

Carolina

**HIT THE GULF STREAM
FOR GIANT BLUEFINS**



SPORTSMAN[®]

FEBRUARY 2022

www.CarolinaSPORTSMAN.com

**CATCH
CRAPPIE
ON THE
LONG LINE**

**YANK A PECK
OF YELLOW PERCH**

**STRIPERS ON THE
COAST, STRIPERS
ON THE LAKES**

**IT'S PRIME TIME FOR
SANTEE SLABS, LUNKERS**

**DEER OF THE YEAR
BEST BUCKS OF 2021**

\$2.99 FEBRUARY 2022



**RUNNIN' RABBITS THE
OLD FASHIONED WAY**





XCLUSIVE PRO BASS SERIES



XCLUSIVE PRO BASS SERIES
X21PRO / X19PRO / X18PRO

BILL LOWEN

BASSMASTER ELITE ANGLER
XCLUSIVE PRO BASS: X21 PRO

CALEB SUMRALL

BASSMASTER ELITE ANGLER
XCLUSIVE PRO BASS: X21 PRO

JASON CHRISTIE

BASSMASTER ELITE ANGLER
XCLUSIVE PRO BASS: X21 PRO

Built on the foundation of innovation, Xpress Boats pioneered the "ORIGINAL" all-welded aluminum boat over 55 years ago which propelled us in the mid-1980s to create the now-famous Hyper-Lift padded hull. Today, you can reap the benefits of years of engineering refinement built into our Xclusive Pro Bass Series. The ultimate performance you will experience begins with its superior holeshot and carries over to its rough and calm water handling characteristics. Our success is evident, chosen by some of the best on the Bassmaster Elite Series further validates that your decision not to settle for anything less than Xpress is one of the best!

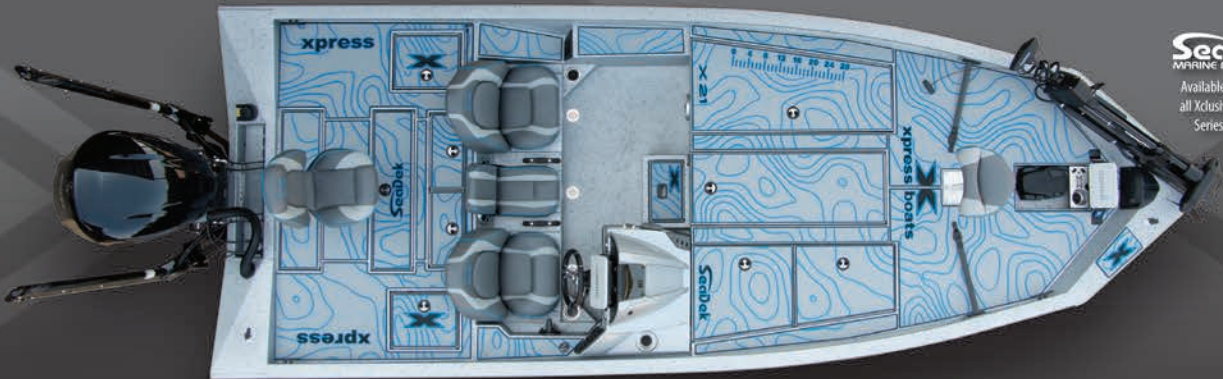


Xpress Boats X21 Pro Staff includes Dale Hightower, Harvey Horne, Zeke Gosset, 2 X NPFL champion John Soukup, Luke Dunkin, and Brandon Dillard.

THE ORIGINAL

A PROVEN WINNER

Look for us at the **2022 Academy Sports + Outdoors Bassmaster Classic** presented by Huk on March 4-6th in Greenville, SC where Jason Christie and Caleb Sumrall will be competing. Visit Bill Lowen and see our exciting lineup of bass boats in our booth at the Outdoor Expo.



SeaDek
MARINE PRODUCTS

Available option on all Xclusive Pro Bass Series models



xpress boats[®]
we build excitement

199 Extrusion Place, Hot Springs, AR 71901



xpressboats.com



YAMAHA



PG AND BOATGIRL
OUTDOORS
PODCAST

PGANDBOATGIRL.COM

BROUGHT TO YOU BY



palmettoboatcenter.com



Get the latest Outdoor
News, Talk and Hunting
and Fishing Reports.
pgandboatgirl.com



CAUTION

Changing conditions around
hydropower facilities

In areas proximate to hydropower facilities, water on the surface freezes to ice; however, underneath it, the water is always moving, and ice thickness can vary significantly from one area to another.

Brookfield
Renewable U.S.



WEAR IT



WEAR IT

www.safewaters.com



10
DEER OF THE YEAR 2021



18
LONG-LINE TROLLING FOR WINTER CRAPPIE

Carolina
CONTENTS

Volume 29 | Number 2 | February 2022

FEATURES:

10 DEER OF THE YEAR 2021

It was another big year for Carolina hunters.

> By Brian Cope

18 LONG-LINE TROLLING FOR WINTER CRAPPIE *COVER STORY*

Top tips for catching slabs during cold weather.

> By Terry Madewell

30 RUNNIN' RABBITS

Hunting rabbits is a Carolina tradition.

> By Phillip Gentry

36 YANKING YELLOW PERCH

Winter is a great time to yank a peck of yellow perch.

> By Mike Marsh

46 SEEKING GIANTS!

February is prime time for giant bluefin tuna.

> By Jeff Burleson

OUTDOOR UPDATE:

- 6 FLOUNDER STOCKING NEWS**
- 8 BIG CAT SHOOTOUT**

COLUMNS:

- 24 SANTEE STRINGER**
By Terry Madewell
- 34 GREENER PASTURES**
By Jeff Burleson
- 42 SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY**
By Phillip Gentry
- 44 HEAD FOR THE MOUNTAINS**
By L. Woodrow Ross
- 52 SOUND & SEA** By Chris Burrows
- 54 COOKING ON THE WILD SIDE** By Capt. Jerry Dilsaver
- 56 LUNKER LINES** By Davy Hite

DEPARTMENTS:

- 17** Hunting Regulations
- 64** Hunting/Fishing Scrapbook
- 66** Advertiser Index/Astro Tables

FISHING HOTSPOTS:

- 26** Kerr Lake crappie
- 58** Fontana smallmouth
- 59** Lake Murray bass
- 60** New Bern stripers
- 61** Clarks Hill stripers
- 62** Cape Fear River stripers
- 63** Little River redbfish

ON THE COVER:

Don't wait until spring – slab crappie like this one caught by Jeff Burleson at Santee are biting right now. Photo by Terry Madewell.



