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JUNE 2022

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EDISTO'S SPANISH ARMADA



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Go deep for grouper this month for some nice-sized offshore catches like this one. Photo by Brian Carroll.



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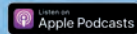


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# OUTDOOR UPDATE

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 CHANGES FOR NC DEER HUNTERS

### HUNTERS IN 8 COUNTIES FACE THE BIGGEST IMPACT

**W**ith the discovery of a CWD-infected deer in Yadkin County earlier this year, the NCWRC is implementing some new rules for hunters in eight counties. These counties are in what the NCWRC has named the Primary and Secondary Surveillance Areas. Those areas were named according to their proximity to the harvest location of the infected deer.

These areas include the entirety of Yadkin, Surry and Stokes counties and portions of Alleghany, Wilkes, Iredell, Davie and Forsyth counties.

The boundaries of the Secondary Surveillance Area stretch out 30 miles from the site of the infected deer harvest. This is the maximum distance a whitetail deer is known to travel. Most travel no more than 5 miles in their lifetimes, making the Primary Surveillance Zone (portions of Yadkin and Surry counties) much smaller than the secondary.

Hunters in the PSA (areas in Surry County east of US 601, south of NC 268 and west of Quaker Church Road and the Ararat River; and areas in Yadkin County east

of US 601, north of NC 67, west of Shoals Road to the intersection with Shady Grove Church Road and west of Fairground Road) must have harvested deer tested by NCWRC during the blackpowder season (Nov. 5 - Nov. 18) and gun season (Nov. 19 - Jan. 2).

Hunters in the SSA (the entirety of Surry County, Yadkin County, Davie County, Forsyth County, Stokes County, Alleghany County East of US 21 and NC 18, Wilkes County East of NC 18 and NC 115, and Iredell County East of NC 115 and North of I-40) must have harvested deer tested by NCWRC during blackpowder season and the first 9 days of gun season (Nov. 19 - Nov. 27).

Hunters will be required to drop off samples (not the entire deer carcass) at locations to be named by Sept. 1, 2022.

Another change hunters face involves transporting the carcass or parts of a carcass from deer harvested in the PSA or SSA. Hunters will not be allowed to transport these outside of the PSA or SSA, with these exceptions:

- Double-bagged carcass or parts transported directly from within the PSA to a Cervid Health Cooperator in Surry or Yadkin County
- Meat that has been boned out such that no pieces or fragments of bone remain
- Caped hides with no part of the skull or spinal column attached
- Antlers, antlers attached to cleaned skull plates, or skulls free from meat or brain tissue
- Cleaned lower jawbones with teeth or cleaned teeth
- Finished taxidermy products and tanned hides. ■



The orange circle represents the CWD Primary Surveillance Area. The yellow line shows the Secondary Surveillance Area. Above photo: Most CWD-infected deer look perfectly normal.

# MCDOWELL COUNTY HUNTER KILLS BANDED GOBBLER

**K**ailee Shumate of Marion, N.C. killed a banded gobbler on game land in McDowell County during a hunt on April 23, 2022. And she wasn't even planning to pull the trigger on her Mossberg 835 Ulti-Mag that day.

"I was hunting with my fiancé, Elijah Winters, and was hoping to get this bird at the end of his gun barrel instead of mine. Unfortunately for Elijah's sake, the shot opportunity was presented to me instead of him," she said.

The overall hunt was a pretty quick one, and Shumate did not know the turkey had a band on its leg until she had shot it and was recovering the bird.

"We had no idea this bird was banded until I ran up to it after taking the shot. Talk about a surprise!" she said.

Shumate did not weigh the bird, which had a 9+ inch beard and spurs that measured 1½ inches.



Kailee Shumate's banded gobbler was part of a research project.

## BANDED GOBBLER WAS PART OF RESEARCH PROJECT

The band had an NCWRC code, so Shumate reported the band and received some interesting information back.

"The bird was part of an ongoing research project with NC State University in partnership with the NCWRC. After reporting the band number, I found out that he was banded and fitted with a transmitter on Feb. 4, 2021. The transmitter was later retrieved on June 7, 2021 almost 7 linear miles from where he was originally captured.

"From where the transmitter was found to where I killed him was almost 6 linear miles. With the mountainous terrain, I would estimate nearly double that in actual walking miles. That bird did some traveling in his lifetime!" she said. ■

## MORE INFO ON NC'S CWD-INFECTED DEER

The NCWRC found the positive test results in March from a deer that was harvested by a hunter in Yadkin County during December 2021.

The sample they tested had been provided by a taxidermist who takes part in a voluntary program with the agency. Once they contacted the hunter who harvested the deer, the hunter provided NCWRC with some valuable information, including photos of the deer.

The hunter stated the deer looked and acted completely normal, and he had no reason to believe the animal was infected with any disease. Testing showed the deer to be about 2.5 years old.

The hunter also provided a sample of the deer's meat so NCWRC could test it, just to make sure the earlier CWD-positive sample was not a mistake. This sample also tested positive for the disease. ■

## TIME TO APPLY FOR SC ALLIGATOR HUNTING TAGS

**S**outh Carolina's 2022 alligator hunting season will run from noon Sept. 10 to noon Oct. 8, and hunters can apply for a tag through June 15.

All hunters will be selected by a random computer drawing. Successful applicants will be issued a permit and one (1) tag that allows them to harvest one (1) alligator in the designated alligator management unit.

Applicants will be allowed to hunt in only one (1) alligator management unit per season.

Applicants can apply for any number of the four management units, including all units. Selecting the same unit more than once does not increase your odds of being selected for that unit. If successful, you will be selected for one unit only.

There is a \$10 non-refundable application fee. Unsuccessful applicants will accumulate preference points (see Preference Points section below). By law, the fees collected are used to support the Alligator Management Program's research and management activities, and for conservation of the American Alligator in South Carolina. Apply at [dnr.sc.gov](http://dnr.sc.gov). ■



# NC HUNTER KILLS SILVER PHASE GOBBLER IN SC

**M**ike Brodie of Polk County, N.C. was hunting in Spartanburg County, S.C. on April 23, 2022 when he killed a unique silver-phase trophy gobbler.

The bird weighed 19 pounds and had a 10-inch beard. But it's the colors of this turkey that really made it a true trophy.

Brodie shot the gobbler with a Benelli Super Black Eagle II shooting 3-inch Nitro No. 5s. Some other hunters had told him the unique-colored turkey was in the area, but it was his first sighting of the gobbler. He hunted the bird old-school, with no decoys and without a blind.

Despite what many folks may assume is a pet turkey or one that escaped from a farm, according to SCDNR and NCWRC wildlife biologists, it's a wild silver-phase gobbler (also called smoke-phase). This color is rare, making up about 1 percent of all wild turkeys. It is one of four color variations (silver/smoke, red, melanistic or black, and true albinos) recognized by the NWTf. ■

Mike Brodie's silver phase gobbler weighed 19 pounds and sported a 10-inch beard.



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You can also check hunting season dates, tide charts, moon phases, major and minor fish feeding times, water temperatures, wind speeds/directions, and check harvest reports by county. The GoOutdoorsSouthCarolina app is free and available for Apple and Android devices, or visit [GoOutdoorsSouthCarolina.com](http://GoOutdoorsSouthCarolina.com). ■



# REDFISH MADNESS WINNER BAGS \$9,980

**M**ike Mattice and the Redfish Madness Team are making a name for tournament redfishing in the Carolinas. Registration for their April 30 - May 1 event was maxed out at 44 boats due to weigh-in dock space. They expect future events to be even bigger.

The tournament launched from the Saltwater Grill in Swansboro, NC. Boats traveled from Morehead to Wilmington in search of the heaviest possible 18- to 27-inch redfish. In the end, Rennie Clark took home the belt and top prize of \$9980 with a total 2-day weight of 13.51 pounds. The \$1800 Big Fish went to Richard Gilligan for bringing in a 7.4-pound redfish on Day 1.

## TOP TEN AND TOTAL WEIGHT:

- |                           |                        |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Rennie Clark 13.51     | 6. David Banks 11.90   |
| 2. Jake Knight 12.93      | 7. Shane Stewart 11.70 |
| 3. Jake Gainey 12.31      | 8. Dexter Smith 11.49  |
| 4. Richard Gilligan 12.28 | 9. Lee Waters 11.40    |
| 5. Drew Ardent 11.93      | 10. Steve Loper 11.30  |

For information on upcoming events check out [redfishmadness.com](http://redfishmadness.com). ■



Rennie Clark won the 1-man, 2-day Redfish Madness King of Battle event.

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**HOLDEN BEACH GUIDE  
SAYS GO DEEP FOR  
BIG BOTTOM FISH.**

■ By Craig Holt

# **DEEP DROPPING FOR GRAND GROUPERS**

**Kevin Sneed, a 14-year guide from Holden Beach, learned several years ago his fishing waters needed to grow.**

**A saltwater guide since 2008, he once carried anglers an hour or two offshore to find suitably large fish.**

## **BUT THOSE DAYS ARE GONE.**

Today he points the bow of his 35-foot Contender, powered by three 300-horsepower Mercury outboards, southeast from Lockwood Folly Inlet to find offshore bottomfish that may weigh 30, 40, 50, 60 pounds — and more. And that means sinking rod-and-reel baits to groupers and other sportfish in once-impossible-to-fish territories.

“I’ve learned to fish the past few years in deeper water,” said the Guilford County native. “Today I fish from 135 to 500 feet, wherever I find bottom structure that holds fish and where they’re not beat to death (by other anglers).”

With the current inflated cost of fuel, few recreational anglers

want to foot a \$600 bill for a 10-hour round-trip tour to grouper grounds.

But Sneed, the owner of Rigged&Ready Fishing Charters near Varnamtown (910-448-3474, [www.riggedandreadycharters.com](http://www.riggedandreadycharters.com)), noticed he rarely saw commercial grouper boats plying their trade in less than 100 feet of water.

Soon he understood the reason — those depths had been pounded so hard, large groupers no longer rule the roosts.

“You can bottom fish that deep, but you’ll catch smaller fish,” he said. “You have to go deeper to catch big ones.”

Sneed once took fishing parties to blue water in a 31-foot-long Pro Kat catamaran. But after winning the November 2018 Kingfish Cup all-time cash prize (\$127,755), he upgraded to a 35 Contender with a 70 mph top speed (for paid trips he cruises 35-40 mph).

### **GOOD ELECTRONICS HELP >**

Fighting belts are common sights on boats that target deep water for bottom fish. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** N.C. anglers may keep three scamp groupers or two scamps and one gag grouper (shown here).



## GOOD ELECTRONICS HELP

Two experienced guides, Capt. Joe Harrington and Capt. Jonathan Phillips, joined R&R Charters in the last 10 years and pilot anglers on 33-foot Onslow Bay and 31-foot Contender fishing platforms.

“Most recreational guys run the bottom from the (Frying Pan) Tower to the Navy Wreck. But all the commercial guys are out deeper,” Sneed said. “I learned deep fishing from them because of the big fish they caught.”

A regular at the Brunswick coast with his family since he was 2-years-old, Sneed learned inshore and offshore tactics from his father Rodney Sneed and Holden Beach grandfather Bill Sneed.

When he takes four anglers to spots marked on his GPS unit, he’s in at least 165 feet of water, which is a two-hour haul from the beach. Farther out, it’s a 10-hour round trip.

Sneed’s able to see bottoms structures — patch reefs, rocks and 10-foot ledges — with a new pair of dash-mounted Garmin 16-inch colorized screens.

“It’s like looking at two TVs,” he said. “They’re high-definition ‘chirps.’ The images are clear; you can see individual fish.”

Commercial fishermen also taught Sneed the efficacy of extra-long leaders.

He places two rods in holders at the bow and two at the stern of his boat. The front rods are spooled with braided line but have 10- to 20-foot leaders of 100-pound test fluorocarbon tied to three-way swivels. The stern rods have leaders that can measure 30 feet with leaders and dropper lines.

“Your bow leaders can’t be too long or they’ll wrap the stern leaders,” Sneed said.

## TERMINAL TACKLE

He uses 12- to 24-ounce ball sinkers to take live menhaden, pinfish or frozen cigar minnows to the bottom. Groupers prefer live baits but will taste frozen cigar minnows.

“I try to use the lightest (sinker) weights possible, but that depends on the ocean currents,” he said.

For big groupers, he spools 100- to 135-pound test Momoi Diamond Hollow Core braid on Shimano Forcemaster 9000 or Daiwa Tanacom 1000 electric reels (they save anglers’ arms, backs and legs by cranking huge fish to the surface).

His light-weight jigging and casting rods include 7-foot Shimano Trevala or Speedmaster 12s.



Hognose snappers are common catches for anglers fishing deep bottoms off southeastern N.C. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Gag groupers are known for pulling terminal tackle into reefs, but will sometimes swim out of the reef if anglers release pressure on the line.



For scamps and gag groupers, Sneed ties 7/0 or 10/0 Owner reef and circle hooks to 65-pound test braid with 80-pound test fluorocarbon leaders. Reels are Shimano Speedmasters.

“I like to connect leaders to braid with PR knots,” Sneed said. “That’s done with a (hand-held) bobbin.”

Bobbins should be familiar to textile-mill workers who once used them in N.C.’s booming industry that depended upon knitting machines to weave wool into cloth.

“We put braid through a bobbin and twist it (with a leader),” Sneed said. “It makes a slim knot that goes through line guides easily and makes a 100-percent connection (to leaders).”

He ties two 10-foot long dropper lines about 4 feet apart above the bottom weight.

Black, gags, mottled groupers and amberjacks are the main fish his anglers haul from the depths.

“Groupers prefer live baitfish. But if you’ve got AJs around, they won’t let live baits reach the bottom,” Sneed said. “So we drop frozen cigar minnows to get through the amberjacks.”

## HARD FIGHTERS >



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



Holden Beach

## DESTINATION INFORMATION

**HOW TO GET THERE** — Follow US 17 S from Wilmington or US 17 N from S.C. border, turn east at NC 211 at Supply toward Southport and follow 1/8 mile. Turn right (east) onto Stone Chimney Road SW and follow for about 10 miles, then right at Sabbath Home Road SW for one mile. Rigged & Ready Tackle Shop is located in corner of Food Lion Shopping Center.

