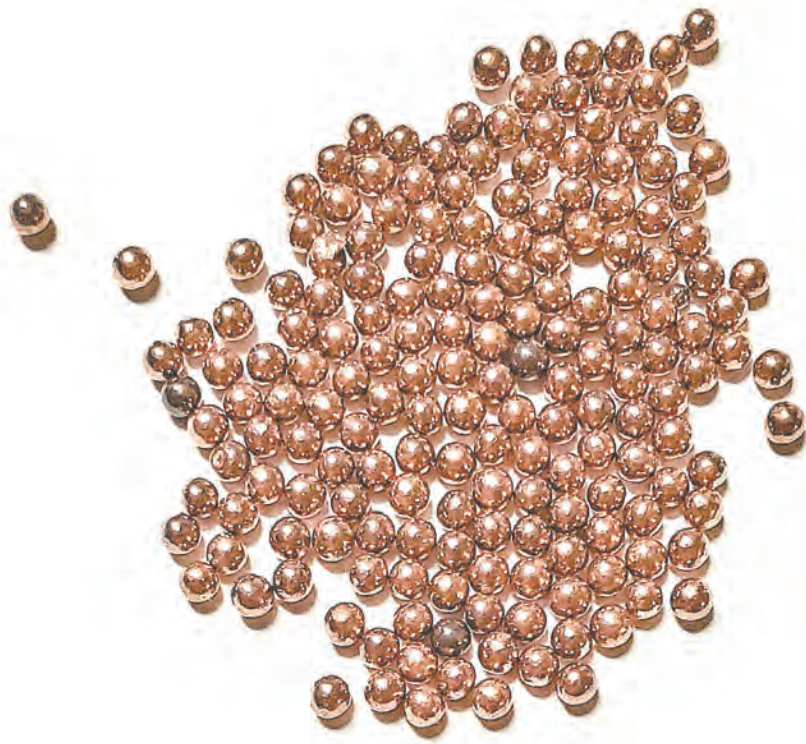
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REACH OUT AND TOUCH ONE

The 22-pound, 5-ounce gobbler had been dead for a good two hours. I laid him on the concrete outside my garage door and went inside to get the proper equipment for turning him into Gobbler McNuggets.

When I came back out, a pool of blood had formed under the tom's big, white head. After dropping him like a rock at 37 yards, I had counted better than two-dozen marks where shot had entered his head and neck. And he was still bleeding out. Clearly, he was graveyard dead about the time the latest "new" piece of turkey hunting gear "arrived."

It doesn't make any noise as the gobbler approaches, doesn't make you harder to see in the woods, doesn't make it easier to hear a gobbler walking – but it makes them "easier" to kill.

Tungsten Super Shot, aka TSS, is this latest wonder. It uses a tungsten alloy that weighs 18 grams per cubic centimeter, which is one-fifth higher than standard tungsten shot and 56% denser than lead. Dense shot carries its velocity out farther than standard lead of other "hevi" shots. The hard, dense pellets are round, smooth and uniform; they won't change shape on the way to the target.

TSS loads have expanded the range of turkey hunters, and made small-gauge shotguns highly effective.

TSS opens up a turkey hunter's world to loads filled with smaller pieces of shot – hundreds more in a 3-inch load. Many hunters use lead or copper-plated shot in Nos. 4, 5 and 6. But with TSS, you're looking at 7s, 8s and 9s. The 2¾-inch, 12-gauge TSS load that turned my gobbler's head into a bloody mess was a load of No. 9s. The pattern it threw at 40 yards was frightening; the bird's head and neck just disappeared.

TSS loads are expensive but add dozens of yards to a 12-gauge shotgun's effective range. And they can turn smaller gauges – 20 and .410 – into effective turkey guns. This can bring plenty of younger hunters into the game long before they're able to shoulder a 12-gauge.

Last season, late on opening morning, my son and I set up on two birds we stumbled on, gobbling, strutting, spitting and drumming at just about every noise we made. They were, in my mind, still 5 or 6 yards too far to kill when my son touched his trigger. The closer bird collapsed like he'd been hit by lightning. He weighed 24 pounds, 12 ounces, stone dead at 54 yards. ■

GREENER PASTURES ➤

Cowpeas offer quick, high-protein food for deer, and are great for planting this time of year.



PLANT NOW!

COWPEAS AND BUCKWHEAT ARE GREAT OPTIONS

Jeff Burleson

Deer hunters and most land managers ramp up their land applications in the late summer and early fall in preparation for the annual deer season. But the warm season is the most critical time to make an impact to the deer herd.

While May is getting quite late in the year, it's not too late to make a difference to the deer herd especially if hunters and land managers want to have the healthiest deer populations with the largest bucks and fattest does.

So what makes warm season food options so critical to deer herds? Bucks, does, and deer of all ages will benefit from high protein and high carbohydrate food options from late spring through early summer. Female deer are dropping their fawns in May and June. Adult does need highly nutritional foods to fuel their lactation to adequately feed their young. By May, antler development is running in high gear. Bucks require highly nutri-

tious dietary consumables daily. Antlers are among the fastest-growing animal tissues known to man. And it takes a lot of energy to grow antlers. Chemical reactions free up calcium from the deer's skeleton to fuel antler growth. As much as 20 percent of the skeleton's calcium will be used to create antlers on whitetail deer.

ANTLER GROWTH

The growing antler is 70-80 percent protein and it's sourced from a deer's current diet. Protein availability is a major factor in deer's diet this time of year.

All studies indicate that the availability of protein in a male deer's diet is directly proportional to the size of antlers. Regardless of the genetics or age of a buck, a poor diet and low protein level during antler development will produce lower antler masses than if fed a high protein diet. Only the healthiest deer with access to high protein foods in the

warm season can produce large anglers. Again, for the listeners in the back row, only the healthiest deer can grow large antlers and a high protein diet during the spring and early summer will give bucks the opportunity to reach their full potential.

In captive deer, the magic number for growing the largest deer antlers is a protein content of 16 percent. But 20 percent protein diets are more suitable and beneficial for deer to grow large antlers.

High protein diets can also benefit fawn bucks by promoting pedicle development at a young age.

When selecting seeds to plant in May, the best options will require the least



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.

amount of preparatory work and provide a ready source of high protein availability.

While lots of different plot options are available for deer in the warm season, certain legumes are among the best and easiest to establish than others. And a mixture of certain seeds can be very beneficial for crop establishment as companion plants and will serve a mutual benefit for the deer and other wildlife.

MIX IT UP

Deer will be consuming the foliage long before any seeds develop out of a warm season planting. And the foliage of most legumes is highly nutritious and provides 15-30 percent protein content that is well within the magic range for growing robust antlers.

Cowpeas are one of the best options for a late spring planting and are easy to establish for the hobby farmer with limited equipment. Iron clay cowpeas are the most used and easiest to establish. Cowpeas are a deer's delight and will provide high levels of protein at the right time.

Buckwheat is another good spring option that is easy to grow for the hobby farmer. It grows fast and provides a food source within weeks after planting.

Both buckwheat and cowpeas are good options to produce good results at a low cost. And these two options are also good companion plants that can be grown together by using the



Jeff Burlison

PLANT A COMBO:

Buckwheat and cowpeas require little preparation and can be planted alone or together to provide a great warm-season food source for deer and other wildlife. Small food plots like these are essential for maximizing a buck's antler growth, and for providing nursing does with developing high-quality milk for fawns. These crops can be planted with the most basic of implements, making them a great option for hunters that don't have a lot of heavy equipment.

same planting techniques. Both buckwheat and cowpea varieties require similar pH ranges and nutrients.

Both can be either drilled or broadcast to produce a solid late spring/early summer food source for deer. ■

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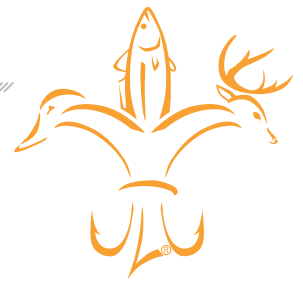
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FLATHEAD CATFISH

By Terry Madewell

TACTICS

THE FLATTIES ARE FEEDING UP.

Thanks to the explosion of the blue catfish into the catfish population throughout the Carolinas, the flathead is now an often-forgotten whiskered target. Flatheads thrive in excellent numbers in many lakes and rivers and grow to trophy sizes throughout the Carolinas. And their apex-predator attitude anchored with a brute-force super-power tests even heavy tackle.

Knowledgeable flathead fanatics are feasting on outstanding fishing throughout both states by May.



Terry Madewell

FLATHEAD FEATURES ON LAKES

Rodger Taylor from Rock Hill, SC guides for catfish on multiple lakes including Lake Wylie, a Catawba River impoundment straddling the North and South Carolina border. He often targets flatheads from May through the summer months.

Taylor (803-517-7828) said not all catfish hotspots are created equal. He often catches flatheads while he's targeting blue catfish. But getting to the next level in flathead fishing requires focusing on specific targets and techniques.

"I've found that certain features and situations seem to produce the most consistent action," he said. "Flatheads are caught by day or night. Flatheads are more of an ambush hunter so they prefer to setup near heavy cover such as brush, logs, fallen trees and rock formations. Depth-changes from deep to shallow near this structure are important.

"If an angler isn't comfortable fishing at night, then I'd suggest focusing on the deeper areas along drops, points and humps during the day," he said. "Flatheads typically do not move as shallow by day."