Carolina
SPORTSMAN
www.CarolinaSPORTSMAN.com

PUBLISHER
Jonathan Menard

MANAGING EDITOR
Brian Cope, brian@carolinasportsman.com

ASSISTANT PRODUCTION MANAGER
Desiree P. Lewis

ART DIRECTOR
Kevin Orgeron

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS
Jeff Cashio, Alissa Zeringue

CONTROLLER
Juanita Guidry

NC ADVERTISING SALES REP
Bradley Hulin
336-688-0237, bradleyh@carolinasportsman.com

SC ADVERTISING SALES REP
Bret Holten
843.442.7250, breth@carolinasportsman.com

ADVERTISING SALES
Asa Faulkner, Mark Boyd, Burton Angelle,
and Mark Hilzim (National Sales)

CIRCULATION DIRECTOR
Mitch Eby 919.602.3862, mitchebync@gmail.com

Carolina Sportsman is published monthly by
CAROLINA PUBLISHING INC.

FOUNDER
Allen J. Lottinger

PRESIDENT
Lisa Lottinger Cuccia

CAROLINA SPORTSMAN (USPS #012969) is mailed at periodicals postage rates and paid at Boutte, La., and additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Carolina Sportsman, PO Box 37030, Boone, IA 50037. All rights reserved. Reproduction of contents is strictly prohibited without permission of Carolina Sportsman. **EDITORIAL** information and guidelines can be obtained by emailing Brian Cope at brian@carolinasportsman.com.

ADVERTISING INQUIRIES:

advertising@CarolinaSportsman.com
985.758.7217

FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS OR SUBSCRIPTION ISSUES, CALL 1.855.224.1667

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

14236 Highway 90
P.O. Box 1199, Boutte, LA 70039-1199
800.538.4355

Volume 29 | No 2

The Wake County Wildlife Club Presents the...

41st Annual

DIXIE DEER CLASSIC



Don Higgins
HIGGINS OUTDOORS



Roger Raglin
TV PERSONALITY



Tom Miranda
ADVENTURE BOWHUNTER

WE ARE BACK!

Carolina DockDogs
Jumping Competition



~WIN A NEW~
2022 ATV

Sponsored by:



All proceeds will fund
WCWC Wildlife Conservation and Education programs.

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

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



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

FRIDAY ONLY

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

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

Entry Price is \$15⁰⁰

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

919.782.5333



www.dixiedeerclassic.org



OUTDOOR UPDATE

with **Brian Cope**



Brian Cope of Borden, S.C. 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.



FLOUNDER STOCKING IS LONG-TERM PROGRAM

SCDNR MOVING FORWARD WITH LONG-TERM GOALS IN MIND

In 2021, South Carolina lawmakers saw fit to fund the SCDNR's flounder stocking program. Flounder, as popular as they are among anglers and restaurant-goers, have become one of the most controversial fish in the sea. North Carolina's extremely short recreational seasons of the past two years have been hugely successful, leaving some

anglers wondering if the species is even in trouble at all.

South Carolina hasn't taken such drastic measures as the Old North State, but they did lower the daily creel limit, increase the minimum size limit, and increase saltwater fishing license fees to help fund the state's stocking program. Will it work? It remains to be seen,

but one thing going for it is the vast experience the SCDNR has in stocking fish — including saltwater fish.

CHALLENGING TASK

In the past 30 years, the agency has raised and released more than 30 million juvenile redfish into the state's inshore waters. And by most accounts, the redfish population is one of the healthiest in the Carolinas. It stands

to reason that the stocking program has helped.

Flounder, according to fisheries biologists, are a bit more difficult to raise than most other fish. But Dr. Aaron Watson, SCDNR associate marine scientist, said it's a challenge that's worthwhile, and one the agency is looking forward to taking on.

Luckily, it's not an entirely new idea. Texas has had a flounder stocking program for years, and is sharing their findings and challenges with their South Carolina counterparts.

"We're excited to visit facilities that are in current production and learn from folks that have had to deal with and overcome many of the challenges we will face here in South Carolina," said Watson.

Fisheries biologists have also gathered genetic samples of flounder from across the southeast. And the state's fish hatchery facilities are being retrofitted for the specific needs of a flounder stocking program.

Because flounder are bottom dwellers, one of the biggest challenges biologists face is having enough space. But that's an easy — although expensive — fix. Other challenges that aren't so easy to fix include the relatively short life span of flounder, as well as their sensitivity to water temperatures in the first few months of their lives.

Because fish observe no state line boundaries, the program should benefit North Carolina anglers as well. It's not a quick fix though, so anglers should remain patient. The first 3 to 4 years of the program will be largely research. The first actual stockings will take place in year five. ■



Raising flounder to release into the wild is a challenging task, but SCDNR officials are hard at work to begin South Carolina's flounder stocking program.

30,000 TROUT STOCKED IN LOWER SALUDA RIVER

This month, the SCDNR is finishing up its yearly stocking efforts on the Lower Saluda River in South Carolina's midlands. Since December, the agency has been introducing rainbow and brown trout fingerlings to the river.

These stockings allow anglers from the midlands to catch trout without having to head to the mountains. And even though SCDNR has been performing these same stockings for years, many anglers in the area continue to be surprised when they realize they can catch trout in their own community.

The trout being stocked were raised in the Walhalla State Fish Hatchery in the Upstate region of South Carolina.

This unique fishery is possible thanks to the cold waters released from the bottom of Lake Murray into the river. Along with abundant food sources, the cold water helps the trout thrive. They can grow to 20+ inches in length after a year or two. This is considered trophy status for these waters.

The Lower Saluda is separated into two sections for the purpose of creel limits. From the Lake Murray Dam to the confluence with the Broad River, anglers can keep five trout per day (only one can



exceed 16 inches). The section from the east bound I-20 bridge downstream to Stacey's Ledge is catch and release only. Neither section has any bait/lure restrictions.

Anglers have luck with a variety of lures in the Lower Saluda River. Inline spinners like Mepp's Aglia and Black Fury are good choices. Small crankbaits like the Rebel Teeny Wee Frog and Teeny Wee Crawfish are also good bets.

Live bait anglers can't go wrong with red wigglers, nightcrawlers, or waxworms fished on the bottom. Live crickets are also good choices, especially when fished under a small cork. ■

BASSMASTER CLASSIC

The Bassmaster Classic returns to the Carolinas early next month. Green Pond Landing at Lake Hartwell, S.C. will host the event for the fourth time March 4 - 6.