**WHEN TO GO** — May through October.

**BEST TECHNIQUES** — Use live menhaden, pinfish or cigar minnows or frozen cigar minnows for grouper. For snappers, use squid chunks or frozen cigar minnows. Drop bait down on 10-foot long dropper lines with Owner hooks tied 4 feet apart above weights.

**FISHING INFO/GUIDES** — Capt. Kevin Sneed, Rigged & Ready Charters/Tackle, 1100 Sabbath Home Rd SW, Holden Beach, NC, 910-842-3474 or 910-448-3474, holdenbeach-charter.com.

**ACCOMMODATIONS** — Gray Gull Motel, 3263 Holden Beach Rd, Supply, N.C. 28462, 910-842-6775. Several other motels available along US 17 near and south of Supply.

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This angler caught a nice black grouper while fishing with Holden Beach captain Kevin Sneed of Rigged&Ready Charters.

## HARD FIGHTERS

Sneed always tries to fill a bait tank with menhaden. If pogies are difficult to find, he'll motor to hard bottoms and jig Sabiki rigs to snag menhaden, cigar minnows or pinfish.

The main problem with groupers is when hooked, these strong bottom-huggers often try to pull terminal tackle into rocks, ledges or reef holes. In that case, anglers must use their wiles.

When a big fish attacks a bait, an angler's first tactic is to turn its head toward the surface to prevent it from diving into structure.

"But you just have to do the best you can (when a hooked grouper swims into structure)," Sneed said. "People often give a fish slack line and wait 5 or 10 minutes. If a grouper doesn't feel line resistance, sometimes he'll swim out ( from



an obstruction)."

Scamp groupers vary in length from 18 to 30 inches but must be 20 inches to keep. Gag groupers must be a minimum of 24 inches.

"Scamps typically will weigh 8 to 20 pounds," Sneed said. "But gags will go 20 to 35 pounds. The biggest gag I've caught weighed 40 pounds."

Anglers may keep three scamps or two scamps and one gag grouper. Greater amberjack must measure 28 inches fork length.

"I also use kites to fish light-lined frozen cigar minnows on the surface," he said. "With kites we catch dolphin, sailfish, wahoos and an occasional king mackerel. But mostly we catch sailfish with kites."

Curious cobias often swim up from the depths to eyeball his boat. In that case Sneed tosses a baited line tied to a stand-up rod at them.

Cobia and grouper seasons are May 1-December 31. Cobia must be 36 inches or longer and only one fish per person is permitted.

Other deep-water sportfish that sometimes slam his deep baits include African pompanos that may weigh 30 pounds. ■

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EDISTO ISLAND, PROVIDING  
NEARSHORE ANGLERS  
WITH PLENTY OF ACTION.**

■ By Pete Rogers

# EDISTO'S SPANISH ARMADA

# OUR ANNUAL FAMILY VACATION TO SOUTH CAROLINA'S EDISTO ISLAND

usually features my sons and I riding out to the Edisto 40 artificial reef to try our luck at catching any of a variety of species.

As we were making the six-mile ride out to the reef — it's named for the depth of water, not distance from land — we were barely past the large sand bars, in only 20 feet of water, when we noticed a large school of fish destroying baitfish on the surface. We slammed to a stop, and we all began casting into the school of fish, still unaware of exactly what they were.

All three of us hooked up immediately. And for the next 90 minutes, we chased this school of Spanish mackerel all around an area covering approximately one-half of a square mile. The school was so large, and the feeding frenzy so intense, it was one of those “You have to be here to believe it” moments.

We lost count of the number of fish we caught. The fast action and the size of fish made this a day to remember. We still reminisce about encountering those Spanish and share stories of the number of fish and the ones that got away. The only thing that ended the foray was losing all of the lures we had to cast at them.

**BIG SCHOOLS NOT UNCOMMON >**



Clarkspons are the preferred lure of many hardcore Spanish mackerel anglers. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Spanish mackerel bite fast and furious enough to keep even youngsters engaged.

## BIG SCHOOLS NOT UNCOMMON

This kind of day was, I learned, not an isolated incident. Webb Belangia from Mauldin, S.C., has been chasing Spanish mackerel off Edisto's beaches for decades. He said they "tend to school between the 'wreck' and the shore around the second week of June every year."

These schools can be quite large, sometimes covering several acres. On the ride out toward the Edisto 40, you will often find fish schooling. And when you find the first school, plenty of action will follow for a few weeks.

Schooling Spanish are not difficult to catch. But anglers should keep a few things in mind when casting for them. Fill the reel with 20-pound braid, then tip your braid with either a piece of light wire or heavy mono to protect the braid from the

sharp teeth for which Spanish are known. Belangia prefers a wire leader to protect the braided line.

"I just believe the (wire) allows the spoon, or lure, to act more naturally than a heavy mono leader does," he said.

Typical gear for Spanish mackerel includes a 7-foot, medium-light spinning rod with a spinning reel such as a Penn Battle III, or Spinfisher IV with decent drag system. The best lures for schooling are spoons that can be trolled or cast, jerkbaits and floating minnows.

Every angler has his favorite lure, and Belangia is no different. "You can use any lure you like, as long as it is a Clarkspoon," he said, pointing to a classic trolling spoon used up and down the south Atlantic coast. "I know they hit these Clarkspoons, so I just don't change from that unless I lose them all and have to get desperate."

It's not difficult to put a handful of Spanish in the boat quickly when a school shows up.



Brian Carroll

The yellow dots and gently-sloped lateral line help anglers distinguish Spanish mackerel from other species. **BELOW:** Wire leaders are a good option when fishing for these feisty mackerel, which have a mouthful of tiny, sharp teeth.

## MAKE LONG CASTS

The technique is straight-forward and simple. Approach the school, cast as far as you can and retrieve the lure through the school as fast as you can reel. Action is often fast, furious and frequent. Excellent casting lures include silver or gold GOT-CHA plugs, Kastmasters and Hopkins spoons, Rapala X-Rap jerkbaits and Crocodile casting spoons, plus the Clark Caster, which turns a trolling spoon into a casting spoon.

Long casts are important, because you can cover more ground, start working on a school more quickly, and stay far enough away not to spook them. The downside is, a 50-yard cast also takes a long time to retrieve. But the payoff is usually a good one.

Spanish mackerel are distinguished by the yellow-gold spots that adorn their sides. Spanish are similar in size to Cero mackerel, except that Ceros have yellow lines and spots, while the Spanish has only spots.

Also, take care not to confuse a Spanish mackerel with a small king mackerel, the latter being a common nearshore fish during the summer. Anglers can distinguish between the two with these tips: Spanish feature a black spot on the first dorsal fin, while a king does not have one. Also, the king mackerel's lateral line has a pronounced dip below the second dorsal. Not knowing the difference can be costly, as



Brian Carroll

South Carolina anglers can keep 15 Spanish per day, with a 12-inch size minimum. They can keep three kings per day, with a 24-inch size minimum.

## PUT 'EM ON ICE

Spanish mackerel receive a wide array of reviews in regard to table fare. Some do not care for it at all. But others see it as a delicacy. One thing is true, if you intend to eat Spanish mackerel you need a large cooler with ice so you can get the fish iced immediately. The decomposition rate is rapid, and the meat will begin to taint quickly if not iced.

Belangia said the Spanish mackerel that arrive off Edisto in late spring usually weigh a couple of pounds and average 16 to 20 inches long. An occasional fish weighing 4 pounds or better is not unusual.

South Carolina's state-record Spanish mackerel is an 11-pound fish caught out of Myrtle Beach in 1983. North Carolina's state-record fish is a 13-pounder caught out of Ocracoke Inlet in 1987 that is also the IGFA all-tackle world record.

Spanish Mackerel are a ton of fun to catch and can make memories that will last a lifetime. If you want fast, furious and frequent action, look out from Edisto Island in mid-June and you'll find it. ■



Pete Rogers



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

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# ACCIDENTAL TOURISTS

June is not just a time for Spanish mackerel to school off of Edisto island. It is also a time for many other species to school in and around these barrier islands.

Bluefish congregate in large schools and are a lot of fun. With their drag-screaming runs, bluefish from 2 to 8 pounds can make for a great afternoon of fishing. They can reach good size, and the large schools are impressive, often reaching several thousand in a group. Bluefish do not seem to stop anywhere for long. Catching them requires constant travel with your boat to keep up with them.

Other species that congregates often with bluefish and Spanish mackerel include Atlantic bonito and false albacore. They are in the tuna family and fight like their bigger cousins. They are seldom targeted except to be used as a baitfish for larger species like marlin. Bonito are some of the most line-ripping species to find near shore and are a great bonus for those chasing Spanish near Edisto Island. ■

SOUND & SEA ➤



Bluefish are one of several bonus species caught by Spanish mackerel anglers.

Dan Kibler

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Fisheries management makes sense, and it's also necessary to make days like this possible.



Chris Burrows

# FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

WE ARE BOUND BY LAW TO MANAGE OUR FISHERIES

I got to take a bit of a break from my normal routine recently to attend the 2022 Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Summit in Arlington, VA as a member of their Steering Committee. This summit was a joint venture organized by NOAA and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. Although I have a bit of history working with fisheries management panels at the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and at the state level, this event was a totally different experience for me.

Work began with the steering committee for this event around the middle of 2021, and it became clear very quickly that some extremely intelligent and diverse individuals were in the group, from all over the country. Living and fishing in the Carolinas for the vast majority of my life, I have never before caught a single salmon, a cod, or even heard of a bocaccio rockfish.

Getting to hear stories about the perceived successes and failures of fisheries

management programs and structures from all around the country made me realize that the battles fought over access to fishing in Alaska, Hawaii, California, or New England are often very similar to battles being fought right here at home. In some cases, however, the issues are more convoluted than anything I have ever experienced in our region.

Red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico is a fishery that has become so complex that regulations vary widely from state to state. It has been marked by bitter fighting between the commercial and recreational sectors with no end in sight. Several fisheries in our area have the potential to go down that route, with flounder in North Carolina perhaps being the most prominent. Let's hope it never gets to that point here.

## FISH MANAGEMENT IS BOUND BY LAW

American saltwater fisheries management is bound by law to follow the

guidelines set by the Magnuson Stevens Act of 1976, which was re-authorized by Congress in 2006. For a good many species, the framework of Magnuson provides a pretty good structure to ensure that overfishing is not occurring, and that overfished stocks are rebuilt. Problems arise, of course, when there are species where different management structures would be more beneficial to having the stock in abundance, with preserved access to the fishery. Additionally, factors other than overfishing might cause a particular stock to be less abundant, such as habitat loss or the degradation of water quality. Still other stocks have changed their historical range.

Anglers are now catching dolphin as far



**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.

north as New England waters in the late summer. New England has never had to manage this stock to any degree before, but they do now. How this will affect management measures with the South Atlantic, which has historically set the allocations for dolphin, really remains to be seen. Suffice to say, a lot of developing issues were on the table at the summit.

One term that was brought up multiple times at the summit was “flexibility.” How differently can fisheries management take place and still follow the framework of Magnuson? The concept of flexibility has been added to the equation with the Modern Fish Act of 2018. But it does not change the core of how Magnuson works.

Flexibility has become a dirty word in certain fisheries but gives hope to others, based on past experiences where management either got it very wrong, or very right. I have formed the opinion that every species needs to be managed with at least a small deal of flexibility, at the very least based on the biology of the species.

## COOPERATION IS THE KEY

For the most part, Magnuson calls for a 10-year period for overfished stocks to be rebuilt. In the case of dolphin, a 4-year-old fish is a miracle, while a 5-year-old fish is a potential all-tackle world record. With longer-lived fish like king mackerel or wahoo, the 10-year plan makes a lot more sense to me than it does for dolphin. Structures of management plans need not be so rigid that they take common sense off the table. Yet for all its good intentions, sometimes Magnuson does exactly that.

What this all leads up to is the concept of how to fix the flaws that are currently a part of fisheries management. It was voiced most eloquently by David Sikorski, of CCA Maryland,

though it was said in bits and pieces by a majority of those who attended the summit. David made it clear that if the system was ever going to be completely fixed, it would require a great deal more communication and collaboration between the managers and the stakeholders (fishermen) in any fishery.

Most of the time, mistrust occurs between the two groups, and fixing that mistrust is the missing link in solving all of this. By and large, fisheries managers are great at a lot of things. But they consistently underachieve when it comes to finding and catching fish. Fishermen are experts at that, but they generally feel like their efforts to communicate the size or actual distribution of a stock to fisheries managers fall on deaf ears. In reality, it is often dismissed as anecdotal data and not really analyzed, even when responsible fishermen try to get involved.

## LET’S GET IT RIGHT

Most fishermen see fisheries managers in the same light as a referee in a basketball game, as only worthwhile when they are invisible. The second the whistle is blown then at least one half of the audience thinks they are doing a terrible job. In my opinion, this view accomplishes nothing.

Successful management of our fisheries requires collaboration between fishermen and those who count and study these fish. And it requires a lot more collaboration than we currently have. It must also be a two-way street. Getting this step of the process right is the most important step I am aware of in ensuring that our children’s generation, along with those after that, get to enjoy the same angling pursuits that we know and love. ■

## COOKING ON THE WILD SIDE ➤

The author attended the 2022 Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Summit in Arlington, VA.



Chris Burrows

## COOKING ON THE WILD SIDE

Jerry Dilsaver

Jerry Dilsaver

**T**he mild flavor of dolphin is excellent prepared in many ways.

Perhaps the only way it wouldn't be delicious would be if overcooked and burned. The idea with this recipe is to have a light, fun meal that is visually appealing too. Dolphin are excellent baked, grilled, blackened, in ceviche and even fried. This recipe combines the light flavor of grilling dolphin fillets after marinating in zesty Italian dressing, then serving them on a bed of grits, with vegetables and a little queso cheese for a topper. Those tastes go together well and my

family hopes you enjoy it as much as they do.