Using electronics to mark specific underwater targets can be an excellent setup for anchoring during daylight he said. He may also fish a large, general target such as a channel ledge loaded with woody cover by drift fishing.

FLATHEADS LOVE THE NIGHT LIFE

He said his personal preference is night fishing because fat flatties move shallow and feed aggressively after dark. He prefers to be rigged and fishing by sunset because the last hour of evening can be productive.

"A good tactic is to go up a large tributary searching for shallow flats in channel bends or near deep holes," he said. "I'll anchor in shallow water and fan cast several rigs into a variety of depths."

Taylor said angler should consider the natural forage that flatheads eat in the water you're fishing as prime bait. And for most of the lakes he fishes that list includes white perch, bream and shad.

"Big, live, bream is my all-around favorite big flathead bait. But white perch are excellent too," he said. "It doesn't have to be live bait. Fresh cut bait is productive. I target some of my baits right on that break line that drops into deeper water."

Taylor said he primarily fishes on the bottom. But suspending bait under floats just off the bottom is an excellent nocturnal technique.

If a long break line exists across the mouth of a creek or cove, Taylor utilizes his sonar to look for logs, brush, stumps or any structure

perpendicular to the main break line.

"They'll key on that difference in depth as a travel route, even if it's a minor difference in depth," he said. "Targeting the woody cover along that break can provide a specific flathead target. That's where they'll set up their ambush."

Taylor said flatheads generally bite different than a blue catfish. And understanding the difference is crucial to ensure a good hookset.

"The bite of a blue is typically aggressive and occurs in a heartbeat," he said. "A flathead takes the bait and slowly swims off, pulling a deep arch in the rod in almost slow-motion compared to a blue. Don't react too quickly. Let the big flattie load up and then crank down on it and the hookup is usually solid."

ROCKY AND WOODY COVER ➤



Rodger Taylor with a big nighttime flathead taken on a live white perch. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Monster flatheads that move shallow to feed can eat about anything on the menu in lakes or rivers.

Terry Madewell

ROCKY AND WOODY COVER

Chris Simpson from McCormick, SC guides for catfish on Clarks Hill Lake and targets flatheads seasonally. His most productive flathead fishing comes from late spring to fall.

“One of my favorite targets for flatheads on big lakes like Clarks Hill is deep, rock bluffs,” he said. “These quick drops into deep holes are the ideal hideout for big flatties by day. Other key areas include where the river forks around underwater islands and at creek and river junctions.”

Simpson (864-992-2352) said in all of these fishing scenarios he graphs the area to ensure wood or rock cover is available for big flatheads to use as concealment. And he’ll anchor-fish specific targets when flathead fishing.

“It’s the nature of a big flathead to nestle up to an object that provides cover to ambush their next meal,” he said.

“Productive depths vary from day to night, seasonally and from one lake to another,” Simpson said.

RIVERS ARE FLATHEAD FAVES

River fishing for flatheads in the Carolinas offers a prime opportunity to hook big flatties during May. And both states have multiple rivers loaded with flatheads.

One avid river flathead angler is Tyler Schultze from Rock Ridge, NC.

Schultze primarily targets the Neuse and Tar rivers in North Carolina but said his river experience and tactics are applicable throughout the Carolinas.

“River fishing requires planning to be successful and I target specific places on every setup,” he said. “It’s not random fishing but the targets are often easy to identify. I search for bends in the river, logjams, eddies, junctions of feeder creeks and natural

Big flatheads take the bait slowly, but once hooked test even heavy tackle. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Guide Chris Simpson with a 60-pound flathead he targeted by day in deep water on Clarks Hill Lake.



Terry Madewell



“

It's the nature of a big flathead to nestle up to an object that provides cover to ambush their next meal.

rock bluffs. Any feature creating unique situations with deeper water, current and eddies are immensely attractive to flatheads.”

Schultze said the common denominator of all of these scenarios is the ability to attract flathead forage. Flatheads are eating machines and are caught where they can find food.

“By May, bluegills are a favorite bait and I’ll use them live or cut,” he said. “I’ve also had great success on flatheads using eel. And I’ll cut them into five- or six-inch baits. In the current they look lively and the scent attracts flatheads. I’ll also use shad, cut or whole, and pick up an occasional flathead. But the shad increases the odds of hooking bonus blues and channel catfish.”



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.

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GO HEAVY ON TACKLE

Schultze strictly fishes from anchor fishing setups and his tackle is designed to handle big fish. He uses 7½ foot medium rods and 6500 ABU reels loaded with 100-pound test braided line.

“Fishing around heavy cover for flatheads requires strong line with no stretch to bully them out of the structure,” he said. “I also use a no roll sinker above a swivel and a 12- to 16-inch leader of heavy monofilament and an 8/0 circle hook.”

“The sinker weight is crucial and varies from 5 to 8 ounces,” he said. “That’s big, but if I’m fishing a large, live bait I want to cast it right next to a specific target such as logjam, tree-top or some form of structure. And I don’t want that bait to be able to pull my rig into the brush.”

Schultze said the inside bend of a channel turn can be productive because of a backwash current creating an eddy.

“The eddy attracts baitfish and if wood or rock structure is available nearby it’s a prime flathead target,” he said.

Whether fishing lakes or rivers, the Carolinas are full of flatheads. Targeting these fish is akin to big-game-hunting by scouting, identifying and catching specific catfish. Rig for big fish, target the right spots and generously dust the process with patience and you’ll discover why flathead fanatics will never forget the flathead catfish. ■



Terry Madewell

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Guide Rodger Taylor said live bait is not required to catch a big flathead, but a live bream is his favorite bait. **RIGHT:** Tyler Schultz with a big Neuse River flathead.



TOP TIPS WHEN RIVER FISHING FOR FLATHEADS

Veteran river catfish angler Tyler Schultze said he has three primary tips for working a river for flatheads.

"One is to focus on deep holes and the second is to fish around woody cover or structure," he said. "Both are flathead magnets. Also, read the current in the river and target eddy currents. Eddies attract forage and flatheads follow."

"River fishing is productive day or night but the nocturnal hours are often best," he said. "If the bite is good, I'll stay in one place until the action stops. If a spot doesn't produce a bite in 30-45 minutes, I'll change locations."

Schultz said on many lakes the upper reaches often revert to a river-type environment and these tactics will also produce flatheads in that situation. ■

HEAD FOR THE MOUNTAINS >

HEAD FOR THE MOUNTAINS

L. Woodrow Ross

The author caught this brook trout from North Mills River.

TROUT STOCKING DELAYED IN 2022

COVID, FUEL PRICES HAVE PLAGUED STOCKING EFFORTS

If you are planning a trout fishing outing for this spring, check the stocking schedule, or plan to fish on a stream that has natural reproduction of trout.

The effects of fuel price increases has impacted many areas of every day life. In addition, we have seen the disruption caused by COVID-19. Not only has it affected our daily lives, but it has also caused some changes, delays and rescheduling of trout stocking programs.

Very little in the way of stocking happened in North or South Carolina during February. Fortunately, March seems to have been better. Here is an update on the latest stockings that took place in March for both states.

N.C. STOCKING

- March 16 – Cherokee, Stokes, Wilkes, Jackson and Haywood
- March 17 – Wilkes, Graham, Madison, Jackson and Transylvania
- March 18 – Yancey and Caldwell

S.C. STOCKING

- March 11 – Oconee State Park, Big Eastatoe (regular and delayed harvest areas)
- March 14 – North Saluda, Middle Saluda, South Saluda, Chauga, Brasstown (regular and delayed harvest areas)
- March 17 – Chattooga (regular and delayed harvest), East Fork Chattooga and Cheohee Tree Nursery

As mentioned last month, South Carolina has two tailwater trout fisheries. The waters below Lake Hartwell and Lake Murray have provided some opportunities for anglers who desire to fish close to home. At the end of this month, I will be visiting with the Saluda River TU Club. This tailwater fishery has developed into an excellent resource and offers SC mid-state anglers the chance to fly fish for trout and smallmouth bass.

Several years ago, I interviewed Chuck Dixon in Anderson, SC. He ran Centerville Specialty Fly Shop that was

secondary to his primary business. He fished the Hartwell tailwaters often and had some rainbow trout mounted that were “footballs.” They feed heavily on baitfish that are shredded by the turbines and get fat and sassy. They are about as big around as they are long.

Tailwater fishing may require some adjustment in the methods and tackle, depending on water conditions. Safety is critical on tailwater fisheries and warnings are sounded when water is to be released. But swift response may be required. Call ahead to check on release schedules.

North Carolina and South Carolina both offer delayed harvest opportunities for fly fishermen. I am particularly fond of these streams. We have fished the North



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.

L. WoodrowRoss

Mills and the East Fork of the French Broad delayed harvest streams and had great success.

The benefit of delayed harvest streams is that the resource is available to a wider spectrum of fly fishermen. The fish that are caught from October until June must be returned to the water and therefore provide sport for more fishermen.

NORTH CAROLINA REGULATIONS AND SIGNAGE

North Carolina has approximately 4,000 miles of trout water. If you fly fish in North Carolina, be aware of the different regulations that govern the taking of trout. Most streams are clearly marked with signs that denote which category applies to that stream. These categories are:

- Catch and Release
- Delayed Harvest - Catch and release regulations apply between October and May. From June to September, seven fish a day are legal. Check regulations for exact date/time.
- Hatchery Supported – Closed to fishing in April, a four-fish limit of 7-inch minimum may be kept the rest of the year.
- Wild Trout – Artificial, single hook only, four-fish limit, must be 7-inch minimum.
- Wild Trout Bait – Natural, live bait (except fish), single hook, four-fish limit, 7-inch minimum.
- Special Trout Regulations – Any special regulations that the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission deems as needed to protect the trout.