Numerous Carolina anglers will fish the event, including Hank

SAFE PASSAGE FOR WILDLIFE

Interstate 40 passes through Pigeon River Gorge on the NC/TN border, where NCDOT said more than 26,000 drivers travel the route daily. And in the past 4 years, more than 90 bears have been killed while trying to cross the interstate.

Numerous other wildlife, including deer, also cause collisions on this section of road each year. But the NCDOT plans to change that. They've partnered with Safe Passage, Inc. to form the I-40 Pigeon River Gorge Wildlife Crossing Project (www.smokiessafepassage.org).

The plan is to build a corridor under I-40, giving safe passage to wildlife. This area of the country is home to many species of animals that roam far and wide. Giving them the ability to safely do so is beneficial to them and to humans.

Other such wildlife corridors throughout the country have been very successful. Building the passageway in an area where natural barriers funnel the wildlife to them is one key. And the animals quickly learn the easiest way to pass, so officials believe this one will be a big help. ■

Cherry of Lincolnton, N.C. Cherry is the reigning champion, having won the Classic the past two years. Other North Carolina anglers include Shane LeHew of Catawba, Brandon Card of Salisbury, KJ Queen of Catawba, Bryan New of Belmont, and Matt Arey of Shelby. South Carolina anglers include Patrick Walters of Summerville and Brandon Cobb of Greenwood.

Boats will leave out of Green Pond Landing each morning, and weigh-ins will take place at Greenville's Bon Secours Wellness Arena. For more information, visit www.bassmaster.com. ■

DIXIE DEER CLASSIC

The 2022 Dixie Deer Classic is also set to take place next month in Raleigh, N.C., March 4 - 6. The event was canceled in 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions, so this year's event should be a big one.

The Dixie Deer Classic is known nationwide as the top whitetail deer show in the country. It's a day of meeting fellow hunters, seeing new products, watching deer mounts receive official scores, observing the best deer killed in the past year, and seeing some of the biggest names in the outdoor world.

Numerous awards are given to hunters in various categories. And the awards aren't just for North Carolina hunters. The event also recognizes the top deer from South Carolina, Virginia, and other states. In the past five years, only one South Carolina hunter entered. As our online Bag-A-Buck Gallery shows, hunters in both Carolinas killed plenty of trophy deer in 2021, so we hope to see many of you at the show.

For more information, visit www.dixiederclassic.org. ■



Paisley June and Jason Wolfe teamed up to win the Blacks Camp Big Cat Shootout in December.

TEAM WOLFE WINS \$8825

Fishing in her “first serious tournament,” 12-year-old Paisley June Wolfe reeled in four catfish that totaled 183.68 pounds to help her team to the first place finish in December’s Blacks Camp Big Cat Shootout.

The young angler was fishing with her dad, Capt. Jason Wolfe of Wolfe’s Guide Service in the 2-day event. It’s a tournament he had looked forward to for a long time. And he was especially proud of how his daughter handled the pressure of fishing in the event.

“I was just driving the boat and serving as net man,” he said. “She reeled in all the fish. She did a great job, and I don’t think she realizes how big a deal this is.”

Not only did they win the tournament, they also won the Big Fish award with a 58.45-pound blue catfish that young Wolfe reeled in on Day 2. That added \$1400 to their first-place prize of \$7425. And to top it off, they set the event record for total weight.

“It was hard work and a lot of fun. I took some of the best naps I’ve ever had out there and I want to thank my dad for finding the fish and for having me fish with him,” said Paisley. ■

BIG CAT BRAWL IS MARCH 18-19

Blacks Camp on the Santee Cooper lakes will host another big catfish tournament next month. The 2022 Santee Big Cat Brawl is sure to be one of the biggest catfish events of the year.

Mark Coburn, weighmaster of the event, expects more than 100 boats to participate based on the tournament’s past participation.

“We’re going to have catfish anglers from all over the country. It’s going to be a great event for families, beginners, and seasoned anglers,” said Coburn.

NC HUNTER WINS DECEMBER BAG-A-BUCK

Ryan Long of Greensboro, N.C. had an incredible hunting season in 2021. He killed a total of three bucks that each scored more than 140 inches -- two in North Carolina and one in Kansas.



On Dec. 5, he killed an 11-point giant that green-scored 157 0/8 inches. That was after bagging a 141 2/8-inch buck in Rockingham County, followed by his Jayhawker buck of 157 6/8 inches, both during the month of November.

Lady Luck smiled on Long again when he was picked as the winner of the *Carolina Sportsman* December Bag-A-Buck contest.

Long's December buck was a mainframe 8-pointer with a split brow tine and two stickers off the G2. The buck had a 20-inch inside spread.

Although he knew the buck was in the area thanks to trail-cam footage, Long didn't expect to see it because it followed a strange pattern that included only nighttime visits to his hunting property.

He had originally planned to kill a bear that day.

"I had been getting pictures of a bear on that trail cam. So I figured I would go in and hunt the bear," he said. "I wasn't expecting to see this deer at all!"

But around 5 p.m., the deer stepped into the food plot Long was watching from a two-man box stand with a hunting buddy.

Long's prizes include a 1-year subscription to *Carolina*



Sportsman and a Sportsman prize package that includes a True Flipper folding knife and other goodies. Along with every subscriber who entered the contest, he is also eligible for the grand prize: a 3-year subscription to *Carolina Sportsman*, a 2-day, deer/hog combo hunt for two people at Cherokee Run Hunting Lodge, a Sportsman prize package that includes a Millennium M25 Hang-On tree stand, and some other goodies. ■

Looking for a
Valentines Gift?



We have gifts available
for everyone!



Are you ready for
Turkey season?
Get ready at
Nichols Store.



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

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



www.NicholsStore.com • 803-328-9792

DEER OF THE YEAR 2021

■ By Brian Cope

IT WAS ANOTHER BIG YEAR FOR CAROLINA HUNTERS.



AVERY COUNTY HAMMER MAY VIE FOR STATE RECORD

Deer hunters across the Carolinas had another big year in 2021. One of those bucks may even set a new record. A 23-point buck killed by Vincent Clark of Newland, N.C. is expected to score well more than 200 inches, and may vie for the state record.

Clark killed the buck in Avery County on Dec. 7, and he attributed the harvest to pure chance.

"We knew it would be a 'hunt a ton and get lucky' scenario. And it was just that. I set in the blind for the evening and just got lucky that he happened to walk out. I believe he was checking scrape lines," Clark said.