Plenty of dolphin are available for anglers this month, so catch your share and try them out on this recipe. ■



# MAHI WITH QUESO AND GRITS

MAKE IT MILD OR WILD

This recipe starts on the grill, where the mahi fillets are seared on the edges. **INSET:** Take care not to overcook the fillets. The author sets his grill to medium heat and watches them closely.

### TIP!

Sear around the edges of the fillets, but be sure not to overcook the fish, which is easy if not careful.

# MAHI, QUESO, GRITS

I don't think anyone would question that fish and grits should taste good combined. But how about also piling on some diced tomatoes, diced chilies, diced jalapeno peppers and drizzling it all with queso? I like it and I hope you will also.

I listed the ingredients as I first made it. But I've tried it several times with the different flavors and degrees of heat available with the Rotel line of diced tomatoes, chilies and peppers. This mixture uses diced tomatoes, a few chilies, fresh jalapenos (all to taste) and should be mild enough for anyone. However, using one of the spicier Rotel blends and/or adding more jalapenos steps it up a notch or three. Adjust according to your personal preferences. I like fresh jalapenos and sometimes, if I have a lot

## PREPARATION:

1. Trim the dolphin fillets to remove the skin, plus any dark meat or bloodlines.
2. Place the fillets in a zip-lock bag and cover with Zesty Italian dressing. Squeeze out the air and let them marinate 30 minutes to 2 hours in refrigerator.
3. Clean and dice the jalapeno(s).
4. Drain the tomatoes and green chilies and combine them in a bowl.
5. Cook the grits according to the directions on the package.
6. Preheat the grill to medium to medium high.
7. Grill the dolphin fillets on a fish or vegetable tray for about 4-6 minutes per side. (Look for a few sear marks, but be careful not to overcook them.)
8. Cover a plate or the bottom of a shallow bowl with grits.
9. Place a fillet of fish on the grits. (The fillet will be tender and may break into pieces.)
10. Sprinkle the tomatoes, chilies and jalapeno pieces on and around the fish.
11. Drizzle the queso across the fish, vegetables and grits.
12. Serve while warm. ■

## TIP!

Start this meal with a green salad or lettuce wedge. Finish it off with a light dessert like pudding, custard or flan.

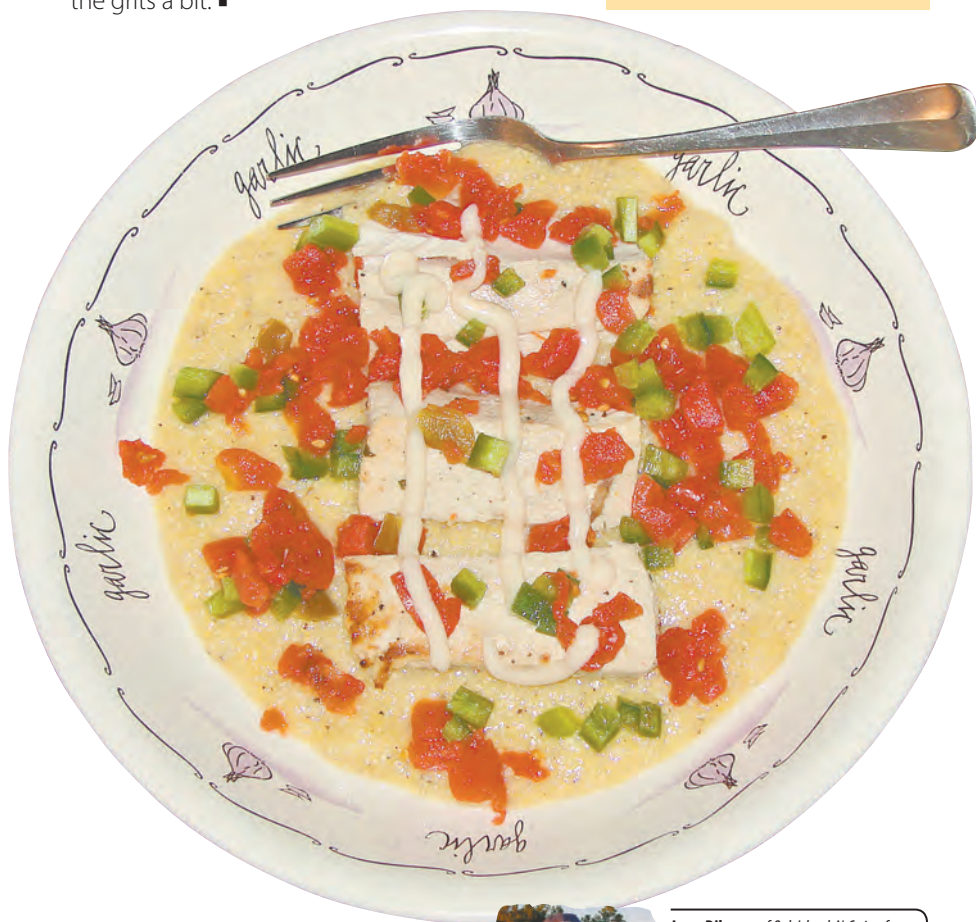
of them, I dice a few pretty fine and cook them mixed in the grits.

The grits need some salt. I use smoked sea salt, but feel free to use whatever salt you have on hand. Follow the directions on the grits package and add some butter also. I inherited a love of pepper from my granddad and probably use more of it than most folks.

Speaking of the grits, I like yellow grits and use them. If you prefer white grits, they will be fine also. I put just a little oil in the bottom of the pan before cooking grits and rice to help prevent sticking together and to the pan. For this recipe, I changed that to use a little bacon grease as it and the pepper also help dirty up the grits a bit. ■

## INGREDIENTS:

- 4 Dolphin fillets,
- 1 Cup corn grits (uncooked),
- 1 Can of diced tomatoes,
- 1 Small can of green chilies,
- 1 Fresh jalapeno,
- 1 Jar of queso,
- 2/3 Cup Zesty Italian dressing,
- Salt & Pepper to taste



Add or subtract the amount of jalapenos to spice things up or to keep them tame, depending on your preference.



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

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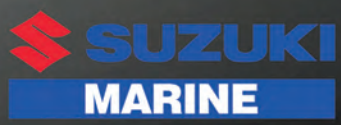
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**N**ormally, it's tough catching fish when they're on the move, swapping places as the seasons change. However, when it comes to June, all the watery highways point to the area around New Bern, N.C.

Striped bass, aka rockfish, are moving back down the river after their spawn, setting up shop around the pilings that support a handful of highway and railroad bridges. Speckled trout are moving out of the deep creeks where they spent the cooler months, heading for the big waters of the Trent and Neuse rivers – which meet at New Bern. And the redfish that have overwintered in the ocean have moved back into the

Pamlico Sound and are headed back up the Neuse, all the way to New Bern.

That puts fishermen like guide Dave Stewart of Knee Deep Custom Charters, headquartered in Minnesott Beach, downstream from New Bern on the Neuse's northern shore, in the catbird's seat as spring fishing turns to summer.

With a little bit of forethought, Stewart can target all three species in the same day, just by moving around a little and tying on different lures. Here's his road map to a great day on the water.

## STRIPED BASS ➤

**THREE OF A KIND IS A FULL BOAT IN THE TRENT AND NEUSE RIVERS WHEN JUNE ARRIVES.**

# NEW BERN'S FULL HOUSE

■ By Dan Kibler



Jeff Burleson

## STRIPED BASS

"You can catch rockfish in the Trent or Neuse. They're around all year," Stewart said. "They'll run up in the rivers in the spring to spawn, then they come back down. We'll have a lot of fish all through the summer – anything from decent fish to little fish."

Stripers in the Trent and Neuse are strictly a catch-and-release fishery. Keeper season is closed year-round.

"You can start with topwaters early and late, in and around reefs and bridge pilings. You have two bridges (US 17 and US 70) and two railroad trestles," Stewart said. "Later, you'll find them in deeper water in channel turns where you have shallow water and current flowing around the turns."

Stewart likes a D.O.A. PT-7, a small, cigar-shaped lure for most of his topwater work. He'll also fish a 3-inch D.O.A. Shad Tail or 4-inch Jerk Shad – white with a chartreuse tail – on a ¼-ounce, chartreuse jighead for deeper work around the pilings. "Just jig it and hop it around the bridge pilings," he said.

When he's fishing deeper water, he goes to a ¼-ounce, D.O.A. TerrorEyz, which resembles a Little Fishie but with a built-in weight in the head.

"The way it's rigged, it will go down and stand straight up," Stewart said. I like throwing them around bridges and piers. The rockfish don't just hit it – they suck it in."

Once in a great while, Stewart said, you'll run into a big, hefty rockfish that missed the spawning train up the rivers

in April and May. Mostly, he said,

"These fish are spawned out, skinny fish. They almost look fragile. They come down the river hungry. You can tell they're spawned out. If you catch one, get it back in the water quickly."



## REDFISH

"In June, all the reds that have been wintering in the ocean are back in here, moving into the river systems, into the bays and sounds," he said. "They'll be all the way up to New Bern, all out in the (Pamlico) sound and everywhere else. There are a lot of slot fish (18 to 27 inches)."

"Up around New Bern, you concentrate on stumps and structure along the shoreline. You can pick up some quality fish, up to 25 inches, around those stumps."

Stewart said targeting reds in the Trent and Neuse around New Bern is a lot like freshwater bass fishing in the spring: presenting baits to fish in extremely shallow water on the bank.

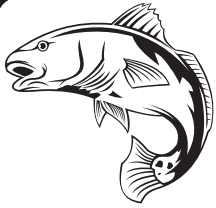
"These fish will cruise along the banks of the creeks and rivers, picking off fiddler crabs that the wind has washed off the banks," he said. "I had a party one time, five people, and we kept five fish. I told them to look in the livewell when we were done, and it was just full of fiddler crabs those fish had spit up. And



Stripers in these waters are strictly catch-and-release, but that doesn't make them any less fun to catch.



Once the fish move out into the sound later in the summer, good electronics are key tools in finding them.



Redfish are plentiful around New Bern, and will readily take a number of baits and lures this month.



Jeff Burleson



Jeff Burleson

the fishing will get even better in July.”

Stewart said the Trent and Neuse in the New Bern area are not affected by lunar tides; the wind moves the water. An easterly or northeasterly wind pushes water into the rivers. A southwest wind blows it back out. Stewart isn't terribly particular, although he likes having a little more water on a bank. But the key is the wind.

“You need to be fishing windy banks – either up in the river or down in the marshes along the lower end of the Neuse,” Stewart said. “The reds will come up in water 6 to 8 inches deep looking for fiddler crabs. They like the water a little stirred up. If you're fishing just for reds, I like it better when it's windy.

“In a sense, what we're doing is, because we don't have any moving water, you've got to impart all the motion to your lures. Especially if you're fishing a jighead, you've got to put that pretty, exciting action into the bait to get the fish to eat it – but not with a cork rig.”

Stewart's favorite way to target shallow, bank-running reds is with a D.O.A. Deadly Combo, a cork and soft-plastic rig that can be pitched right to the bank and worked back to the boat with a series of pops and jerks that attracts reds.

“You can fish it right up in the stumps without getting hung up,” he said. “You take any weedless hook of your choice – I use a D.O.A. hook with a pinch-on weight – and use a shrimp or a 3-inch Shad Tail. Just pop the point of the hook through the bait and turn it around and make it weedless. But check it after every cast to make sure it's still weedless, or you can get hung up. Make sure to bring some extra baits, because you can lose some.”

## SPECKLED TROUT >



**Dan Kibler** of Winston-Salem, N.C., is the former editor of *Carolina Sportsman* and now a freelance writer.

## SPECKLED TROUT

Stewart said most of the speckled trout in the Trent and Neuse are resident fish that never find their way to the ocean.

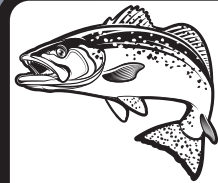
“They just make a vicious loop out to the Sound in the summer, then up the creeks in cold weather,” he said. “In June, they’ll be coming out of those deeper creeks, moving into the river systems. You’ll find trout all the way up to New Bern, mixed with reds. Sometimes they’ll be in the same areas, but the trout won’t be as tight to the bank – out in deeper water.”

Stewart said he catches plenty of trout by working the cork rig all the way from the bank for reds out to several feet of water for trout. “If I don’t get a red right off the bank, I can work it out a few more feet and catch a trout. If I’m targeting trout, I’ll cast to about 5 feet or so off the bank.”

His favorite way to target trout, however, is with a soft-



Jeff Burlison



Speckled trout are moving out of deep creeks and into the Trent and Neuse Rivers, making New Bern a hot spot for anglers.

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plastic bait on a jighead. He prefers a 3-inch Shad Tail or a 4-inch Jerk Shad.

“I like to make a cast and pop, pop, pop it off the bottom,” Stewart said. “But you’ve got to stay in contact with the bottom to feel that thump.”

“These trout love shrimp, little croakers – any little bait they can find,” he said. “The brown shrimp are just showing up in June. The trout like deep points – points that are shallow on one side and drop on one side. In little bays, they like water that’s a little deeper because the water is starting to heat up and they’re moving out to spawn.”

“As the summer goes on, they’re going to be more down the river around Minnesott or out in the sound. You’ll have to fish around docks early and late, and in the marshes. They’ll be around oyster rocks and wrecks in the sound. People with good (GPS) numbers can get out and find plenty of fish – and good, quality fish.” ■

# THE COLOR EQUATION

Because there's so much tannin-stained water in the Neuse and Trent rivers, Stewart said he chooses his lure colors based on the stain.

"Water clarity is what matters for lure color," he said. "We have a lot of tannic water, especially in the summer. The baits I use 90% of the time will have some gold or red, because those colors show up better. My favorite is a 4-inch jerkshad in golden bream, which is gold and red. It seems to radiate through the water a little better. I also like to fish the new penny and glow gold colors." ■



Jeff Burlison

Stripers will completely inhale lures this time of year, so a good pair of pliers is essential for removing the hook and releasing them quickly.

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# HIT THE DOCKS FOR LOWCOUNTRY REDS

Brian Cope

## Live bait and patience will produce redfish around structure

**C** By Brian Cope  
apt. Dylan Rohlfs of RedFin Charters (843-277-5255) in Charleston, S.C. made a cast, set the rod in a rod holder, then started explaining his expectations for the day. But before he could finish his thought, the fishing rod doubled over.