For good information, to book a trip, take some casting lessons or even if you are interested in a good fly-fishing guide school, contact Mac Brown Fly Fishing in Bryson City, N.C. They offer wade trips, float trips, fly fishing instruction, a fly-fishing guide school and more. They are in the heart of North Carolina's excellent trout fishing and can be reached at macbrownflyfish@gmail.com or by telephone at 828-736-1469. ■

This fat rainbow trout fell victim to the author's fly.

WATEREE RIVER STRIPERS ➤



SIZZLING STRIPERS on the Wateree River

S By Brian Cope
tripper fishing has been on fire since mid-March on the Wateree River, and these fish will continue biting throughout May.

A big concentration of these fish have settled into the area between Hwy. 1 and the Lake Wateree Dam, spawning and recovering as they prepare to head downstream and back to the Santee Cooper lakes until next spring. Right now, they're feeding up to regain their strength before making that big downstream trek. And that's good news for anglers. These fish have big appetites and they're not shy about striking aggressively.

Capt. Jason Wolfe of Wolfe's Guide Service (803-487-3690) loves fishing here this month.

"I've had some really good days for stripers here this time of year, and I've had some really great days. Every day is a little bit different, but you can count on these stripers to bite consistently good this time of year," he said.

Wolfe said most of his clients catch these fish on wakebaits like the Cordell Red Fin. He suggests casting at a 45-degree angle toward the bank or structure, then working the lure back through current, eddies and slack-water pools created by the rocks and boulders present in this stretch of the river.

"All you need to do is just give it a steady retrieve. You don't need to do anything erratic because the way this lure shimmies back and forth on its own is enough to draw strikes.

"You just want to make sure that when you're retrieving the lure, you're prepared to get a hard strike. You might reel it all the way a few times without a hit, then on the next cast, a fish hits it like a lightning bolt. You can't get complacent or you'll miss those hard strikes," he said.

Wolfe said the stripers will sometimes bite as soon as the angler first cranks the reel handle. Other times, they'll hit it in heavy current, in the slack pools, or in an eddy.

"The beauty of fishing here is they can hit it anywhere," he said.

On some days the fish are so aggressive that Wolfe will try other lures like long soft plastic curly tail jigs or swim-baits with fairly light jigheads.

This part of the river is very rocky, swift, and dangerous if you're in the wrong boat. Wolfe uses a G3 aluminum boat with a jet-drive Yamaha. ■

The swift current of the Wateree River is a hotspot for stripers all spring.



“ I've had some really good days for stripers here this time of year, and I've had some really great days. Every day is a little bit different, but you can count on these stripers to bite consistently good this time of year.

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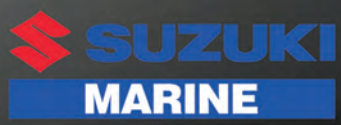
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REDFISH ARE FEEDING
ALL ALONG THE CAROLINA
COASTLINES.

Red Spring

By Jeff Burleson



In May, water temperatures are climbing every week with bait and predator fishes running free and rambunctious. And while many flounder anglers are trying to intercept every new wave of fish coming in the inlet, *the redfish are chomping all over the place with vengeance.*

Except for porpoises, redfish are the top predators of the inshore lair. And by May, most marine mammals have shifted their focus from the spot-tailed meals to other food sources. Redfish will still be a little spooked when a group of dolphins comes cruising the shorelines. But reds are able to spread out this time of year to ambush any available baitfish and crustaceans pouring into the estuaries.

Capt. Dan Connelly of Capt. Dan's Fishing Company out of Murrells Inlet, S.C. is a year-round inshore angling guide that targets mostly redfish and speckled trout. And for Connelly,

redfish are amped up in May and can be solid targets for a spring day on the water.

"Redfish exit their winter pattern in the spring when the water warms up and spread out to various ambush positions all over the inlet," Connelly said. (843-241-7022) "The water temps are in the 70s in May. They can swim faster and can eat and digest a lot more food."

REDFISH EXPAND THEIR DIET IN MAY >

A number of baitfish species, as well as artificial lures, are good for catching redfish this month. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Redfish are abundant through the inshore waterways along the Carolina coastlines, and are feeding heavily this month.



Jeff Burleson

REDFISH EXPAND THEIR DIET IN MAY

The availability of baitfish and food in the estuaries is limited in the winter season. But as the water temperatures start to rise in early spring, shrimp and baitfish begin to reestablish residency in the estuaries. And by May, small shrimp are around along with a wide variety of juvenile fishes that will create a smorgasbord of culinary delicacies for inshore predators like redfish, speckled trout, and flounder.

Due to the widespread availability of food and with less dolphin predation pressure, redfish will no longer hunker down in large, triple-digit schools in the super shallow backcountry waters.

“Redfish get happier and are more comfortable being in smaller groups or in pairs,” he said.

In May, finding huge schools of reds is a rarity. But they will also be found in more places than before. From the jetties to the backcountry oyster flats, redfish are chasing bait all over the place. Mullet are generally sparse yet, and the creek shrimp are going to be very small this time of year, but still a valid food source and something for reds to gobble up in shallow water. Creeks are going to have several species of mud minnows present and lots of arriving juvenile fishes, such as pinfish, spots, croakers, and others.

Finding a place to intercept a redfish in the spring is less of a challenge than in other times of the year. Yet, some places are certainly better than others. And Connelly surely knows how to find them in the spring season.



“Redfish are spread out eating shrimp, crabs, or whatever they can find to eat. I typically fish for them at the jetties, docks, or along big oyster beds found between grass lines and deep water drop-offs,” he said.

AMBUSH FEEDING

Reds are known as ambush feeders. But they certainly will not just wait in the shadows all the time for food to come rolling by in the current either. They will swim around along grass edges and oyster beds to pick off a small shrimp, fiddler crab, or little fish scurrying in and around structure.

Naturally, redfish can be caught on every type of fresh or live bait imaginable and especially during the spring when they are feeling good and eating about everything in sight.



The author caught this redfish on a soft plastic lure, an effective strategy in May. ABOVE: Anglers don't need a big boat to catch redfish along the Carolina coastlines.



This redfish was caught along flooded grass near a feeder creek.

“Redfish are smart, but when they are feeding and hungry, they will eat about anything that resembles food,” he said.

Connelly’s go-to bait any month of the year is always going to be a live shrimp on a slip cork because there isn’t anything that will turn their lip up at a live shrimp. But they are a little harder to produce than mud minnows and other types of fresh bait. Again, redfish aren’t very picky eaters. Fresh cut shrimp, frozen shrimp, or other cut fish will quickly get the attention of a passing red.

One of the best baits in the springtime is a creature that doesn’t swim much at all.

“Chunks of blue crab work really well in springtime and can be a great alternative to live shrimp due to the abundance of pickers around in May and June,” he said.

Blue crabs are a large part of a redfish’s spring diet due to the abundance of molting activity in the spring months. Blue crabs will molt from the spring through the late summer, but the spring molt is quite intense.

Blue crabs will dig out of the mud in March and start scurrying across the seafloor looking for food. And as the peak moons come around in April and May, every blue crab in the estuary begins molting nearly at the same time. And redfish just go mad for a few weeks gorging themselves on these vulnerable and soft delicacies.

Connelly will cut up an adult blue crab into quarters and put them on an octopus circle hook at the end of a Carolina rig.

Even though fresh and live bait is a good way to fast action, artificial lures are also quite productive in the spring season. And especially scented soft plastics such as Berkley Gulp.

“I will dead stick Gulp around docks in areas with good current flow. I catch a lot of fish that way,” he said. ■

POPPERS FOR REDS >



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

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Poppers for reds

Redfish are essentially the largemouth bass of the salt. Lures that produce bass around lily pads and cypress stumps on Lake Marion will also get quite the attention of a hungry redfish. And when redfish are out of their winter slumber and feeding heavily on whatever they can find, a gurgling topwater lure is too attractive to go sailing by without an attack.

Redfish have subterminal placement of their mouth and are typically known for feeding along the bottom. But they will not think twice about crashing on a bait swimming along the water's surface. And when reds are aggressively feeding on anything they can find, a topwater option is a solid choice.

Surface lures come in a wide variety of shapes, colors, sizes, and actions. Most commonly, topwater lures are either poppers or surface walkers. While both types of lures can bring a redfish to the top, a new hybrid style of topwater lure is among the best of both worlds that provides a sweet gurgling noise.

Berkley makes a prop-style lure called the Choppo that can be fished slowly on top and it produces the perfect gurgling



Jeff Burleson

The author found this redfish near an island that features shallow water with access to deeper water nearby.

noises that redfish can't resist. Even though redfish can feed on top regularly, it is a little tougher for them to feed upwards. As a result, a slower pace lure will get the job done and the Berkley Choppo is one of the best options out there to be fished slowly in a stop and go fashion. Or it can be fished using the same action as a popper, but it will produce a gurgling action redfish just can't resist.

Topwater surface lures tend to produce the most success if fished along shallow water adjacent to grass edges, mud flats, or just above or next to oyster beds. And the spring period can be deadly and a load of fun with surface options. ■

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SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY

Phillip Gentry

The month of May means warming waters and baitfish moving back into the coastal creeks, a sure sign that redfish are on the move.