To get an official score on the deer, Clark must wait until after the 60-day drying period has passed. It's a tall order to unseat the current state record, a 228 $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch buck killed in 1998 by Don Rockett in Person County. But with 23 points and plenty of mass, Clark's buck may have a shot at it.

He's hoping to have the mount of his buck back from the taxidermist in time for the 2022 Dixie Deer Classic, where Clark hopes to have it officially scored.

This deer is sure to create plenty of excitement at the show, which was canceled last year due to the pandemic.

OUR READERS TELL STORIES

Plenty of other noteworthy deer were also killed in the Carolinas during the 2021 hunting season. Calico bucks, white bucks, antlered does, velvet bucks — all types of deer came into the CarolinaSportsman.com Bag A Buck gallery from across both states.

But it wasn't just the out-of-ordinary bucks that raised eyebrows. Numerous hunters killed typical and non-typical bucks with unique and/or massive racks.

And while photos tell much of the story, it's the words from the hunters themselves that tell those stories like no one else can. Most of our Bag A Buck entrants sent photos and just a few details of their deer. Others weaved tales that made us jealous of their way with words. We're sharing one of those stories here from 6-year-old Tristan Fulcher. See the rest at CarolinaSportsman.com/bag-a-buck-gallery/. ■

THE BEST DAY EVER

by Tristan Fulcher

My name is Tristan Fulcher I'm 6-years-old from Fayetteville, N.C. I killed my first deer with my father Brian Fulcher on Nov. 20, 2021. I sat for many days with my father last year after a huge buck with no luck. But this year my first hunt only sitting in the stand for 20 minutes this monster walks out and starts eating on the corn pile.

We watched him for about 10 minutes before being able to get set up and taking a good shot on this giant 11-point Cumberland County buck. My father was really nervous but I was cool as a cucumber and after I shot him and seen him fall I was extremely excited and looked at my dad and asked him why he was crying and he told me one day son you will understand and know the answer to that question. ■



Six-year-old Tristan Fulcher killed his first deer on Nov. 20 and shared his story in his own words at CarolinaSportsman.com.

DEER OF THE YEAR BIG BUCK GALLERY



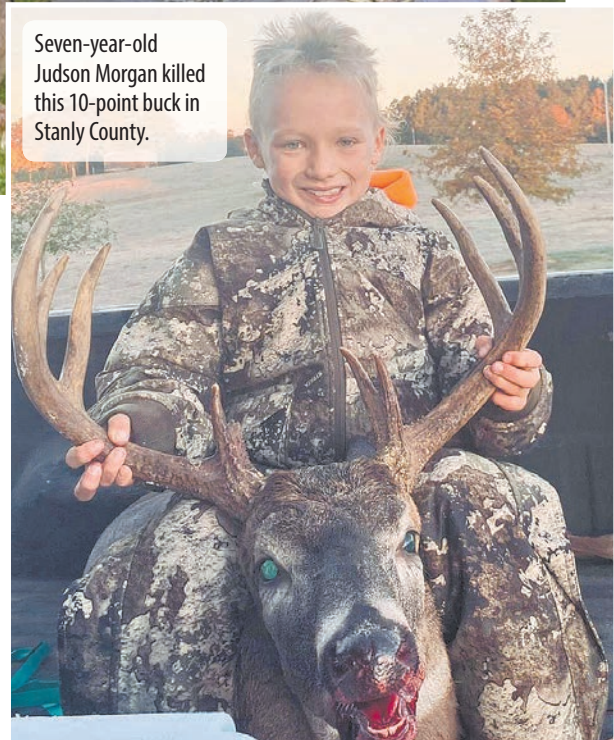
Frederick Gaskins hunted this buck for more than a month, killing it in late November.



Joe Hall killed this Alamance County non-typical on a small tract of land in mid-November.



This 11-point Rockingham County brute capped off a great hunting season for Ryan Long.



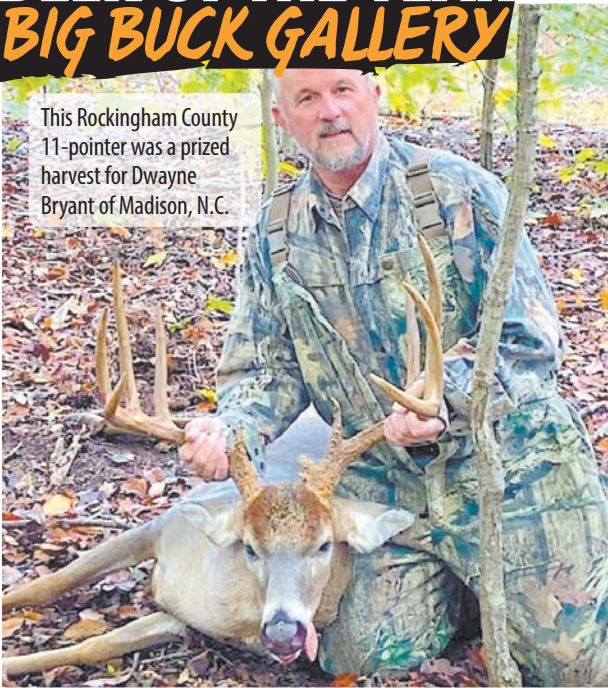
Seven-year-old Judson Morgan killed this 10-point buck in Stanly County.



Bud Long's 9-point Rockingham County buck green-scored 146 6/8.

DEER OF THE YEAR BIG BUCK GALLERY

This Rockingham County 11-pointer was a prized harvest for Dwayne Bryant of Madison, N.C.



Donnie Johnson downed this Johnston County 10-point buck on Nov. 13.



Opening day of bow season in Rockingham County produced this 13-point buck for RJ Seiler.



Christian Bowling's 8-point buck green-scored 147 4/8 inches.