Sullivan McElveen of Mt. Pleasant grabbed the rod, which was stuck hard in the rod holder. She finally lifted it free and the fight was on.

Within a few minutes, Rohlfs eased the net under the fish and brought it aboard. It was a nice keeper-sized redfish.

"This time of year, it's tough to beat live bait around docks and other types of structure," said Rohlfs. "We like to get into the smaller creeks around the lowcountry and fish those structures."

He advises anglers to anchor down within casting distance of a dock, put a live mud minnow or shrimp on the hook, make a cast toward the structure, place the rod in a rod holder, then wait.

"You want to have a little patience. They don't always hit right away. But there's plenty of redfish around right now and they're going to eat live bait," he said.

Rohlfs said anglers should recognize the difference between being patient and wasting time though.

"You want to give it 15 minutes, maybe 20. If you don't catch one or at least get a good, strong bite by then, you should move on," he said.

But that doesn't mean making a long run. Sometimes just moving down to the next dock is all it takes.

"Especially if a dock has something like a

small trickle of water coming in from even a tiny feeder creek, that's a good place to try," he said.

In between working the docks, Rohlfs also likes to pitch live shrimp under popping corks along grass lines.

He prefers to fish the outgoing tide, especially on days that it coincides with sunrise.

"The docks near smaller feeder creeks are especially good on the outgoing tide because the fish are leaving those creeks, moving toward the dock rather than away from the dock and into the creeks as they do when the tide is coming in," he said.

Rohlfs suggests anglers use spinning rods and reels with 15- to 20-pound test braid with corresponding fluorocarbon leaders tied to 3/0 circle hooks. ■

Numerous baits and lures catch red drum along NC's central coast this month.



# BANG THE DRUM

## NC's red drum feed heavily on variety of lures and bait

**G** By Craig Holt

et on the water early enough, and the topwater bite can be tremendous for red drum around Topsail/Wrightsville Beach in June. Late evenings and cloudy days are also good.

"Redfish will be in creeks, at oyster rocks and near marsh grass edges with oysters in 1- to 3-feet of water early in the morning when the tide's rising, late in the evening and on cloudy days," said Jot Owens (Jot It Down Fishing Charters, 910-233-4139).

Owens prefers to cast MirrO lure TopDog Juniors (white body and red head) or Halloween (gold, orange and black). The same colors apply for TopPup Juniors. The lures are factory fitted with two black nickel treble hooks.

"June redfish will be mostly 3- to 10-pounders," Owens said. "(The Top Dog 84-808 MR Juniors) are about 4 inches (long) and resemble menhadens."

Inside rattles emit low-frequency sounds that may draw strikes from other species, particularly spotted seatrout, in early hours.

The most-effective tactic for retrieving Top Dog Jrs. is the "walk-the-dog" method. This technique takes a little practice to master but imparts a zig-zag motion similar to a wounded baitfish — if an angler snaps down his wrist and lets the lure twitch during a return. It can produce explosive topwater strikes.

Owens prefers medium 7-foot Fenwick HMG rods mated to 2500 or 3000 Series Penn Battle III or Slammer spinning reels spooled with 10- to 15-pound test Spiderwire braid and 8- to 10-inches of monofilament leader.

When the sun climbs, redfish go deeper, ending the topwater bite. So Owens uses a loop knot to tie on a 1/8- or 1/4-ounce leadhead jig threaded with a 3- or 4-inch Berkley Gulp Shrimp in pearl-white, Sugar Spice or Sangria, a new translucent color (pink, red and gold).

"I use 8- to 10-inch long 30-pound-test fluorocarbon leaders," he said.

To fish soft plastic lures, his terminal tackle may be a Carolina-rig with a 1/2- or 3/4-ounce egg sinker and 18-inch fluorocarbon leader tied to an Eagle Claw L42 1/0 hook to fish live finger mullets or menhaden.

"If I have novice anglers (on his 22-foot Ranger bay boat), I may set up a popping or rattlin' cork with a 1 1/2-foot fluorocarbon leader and fish live bait or 3-inch Berkley Gulp Shrimp."

Owens said a perfect redfish day would include conditions that allow fishing shallows/flats for a topwater bite then hit deeper spots at docks.

"Normally in a full day's time, we catch red drum that are 24 to 30 inches but often catch two or three 36-inch reds," he said. ■



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## TROUT HOTSPOTS



# SHOWTIME SPECKS

## Big speckled trout in Cape Fear backwaters

Lots of chunky speckled trout feed heavily in the Cape Fear backwaters this month.

**J**y Jerry Dilsaver  
June is a great time to catch larger speckled trout in the backwaters around the Cape Fear River. Typically it will be fewer trout than in the fall, but more of them will be larger fish, with a surprising number surpassing the 5-pound minimum for an outstanding catch citation or 24-inch minimum for a live release citation.

June is the peak of the speckled trout spawn in southern N.C. and many large sow trout are active and feeding. Good numbers of males and other smaller trout are also present.

They may be along the ocean beaches, around creek mouths and points of the many marshes, around rip rap and other structure of the spoil islands along the Cape Fear River Ship Channel and along the few jetties and breakwaters.

Capt. Tommy Rickman of Southport Angler Outfitters Guide Service ([www.fishsouthport.com](http://www.fishsouthport.com)) in Southport said, "This is an excellent time to catch trout. There is also a good possibility of catching a big trout. Spawning keeps them busy and makes them hungry. And they enjoy feeding on live shrimp that are also making their way into the backwaters to spawn."

Rickman said fishing live shrimp under floats is one of his favorite ways to catch trout and even works well for fishermen just

learning to cast. Simply anchor up current of the feeding trout, and drift live shrimp back to them. He said a prime key to being successful at this is finding the depth where the trout are feeding and adjusting the leader to hold the bait there.

Rickman likes the Billy Bay adjustable-depth Lowcountry Lightning Floats from Betts Tackle. He said everything you need to make the cork adjustable is in the package. And anglers can adjust the depth of the bait in seconds. Rickman typically begins with the bait suspended about a foot above the bottom. But if he isn't getting strikes, he can quickly and easily adjust the bait shallower or deeper. This also works with soft plastic baits when live baits aren't available.

"Sometimes June trout are feeding aggressively and you can catch them using topwater lures," Rickman said. "It takes a little practice to learn the walking-the-dog retrieve motion. But it isn't difficult. This is definitely the most exciting way to catch trout as they often make big splashes when hitting the lure. Twitching soft plastics and suspending lures or working diving hard baits through the water column will also catch trout."

The probability is good this month to see some specks at and above citation size. Live shrimp are almost foolproof and a variety of soft and hard lures makes a good second choice. ■



## GRAND STRAND SHARKS

### Hook up with Jaws this June

Sharks are plentiful along South Carolina's Grand Strand this month, and they are a blast to catch.

**G** By Jeff Burleson  
 Guide Greg Holmes of Fish Skinny Charters Guide Service takes clients to catch a wide number of species of fish. Many request to hook up with sharks.

"Sharks are very plentiful around the Grand Strand and a lot of people really love when we get hooked up with a 5- to 6-foot shark," Holmes said (843-241-0594). "Sharks are patrolling the reefs, jetties, inshore waters, and along the beachfront in the pogie pods. You can catch them about anywhere. But the balls of menhaden that are migrating along the beachfront are my top places to catch sharks."

Holmes motors along the beach front near North Inlet on both the frontage of Debordieu Beach and North Island. He will look for pods of menhaden and it is a bonus when something is already disturbing the bait.

"Sometimes you can see the activity of something feeding in them before you get there and that is even better," he said.

Holmes catches a netful of menhaden and puts them in his livewell first. Then he nose-hooks the biggest menhaden he can find on a 3/0 to 7/0 offset, circle hook.

"I generally will either free line or place under a popping cork right in the middle of the school. But you can also peg a 1- to 2-ounce egg sinker to anchor the bait to the bottom," he said.

Sharks will find the bait in distress quickly, if they are around. "Cast the bait in there and hold on. If they are there it doesn't take long," he said.

Sharks are plentiful this time of year. And anywhere an abundance of bait is present, sharks will be close by. On days when the wind isn't cooperating and the ocean is too rough to fish, Holmes will fish within inshore grounds for big sharks as well.

"The bars along creek channels will have sharks routinely working them. Sharks are really all over and you can catch them in places that bait is abundant," he said. ■

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weight allows for long casts. Heavy weed patches hold elusive bass, but most lures don't stand a chance in such areas. Don't pass up those sure-fire honey holes — make a cast with the Flappin' Frog and get ready to set the hook.

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■ By Tony Garitta

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Tony Garitta

# In more than 25 years of guiding, Joel Richardson of Kernersville has taken clients to Shearon Harris, Jordan, High Rock, Kerr, Gaston and other largemouth bass factories. But he cites 3,750-acre Hyco Lake in Person County as his favorite body of water for **BASS FISHING TRIPS.**

“I may not fish Hyco for a year, but when I return I know I can put my clients on plenty of bass,” said Richardson. “It’s not uncommon to catch as many as 50 largemouth a day. The majority of fish will be under 3 pounds, but the action can be non-stop. And there’s always the possibility of a big fish. Sometimes, 50 bass can be caught in one place if I find a large school.”

A 2018 N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission survey at Hyco affirms Richardson’s glowing view of the fishery.

The survey revealed that the number of fish caught was above average at 96 largemouth bass per hour of electrofishing and that 80-85% of the bass in the lake weigh 1-2 pounds.

“Anglers can expect to catch higher numbers of fish during fishing trips compared to nearby lakes like Mayo,” said fisheries biologist Kelsey Roberts.

The fish at Hyco have a diverse menu. They can dine upon crawfish, gizzard shad, threadfin shad and tilapia, though the latter have declined in numbers with the reduction of hot water being discharged at the hot hole.

“The main impact of the discharge is the current that’s associated with it,” said Richardson. “The current has a positive effect upon the fishing in the area. In turn, there’s a lot of fishing pressure near the hot hole.”

Although numbers of bass can be caught year-round at Hyco, Richardson ([www.joelgrichardson.com](http://www.joelgrichardson.com)) said one of the most productive months is June. The majority of bass have spawned, and post-spawn fish reside both shallow and deep.

**BASS ARE AT ALL DEPTHS** ➤



Tony Garitta

Brent Marshall reels in another Hyco fighter. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Though most of the fish at Hyco weigh around 2 pounds, occasionally a bigger bass can be caught like this one held by guide Joel Richardson.

## BASS ARE AT ALL DEPTHS

“In June, you can fish about any way you like and catch fish because fish are at all depths,” said the veteran guide.

For a shallow bite, Richardson said dingy water at the upper end of the lake is best. The main targets are boat docks, lay-downs, logs, rocks and stumpy flats.

“The number of boat docks on Hyco has increased in recent years, though the lake remains largely undeveloped compared to waters like High Rock and Norman,” said Richardson. “Not long ago, very few docks dotted the lake.”

Richardson flips docks in 10 feet of water or less with a black jig or plastic worm. Other effective colors in the murky water include blue and purple.

For flipping, he uses a heavy 6 ½- to 7-foot rod paired with a high speed reel with a 6:1 ratio. The reel is filled with 17- to 20-pound monofilament line.

“I don’t like fluorocarbon line for flipping,” he said. “I’m afraid it will break off, which it’s been known to do.”

Many local tournaments are won at the docks.

“The dock bite doesn’t surrender many fish, just bigger fish,” said Richardson. “You’re not going to catch 50 fish from the docks.”

For dock fishing, Richardson prefers sunny days with little wind. Shallow-running crankbaits and spinnerbaits entice fish around other shallow cover.

“The shoreline features lots of rock and stumpy places that can be found by cranking or by using your electronics,” said Richardson. “There can also be a good topwater bite with Pop-R lures and buzzbaits in the mornings.”

Most of the time, Richardson can be found fishing offshore structure in June.

## CRANK ‘EM UP

He probes long points, high spots, and the ends of islands in 10 to 18 feet of water with deep-running crankbaits. If the deep structure harbors rocks and stumps, so much the better.

Deep-water cranking really excites Richardson because he knows if he finds a school of offshore bass he can load up and catch 50 or more bass in a hurry.

His cranking outfit consists of a medium-heavy 7-foot rod and a matching baitcasting reel. But his line selection is the key. He favors 10- to 12-pound monofilament instead of fluorocarbon line.

“The lake bottom has lots of mussels, and mussels are hard on fluorocarbon line more than monofilament line,” said Richardson. “I’m a rugged fisherman and fish a lot of cover. I don’t like to have fish break off.”

Richardson’s line size also allows his crankbaits to achieve their maximum action and depth.

When the offshore bite fizzles in dingy water, he’ll move to the lower end of the lake near the hot hole where the water turns clear and tries cranking deep structure in that area.

In the clear water, he uses crankbaits in shad patterns.

If cranking doesn’t produce, he fishes deep structure using jigs, Carolina rigs, plastic worms and Shaky heads.

When he resorts to a C-rig, he selects plastics in red bug or green pumpkin, effective hues in clear water. With the C-rig, he switches to 17- to 20-pound fluorocarbon line.

## CHANGE IN WATER COLOR ➤

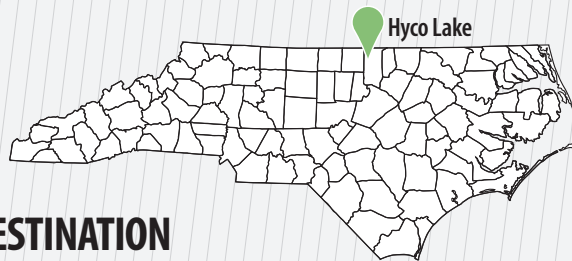




Tony Garitta



Tony Garitta



## DESTINATION INFORMATION

**HOW TO GET THERE** — Hyco Lake is located 9 miles from Roxboro in Person County. From Greensboro, take US-29 N to Candy Creek Rd. in Rockingham. Take Exit 145 from US-29 N. Continue on Candy Creek Rd. to NC-150 E/NC-87 S. Take a right on to NC-150 E/NC-87 S, then left on to NC-150. Follow 158 E to Solomon Lea Rd. in Leasburg. Follow Solomon Lea Rd. to Pointer Rd. in Semora. From Burlington, take NC 119 N to Roxboro. From Hillsborough, take NC-57 and from Durham, take US 501, then take NC-57 W to Hyco. The boat ramp is on Kelly Brewer Rd., a half mile off NC-57.