Phillip Gentry

RED ALERT

IT'S CODE RED ALL MONTH FOR KAYAK ANGLERS

The tidal marshes of the Carolinas are like no other area in the country. The alluvial tides inherent to the area create a constantly changing environment where tidal flows vary anywhere from 3 – 8 feet per cycle. Every 6 hours an average of 6 feet of water moves in or moves out of the marsh.

As an inshore angler, you either learn to love it or hate it. Anglers are constantly on the move to find a pattern before the tide changes the game, taking the fish with it.

Veteran kayak anglers relish the view of the marshes, inlets and bays up and down the coast from a cartop plastic boat that may only weigh a little more or less than 100 pounds. What some may see as a handicap, these anglers view as a distinct advantage.

Redfish (which many North Carolina

anglers prefer to call by their proper name, red drum) move in and out of the Carolina marshes with the tides. This gives kayaking anglers the ability to get much closer to fish and to pitch a bait in front of them, more silently in the shallow water than anglers in a bigger boat.

GET SHALLOW

That advantage doesn't always necessarily translate into a caught fish. But it does give the silent minority the opportunity to try to figure out what they're willing to hit if they're being picky or really mop up if they aren't.

The dawning of May and into June sees redfish starting to break out of their tightly grouped winter pattern as the waters warm and the early food sources begin to emerge in the marsh. It's a time when smaller baits and more precise presentations catch more fish than trying to

power-fish an entire area.

Following the push of the tides far up into the marsh, many kayak anglers prefer to use a push pole to propel the boat in just inches of water while standing and casting to reds along the bank. Kayak anglers may not have the range of a power boat, but they can more than make up for that by getting into schools of fish that would otherwise be inaccessible.

"Getting up on those grass flats before a boat can with only a few inches of water, it's amazing to see redfish stalking your bait in only 4 or 5 inches of water," said



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

GET A GRIP

Space for gear, when fishing from a kayak, is at a premium. Kayak anglers frequently find themselves doing without or making do with what they have because they don't have room for all of the equipment that is taken for granted in a larger vessel.

While the stability of today's plastic armada is also on average better than it has ever been in the past, packing gear that floats if accidentally dropped overboard is another big plus. One must-have kayaking item that fits this bill nicely is a product made by United Plastic Molders called "The Fish Grip" (thefishgrip.net).

The Fish Grip is a sturdy, plastic landing device that incorporates a unique jaw design that holds the lip of the fish securely and can handle even large fish. The over-center locking mechanism allows you to grip it to lock onto the fish and flip the handle to open.

A weight scale slot allows you to weigh the fish without releasing it from the grip (just deduct 5 oz. from the weight). The durable plastic grips come in six hi-vis colors including glow-in-the-dark. The grip has a wrist lanyard in case it slips, and it also floats.

"Personally, I just like this grip for landing a fish," said kayak expert 'Dolphin Dave' Hamilton, from Mt Pleasant, S.C., "especially if it's a catch-and-release tournament where I need to get a picture of the fish. It helps me kind of hold the fish on to my measuring board. With some of the bigger reds they are catching, you know they just won't fit into a net." ■

The ability to float in shallow water is one reason kayaks are such effective redfish-chasing platforms.

Georgetown, S.C. kayak fishing guide Mike Eady. "On certain tide levels, that's all the water that's on the flat and some days that's all the redfish want. I love those days when you get the reds with half their backs coming out of the water, pushing through that grass, aggressively feeding."

FOCUS ON STRUCTURE

Speaking of structure, Eady indicated that even newcomers to kayak fishing in the Carolinas can quickly learn what makes it good for fishing simply by being patient and observing the surroundings. He said the benefit of so much tidal fluctuation is that when the tide goes out, it uncovers the oyster bars, ditches, and other structure that fish will hold on just as soon as the water returns. Anglers can return to those areas with a better understanding of how fish will relate to them.

"Depending on where you're at, an average tide is 5 feet and we can see upward of 7, 7 ½ feet of total water movement," he said. "When that happens, that creates a lot of current but also gives you unique opportunities as a fisherman to see your environment, to see what's out there, to see what fish are laying next to, to see the structure, to see the drop-offs, the channels, the points. I encourage everyone who catches a redfish to come back to that spot and see why that fish was there. If you do that, it won't take you long to become a better angler." ■

COOKING ON THE WILD SIDE ➤

BEST BETS

NORTH CAROLINA

WHAT — Red drum

WHERE — Swansboro area

HOW — Fish topwater baits early in the morning, then switch to scented baits later in the day. Present shrimp or fiddlers under a popping cork and target dock pilings, oyster bays or drains between the creek and a flat marsh area.

LAUNCH — Cedar Point, Emerald Isle, and Willis Boat Landing all offer public boating access. Numerous dump-in points, both public and private will get you closer to the action.

INSIDER TIP — Fishing inshore waters is best near Swansboro during falling-water periods that begin after high tides turn.

SOUTH CAROLINA

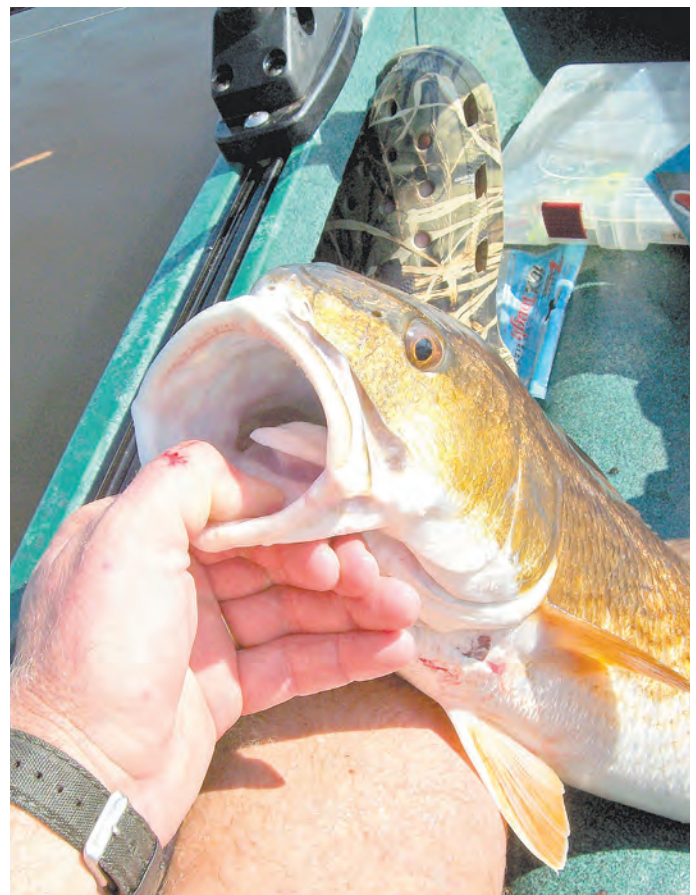
WHAT — Redfish

WHERE — Hilton Head/Bluffton area

HOW — Fish ⅛- to ¼-ounce jigheads with soft-plastic trailers or live bait under cork rigs using medium spinning rods spooled with 20-pound braid and a 2-foot section of 20-pound fluorocarbon leader. Current means food to spring redfish, so target any area that offers a current break adjacent to moving water.

LAUNCH — Alljoy landing on the May River, Chechessee landing at the SC 170 bridge, Sam's Point Landing on Ladys Island, and the Port Royal landing on the Beaufort River are all public access.

INSIDER TIP — Fishing artificials and live bait is fun and exciting with lots of casting activity, but don't overlook soaking live or fresh cut baits on the bottom near fish-holding structure. Pretend you're catfishing. Use 2/0 - 5/0 circle hooks for healthy releases.



Jerry Dilsaver

PORT MANSFIELD REDFISH CEVICHE

This recipe is courtesy of Capt. Marshal Hardin of Semper Fi'sh Adventures in Port Mansfield, Texas. His dad and I have exchanged fish and game recipes for years, and he offered this one at the conclusion of our recent fishing adventure. It was originally intended to be made with trout, but the windy weather muddied the water and made us switch species.

This healthy recipe simply calls for a few vegetables, some lime and lemon juice and the freshest fish possible. Seriously, a couple of these fish were still active when placed on the cleaning table. Check with your doctor if you have any doubts about the health benefits. Doctors and nutritionists agree that eating a diet containing a fresh fish is good for us and it doesn't get any fresher than this. I hadn't thought of red drum as the main ingredient in ceviche prior to this, but I will from now on. It tasted very good and I'll recommend trying it. ■



Simple ingredients are all that's needed to make this healthy, delicious dish. **INSET:** The only "cooking" required for this recipe comes from the citrus in lime and lemon juices.

Jerry Dilsaver

TIP!

A hand-held juicer made for lemons and limes extracts the maximum amount of juice without struggle.

REDFISH CEVICHE

According to Wikipedia, ceviche, also sometimes called cebiche, seviche, or sebiche, is a Latin American seafood dish thought to have originated in Peru. It is typically made from fresh raw fish cured in fresh citrus juices, most commonly lemon or lime, and spiced with aji, chili peppers or other seasonings including chopped onions, salt, and coriander. Because ceviche is eaten only with the curing of the citric acids and not cooked with heat, it must be prepared and served fresh.