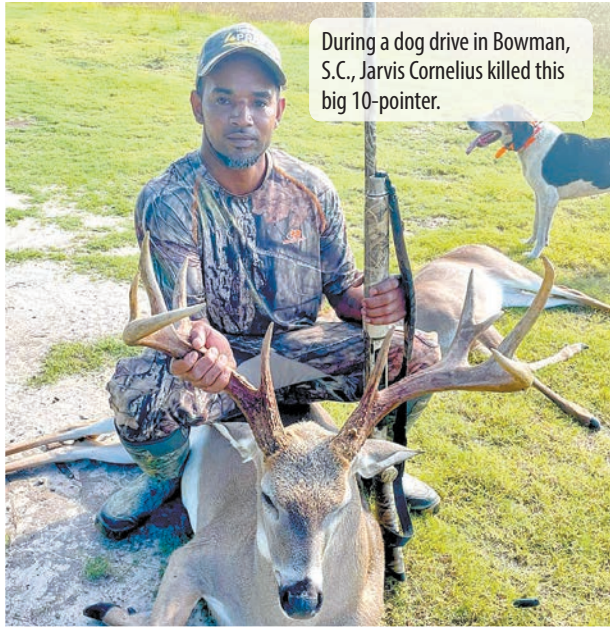


Brittany Dennis of Lugoff, S.C. killed this Kershaw County 12-point buck on Oct. 20.



Eli Cox killed "The Beast" in Randolph County on Dec. 12.





During a dog drive in Bowman, S.C., Jarvis Cornelius killed this big 10-pointer.



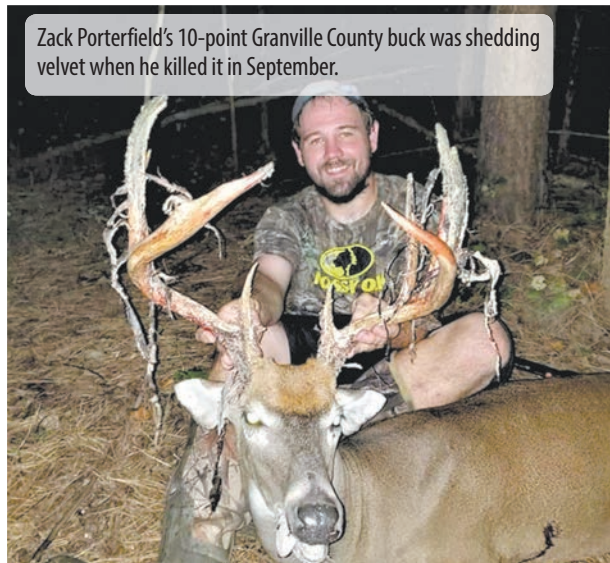
Ben Carraway killed a trophy buck with his Pa Bill's rifle from a stand made by his Granddaddy.



Lance Hill killed this Calhoun County beast during South Carolina's early season.



Callie Branham's velvet 8-point buck came from Calhoun County on Aug. 16.



Zack Porterfield's 10-point Granville County buck was shedding velvet when he killed it in September.



Adam Rorie of Monroe, N.C. killed this huge Chesterfield County, S.C. 6-point buck on Sept. 1.

DEER OF THE YEAR BIG BUCK GALLERY



Jon Miller killed this Wilkes County buck, which green-scored in the 170s, in late December.



Andrew Ingerick dropped a 9-point trophy buck in Chatham County, N.C. on Nov. 12.



Michael Wolf's August buck from Allendale County had 13 points and was in full velvet.



Justin Robertson's Chesterfield County buck had 13 points and palmated antlers.



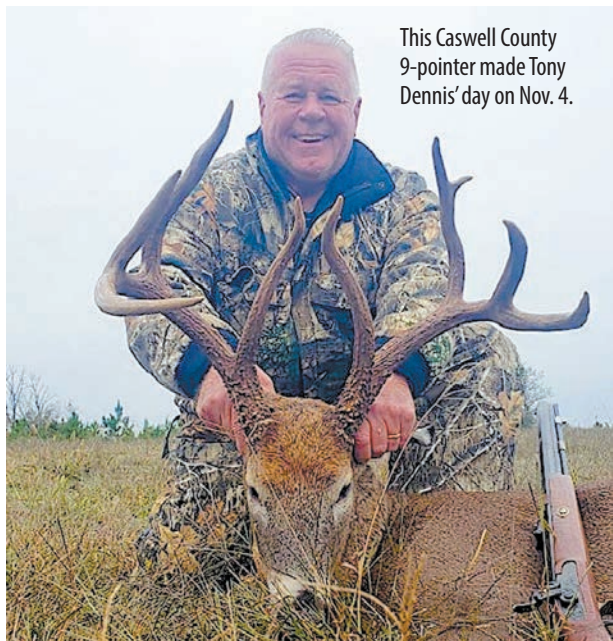
Garrett Webster's 10-point Chesterfield County buck from September green-scored in the 140s.



Chris Glosson killed this Durham County 10-pointer during an archery hunt in September.



Logan Stuart killed this trophy buck in Guilford County on Nov. 23.



This Caswell County 9-pointer made Tony Dennis' day on Nov. 4.



Steven Kirkland's Dalzell, S.C. buck was still in full velvet when he killed it in late October.



Jimmy Williams' Jasper County 10-point buck in velvet from August weighed 190 pounds.



Zeke Houser's Cleveland County buck had shards of velvet clinging to its 14-point antlers.



A 728-mile round trip helped produce Dawson Durham's Stokes County 11-point trophy.

DEER OF THE YEAR BIG BUCK GALLERY



Thanksgiving was extra special for Josh Matthews thanks to this 17-point buck.



Matt King killed this buck in Surry County on Nov. 20 just hours after returning home from a Colorado elk hunt.



Brantley Mays, 9-years-old from Sumter, S.C., got this Clarendon County 9-point buck Oct. 24.



Ashley Nevins killed this Granville County muzzleloader buck on Nov. 6.



This Anson County buck was 7-year-old Tenley Smith's first deer. She killed it in late November.



This 15-point buck was a November birthday present for James Cox, Jr. of Stem, N.C.

2021-22 NORTH CAROLINA HUNTING REGULATIONS

Not an official document.
Refer to NCWRC's official
hunting regulations pamphlet
or www.ncwildlife.org.