**WHEN TO GO** — For quality bass, November through March is best. For numbers of bass, June can't be beat.

**BEST TECHNIQUES** — For shallow fish, target docks, stumps and rock. Flip the docks with jigs and worms; toss shallow-running crankbaits at shallow rocks and stumps. For deep fish, locate offshore structure like points and high spots. Probe these places with deep-running crankbaits and Carolina rigs.

**FISHING INFO/GUIDES** — Joel Richardson at [www.joelrichardson.com](http://www.joelrichardson.com); Keith Wray of Fish Docs Guide Service, 336-589-9025.

**ACCOMMODATIONS** — Campground: Person-Caswell Lake Authority Campground, 336-599-4343. Inns: America's Best Value Inn, 1006 N. Madison Blvd., Roxboro, 336-599-9276; Hampton Inn, 920 Durham Rd., Roxboro, 336-599-8800; Executive Inn, 1858 NC-86, Yanceyville, 336-694-9494, Restaurants: Buoy on Hyco Lake, 336-330-6000, 9510 Semora Rd., Semora.

**MAPS** — On-line map at [hyco.lakesonline.com](http://hyco.lakesonline.com) and print maps at Person-Caswell Lake Authority marina and campground office.

While more docks have appeared at Hyco recently, the lake remains relatively undeveloped. **INSET:** Guide Joel Richardson holds a hybrid in one hand and a largemouth in the other, an indication of what Hyco has to offer.

# HYCO ELECTROFISHING SURVEY

The 2018 electrofishing shoreline survey of Hyco Lake reveals 80-85% of the largemouth bass weigh 1-2 pounds.

Fisheries biologist Kelsey Roberts said the bass fishery at Hyco is surveyed every three to four years. The 2018 results are the most currently available.

In the 2018 survey, biologists collected 403 largemouth bass; the number of fish caught per hour was above average at 96 fish per hour of electrofishing. The growth rate, whereby bass reached 14 inches by age 5, was slightly below the average growth rate for Piedmont reservoirs. About 80% of the fish surveyed were age 5 or younger. A quarter of the fish were greater than 14 inches.

The data translates into great fishing for numbers of small bass. "Anglers can expect to catch higher numbers of fish during fishing trips compared to nearby lakes like Mayo," said Roberts.

Though most of the fish will be small keepers, Roberts said bigger fish are available.

"We know that anglers can catch fish greater than 4 pounds, and a 5-fish daily limit can be over 20 pounds," said Roberts. "The best bass fishing is likely in the late fall and the early winter.

"The largemouth bass population has not changed much over the last decade," said Roberts. "It has historically consisted of younger individuals with below average body conditions and growth. The Commission encourages anglers to harvest individuals that are 12-14 inches long to reduce competition between the smaller bass and allow more fish to break into the larger classes."

While contamination issues have been a concern at Hyco, Bill Norton, a spokesman for Duke Energy, said:

"Duke Energy has monitored water quality in Hyco Lake for decades, including surface water testing and fish community studies. As shared with state regulators, the data demonstrates the lake is safe for recreation and maintains a self-sustaining community of regionally common fish species." ■



Tony Garitta



Tony Garitta

A handful of shallow-running baits that are deadly at Hyco. **BELOW, LEFT:** Joel Richardson (left, blue shirt) and Brent Marshall, both of Kernersville, display a morning's catch of Hyco bass.

## CHANGE IN WATER COLOR

"The bridge near Hyco Marina marks the place where the water color changes from dingy to clear and separates the upper end of the lake from the lower end," said Richardson. "It's also a place that holds its share of bass. Usually, the windy side will draw more fish to it than the calm side. Fish the rip-rap with spinnerbaits and medium-running crankbaits and if you don't mind losing baits, black or blue jigs."

If the thought of catching 50 largemouth bass a day doesn't thrill you, then Hyco offers another enticement.

In June 2019, the Commission stocked 37,500 hybrid fingerlings in the lake. This year, the lake has exploded with hybrids weighing 2 to 4 pounds.

These willing strikers are ready to take up the slack whenever the largemouth bite slows. ■

## LUNKER LINES >



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

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## LUNKER LINES

Davy Hite

Davy Hite breaks out the crankbaits in June to find bass grouped up in deeper water chasing baitfish.



Dan Kibler

# DEEP WATER BASSIN'

## FOLLOW BAITFISH TO DEEP HOLES FOR JUNE BASS

**L**ike a lot of bass fishermen, I like to fish shallow in the spring, but June is the beginning of summertime, and especially by mid-June, I'll be doing a lot of my fishing offshore, whether I'm fishing a lake in North Carolina or South Carolina. And I don't mind at all, even though the processes are a little different.

What you're doing in June is following the migration of baitfish out to deep water. A lot of our lakes have blueback

herring; a lot do not. That said, threadfin shad are our most-prominent baitfish throughout the Carolinas. They move into the shallows in May to spawn. And after they do, they move back offshore. My job is to try and find where they go, because the bass won't be far from them.

Back in the day, when I was growing up, it was really hard to follow them. But now, you can find baitfish with your electronics. Almost every fisherman has some of the new electronics on their

boats – mine are Humminbird Helix units. And they're so good, you can be off the lake for several weeks and go out and find the baitfish in a couple of hours. Just trust your electronics and find the



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

baitfish, and you're going to be in the game as far as the bass are concerned.

I like to spend time in the creeks, especially in early June. The baitfish and bass are going to move deeper and move out of the creeks at the same time. By the end of June, I'm probably going to be fishing the main river channel itself.

You can start in the backs of the creeks where it's all silted in and you just have maybe a little ditch, and fish all the way to where the mouth of the creek hits the main river channel – and that might be a little different from what you see at the surface.

Some creeks don't join up with the river channel where you think they should. A lot of them will be much farther out, well outside of what you think is the creek as you see it.

## MAPS ARE HELPFUL

Just trust your maps. I probably have 100 maps of lakes and rivers around the country from my 23 years fishing as a pro. But now they're all on one SD card with my LakeMaster lake maps program. The help you can get from a good mapping program is hard to measure, it's so great.

Baitfish will be relating to cover or contour lines. Early in June, you're looking for more of a depth change. But you use a lot of factors when looking for places to fish offshore. The kind and amount of cover, and water clarity, are big factors. And you can have big changes from place to place as far as cover and the color of the water, even changes between places on the same body of water.

So, find the big clouds of bait on your depth finder and start looking for places close by where the bass are likely to hang out, ready to ambush the shad or herring. And tie on a few crankbaits.

At other times of the year, I love to throw a Mop Jig or a Senko. But in June, I'm going to do most of my searching with a Rapala DT-6 or DT-8 crankbait. I really like the new DT-8. It's a small-profile bait that really dives well, down to a solid 10 or 11 feet. That's really all you'll need in June.

Most of my cranking in June will be in water from 6 to 12 feet. On into July, they'll move out in 16 to 20 feet of water. But in

June, it's 6 to 12 feet. That's still a pretty big range. So to narrow it down, I'll say I catch most of my bass in 8 to 10 feet of water.

Shad don't spawn until the first or second week of May in the Carolinas, in 5 feet of water or less. And they don't go super-deep in June – so I don't fish super-deep water. In fact, there are very few places in the country where the fish really go deep in June. A lot of that has to do with water clarity and cover. If the water is really clear and there's not much cover, they might go deeper. On the lower end of a lake, where it's clearer, they might go 10 to 14 feet deep. But on the upper end, it's more likely to be 6 to 10 feet.

## LOOK FOR GROUPS


Because the availability of cover and water clarity changes so much, I will usually have three baits tied on that will run different depths. I might have a DT-6, a DT-8 and a DT-10 or DT-16 tied on, in the same color – a shad pattern or chartreuse/blue back – because I might need to be able to work my baits in different depths. I want to be able to fish that entire range of 6 to 12 feet. I'll fish them on a 7-foot, Lew's cranking rod, a Lew's reel with a 6-to-1 or 7-to-1 retrieve ratio. That's a personal preference. I know a lot of fishermen like slower reels than I do.

I spool my reel with 10- to 12-pound Suffix Advantage fluorocarbon, which is a low-stretch, small-density line that's very strong and is very castable – everything you want to fish a crankbait on.

One thing I really love about June is that you can really hammer 'em on one spot. You might not get bit everywhere you go. But you can find big schools of fish. You're looking for groups of fish following bait. You aren't looking to catch onesies and twosies. You want to load the boat, and it can happen a lot more often than you'd think.

So get in the last really good month of bass fishing before summer takes over and the heat cranks up. Tie on a crankbait, back off the bank, move out of the creek, find 'em and catch 'em. ■

**SANTEE STRINGER >**



The Rapala DT-8 is a great lure for cranking down to where bass are lurking this month.

## SANTEE STRINGER

Terry Madewell

Guide Leroy Suggs and Kevin Davis found this striper in a deep hole.



# SANTEE'S SUMMER PATTERNS

Terry Madewell

## LAST CHANCE FOR STRIPERS UNTIL THE FALL

**C**onsistent, diverse and sometimes spectacular fishing success are typical descriptions of June fishing patterns on the Santee Cooper lakes. Multiple species are on a strong bite including catfish rebounding from spawning, crappie caught on hard, woody targets and striper season winding up on June 15 with exciting action. And it's time to apply for alligator hunts.

### CATFISH MAKE A COMEBACK

Catfish action typically improves significantly this month in terms of consistency as the spawn winds down and big cats are on the prowl for chow. By mid-month the action heats up considerably and catfish are generally found in multiple depths of water.

As temperatures heat up, some anglers think deep water is the key and plenty of catfish will migrate to deeper water. But

don't overlook the shallower water.

Catfish guide Steve Howard said May is typically difficult because the spawn often trumps eating for spawning catfish. But June brings excellent action for day or night fishing.

"Follow the forage is the best guideline as to where specifically to fish during June," he said. "Don't overlook water in the 10- to 15-foot depth range as well as deeper water during the day. It's common to find catfish fairly shallow in low-light times early and late in the day during this month.

"One of my favorite ways to hook big catfish during June is night fishing the shallow flats adjacent to deeper water from an anchored setup," he said. "By fishing at night, anglers have favorable air temperatures and I think the odds of hooking big fish are better at night."

Howard (336-421-5313) said for daytime fishing he'll fish from an anchored setup

as well as drift fish.

"Drift fishing around baitfish marked on the graph, and the mussel beds, are good choices as long as I see big fish also marked on the graph," he said.

Howard guides out of Blacks Camp and said catfishing is good on both lakes Moultrie and Marion from June and throughout the summer."

If ample current flow exists in the Diversion Canal that resource provides excellent catfish action this month. With ample rain, plenty of current will be flowing through the Canal. And that typically creates excellent fishing for blues, flat-heads 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.

## STRIPER FISHERY CLOSES ON JUNE 15

Santee Cooper's striper fishery closes on June 15 and will open again in the fall. The first two weeks of this month can bring hot striper action to anglers who can find these fish along deep-water ledges and humps as they chase baitfish in big schools.

Benji Brown shows off a summertime blue catfish, a common species to catch this month.



Terry Madewell

## LAST CHANCE STRIPERS

June 15th is the last day for striper fishing until October 1 as the striper fishing closes for the hot weather portion of the year.

But Striper guru LeRoy Suggs said these last two weeks of the season can provide outstanding action.

"The stripers tend to pile up along the deep-water ledges and humps at this time of the year and move along these areas until they find big pods of forage," he said. "The key is finding the forage and suspending live herring at the depth the forage and fish are marked, or slightly above that depth."

Suggs (910-995-1168) said both lakes Marion and Moultrie are productive. But on Marion much of the best fishing is in the lower end of the lake by June.

"This is the type of fishing where we can hook multiple stripers quickly, then have to move around some and fish another school of fish," he said. "But odds are great we'll be able to catch limits of keeper fish. Go now or you'll have to wait until October."

## CRAPPIE ON HARD, WOODY TARGETS

Kevin Davis, owner of Blacks Camp on the Diversion Canal, said both lakes produce quality crappie action from now through the fall.

"Based on the seasonal patterns I've found, during June the crappie relate to deep water and cover such as brush, logs or stumps during June," Davis said. "But they change specific areas frequently so the fish-finding process requires patience."

Davis (843-312-3080) said depth patterns may vary from 15-to-35-feet of water depending on conditions. On cloudy days, or those days when enough wind blows to create a chop on the water, the fish will often be found shallower.

"I'm not referencing spring fishing type of shallow water, but instead of the fish being jumbled in the limbs and brush of crappie beds near the bottom, they may be found on top of the structure and on an active bite," he said. "Bright days may push the fish deeper along the sides or in the brush. They're still catchable, but it requires more finesse."

## GATOR GETTING APPLICATION TIME

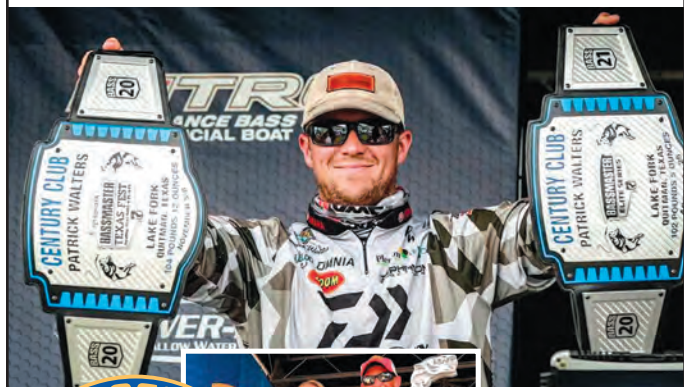
It's alligator hunting application time and for those planning to hunt around the Santee Cooper lakes, applications can be

submitted electronically. The applications must be received by 5 p.m., June 15. Go to the SCDNR website at [www.dnr.sc.gov](http://www.dnr.sc.gov) and check the 'Alligator Hunting' section on the website for complete details. ■

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## SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY

Phillip Gentry

Adding multiple species to your target list is one way to up your kayak fishing game.