This ceviche was made using red drum, but it works well with almost any fish. Capt. Hardin had originally planned to use speckled trout, but they weren't in their usual haunts. Redfish became a willing substitute. I noticed it required a little more time for the redfish to "cook." Most

PREPARATION:

1. Chop the tomatoes into ½-inch pieces.
2. Chop the onion into approximately ½-inch pieces.
3. Remove the seeds and finely chop the jalapenos (2 for mild palates and 3 for more robust palates).
4. Chop the cilantro and save a few full leaves for garnish.
5. Squeeze the limes and lemons and combine the juice. (Add orange juice if you like).
6. Mix the tomatoes, peppers, onions, cilantro, olives (optional) and olive oil in a large bowl.
7. Cut the redfish into approximately ½-inch pieces.
8. Mix the redfish pieces and the lime, lemon and orange (optional) juices into the bowl.
9. Season with salt and pepper to personal taste.
10. Cover the bowl and place it in the refrigerator or on ice to keep the mixture cool while the fish "cooks."
11. Peel, pit and cut the avocados (optional) into approximately ½-inch pieces.
12. Stir in the avocado just before serving, being careful not to crush it.
13. Garnish with a few cilantro leaves before serving.

Serve a bowl of ceviche on a plate with tortilla chips. You can pick up a bag of real tortilla chips from the Mexican restaurant if you choose to use Pico de gallo. I really like this with blue corn tortilla chips.

anglers know places to catch their own redfish, but they are also available in many fish markets. Other species also work well in the event redfish are reluctant biters or not available from your favorite fishmonger.

Capt. Hardin made a suggestion he often uses so charters can enjoy some fresh ceviche before heading home. Purchase a quart of Pico de gallo from your favorite Mexican restaurant instead of taking the time to chop the vegetables and peppers. I can verify this worked well and tasted great.

Using the Pico de gallo, the ingredients are ready to mix and have the lime and lemon juices added as soon as the first fish is cleaned. It can be "cooking" quickly and is ready to eat once all the fish and boat are cleaned. ■

Most folks serve ceviche as a snack or an appetizer, but I like it a lot and sometimes eat it with a green salad or lettuce wedge for a light meal.

The preparation for this dish really begins on the water as soon as you catch fish. Ice them immediately once on the boat.

This is especially true for those fish intended to be used in ceviche. Push the fish, nose first, down into the ice so it is totally covered and cools quickly. This simple step really helps with the flavor and texture of the ceviche.

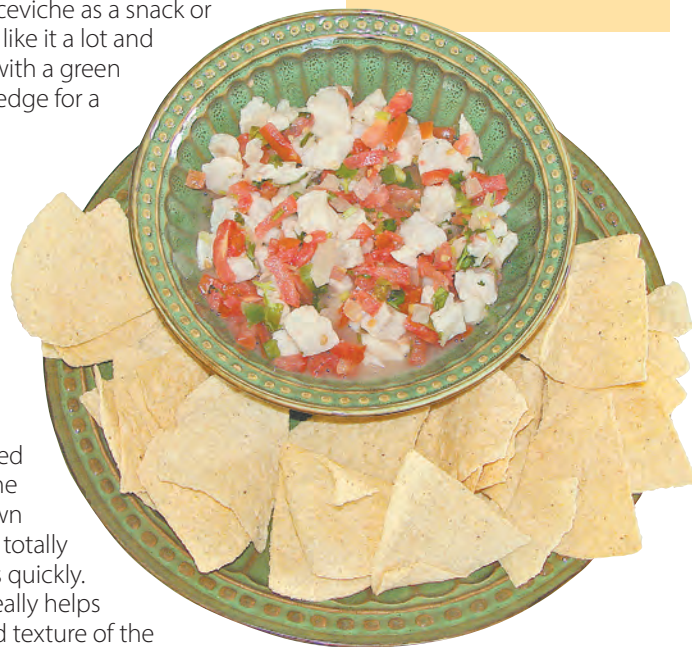
Capt. Hardin introduced a hand-held juicer, made for limes and lemons, that gets an incredible amount of juice from each with no struggle. I came home with one and will need fewer limes and lemons when making ceviche in the future. ■

TIP!

Kick up the spice factor a notch or three on this recipe by adding jalapenos or other peppers.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 Fresh redfish fillet (1-1 ½ pounds),
 - 1 Medium sweet onion,
 - 2 Medium-large tomatoes (about 1 pound),
 - 10 Fresh limes,
 - 3 Fresh lemons,
 - 2-3 Fresh jalapenos (personal preference),
 - 1/3-1/2 Cup chopped cilantro,
 - 2 TBL extra-virgin olive oil,
 - Salt and pepper to taste,
 - Chips and/or crackers
- Optional:
- 1/3 Cup chopped pitted green olives,
 - 1/3 Cup orange juice,
 - 2 Ripe avocados
- *Substitute Pico de gallo from your favorite Mexican restaurant instead of chopping and mixing the vegetables.



Served with tortilla chips, this dish works great as a light snack, appetizer, or a complete meal.



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

■ By Brian Cope

**STABLE TEMPERATURES,
INFLUX OF BAIT CRANKS UP
INSHORE BITE**

LOWCOUNTRY MIXED BAG

STABILITY.

That's what Capt. Stephen Flook of Unashamed Adventures said he — along with inshore gamefish — love about the month of May. He's mainly talking about air and water temperatures, which usually range between extremes during March and April

“As good as the fishing is during March and April, some days are especially tough because of the fluctuations of air and water temperatures. In May, those temperatures are usually stabilized. This concentrates the bait. And that puts the fish on a much more normal pattern,” he said.

Flook spends most of his time fishing the central part and lowcountry of South Carolina's coast. But he said the creeks, inlets and main waterways throughout both Carolinas are pretty similar when fishing this month.

“You'll find redfish in all the normal places this month. Grass lines, oyster beds and feeder creeks are all good spots for redfish. And if you find all three in close proximity, that can be a gold mine,” he said.

Anglers can also catch plenty of reds on flats, especially those that have access to deep water.

Just because air and water temperatures are generally consistent this month doesn't mean the fish are easier to locate. But they do tend to bite better day after day instead of being hot one day and dormant the next, as can be the case during wild temperature fluctuations of March and April.

KEEP AT IT

“These fish move around a lot, so every day is different. But the fishing gets better and better

each day this time of year. You just have to be willing to search and not give up just because the fish aren't in the same spot they were yesterday or last week. These fish are hungry and they're following the baitfish around. This time of year, you'll find plenty that are willing to bite.

“You might hit one spot first thing in the morning and get nothing, then try a second spot and get nothing. And then you try the third spot and it's on with non-stop action,” he said. “Be patient but don't waste time at unproductive spots,” he said.

And when looking for productive spots, Flook will check out likely-looking honey holes, looking for surface wakes, flickering, or boiling water.

“When you see signs of life, that's a good thing. Even if you know it's just mullet or shrimp causing those surface disturbances, redfish are often mixed in with them. That's what the redfish are looking for. So any time I see signs of life like that, I'm going to give that spot a try,” he said.

GET SKINNY >

Capt. Stephen Flook caught this redfish on a Z-Man EZ-ShrimpZ rigged on a Texas Eye jighead. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** This redfish was caught along the pictured grass line in a small creek mouth off the main waterway in South Carolina's lowcountry.



Brian Cope

GET SKINNY

One strategy Flook (864-430-8830) uses for redfish is he gets into the mouth of small creeks as the tide is going out, pitching Z-Man EZ-ShrimpZ into the creek. Lots of redfish are ganged up in those mouths, gorging on baitfish as they move out of the creek just before the tide goes to dead low.

“You have to be careful that you don’t get your boat stuck, but this is a great way to pick up a handful of redfish pretty quickly,” he said.

Those fish like to eat up as the tide is leaving, knowing it will be 6 hours before they can get back in that water. At low tide, they’re relegated to cruising the main channel where it’s tougher to ambush prey.

He’ll do the same as the tide moves in to those same small creeks. The redfish will move in as soon as they can, ready for a meal that’s easy to catch in the shallow pools.

Whether on the incoming or outgoing tides, Flook won’t hesitate to anchor his boat and get out to wade fish the small creeks. This can be extremely effective in even the smallest of creeks that get completely cut off from the main channel at

dead low tide.

“If the creek keeps enough water in it at low tide, some fish will stay in there. It keeps them protected and it’s also easy for them to find plenty of baitfish and crabs to eat. The skinnier the water is, the easier it is for them to find plenty of food,” he said.

The trick is knowing which creeks hold enough water at low tide for that possibility, and that comes with experience on the water and continually trying new places.

“When anglers go fishing for a day, they should always try to spend some time checking out a place they’ve never fished before. If they find something they like, they can add that to their list of honey holes. If not, they can eliminate it from future trips. Either way, they’re learning,” he said. “It’s easy to get stuck in a rut of fishing the same spots over and over, especially when they continually produce.

“But you’re better off having numerous spots to try. Because on the day that your top spot isn’t producing, chances are good that the fish are biting somewhere. So continually finding new spots gives you confidence in more areas. And confidence is a big part of it,” he said.

Casting into the mouth of small creeks during outgoing or incoming tide is a sure bet to get a bite from reds and specks.



BREAK OUT THE SAUCE

Another key for Flook that many anglers ignore is the use of commercial scents. He's a big believer in using Pro-Cure. He applies it liberally to every lure, and he refreshes each lure often.