HUNTING SEASONS

DEER

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

BEAR

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

SQUIRREL	Oct. 18-Feb. 28, 2022 (gray & red) Oct. 18-Jan. 31, 2022 (fox)
RABBIT	Oct. 18-Feb. 28, 2022
RACCOON, OPOSSUM	Oct. 18-Feb. 28, 2022
QUAIL	Nov. 20-Feb. 28, 2022
GROUSE	Oct. 18-Feb. 28, 2022
RAILS	Sept. 4-14, Oct. 2-Dec. 1
COMMON SNIPE	Oct. 27-Feb. 28, 2022
CANADA GEESE	Resident zone, Oct. 21-30, Nov. 6-29, Dec. 18-Feb. 12, 2022 Statewide: Sept. 1-30; NE Zone, Jan. 15-31, 2022 permit
SNOW, BLUE, ROSS GEESE	Oct. 12-Feb. 12, 2022, Feb. 14-March 31, 2022, permit
DUCKS	
(Inland Zone)	Oct. 21-23, Nov. 6-27, Dec. 18-Jan. 31, 2022
(Coastal Zone)	Oct. 29-30, Nov. 6-29, Dec. 19-Jan. 31, 2022
EARLY TEAL	Sept. 11-29 (east of US 17 only)
SEA DUCKS	Nov. 23-Jan. 31, 2022
BRANT	Dec. 18-Jan. 31, 2022
DOVE	Sept. 4-Oct. 2, Nov. 6-27, Dec. 9-Jan. 31, 2022
TUNDRA SWAN	Nov. 6-Jan. 31, 2021. Bag limit 1, by permit only.
WOODCOCK	Dec. 10-Jan. 31, 2022
WILD TURKEY (Youth)	April 2-8, 2022 April 9-May 7, 2022

2021-22 SOUTH CAROLINA HUNTING REGULATIONS

Not an official document.
Please refer to SCDNR's
Rules & Regulations Digest.

HUNTING SEASONS

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


DEER SEASON

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

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

WATERFOWL SEASONS

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

A man wearing a tan cap and sunglasses is smiling while holding a large crappie fish. The fish is held vertically, showing its scales and fins. The background is a bright, overcast sky.

Long-line trolling for crappie is a highly productive method for catching crappies in the Carolinas. During the pre-spawn phase crappies shift from deep-water, bottom-hugging mode and transition to a lengthy process of moving toward spawning areas. They're often suspended during this period and anglers can catch them in big numbers and sizes.

Long-lining is effective on any crappie lake. But experts use specific techniques to streamline the fish-finding process.

Ed Duke from Concord, N.C. is a retired general contractor who owns Southern Crappie Rods, a crappie-oriented tackle company. Duke has crappie fished lakes throughout the Carolinas much of his life and said productive long-lining for crappie typically begins in late January and can be wide-open by February.

"This is slab-crappie season because big fish are on the move," he said. "The entire pre-spawn is excellent. But the early portion usually produces many of the largest crappie."

"Long-line trolling is not a complicated process. But I've learned that the most successful fishermen will adapt to ever-changing fishing conditions as pre-spawn activity increases," he said. "Fine tuning tactics daily to stay on the fish is a key to success."

LONG-LINE TROLLING FOR WINTER CRAPPIE

**TOP TIPS FOR
CATCHING SLABS
DURING COLD
WEATHER**

■ By Terry Madewell

Slabs rule the day for anglers long-line trolling for crappie during the early part of the year.

STAGGER RODS OF DIFFERENT LENGTHS

Duke (704-791-0108) said understanding the proper rigging setup is the first step. He uses an assortment of rod lengths placed strategically around his boat. They consist of 7-foot and 9-foot rods fished directly out of the back of the boat. And off each side of the boat he'll use rod lengths of 12, 14 and 16-feet. The side rods are positioned with the 12-foot rig at the back of the boat and 14-foot and then the 16-foot rod toward the front, each extending two feet further than the other. All are set in rod holders.

"This setup enables me to effectively fish a wide swath of water while keeping my lines parallel," he said. "I can turn the boat to cover specific targets without lines getting snagged. I want to spend time fighting fish, not untangling lines."

Duke uses 6-pound test line on each rig. He begins a trip with three different lure sizes. He pulls 1/32- and 1/16-ounce jigs and a 1/10-ounce lure he makes called the 'Spinnie Minnie.' This allows him to work the rigs at different depths in the water column. He casts the rigs 50 to 60 feet behind the boat and employs his electric motor to troll in the 0.7 miles-per-hour speed range.

"I've found this setup to be the most effective to enable me to

find the speed and depth pattern of the day," he said. "I'll speed up, slow down and make turns which impacts speed and depth of the lures. And I change locations until I find crappie.

IT'S A COLOR GAME

Duke said jig color is crucial and he'll use various patterns. But two favorites to begin the trip include the blue and chartreuse, and the pink and chartreuse, color combinations. He experiments with color combinations throughout the day.

Duke said presenting the lures where crappies are located is essential.

"Long-lining is not random and when pre-spawn activity begins my target area will be in creeks," he said. "Crappie can be anywhere from the mouth of the creek where the river and creek junction, all the way to the back. I've caught limits near the mouth of the creek one day. And the next day we'll catch them in the back of the creek."

Effective tactics vary with different lakes but a consistent pattern is fishing the creek channels as they wind back through the flats.

Chris Simpson guides for multiple species of fish at Clarks Hill Lake in South Carolina. And he'll long-line fish for crappie during the pre-spawn phase.

FIND THE RIGHT DEPTH FIRST >

Experts use multiple rods of different lengths, spreading the lures out to effectively cover more area and reduce tangling lines.



Terry Madewell

FIND THE RIGHT DEPTH FIRST

“It’s a dependable pattern in early spring to catch a lot of big crappies,” he said. “The first thing I do is search with my graph to find a depth pattern for the crappie. When I see an area where a lot of fish are marked, I’ll start working that depth,” he said.

Simpson (864-992-2352) said crappie have specific daily depth preferences. So his lure and line size, along with boat speed determines the depth his lures run.

“Some days I find fish in open water right in the middle of the creek,” he said. “I may find them suspended at mid-depths or

near the bottom on one trip. But other days they’ll be holding along a ledge.

“Unless I’m on a good crappie bite, I seldom troll a straight line,” Simpson said. “I make sweeping curves to cover more water. That also allows my outside jigs to speed up and fish shallower water while those in the inside of the turn will slow down and drop slightly deeper.

“It’s a lot of information to process but it’s a great way to piece together a productive pattern,” he said. “When I catch a single crappie, I usually keep going. But hooking multiple fish tells me to work that spot thoroughly. If the action slows, I’m back to searching. But it’s surprising how quickly the numbers begin to



Chris Simpson likes to troll along ledges and over points when searching for crappie. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Ed Duke caught this stringer of crappie while long-lining with jigs and minnows.

add up.”

TARGET CONTOUR CHANGES

Simpson said one tactic that works well is to troll his lures across points that drop into the creek channel.

“A point provides fish a quick change in bottom depth from deep to shallow that fish relate to,” he said. “Crappies may be

suspended 10 feet deep over 35 feet of water in the open channel. But the bottom depth where I cross the point may be only 20 feet deep. But the crappies will still be at the 10-foot depth I’m already targeting.