# NEXT LEVEL KAYAK FISHING

Phillip Gentry

## KAYAK ANGLERS ALWAYS HAVE ROOM TO GROW

**K**ayak fishing can be as simple or as complex as you want to make it. You can fish for fun in a local farm pond from an inexpensive kayak you picked up at Wal-Mart and strapped to the top of your car. You can travel the country trailering a state-of-the-art boat rigged with all the latest gadgets and compete in high dollar fishing tournaments. Or you can do something somewhere in between. You can't do it right or wrong in this sport, only what's right for you.

It's only human nature to want to get better or go bigger with anything you love to do.

If you're one of those fortunate anglers who has caught the bug here's a few suggestions on how to advance to the next level.

**Join a Kayak Fishing Club** – Kayak fishing clubs, whether in person or even internet-based, allow you to correspond with experienced anglers. They can often

show you how to up your game and/or give you advice on what to expect.

**Trophy Fishing** – Trophy fishing for a number of species frequently involves specialized tactics and tackle. The kayak angler also often foregoes the opportunity of catching more, or different species of fish because they focus on catching one big fish. Trophy fishing sometimes means traveling to destinations known for harboring trophy sizes of the fish you're after.

**Multiple Species** – Some of the best all-around anglers are those who choose to fish for a variety of species. Some kayak fishing clubs even take that to the next level by having monthly tournaments based on one given species per month. Being proficient in catching both salt and fresh water species is a great way to take all of your kayak fishing skills to the next level.

**Propulsion** – In recent years, a three-way split has evolved with paddles,

pedals, and electric motorized kayaks. Motors may not be the next step in kayak evolution, but it definitely puts a spin on kayak fishing range and speed.

**Kayak Repairs** – Learning how to work on your own boat is definitely a next level step. This might include rigging the boat to suit your individual needs or repairing something that has become damaged. Many manufacturers offer replacement parts for typical high-wear items. And the information, tools and materials are available for repairing cracked or damaged hulls without taking the boat in to a shop. ■



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

## TOO MUCH STUFF

A natural tendency when “getting into” a sport is buying every piece of gear made for that sport. Kayak fishing is definitely a less-is-more sport when it comes to gear. But many anglers manage to stow away a lot of integral tackle and gear by developing good organizational skills.

This skillset often spills over to the kayak vehicle or trailer with additional, and lockable, storage systems. Kayak anglers, particularly those who are on a multiple day fishing trip or tournament may not be able to carry everything they need on the boat. But they at least have it with them if conditions warrant changing tackle or tactics.

The other side of this equation is lugging along stuff just because another person or more likely, some advertisement or kayak fishing You-Tuber said you need it. Storage in a kayak is at a premium. Even with public launch facilities and kayak trailers, odds are still pretty good you’ll have to drag your boat some distance from your automobile to the water.

Once you get on the water, do you really want to paddle around with items that are going to catch the wind and push you around as if you had sails? Or even worse, possibly tip the boat because it’s too top heavy?

Keep in mind that a kayak does not equal a power boat. Many kayak anglers make the mistake of trying to match gear and tackle with everything a power boating angler can carry.

Kayak anglers have created some very ingenious solutions to storage constraints when it comes to carrying live bait, retaining fish, staying hydrated, and protecting themselves from the elements. Taking your kayak fishing game to the next level often means figuring out what you do need, what you don’t need, and how to minimize the impact from a space and weight perspective of the stuff you can’t live without. ■

## BEST BETS

### NORTH CAROLINA

**WHAT** — Bluefish, Spanish mackerel, red drum, bottom fish

**WHERE** — Northern Coastal Beaches

**HOW** — Much of the kayak fishing along the Outer Banks tends to be float trips up or down the beach. Expect fairly strong currents. Carry a variety of baits to cover mid depths and bottom bouncing. And bring live bait like squid or shrimp for bottom fishing structure.

**LAUNCH** — At just about any location that is legal to park a vehicle, you can drag a kayak to the water. Launching near inlets or other visible structure will give you a head start on fishing.

**INSIDER TIP** — Check the currents. It’s much easier to fish with a buddy and drop a vehicle somewhere down the beach than to spend all day paddling against the current.

### SOUTH CAROLINA

**WHAT** — Flathead Catfish

**WHERE** — Pee Dee, Cooper, and Edisto Rivers

**HOW** — Flathead catfish love rivers and river channels but don’t like to fight current. So look for a current break when setting up. Flatheads are predatory fish and will take live bait much quicker than cut bait. Low light and night times are the best times to fish for flatheads.

**LAUNCH** — Each river has several public boat launches available to kayak anglers. In addition, bridge crossings may offer public access via public right of way suitable for kayak launching. Public boat ramps can be found at <https://www2.dnr.sc.gov/ManagedLands/boatramp/boatrampsearch>

**INSIDER TIP** — When fishing river systems, expect to fish in and around downed trees. Skip the anchor and pack a couple of lengths of rope or long bungees to tie out and make setting up and changing spots easier.

## CATFISH HOTSPOTS >



Some anglers can overdo it, taking so much stuff with them that it's all in the way once on the water.

Phillip Gentry

# BUSH HOOKING BIG CATS

## on the Waccamaw River

**T** By Brian Cope  
he Waccamaw River is home to all three major species of catfish. And one of the most underutilized ways of catching them here is by setting bush hooks.

Capt. Todd Vick of Fishin' Freshwater Charters (843-333-8200) said bush hooking is effective and a lot of fun.

Setting bush hooks requires strong twine, big hooks and big weights. Anglers bait the hooks, hang them from tree or bush limbs, then come back to check them later. If you've never done it and it sounds boring, you're not alone in that assumption.

"A lot of folks feel that way before they ever try it. And once they do it, they're surprised at how enjoyable it is," said Vick.

One reason it's so exciting, he said, is what he calls "limb shakers."

"Everyone loves coming up the river, seeing where we've set a line, and noticing the whole limb or bush is just shaking. So there's no doubt we've got a big fish on," he said.

Vick likes to target flatheads and said they prefer live bait. Live eels are good choices, and live bream (legal on the S.C. portion of the Waccamaw but not in N.C.) are also top notch baits.

"If you're targeting blues or channels, cut bait is good. Flatheads will eat them too, but they really prefer live bait," said Vick. "Just make sure it's legal where you're fishing."

A typical bush line starts with 100-pound test cord, ends with a No. 13 circle hook, and has a 4-ounce weight somewhere in between.

"You don't want the weight too close to the hook because you want the bait, even if it's cut bait, to have some movement," said Vick.

Once the line is tied to a limb, it's time to move on to the next one.

Vick likes to set about a dozen lines within an hour of sundown, marking their locations on his boat's electronics as he goes. The next morning, he checks each line, removing the tackle at every stop.

"We'll catch a lot of 5 and 6 pounders — good eating sized cats. But we'll also catch some trophies — fish up to 40 pounds and more. We release all those trophy fish," he said. "It's a great way to spend time on the river doing things a little differently. And it can lead to lots of catfish, including some big ones." ■

Capt. Todd Vick caught this big flathead on the Waccamaw River with a bush hook.



# THE BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

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**BREAM BED  
FISHING LASTS ALL  
SUMMER LONG.**

**BUST THOSE  
SANTEE COOPER  
BEDDING  
BREAM**

By Terry Madewell

**The approach of a late-spring full moon phase means bream fishermen throughout the Carolinas will flood to their favorite bream waters with high expectations of**

## **LIMIT STRINGERS OF BULL BREEM.**

They're usually rewarded with excellent fishing for several days until they clean the beds out. Then most begin the wait for the next full moon phase to repeat the process. Or they begin searching for isolated groups of bream in non-bedding habitat.

Fishing bream beds is a major fishing event in the Carolinas, and landings that have had minimal use for months now have waiting lines to launch boats.

Conventional wisdom teaches that bream bed fishing is best a few days prior to the full moon and a short period afterwards. But is that the whole story?

Many devoted bream fishermen also believe fishing on the

dark of the moon moves the bream-bedding needle in a positive direction with a spike in bedding activity. And they make bream-bed catches to support it.

But one Santee Cooper angler pursued the concept that bream bed fishing can provide uninterrupted success throughout the summer, regardless of moon phase.

And he's developed a repeatable process and provable pattern that once bream bed fishing begins, it continues nonstop until fall.

Stacey Weatherford grew up in Cross, S.C. adjacent to Lake Marion and has fished the Santee Cooper lakes his entire life. Catching bull bream has always been a primary pursuit.

He said bed-fishing around the moon is prime time, but that doesn't represent the full scope of the lunar-impact reality of bream-bed fishing.

**FORGET THE MOON PHASE >**



Not all spawning beds are in shallow water during the summer. Look for big beds in open water down to 10 feet deep. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Stacey Weatherford catches limits of bedding bream all summer, regardless of the moon phase by finding open water bream beds.

## FORGET THE MOON PHASE

Weatherford has expanded his thinking over years of fishing and experimentation. He's proven to himself, and those fortunate enough to fish with him, that once the full moon occurs in late-May or June, he can catch limits of bedding bream the remainder of the summer, regardless of moon phase.

"I've bream fished a lot of lakes in the Carolinas and beyond and found this pattern to be true elsewhere," Weatherford said. "But on Santee Cooper specifically, once the full moon pulls bream onto the beds, I'll find plenty of bream on the beds anytime I go fishing the rest of the summer. It's the gift that never stops giving."

Weatherford said it's not scattered fish on random beds. It's fast-paced action that anglers would expect on the full moon.

"But this technique involves diligent effort and reasonable restraint," he said.

The first step is finding lots of bream beds, and that begins with knowing and locating the right bottom substrate and depth. His home base is out of Blacks Camp on the Diversion Canal, giving him easy access to both of Santee Cooper's lakes.

"I'm not interested in finding one big bed and literally fishing it to death," he said. "I search for hard bottom areas of sand and gravel from shallow water down to 10 feet deep."

Weatherford said anglers typically find beds at Santee Cooper in shallow water down to the 3- to 4-foot depth range. But most overlook deeper water beds.

"I'll find a lot of huge beds in deeper water," he said. "These can be the real honey holes because they're often not fished by others."

## LEAVE SOME SEED

Weatherford employs side-imaging sonar to locate bream beds. Primary areas to search include sand and gravel bottoms along sloping points and along shallow flats that drop into slightly deeper water. He devotes on-the-water time scanning for beds to increase the number of active bream beds he can access.

"The more beds I have marked on my graph the better my odds," he said. "Some anglers search until they find a bed or two then fish those spots repeatedly. The problem is bream beds can be totally fished out and likely won't be rejuvenated the remainder of the year. I learned this the hard way."



Terry Madewell



Terry Madewell

## DESTINATION INFORMATION

### HOW TO GET THERE

— The Santee Cooper lakes, Marion and Moultrie, are in between Columbia and Charleston, S.C. I-77, I-95 and US 52 provide good road access to both lakes. Dozens of public boat ramps serve the two reservoirs, which cover a total of 177,000 acres. For a complete list, visit [www.santeecooper-country.org/listing-item/?type=Lakeside%20Facilities](http://www.santeecooper-country.org/listing-item/?type=Lakeside%20Facilities)



**WHEN TO GO** — Beginning with the full moon in May and all summer long.

**BEST TECHNIQUES** — Live crickets and worms fished under corks are tough to beat. Small lures like Beetle Spins are also good choices, especially when covering open water.

**FISHING INFO/GUIDES** — Blacks Camp, 843-753-2231

**ACCOMMODATIONS** — Santee Cooper Country Visitors Bureau, 803-854-2131, [santeecoopercountry.org](http://santeecoopercountry.org).

**MAPS** — Delorme's South Carolina Atlas & Gazetteer, 207-846-7000, [www.delorme.com](http://www.delorme.com); Atlantic Mapping, [www.fishingGPSmaps.com](http://www.fishingGPSmaps.com).

Big shellcrackers will bed with bluegill during the summer, however worms are typically the best bait for shellcrackers. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Stacey Weatherford said he likes to get out early to beat the heat but productive bed fishing occurs throughout the day.

“After years of studying bream-bed fishing I’ve found it’s crucial to leave active bream spawning on that bed,” he said. “This allows the bed to recover quickly because actively bedding bream attract more bream on any moon phase.”

Weatherford said investing the time to locate multiple beds early in the season is a key. It provides the ability to enjoy fast-action on a specific spot but provides multiple targets so he doesn’t clean out a bed. He’ll finish the creel limits, if that’s the goal for the day, on other beds.

“The payback is I can return to that first bed and find the bed nearly full of bream again,” he said.

“If I catch all the bream on a bed, my experience is that bed is likely lost for the remainder of the summer,” he said. “With the right bottom substrate, bream will likely return to it next year. But leaving ‘seed’ bream on the beds has a dramatic impact on other bream filtering in within a few days.”

## DON'T IGNORE OPEN WATER

Weatherford said protecting bream beds from over-fishing has another benefit. New bream bed colonies early in the

season often start out small, maybe with 20 to 30 beds. If not over-fished the colony can naturally expand to 100 to 200 beds in only a couple of years.

“Those are honey-holes worth waiting for,” he said.

He fishes typical shallow water areas around grass, weeds and woody cover. But he also graphs a lot of open water.

“By fishing open water areas, I build up a base of multiple beds that aren’t pressured as much,” he said. “They typically receive less fishing pressure because they’re away from the recognizable landmarks on the shoreline.”

Weatherford employs light-tackle spinning and spincast rigs loaded with 8- to 10-pound test line and a No. 4 wire hook and small splitshot. He prefers an adjustable float that allows him to quickly change the depth he’s fishing.

“Live crickets and worms work great. Bluegills typically prefer crickets and shellcrackers favor worms,” he said. “Another advantage of fishing open water beds is they often have both bluegill and shellcrackers on them.”

## BEEBLE SPINS FOR BREAM ➤

**SALTWATER**

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

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

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

**FRESHWATER**

<b>FISH Species</b> (Inland waters)	<b>Minimum Size Limit</b>	<b>Creel Limit</b> (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 SCDNR's Regulations Digest

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

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



Anglers can catch bream and shellcracker on the beds all summer if they have a good game plan.