Once he gets a soft plastic lure on his jighead, Flook dabs the scent up and down all sides of the lure. He said it can make a big difference in a day of fishing.

"On some days, fish are just going to bite better than others. You always want to stack the odds in your favor. Using Pro-Cure can turn a good day into a great day, or a slow trip into a good one. It's inexpensive enough and effective enough that I won't go fishing without it," he said.

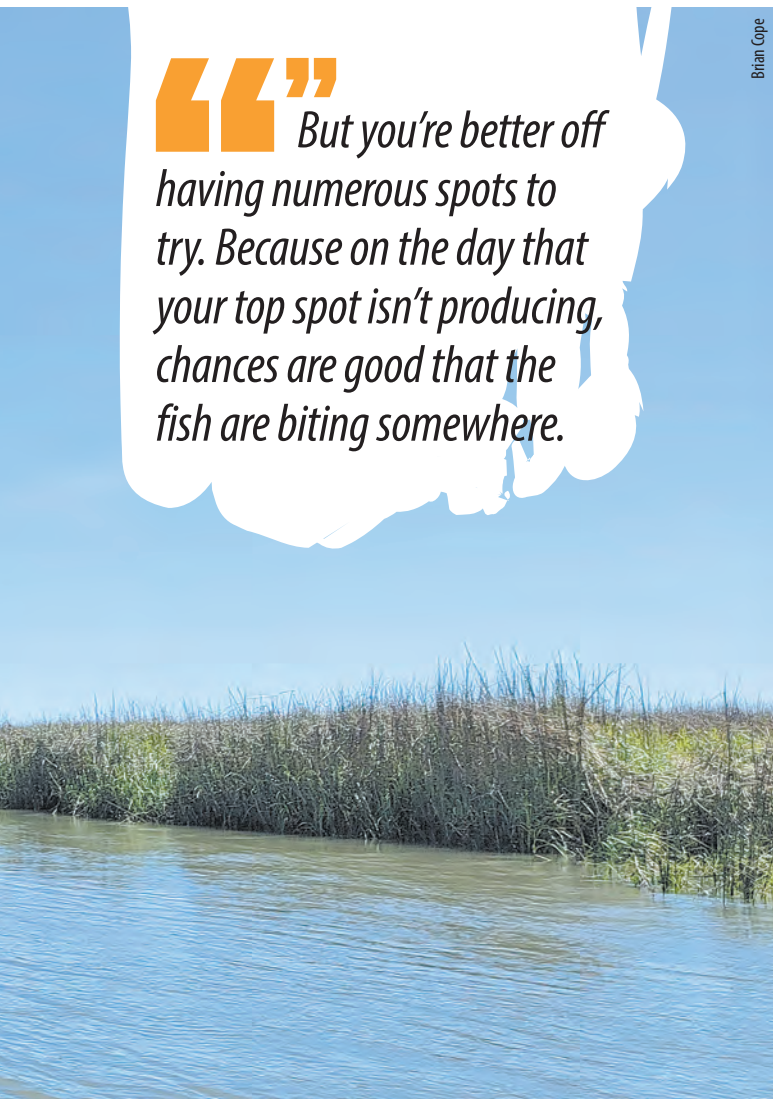


Brian Cope is the editor of Carolina Sportsman Magazine and CarolinaSportsman.com. You can reach him at brian@sportsmannetwork.com

DON'T IGNORE THE SPECKS >

“But you're better off having numerous spots to try. Because on the day that your top spot isn't producing, chances are good that the fish are biting somewhere.**”**

Brian Cope



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 (http://www.nmfspermits.com)	
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. # Check with the SAFMC at 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-bream), 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 SCNDR's Regulations Digest

% For lake-specific regulations, see the SCNDR's Regulations Digest or visit 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.

DON'T IGNORE THE SPECKS

Speckled trout are also in the mix this month, especially during the early morning hours. Flook likes to chase them first thing, mainly staying in smaller creeks and fishing the grass lines and oyster bars.

"You'll catch both species in the same type spots right now. You can't go wrong throwing soft plastics on jigheads along grass lines and over and around oyster bars. Sometimes the trout will be right over the top of oysters. Other times, they'll hang 10 or 20 feet off of them. You just have to pick at it until you see what they're doing that day," he said.

Everyone loves to have a fish crash a topwater lure, and Flook said that is definitely possible from the trout this month.

"Especially when a good tide matches up with the sunrise, the topwater bite can be phenomenal. Any of the MirrOlure topwater baits are great. The Heddon Spook and Spook Jr. are also good choices." ■

Speckled trout are suckers for plastic lures cast along grass lines and around oyster bars.



Brian Cope

Z-Man's paddletail MinnowZ and EZ-ShrimpZ are great lure choices for inshore reds and specks.



Z-MAN LURE SELECTION FOR INSHORE FISHING

Capt. Stephen Flook always keeps live bait handy in May, but he really prefers catching redfish and speckled trout on artificial lures. His favorites are Z-Man MinnowZ and EZ-ShrimpZ.

The lures are made of ElaZtech, which is 10-times tougher than plastic used in making many other lures. He rigs them on Z-Man's Trout Eye and Texas Eye jigheads and slathers them with Pro-Cure scent.

"Anglers have lots of soft plastic lure options, and many of them work great. But I find the Z-Man lures to be more durable than any others I've tried. You can put one on and catch fish on the same one all day long," he said.

When it comes to colors, Flook uses a big variety, but he does have his favorites.

"I like the Beer Run color and the Slam Shady color a lot. But the water clarity really determines what colors I use on any given day. In clear water, I want to use more natural colors. In dingy water, I'll use a lot of chartreuse-type colors.

Flook said one mistake many anglers make with these lures is fishing them too fast.

"I want to feel the bottom when I'm working these lures. You don't want it to rest on the bottom because you'll get hung up a lot that way. But you want to reel slowly enough for it to scrape along the bottom as you work it," he said.

And it's not just a straight retrieve most days.

"When I make a cast, I'll let it sink all the way to the bottom, give it a couple of twitches, reel in the slack, then another couple of twitches. If that's not working I'll adjust a little bit. But that's usually good enough to catch plenty of redfish and speckled trout," he said. ■

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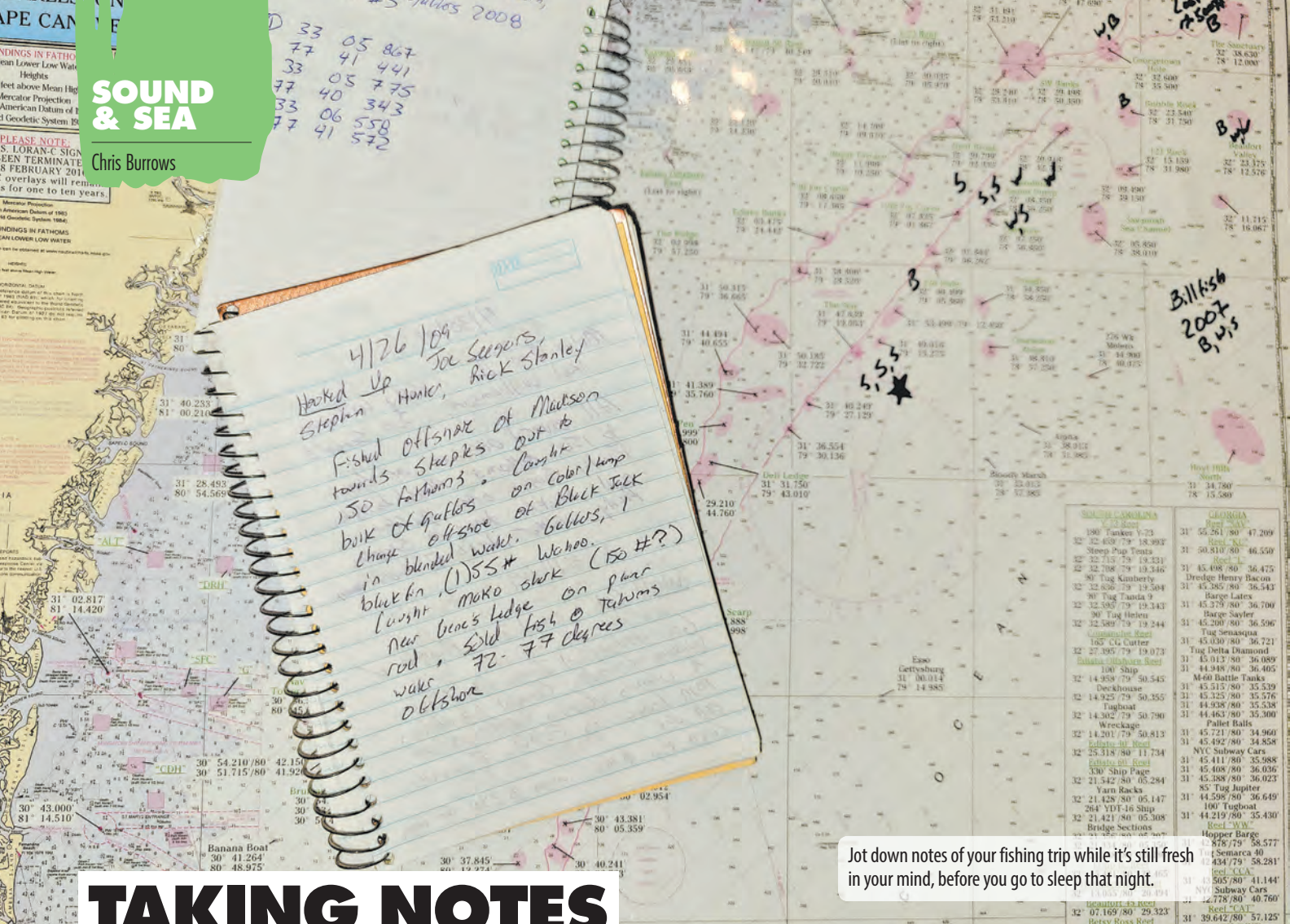
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SOUND & SEA

Chris Burrows

TAKING NOTES

KEEP A FISHING LOG FOR FUTURE SUCCESS

When you get back to the dock after a day on the water, it often seems like the fun ends and the work begins. You hopefully have fish to filet, a boat to clean, and gear to go through, repair, and make ready for the next trip.