“The specifics vary. But points, humps and ledges all provide bottom contour changes I can target,” he said. “These specific areas often hold more crappie in a concentrated area. If brush piles are present at the right depth, they’re a great target. And I’ll pull lures across the top of the brush.”

Simpson said the final destination for pre-spawn crappies are the shallows to spawn. But not all crappies are in the same spawning cycle stage at the same time. So pre-spawn fishing is not a straight-line process from the mouth to

ADD A MINNOW TO YOUR JIG >



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



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



REMOVABLE
SAND BAG
WEIGHTS
AVAILABLE

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



Crappie have a hard time resisting Ed Duke's Spinnie Minnie, which he often uses when long-line trolling.

the back of the creeks.

ADD A MINNOW TO YOUR JIG

"Some fish may be beginning the pre-spawn process while others are beginning to spawn," he said. "Where I catch crappies one day may be much different from the previous days in terms of depth and location. Keep an open mind on finding fish on any given day."

Simpson said long-line trolling is productive because it enables anglers to quickly and effectively cover water while constantly changing depths and locations until a pattern is obvious.

"But a hot early-morning pattern can morph into something else as the day progresses," he said. "A sunny day that becomes cloudy, or vice versa, can change patterns quickly. When a productive pattern slows, simply start the crappie-hunting process again."

Duke and Simpson agree on another pre-spawn tactic. They both often add minnows to their jig offerings. It's not always necessary. But it's something they've found can considerably improve productivity on some days.

"Adding a minnow trailer to the lure can make a dramatic difference in productivity," Simpson said. "Adding minnows to a jig is one of the first things I try this time of the year." ■



PIG COOKERS, PATIO GRILLS, SMOKERS CUSTOMIZED BBQ TRAILERS



CUSTOM BUILT
QUALITY
OUTDOOR
BBQ PRODUCTS
SINCE 1989

BQ GRILLS



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

Black's Camp on the Santee Cooper Lake System

**Deep Water Access
to Diversion Canal
and Both Lakes...**

Boat Launch is Protected From
Wind and Current.



Bait • Ice • Fuel Available

FOOD TO GO, ORDER ONLINE



Please
Call Us For
Campground
Lodging &
Guide Service
Availability

Cross, South Carolina 29436

(843) 753-2231

www.blackscamp.com

HIDDEN CRAPPIE: NEVER RULE OUT SHALLOW WATER

Ed Duke said early season crappie anglers often dismiss shallow water as a potential hotspot for crappie fishing success. And that's a big mistake.

"I rely on my electronics to find crappie when I begin fishing," he said. "Sometimes the fish are ultra-shallow in the water column, but suspended over deep water. When crappies are shallow in the water column, graphs may not mark them and many fishermen rule out shallow-water suspended fish.

"Crappie have a tendency to move vertical in the water column and it's not unusual to find fish suspended 2- to 4-feet deep, even if the water is 20- to 40-feet deep."

"If I see fish marked at a specific depth, I target my lures and speed to present the bait at those depths," he said. "If I don't see any fish on the graph that I think may be crappie, that tells me the fish are possibly shallow in the water column."

"This is such a potentially strong pattern I'll fish it until I'm satisfied that they're not in that segment of water," he said. "But I often find them shallow in the water column, suspended over deep water, and I'll catch them like crazy."

Duke said depending on water clarity and the weather patterns this shallow water action can occur most any time of day at this time of year.

"Early morning is a prime time to troll in shallow water," he said. "The low light period, after a night of not being disturbed by boats is ideal. Plus, their forage is also often in that water depth. And that's another reason for crappie to be in that portion of the water column."

When crappies are ultra-shallow Duke said he can shorten the lure distance behind the boat to help the lures run shallower. He may also increase his trolling speed to get lures shallow enough to catch these hidden crappies. ■

SANTEE STRINGER >

THE NEW **ARGO 2021**

AURORA 950 SX 8x8
IS HERE.



GO
ANYWHERE



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

VISIT **BOST ARGO ATV SALES**

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

SANTEE STRINGER

Terry Madewell

Capt. David Hilton said February is a great time to catch Santee's biggest slabs.



SETTING UP TO SPAWN AT SANTEE

NUMEROUS SPECIES ARE PREPARING TO SPAWN

February fishing is on the upswing as the basic trend of rising water temperature puts several species of fish on the move. The passage of cold fronts slows fishing action down for brief periods. But overall, February is prime time to catch trophy fish at Santee.

Crappie, largemouth bass and stripers are active with the big spawning fish of these species beginning to follow the innate instinct to reproduce. And this makes them more susceptible to being caught.

SUPER SLABS ON THE PRE-SPAWN PATTERN

Pre-spawn and spawning activity for crappies lasts from February well into late March and April. But many of the largest crappie taken each year are caught during February. Experts say the biggest crappie are among the first to spawn. So now's the time to get in on the action.

Guide Dave Hilton said he'll work brush

piles and other woody cover at a variety of depths with live minnows or jigs and minnows on a tightline rig.

"Crappie move a lot during February and productive depths change frequently," he said. "It's not a simple process of fish gradually getting into shallower water until they spawn. They don't all spawn at the same time. Drones of crappie come and go and depths change constantly. One brush pile may produce limits today and the next time the action is slow."

Hilton (843-870-4734) said the public artificial fish attractors placed in both lakes are great places to find crappie this month.

Another productive method is long-line trolling in the creeks and major coves of both lakes. The long-line trolling process enables anglers to cover a lot of water pulling jigs of different sizes and colors until a daily pattern is determined.

Troll along the edge lines of drops in the

creek as well as the open, deeper water. Crappies often suspend at mid-depths over deep water and long-line trolling is a prime method to catch these fish.

This is an often-overlooked method to catch slab crappie during February and March.

BIG BASS ON THE PROWL

Bass make a major move in February, especially late in the month. Water temperature is a key to this movement but they'll be trending toward the shallow water.

Productive lures will morph from slow and deep lures to shallow water



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.

baits such as spinnerbaits, chatterbaits, bottom bumpers and shallow-running crankbaits.

The stump- and tree-infested water found throughout the upper end of Lake Marion and all-around Lake Moultrie offer a variety of targets. This month, these areas are beginning to produce excellent results.

The basic pattern by mid to late month is a pre-spawn pattern. And if water conditions are right, some of the biggest bass in the lake may get into shallow water spawning territory. Those that don't will be staging close to make a big push during March.