Terry Madewell

**BEETLE SPINS FOR BREAM**

"If I'm fishing shallow-water cover searching for beds, I'll often use Beetle Spins," he said. "It's highly effective and I can cover a lot of area quickly and effectively."

Weatherford understands that an approaching full moon certainly pulls new bream to the beds in significant numbers. But he's learned that bream come and go throughout the summer regardless of moon phase. The full moon phase injects vigor into the process. But bream moving to the beds is a never-ending process.

"A graph image depicting a bed loaded with plenty of active, bedding bream occurs on any given day from June until September," he said. "Using modern side-imaging technology to find my targets and restraint in terms of not over-fishing individual beds, I enjoy bream bedding all summer.

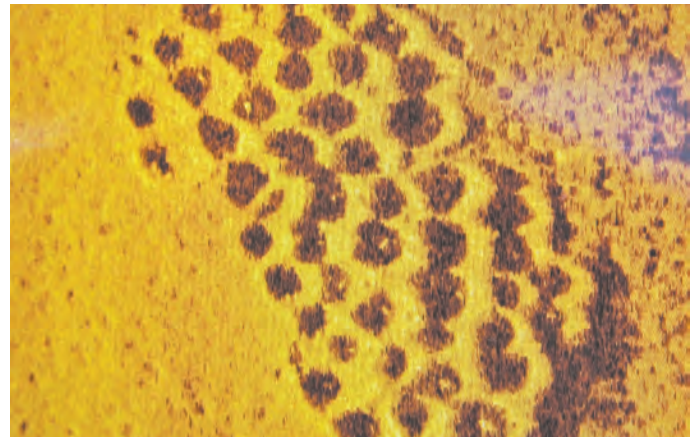
"Plus, I'll finish the summer with more active bream beds, with more bream on them, than I had in June," he said. "And that sets me up for next year." ■



Terry Madewell of Ridgewood, 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.

Bust those Santee Cooper bedding bream

Bream beds show up as dimples on sidescan sonar. The bright spots are bream actively working the bed.



Terry Madewell

# SCOUTING FOR BREAM BEDS IS AN IMPORTANT KEY

Stacey Weatherford invests plenty of time and effort searching for bream beds. This diligence pays off throughout the summer months in terms of limits of big, bull bream at Santee Cooper.

"Time spent prospecting for beds is time well spent and I may find multiple beds without fishing any until I'm through hunting beds for that trip," he said. "Then I reap the rewards and catch bream while expanding my portfolio of bream beds."

He said to use the best graph unit you can afford. Side-imaging is essential to his process.

Weatherford practices what he preaches and during a trip on a hot July day, on a first-quarter moon, he fished at least a dozen different beds and scouted a half-dozen more. All of these beds had active bedding bream brightly marked on the graph. While we could have likely limited quickly in the first couple of places, we side-image scanned the beds pre- and post-fishing and caught a reasonable number of fish then moved to another bed.

"When I'm already in good bream bed territory in terms of

depth and bottom composition, I often find new beds as I'm moving toward locations I have stored in my unit," he said.

This off-moon day of fishing was a perfect example as he found two new beds in open water in one bay, both loaded with bream on the beds. They're now on his lengthy list of potential targets.

"The new generation of side-scan technology is the key and provides information I need for this process," he said. "Side-imaging depicts the beds in a specific place and which ones have bream on them. This provides me a realistic number of how many fish I can take without over-fishing. I also enjoy seeing that bed expand and how it can become exponentially larger in ensuing years." ■

## BREAM HOTSPOTS ➤



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# GO TO BED FOR MURRAY'S BLUEGILLS

**W** By Pat Robertson  
hen it comes to bream fishing on Lake Murray, Billy Burnes of Lexington knows his bluegills.

As spring turns into summer and the water warms, shellcrackers go on the bed in the shallows along the banks. But by June they have moved off and the bluegills take over, Burnes said.

"June will be a very good month for bluegills," he said.

After targeting Murray's bream for more than 20 years, Burnes does not have to hunt for bedding areas. Experience tells him where they are and the fish use those same areas each year, he said.

"Most people will look for the beds. But I just go and fish those areas," he said. "You don't necessarily see them (bluegills) like with shellcrackers. So I just throw out in those spots."

Earlier in the spring when he is targeting shellcrackers, he fishes with worms. But by the time the bluegills take over he switches to crickets.

"I fish with an ultralight rod and reel, using a No. 4 hook and a small piece of lead – a split shot – to give it enough weight to cast it or to hold the cork steady up if you use a cork," Burnes said, noting that he frequently fishes without a cork. "If you know where the beds and the fish are located, it does not scare them like it does sometimes when the cork hits the water."

This time of year, he said, he likes to fish from about 7 to 9 a.m. and then sometimes in the afternoon a couple of hours before dark. He does not care to fish in the middle of the day.

"You can still catch them then, but I don't like dealing with the sun and the heat," he said.

Besides, he noted, there is no use dealing with the discomfort of summer heat when the bluegill fishing is so good early and late.

"On a good morning you can usually catch a 30-fish limit each. During May and June it's not hard to limit out every morning with fish from half a pound to a pound in size." ■

**CRAPPIE HOTSPOTS >**

Pat Robertson



Stringers like this are common sights among Lake Murray bream anglers this month.

# SANTEE COOPER LAKES



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– Major League Fishing Toyota Series Winner, Bryan Cook



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Guide Keith Wray catches stringers like this at Buggs Island with tactics that are dictated by the water level.



Keith Wray

## KERR LAKE'S FINICKY CRAPPIE

**D** By Tony Garitta  
uring June, the water at Kerr Lake (Buggs Island) can either be in the bushes, out of the bushes, or into the woods depending upon the amount of rainfall. The 300-foot level is normal pool with the water barely in the bushes. The 304-305 foot level is ideal for fishing.

Given flooded lake conditions, Wray ([www.fishdocsguideservice.com](http://www.fishdocsguideservice.com)) stays off the lake.

"I rarely fish Buggs for crappie if the water level exceeds the 305-foot mark," said Wray. "The woods will be flooded with the crappie spread out among hundreds of trees and bushes and difficult to catch."

Instead, Wray thrives when the water is either in or out of the bushes, catching from 50 to 100 a day, weighing up to 1 3/4 pounds each.

If the water is in the bushes, Wray targets docks, not bushes, especially those that rest in 8 to 10 feet of water.

"The ideal situation is to have a pontoon boat resting at the side of a dock or boathouse," said Wray. "That combination provides additional shade and cover and attracts schools of crappie. It's not uncommon to catch 20 or more slabs from such a place."

Wray said another crappie magnet is any extended walkway from a dock because its length offers cover over various depths of water.

Wray shoots docks for crappie with ultralight spinning gear and 4-pound line, a technique that enables him to propel 1/8-ounce jigs into the recesses of docks and pontoons and through the smallest crevices and openings around docks. He can reach places other fishermen can't possibly reach by conventional casting.

When the water is out of the bushes, Wray fishes brush piles, rock piles and laydowns.

"After more than 15 years of crappie guiding, I know of about 500 brush piles resting in water down to 30 feet. So some will be fishable under most low water conditions," said Wray. "The best top off at about 3 or 5 feet under water, factoring in the water level."

Wray fishes brush using an ultralight 6-foot rod and a reel filled with 4-pound line. He employs a countdown method with a 1/32-ounce jig, letting the bait free-fall until it reaches the desired depth.

He fishes rock piles in the waters above Clarksville, Va., using the countdown method. Laydowns are wherever he finds them. ■

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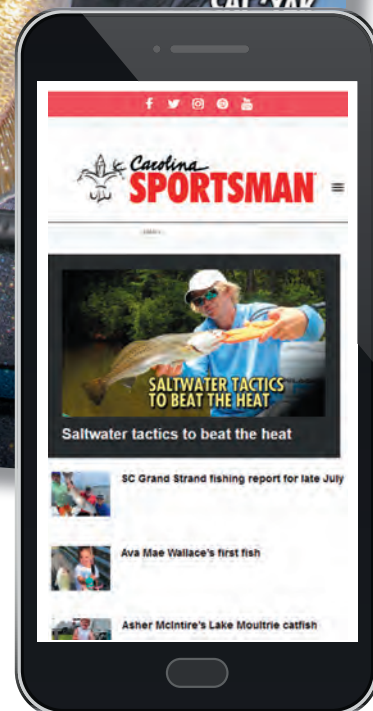
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## WHIRLING DISEASE

DETECTED IN SOUTH CAROLINA TROUT STREAMS

**In** mid-April, whirling disease was detected in four streams in South Carolina. These streams were located in Pickens and Greenville counties. The disease first occurred in the United States in 1958 and has spread throughout the country since. Fortunately, the disease has not been detected at the Walhalla State Fish Hatchery,

This problem was first detected in NC on July 27, 2015, on the Watauga River. At the time, officials were gravely concerned for the long-range effects of the disease. They feared the rainbow and brook trout populations could be seriously affected.

Whirling disease is caused by a parasite and affects all trout species and salmon. The rainbow trout and brook trout species are the most susceptible. This disease is spread by a microscopic parasite called *Myxobolus cerebralis* that can be transferred from one stream to another by several means.

Although affected fish cannot be treated for the disease, the widespread effect of the disease has been less severe

than first expected. Some of the western states had dramatic losses in the early days after the detections of the disease. But recovery was positive.

The effects of whirling disease are exhibited by young trout (young trout are the most susceptible) by abnormal whirling or tail-chasing. It is a disease that affects nerves and cartilage. Other symptoms such as black tails and deformities to the head or body are also possible.

Trout fishermen are advised to take appropriate steps to avoid transferring the disease from one stream to another by following these tips:

- Properly clean and dry equipment prior to fishing a different stream.
- Do not move fish or any other aquatic life from one stream to another.
- Be sure to properly dispose of fish parts after cleaning by placing in garbage, burying or burning completely.

### ONE STOP INFORMATION SOURCE

On a more positive note, as fly fisher-

men, we need to be good researchers of the best techniques, flies, equipment, destinations, etc. If you need maps, hatch charts, entomology tips, guide service or trout stocking schedules, there is a one-stop website that offers a lot to us. It is <https://www.flyfishingnc.com>. It contains a wealth of information and even provides GPS coordinates for North Carolina streams.

This is an excellent resource for the beginning fly-tier, including photos of various patterns that provide a great visual model for reference. Check it out and be amazed at the good information available.

### STILL WATER TROUT

Last month, as I was on a turkey hunt on a relatively new WMA in upstate SC, I ran into a man who told me that



**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.

Whirling disease, which is deadly to trout, has been detected in four Upstate, S.C. streams.

## 2022 NORTH CAROLINA FISHING REGULATIONS

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

### SALTWATER

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

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

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

### FRESHWATER

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

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

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

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

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

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

the lake on the property had been stocked with trout. It has become one of my favorite spots for bass and bream fly rod fishing from my kayak.

I was a little distrusting of the information, but a few days later, I took my kayak over and caught a few brown trout and a couple of crappies. One of the crappies was a slab. Both were full of roe and were hanging out in the treetops.

This was news to me. I didn't know that the pond held brown trout or crappies. This news expanded my choice of species, but require different techniques from the bream and bass which hold close to structure near the bank in the summer and fall victim to popping bugs. The trout respond to streamers and tend to hold in the deeper water, probably due to the preference for colder water.

## TIPS FOR WINDY DAYS ON THE WATER

Once when fishing on the Madison River, near Ennis, Montana, it was a windy day and as I made a back-cast to relocate my fly, a gust of wind redirected the fly and it was firmly embedded in my lip. Not wanting to waste a day on the water, I clipped the tippet and continued to fish with the fly in my lip.

When I got back to the car, my friend cut me a strip of heavy tippet and I looped it under the bend of the hook. I held the eye of the hook down against the skin and gave the tippet a quick jerk. Problem solved.

The moral of that story is to always wear eye protection when fly fishing, especially on a windy day. ■

Herbicides are beneficial to all types of food plots, but land managers must use the proper ones.

## STAY OUT OF THE WEEDS!

DECLARE WARFARE ON WEEDS IN FOOD PLOTS

Andrew Kibler

**W**ildlife management involves activities all year long. And the establishment and maintenance of food plots can be a wonderful way to feed and attract wildlife. Food plots can take many forms from small 6-foot strips within a pine plantation to large, 20-acre fields.

When it comes to food plots, more is always going to be better because deer and other wildlife need plenty to eat. And a solid food plot is a good way to retain and attract wildlife. But food plot plantings will have competition. The best way to offset competition is with chemical warfare. In other words, poison the competition!

Most food plots start with some level of disturbance. It is usually from a tiller, disk, or some other mechanical method of plowing through the top layer of soil for aeration or to uproot any existing competition. Mechanical methods will

kill some of the existing unwanted vegetation. But the benefits don't always outweigh the detriments.

In fact, plowing up the soil exposes fresh dirt and allows dormant seeds the opportunity to germinate and to grow towards the sky. Sure, plowing can be an excellent situation for establishing the newly planted seeds because of the same reason. But the soil is generally loaded with aggressive weed seeds that will take off as soon as they get the first opportunity.

Poison is the only real way to control the competition for new food plots and for established areas. One way or the other, the best food plots have a series of chemical treatments to control weedy invaders.

### HERBICIDES HELP

Herbicides are critical for crop production. Few crops are produced without the use of these chemicals. From pre-planting treatments to mid-season application, herbicides are used every day in the

farming community. Without delving too deep into a college-level chemistry lesson, herbicides are chemical assailants that attack cellular processes within plants.

Unwanted plants will quickly die when a critical cellular process is disrupted, such as blocking cell division, chlorophyll destruction, inhibiting mitotic processes within cell walls, blocking electron transfer, blocking critical enzymes, inhibiting photosynthesis and disrupting protein synthesis – just to name a few.

Basically, two methods of nuking food plots can control herbaceous competition. One involves soil active chemicals.