And it often means a long trip from the ramp back to wherever you call home.

Trailering a boat home safely, often in the dark and on narrow backroads is a job in itself. Ultimately, it can lead to a pretty tired captain thinking only about how to get into bed with the least amount of hassle. However, it's in every fisherman's best interest to not forget one last thing. It's time to take notes and fill out your fishing log.

Keeping a log of your days on the water may not sound like the most fun thing to do before closing your eyelids. But it will pay tremendous dividends in the long run.

Keeping a good log isn't just writing

down how many fish you caught, how big they were, what you caught them on, and where you caught them. Record any details about the day that stood out from the normal, and any observations you made while you were catching fish (or NOT catching fish) that you think made the difference.

Things like tides, phase of the moon, concentrations of bait, water temperature, clarity, and depth all factor into whether or not you find hungry fish. So any detail that you can remember, jot it down. Write down new numbers or sets of new numbers that you came across and marked in your GPS. Later, when you start to read over old entries, you'll start to spot trends that you never even considered. Truly, no detail is too small.

Incorporating copies of a marine chart, especially one with accurate contour lines, with a series of dates and water temperatures, including what you caught in symbols or shorthand (so as not to clutter up the charts) is another way to

Jot down notes of your fishing trip while it's still fresh in your mind, before you go to sleep that night.

track trends over time, especially if you are fishing offshore and covering a lot of different areas. When I was fishing a lot of king mackerel tournaments, looking at a series of these charts gave a lot of insight over what depth to start looking for bait concentrations when the water hit a certain temperature. I can't say that it ever paid me off with a first-place fish, as I always seemed snakebitten when it came to catching a winner with big money. But it led to a lot of consistent fishing and a great game plan on the charter boat, where getting action is just about the most important thing.



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.

Chris Burrows



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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 (http://www.nmfspermits.com)	
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. % 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

% Striped bass creel limits and size minimums vary by lake. See NCWRC regulations digest or 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.

I want to use a medium where I can make the ultimate decision on what outside parties can have access to. I don't mind helping my fellow fishermen with a bit of a steer toward where I think the fish will bite, or what conditions I'll be looking for.

Just like with the rest of society, online logs and apps are now available. I feel that these programs have their place in the fishing world. But they often seem like another type of social media with a focus on sharing photos of outstanding catches or your friends on the boat.

Having an electronic log certainly has its merits due to how much information you can store on a device like a cell phone, the cloud, or a USB drive. I may experiment with this concept more going forward. But I want to use a medium where I can make the ultimate decision on what outside parties can have access to. I don't mind helping my fellow fishermen with a bit of a steer toward where I think the fish will bite, or what conditions I'll be looking for.

Am I going to give just anyone the latitude and longitude of my favorite fall grouper hole? Would you?

My venerable old paper logs and chart copies ensure that my "secrets" stay secret, unless someone breaks into my house and gets in my safe. As far as photos go, I'm usually fine with sharing whatever, just so long as there isn't a clear view of the chartplotter in the frame. My point is, I just want to be in control of what knowledge I do share. A spiral bound notebook solves that issue for me entirely.

At the end of the day, saving and cataloging information is a really important step in becoming a more consistent fisherman. Once that information is in place, you then need to take the next step, which is identifying the important stuff and using it to form strategies. Take the extra time before bed to get it into whatever format works the best for you while it's still fresh in your head. You'll be amazed at how quickly important information jumps off the page when you go through a season or two of your old log entries. ■

Elijah Painter of Harrisburg, N.C. caught this whiting in the surf near Oak Island.

WHITING ARE BITING

NC's southern coast is a whiting hot hole

W By Jerry Dilsaver
Whether called whiting, sea mullet or Virginia mullet, or their proper names of Gulf, southern and northern kingfish, the arrival of these small panfish each spring is eagerly anticipated by scores of fishermen along the Cape Fear Coast. They taste great fried, grilled or broiled. Boat fishermen, pier anglers and surf fishermen catch them regularly.

Boat fishermen usually see whiting first. They make their earliest appearance around the mouth of the Cape Fear River. Whiting have a fondness for the bottom on the west side of Jaybird Shoal just outside the river off Fort Caswell and along the edges of the Cape Fear Ship Channel between Southport and the mouth of the river. Capt. Butch Foster of Yeah Right Charters (www.yeahrightcharters.com, 336-309-5900) said 14 to 17 feet seems to be their preferred depth in either place.

Pier anglers see whiting next and that began early this year. The water temps passed 60 in mid-March and the first pier whiting began to arrive shortly after. Carolyn Riggan of Oak Island Pier (910-910-933-6161) said fishermen there were already seeing good whiting catches and they expected the good catches to continue into June.

Surf fishermen see whiting a week or so after the first pier catches and good catches are already being reported. Bobby Summey is an avid Oak Island surf fisherman and he said whiting tend to gather around the first breaking wave on the outer bar. The breaking waves wash food out of the sand for easy pickings.

Foster, Riggan and Summey said the easiest way to catch whiting is using a double-drop rig baited with the freshest shrimp possible. Foster and Summey make their own rigs while Riggan said most pier fishermen catch whiting well using the Sea Striker rigs they sell at the pier. These rigs come plain or with red or green beads. They all work well. The hook of choice is a long shank and offset, size 4 or 6 Eagle Claw L072.

Some fishermen also use bloodworms and the synthetic bloodworms from Fishbites with good success. Foster said he has also had good success using pieces of Berkley Gulp baits and using shrimp flavored Pro-Cure Scent Gel to cover the smell of older shrimp. Whiting are members of the drum family and use their noses to find food, so having good smelling bait is important.

Currently there are no size restrictions or number limits on whiting in N.C. waters. ■



Foster, Riggan and Summey said the easiest way to catch whiting is using a double-drop rig baited with the freshest shrimp possible.

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OLD DRUM, COBIA HOTSPOTS >

OLD DRUM FISHING along Cape Lookout Shoals

M By Craig Holt
ost North Carolina inshore anglers think of May as a month to chase spotted seatrout, bluefish, cobia, kings and Spanish mackerel. But another species requires some looking. And a little bravery can provide rod-bending action.

Locals call them “old” drum, but they’re actually female red drum that vary from 20 to 60 pounds.

Because air temperatures warm Atlantic Ocean waters by May (and with the help of regulations), N.C. redfish numbers have exploded.

Bryan Goodwin, an 8th-generation Beaufort native who owns and operates Native Guide Service (252-725-3961) and produces the Downeast Outdoor Television show, watches for baitfish at Cape Lookout’s shoals near Beaufort Inlet and nearby beaches.

The shoals stretch seaward 19 miles from the north corner of the inlet to the Knuckle Buoy (where it’s safe to U-turn a boat and head toward land).

Depending on wind and ocean tides, large menhaden schools cross through small shoal cuts or swim along the shoal’s sides. When the tide flows out, baitfish get plastered against its sides, providing a smorgasbord for drum.

“But it’s challenging, difficult fishing. And you only can fish a few (good weather) days at the shoals. Few people fish the Cape Lookout shoals because weather, wind and waves can create dicey conditions for boat anglers,” said Goodwin.

“Shad and old drum head toward the shoreline when the water temperature changes,” he said. “They migrate about the same time every year.”

Adult redfish leave offshore structures each spring and follow menhaden schools. They spread out along the beaches or swim through Beaufort Inlet for inside waters.

“I look for menhaden on the surface or with side-scan sonar for reds,” he said.

He likes reels mated to 6-foot rods with 20- to 30-pound-test braid line and 3- to 4-feet of fluorocarbon leaders.

“I lighten up my tackle a bit. But it’s basically the same tackle I use for cobia,” Goodwin said.

When the water is dingy, his tackle includes 20- to 40-pound test main line and 2- to 3-ounce bucktails. He adds curlytail soft-plastic trailers to his bucktails.

“Sometimes at the shoals you’ll catch a cobia on the bucktails when you’re fishing for red drum,” Goodwin said.

Another favorite tactic of anglers who eschew artificial lures is to soak crabs on the bottom. ■

Bryan Goodwin



Bryan Goodwin cradles an old drum he caught at the Cape Lookout shoals during May.

“ But it’s challenging, difficult fishing. And you only can fish a few (good weather) days at the shoals. Few people fish the Cape Lookout shoals because weather, wind and waves can create dicey conditions for boat anglers. **”**

IT'S COBIA TIME along the beaches of Murrells Inlet

C By Jeff Burleson
apt. Tommy Werner of Outlaw Fishing Charters looks forward to the spring cobia season in Murrells Inlet. And when these fish begin to show up in late April, he makes regular trips along the beach looking for these large powerhouses.