**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.

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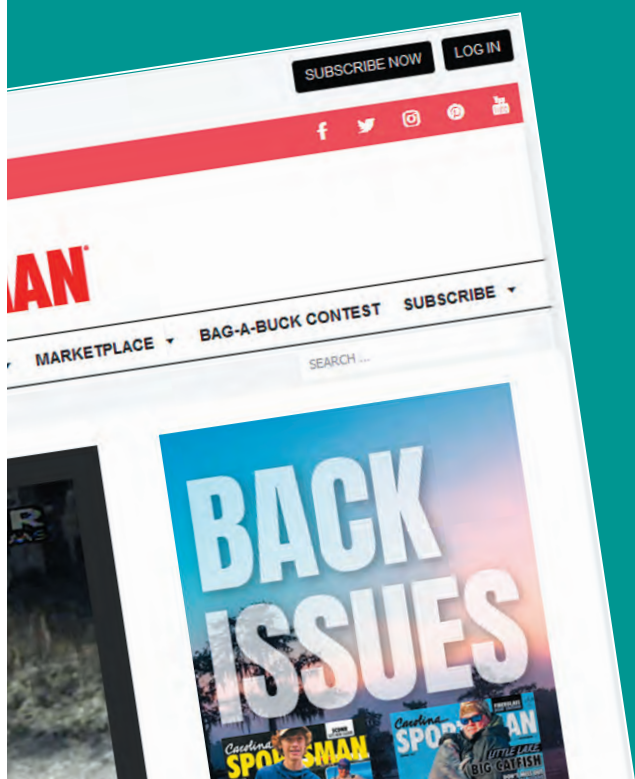
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Jeff Burleson

## ATVS FOR HERBICIDES:

You don't need heavy farm equipment to properly apply herbicides to your food plots. ATVs equipped with inexpensive sprayers work great, and can get into even the smallest of food plots that aren't easily accessible to bigger equipment.

The other involves contact killers. For the best results, both chemical delivery methods used in concert will control the undesirables the most.

Weeds are aggressive pioneer species and will out-compete most food-plot plant varieties. Pretreatment is always a good plan for establishing warm-season food plots and several pre-plant herbicides are available to inhibit non-target vegetative growth.

Before selecting a pre-emergent herbicide, the targeted food plot seed must be selected first because pre-emergent herbicides are labeled to control certain types of plant species. And we need to make sure that the selected food plot seed isn't included as one of the species affected by the herbicide. Pre-emergent herbicides label the plants they control and what plants are benefited. The best action is to examine the herbicide's label to properly understand what food plot seed will benefit versus what they control.

## FOLLOW THE LABEL

In addition to choosing the right chemical, careful examination of the product label is recommended to determine the adequate application rate and the types of plants affected by the chemical. Herbicide labels are comprehensive, with a plant listing controlled by the herbicide. Additionally, the labels will often list crops where the herbicide is labeled for use, as well as the recommended dosage rate per acre. Also, the product label will list dangers and necessary human-safety precautions for handling.

For most spring food plots where legumes and corn are planted, an application of either Prowl H2O (Pendimethalin), Treflan EC (Trifluralin), Dual Magnum (S-Metolachlor) and/or Pursuit DG (Imazethapyr) can produce effective results for the warm season planting cycle. And in some cases, these chemicals can be mixed to produce optimum results. Check the labels to make sure the proper pre-emergence herbicide is selected.

While pre-plant herbicides can make planting and establishing a plot go smoother, pre-plant methods don't always coincide with the food plot plan. That's especially true when the plot is already established.

For established food plots that are losing ground to noxious weeds, land managers can apply selective contact herbicides to kill competing vegetation. Food plot plants are either grasses or broadleaf plants. Selective herbicides must be used to control either broadleaf or grass pests. In other words, grass competition can be controlled with grass-selective herbicides in broadleaf food plots like soybeans or other legumes. And broadleaf-selective herbicides can be used in grass food plots like wheat, oats, millet, or corn. ■

## DON'T AVOID HERBICIDES

The most common contact killer is glyphosate, commonly referred to as Round Up. Glyphosate can be used to kill all the existing vegetation prior to planting. And Glyphosate will kill both broadleaf weeds and grasses.

But when herbaceous control is needed after plants are already emerged or already established, selective herbaceous contact versions should be used. For grass-type plantings such as corn, millet, sorghum, and wheat, 2,4D can be sprayed to control broadleaf vegetation. When broadleaf crops are established such as legume and brassicas, then grass-selective herbicides should be used such as, clethodim and sethoxydim to control unwanted grasses.

Clover is one of the most common food plot plants in the nation. And for good reason. Clover is perennial and can be an excellent source of nutrition to deer and other wildlife all year long. But, clover typically has some issues with herbaceous competition. Luckily, clethodim can be used in clover to control grasses and butyrac 200 or 2,4 DB can be used to control broadleaf weeds in clover. Tight mowing can also help fight herbaceous competition in clover.

Herbicides are something that many land managers avoid using especially on food plots. But chemical control of unwanted weedy invaders is a healthy way to promote the growth of target species. And its use shouldn't be avoided. ■



The proper herbicides can be applied to established food plots to keep them growing weed-free.

Jeff Burleson

## HUNTING/FISHING SCRAPBOOK ➤

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Digital images must be at least 500KB and in jpeg format.



**Chad Johnson**

Chad Jackson killed his first turkey gobbler on April 15, 2020, hunting with his father in Robeson County, N.C.



**Conner Taylor**

Conner Taylor killed this turkey gobbler on Opening Day of the 2021 youth season. It had a 10-inch beard and 1-inch spurs.



**Lexton Ford**

Lexton Ford caught these two nice bass on W. Kerr Scott Reservoir last June.



**Dakota House**

Dakota House, 12, of Micro, N.C., killed this 4-bearded turkey on April 6, 2021, in Halifax, N.C. It weighed 21 pounds.



**Warren Romine**

Warren Romine of Raleigh, N.C. caught this wahoo on the maiden voyage of his new boat on July 30 off Cape Lookout.



**David Cooper**

David Cooper, 10, killed this 7-point buck the opening day of blackpowder season in 2020 in Chatham County, N.C.



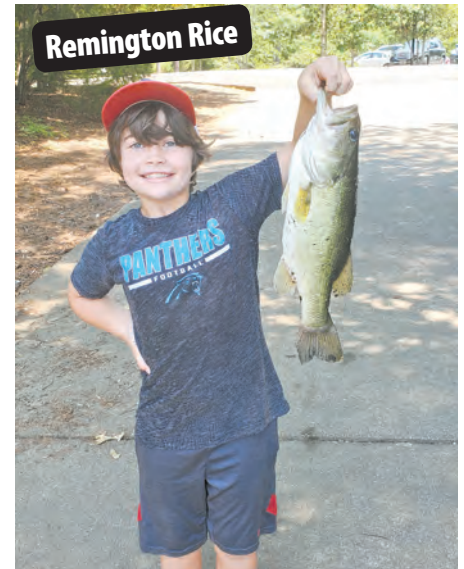
**Brantley Pegram**

Brantley Pegram caught this nice pair of summer bass on Belews Lake in August 2021.



**Daniel Wilson**

Daniel Wilson of Hillsborough, N.C., caught this 70-pound tarpon on Aug. 10, 2021, surf fishing on Oak Island, N.C. The battle lasted an hour and drew 100 onlookers.



**Remington Rice**

Remington Rice caught this 3-pound bass on a Carolina-rigged bluegill at Bond Park in Cary, N.C.



**Jackie Freeman**

Jackie Freeman of Bolivia, N.C., landed this red drum while fishing with Yeah Right Charters out of Southport, N.C.



**Maddie McMichael**

Maddie McMichael, 12, from Reidsville, N.C., caught and released this carp at the KMT ranch in June 2021.



**Jim Rodriguez**

Jim Rodriguez caught this 43-inch bull red, the first in his kayak, on the Neuse River on Aug. 8, 2021.



**Mack Dickson**

Mack Dickson of Lenoir, N.C., caught this 34-inch, 18-pound striped bass on W. Kerr Scott Reservoir on Memorial Day 2021.



**Alston Watkins**

Alston Watkins killed this drake mallard in December 2020, hunting in Currituck County.



**Chuck, Lee Baker**

Chuck and Lee Baker of Raleigh N.C., had a good day last Jan. 22 duck hunting with a little help from their lab buddy.



# HUNTING/FISHING SCRAPBOOK



**Shawn, Hunter Simpson**

Shawn Simpson and his daughter, Hunter, of Ocean Isle Beach, N.C., with two slot red drum caught on live mullet near Shallotte Inlet on Aug. 21, 2021



**Matthew Pruitt**

Matthew Pruitt of Lyman, S.C., caught this 21-pound catfish at Lake Wylie on Oct. 15, 2021.



**Brent Meche**

Brent Meche of Fort Mill, S.C., caught this 31½-pound flathead catfish Oct. 20, 2021, on Lake Wylie.



**Devin Hayes**

Devin Hayes of Lumberton, N.C., killed this raccoon on a hunt with his redbone hounds on Jan. 28, 2021.



**Mason Moser**

Mason Moser, 8, of Hickory, N.C., caught this beautiful catfish on Lake Hickory on June 17.



**Drew Pressley**

Drew Pressley, 22, caught this 9-pound bass on Aug. 5, 2021, in Stokes County, N.C.

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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.

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2022 JUN					BEST DAYS				LUNAR PERIODS				TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED	
POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCEL	VALUE	MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT						
Wed 1	█	█	█	68	7:24 am	<b>1:09 pm - 4:55 pm</b>	10:41 pm	<b>12:46 am - 4:28 am</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Thu 2	█	█	█	59	8:15 am	<b>2:02 pm - 5:44 pm</b>	11:28 pm	<b>1:34 am - 5:20 am</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Fri 3	█	█	█	54	9:11 am	<b>2:55 pm - 6:31 pm</b>	no period	<b>2:27 am - 6:09 am</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Sat 4	█	█	█	54	10:09 am	<b>3:47 pm - 7:13 pm</b>	12:09 am	<b>3:20 am - 6:56 am</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Sun 5	█	█	█	53	11:09 am	<b>4:40 pm - 7:52 pm</b>	12:44 am	<b>4:12 am - 7:38 am</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Mon 6	█	█	█	56	12:08 pm	<b>5:33 pm - 8:29 pm</b>	1:16 am	<b>5:05 am - 8:17 am</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Tue 7	█	█	█	64	1:09 pm	<b>6:25 pm - 9:05 pm</b>	1:45 am	<b>5:58 am - 8:54 am</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Wed 8	█	█	█	52	2:10 pm	<b>7:21 pm - 9:37 pm</b>	2:12 am	<b>6:50 am - 9:30 am</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Thu 9	█	█	█	45	3:13 pm	<b>8:16 pm - 10:12 pm</b>	2:39 am	<b>7:46 am - 10:02 am</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Fri 10	█	█	█	44	4:19 pm	<b>9:15 pm - 10:51 pm</b>	3:06 am	<b>8:41 am - 10:37 am</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Sat 11	█	█	█	52	5:30 pm	<b>10:17 pm - 11:33 pm</b>	3:37 am	<b>9:40 am - 11:16 am</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Sun 12	█	█	█	60	6:44 pm	<b>11:24 pm - Midnight</b>	4:13 am	<b>10:42 am - 11:58 am</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Mon 13	█	█	█	70	8:00 pm	<b>Midnight - 12:22 am</b>	4:56 am	<b>11:49 am - 12:47 pm</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Tue 14	█	█	█	75	9:14 pm	<b>12:33 am - 1:19 am</b>	5:49 am	<b>12:58 pm - 1:44 pm</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Wed 15	█	█	█	64	1:09 pm	<b>1:42 am - 2:24 am</b>	6:51 am	<b>2:07 pm - 2:49 pm</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Thu 16	█	█	█	53	11:15 pm	<b>2:47 am - 3:33 am</b>	8:02 am	<b>3:12 pm - 3:58 pm</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Fri 17	█	█	█	45	11:59 pm	<b>3:45 am - 4:41 am</b>	9:17 am	<b>4:10 pm - 5:06 pm</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Sat 18	█	█	█	41	no period	<b>4:37 am - 5:45 am</b>	10:30 am	<b>5:02 pm - 6:10 pm</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Sun 19	█	█	█	47	12:36 am	<b>5:21 am - 6:47 am</b>	11:40 am	<b>5:46 pm - 7:12 pm</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Mon 20	█	█	█	59	1:08 am	<b>5:59 am - 7:45 am</b>	12:45 pm	<b>6:24 pm - 8:10 pm</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Tue 21	█	█	█	52	1:36 am	<b>6:33 am - 8:41 am</b>	1:48 pm	<b>6:58 pm - 9:06 pm</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Wed 22	█	█	█	49	2:02 am	<b>7:06 am - 9:36 am</b>	2:48 pm	<b>7:31 pm - 10:01 pm</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Thu 23	█	█	█	50	2:28 am	<b>7:41 am - 10:27 am</b>	3:48 pm	<b>8:06 pm - 10:52 pm</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Fri 24	█	█	█	53	2:56 am	<b>8:14 am - 11:20 am</b>	4:47 pm	<b>8:39 pm - 11:45 pm</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Sat 25	█	█	█	63	3:25 am	<b>8:52 am - 12:12 pm</b>	5:47 pm	<b>9:17 pm - 12:37 am</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Sun 26	█	█	█	74	3:59 am	<b>9:33 am - 1:05 pm</b>	6:46 pm	<b>9:58 pm - 1:30 am</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Mon 27	█	█	█	84	4:37 am	<b>10:18 am - 1:58 pm</b>	7:43 pm	<b>10:43 pm - 2:23 am</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Tue 28	█	█	█	89	5:21 am	<b>11:07 am - 2:49 pm</b>	8:36 pm	<b>11:32 pm - Midnight</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Wed 29	█	█	█	79	6:11 am	<b>11:58 am - 3:40 pm</b>	9:25 pm	<b>Midnight - 3:14 am</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾
Thu 30	█	█	█	69	7:05 am	<b>12:49 pm - 4:29 pm</b>	10:08 pm	<b>12:23 am - 4:05 am</b>	☀	☾	☾	☾	☾	☾

25 50 75  
AVERAGE

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

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