"Cobia start migrating into the area from Florida in April," said Werner (843-504-8793). "But May is the best time to catch them along the beaches. And the full moon in May is typically the prime time."

According to Werner, cobia arrive in two distinct schools where one school tends to set up along the nearshore and reefs. The other school frequents the beachfront just behind the breakers.

"Menhaden are migrating into the area and cobia show up following the bait," he said.

Cobia arrive in big numbers, but they will be in small groups around the bait nearshore. They generally travel in one- to three-fish packs. These fish that arrive patrolling the beachfront are typically mature specimens and they aren't too bashful or boat-shy. In fact, they are far from spooked by the presence of a boat.

"When I pull up to a school of bait, cobia will be sunbathing and gliding across the surface near the bait. They are curious creatures. Sometimes they will swim right up to the boat," he said.

This situation is a prime opportunity to get a hookup which is why Werner likes to have a couple of pitch rods rigged and ready for deployment.

"I will have a heavy-duty spinning rod rigged with a bucktail and curly tail trailer. And a conventional reel with a live menhaden or big mullet on a circle hook," he said.

Having pitch rods ready to use is critical for getting hooked up on these fish because the opportunity they present will typically be a short one.

"Pitch to the fish as fast as you can. The cobia will be there and then gone. Sometimes you can have a few minutes. But it is normally 30 seconds and then the fish disappears. And every cobia is different. Sometimes they take the bucktail immediately. But other times they just come up and look at it and turn away," he said.

Werner emphasizes to make the first pitch count though and to present the lure the way it should be presented to increase chances of hooking up.

"The first reaction will be the best chance of hooking the fish," he said.

Cobia at nearshore reefs remain a valid option all summer long, but typically, the largest fish caught all year are patrolling the beachfront throughout May. Cobia greater than 50 pounds are not uncommon. ■

“ Pitch to the fish as fast as you can. The cobia will be there and then gone. Sometimes you can have a few minutes. But it is normally 30 seconds and then the fish disappears. **”**



The spring cobia migration brings some of the biggest fish of the year to Murrells Inlet.

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HUNTING/FISHING SCRAPBOOK



Riley and Kate Hughes

Sisters Riley and Kate Hughes of Deep Run, N.C. doubled up on N.C.'s opening day of the 2022 youth season.



Jay Priest

Jay Priest caught this huge bass in Craven County, N.C.



Jackson Roy

Jackson Roy caught this big redfish at Topsail Island in October 2021.



Ethan Baxley

Ethan Baxley of Raeford, N.C. killed this buck in October during a hunt in Hoke County.



Mason Small

Mason Small caught this 31-pound blue catfish on the Catawba River.



Carson Queen

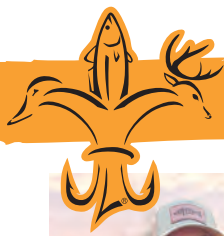
Carson Queen of Marshville, N.C. killed his first snow goose on March 3 during a hunt in Missouri.

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HUNTING/FISHING SCRAPBOOK



Megan Turcotte

Megan Turcotte of Beaufort, S.C. killed this gobbler in South Carolina's lowcountry on April 3.



Mason Kennington

Mason Kennington, 8-years-old of Camden, S.C. caught these crappie on Lake Wateree in March.

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Mason Veedock

Mason Veedock caught this channel catfish at Hyco Lake last fall.



"CornBread" Willetts

After 40+ years of working at the paper mill, "CornBread" Willetts said he spends most of his days catching up for lost fishing time.



Dallas Brooks

Dallas Brooks of Siler City, N.C. was fishing at Jordan Lake when she caught this crappie.



Jacoby Williford

Jacoby Williford caught this 7+ pound bass near the Catawba Indian Reservation in Rock Hill, S.C. this spring.



Gerald and Trey Smith

Gerald and Trey Smith won the March 5 Southeastern Catfish Club tournament on Lake Wylie with a total weight of 80.59 pounds.



Rosalyn Ballam

Rosalyn Ballam killed this 19-pound gobbler in Charleston County, S.C.



Brayden Stroup

Brayden Stroup of Murrells Inlet, S.C. killed this 22-pound gobbler on March 19 during a hunt in Marion County.



Alyssa Redmon

Alyssa Redmon was hunting in Spartanburg County, S.C. when she killed this turkey, her first.



Kate Morton

Kate Morton of Rock Hill, S.C. killed this York County gobbler with her crossbow.



Smith Andrews, Jr.

Smith Andrews, Jr. killed this gobbler in Nash County, N.C. on his 9th birthday, during N.C.'s youth season.



Josh Wensil

Josh Wensil caught this striper in March on the Wateree River while fishing with Wolfe's Guide Service.



Kaitlyn Neely

Kaitlyn Neely killed this 19-pound gobbler on March 27 while hunting with her husband.



Cole Welch

Cole Welch caught this 45-pound blue catfish at Badin Lake in February.

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

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

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

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

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2022 MAY		BEST DAYS				
		POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCEL	VALUE
Sun 1						71
Mon 2						62
Tue 3						54
Wed 4						49
Thu 5						41
Fri 6						51
Sat 7						56
Sun 8						65
Mon 9						55
Tue 10						48
Wed 11						46
Thu 12						54
Fri 13						61
Sat 14						71
Sun 15						75
Mon 16						63
Tue 17						53
Wed 18						41
Thu 19						35
Fri 20						35
Sat 21						40
Sun 22						52
Mon 23						43
Tue 24						40
Wed 25						43
Thu 26						45
Fri 27						57
Sat 28						69
Sun 29						80
Mon 30						86
Tue 31						77

25 50 75
AVERAGE

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LUNAR PERIODS					
TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED					
MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT		
6:50 am	12:13 pm - 3:29 pm	9:02 pm	12:01 am - 3:01 am		
7:22 am	12:53 pm - 4:23 pm	10:02 pm	12:38 am - 3:54 am		
7:59 am	1:37 pm - 5:17 pm	11:00 pm	1:18 am - 4:48 am		
8:41 am	2:26 pm - 6:08 pm	11:55 pm	2:02 am - 5:42 am		
9:29 am	3:15 pm - 7:01 pm		2:51 am - 6:33 am		High Apogee
10:22 am	4:07 pm - 7:49 pm	12:46 am	3:40 am - 7:26 am		
11:19 am	5:02 pm - 8:34 pm	1:31 am	4:32 am - 8:14 am		
12:18 pm	5:54 pm - 9:16 pm	2:10 am	5:27 am - 8:59 am		Half
1:19 pm	6:49 pm - 9:55 pm	2:45 am	6:19 am - 9:41 am		
2:20 pm	7:42 pm - 10:32 pm	3:16 am	7:14 am - 10:20 am		
3:23 pm	8:37 pm - 11:07 pm	3:44 am	8:07 am - 10:57 am		
4:27 pm	9:34 pm - 11:42 pm	4:12 am	9:02 am - 11:32 am		
5:33 pm	10:33 pm - 12:19 am	4:40 am	9:59 am - 12:07 pm		
6:43 pm	11:34 pm - Midnight	5:10 am	10:58 am - 12:44 pm		
7:56 pm	Midnight - 1:00 am	5:43 am	11:59 am - 1:25 pm		Full
9:12 pm	12:40 am - 1:46 am	6:22 am	1:05 pm - 2:11 pm		
10:26 pm	1:47 am - 2:39 am	7:10 am	2:12 pm - 3:04 pm		Perigee
11:35 pm	2:57 am - 3:39 am	8:07 am	3:22 pm - 4:04 pm		
	4:02 am - 4:44 am	9:12 am	4:27 pm - 5:09 pm		Low
12:34 am	5:03 am - 5:51 am	10:23 am	5:28 pm - 6:16 pm		
1:23 am	5:57 am - 6:55 am	11:35 am	6:22 pm - 7:20 pm		
2:03 am	6:42 am - 7:58 am	12:44 pm	7:07 pm - 8:23 pm		Half
2:36 am	7:23 am - 8:55 am	1:50 pm	7:48 pm - 9:20 pm		
3:05 am	7:59 am - 9:51 am	2:53 pm	8:24 pm - 10:16 pm		
3:32 am	8:33 am - 10:45 am	3:54 pm	8:58 pm - 11:10 pm		
3:58 am	9:05 am - 11:37 am	4:54 pm	9:30 pm - 12:02 am		
4:24 am	9:38 am - 12:30 pm	5:53 pm	10:03 pm - 12:55 am		
4:52 am	10:13 am - 1:23 pm	6:53 pm	10:38 pm - 1:48 am		
5:23 am	10:53 am - 2:15 pm	7:53 pm	11:18 pm - 2:40 am		
5:58 am	11:34 am - 3:10 pm	8:52 pm	11:59 pm - Midnight		New
6:38 am	12:21 pm - 4:03 pm	9:48 pm	Midnight - 3:35 am		

ANY LUNAR PERIOD IS ENHANCED WHEN IT OVERLAPS A KEY SOLAR PERIOD. THE BEST OF THESE OVERLAPS ARE DESIGNATED BY THE SUN SYMBOLS:
 ☀ = DAWN ☀ = HIGH NOON ☀ = DUSK
 WHILE THE LESSER MOONRISE AND -SET OVERLAPS (ABOUT 30 MIN. BEFORE AND AFTER THE LISTED TIME) ARE DESIGNATED BY BOLD BLACK TYPE.

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