This is a great time to take a trophy bass. Get on these big bass now and follow them throughout March as they spread to shallow water targets in greater numbers.

SEEKING CURRENT

Striped bass make a move as the urge to spawn surges. The upper end of Lake Marion is a target because stripers seek moving water for the spawning process instead of shallow water like some other species.

Steve Pack at Packs Landing (803-452-5514) said stripers begin to arrive in the upper portion of the lake in February, but not in the big numbers seen during the peak spawning run during March and April.

"Most years we'll get some big stripers moving upstream in February," he said. "Patience is important. The striper bite is slower in terms of numbers of fish than later on. But the poten-

tial to take trophy fish is good using cut bait on the bottom around points and sandbars in the main river."

And that's not the only area stripers congregate at Santee Cooper. The Diversion Canal connecting the two lakes is also a prime target.

Capt. Leroy Suggs guides for stripers year-round. He said the current in the Diversion Canal is a natural attractant for stripers during February.

"Stripers move out of the deeper water and are attracted to the current in and around the Canal," he said. "Normally we have plenty of current during February and throughout the spring."

Suggs said fishing targets include holes or drops in the Canal along with points, pockets and underwater objects that create eddy currents.

Suggs (910-995-1168) said bucktails are great to work the shallows around points and pockets. Live blueback herring is his choice to fish around deep holes and underwater objects.

IT'S TIME TO GO

Whether targeting crappie, bass or stripers, go now to catch trophy fish from these species. ■

FEBRUARY FISHING

The weather can be brutal in February, but some days can be sunny and warm. It's not a problem with Santee's fishing guides, who fish from stable pontoon boats with roll-up walls and propane heaters on board.

TIGHT-LINE FOR KERR LAKE SLABS ➤

**Call Now to Schedule
Your Trailer Maintenance... Don't Wait!**

Capps TRAILERS.com Boat • Dump • Enclosed
Parts • Sales • Service Equipment • Utility

Hwy. 70E, Dover (5 miles east of Kinston), NC • 252-523-1038

ALUMA

All Aluminum Construction, Lightweight,
Maintenance Free, Torsion Axles, LED Lighting
Trailers for ATV, Equipment, Car Hauler,
Utility, Jet Skis and so much More



**Your Eastern NC
Trailer Headquarters!**

Too Cold To Fish? NOT IN SANTEE COOPER COUNTRY



SANTEE COOPER COUNTRY CALL FOR OUR TRAVEL GUIDE
803-854-2131 FOLLOW US ON 
FISHSANTEE.COOPERCOUNTRY.COM

TIGHT-LINE FOR SLABS

at Kerr Lake during February

F By Dusty Wilson
 or most outdoorsmen, February is just another cold month to get through while looking forward to spring. But to crappie, they feel the urge to head to the mouths of creeks, preparing to spawn. Guide Eddie Moody of Roxboro, N.C. takes full advantage of this knowledge.

"In February, crappies' instincts tell them that the spawn is coming. They're also following their grocery store. So a good indicator is when you see the shad moving. The crappie will start moving into the mouths of the creeks," said Moody (984-363-5256).

Moody prefers targeting February crappie in 12 to 16 feet of water. But he'll check water as deep as 20 feet early in the month, and as shallow as 7 feet toward the end of the month. He looks for the magic water temperature range of 55 to 58 degrees.

The upper end of the lake, Moody said, will see the hottest action first. The headwaters where the Staunton, Dan and Roanoke rivers meet will be a hotspot. And creeks like Buffalo and Bluestone will see early action as well. Anglers should concentrate on rocks and stumps, along with any type of wooden cover like brush piles or sunken debris.

TIGHT-LINING IS THE KEY

"Tight-lining will dominate," Moody said. "Fish will be moving slow, and you can dangle a bait in front of their face."

Moody likes running a spread of 8 to 10 rods with the boat moving at 1/2-mile an hour or slower. He

Tight-lining is the key to catching crappie at Kerr Lake this month.



Eddie Moody

BE A PART OF HISTORY IN THE MAKING!

GAMBLER

BASS BOATS ARE BACK!

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

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

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

Hat Creek Marine Corp. | 721 Hannah Dr | Santee, SC 29142 | USA | [f](https://www.facebook.com/GamblerBassBoats) | GamblerBassBoats.com

rigs up each rod with a 1/4-ounce weight, a leader of 12 to 24 inches, and a jighead in 1/32- or 1/64-ounce. Then he tips the jigheads with minnows. He likes using Bobby Garland lures in colors ranging from black and blue, chartreuse, and chartreuse and pink. On high pressure days he turns to red-colored lures.

He runs a mainline of 8-pound monofilament and uses leaders that are 6-pound test. ■

12 ISSUES OF *Carolina* **SPORTSMAN**[®]

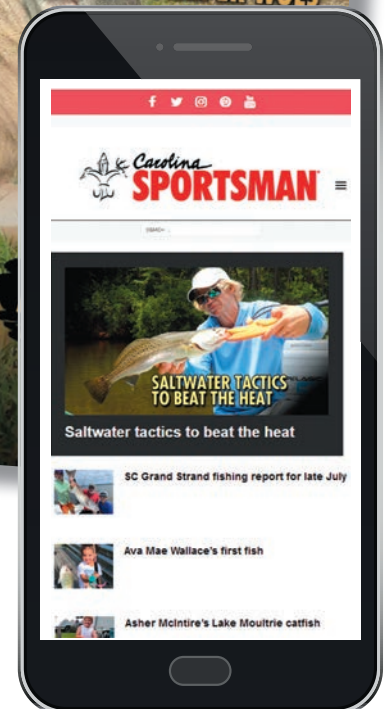
SUBSCRIBE TO NORTH & SOUTH CAROLINA'S TOP SOURCE FOR FISHING AND HUNTING INFORMATION

NEVER MISS
AN ISSUE

SUBSCRIBE TO GET OUR
MONTHLY PRINT MAGAZINE
AND FULL WEB ACCESS ON
ALL YOUR SMART DEVICES.

- FISHING HOTSPOTS
- HUNTING TACTICS
- LATEST MUST-HAVE GEAR
- EXPERT ADVICE

\$19.95
12 issues



To Subscribe call toll-free
1-855-224-1667

or for faster service visit

CarolinaSportsman.com/subscribe

www.CarolinaSportsman.com

Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery of first issue

February 2022 | Carolina Sportsman 27

SEE YOUR LOCAL DEALER FOR SPECIALS

OFFERED BY



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



■ HOOKED ON™ SUZUKI TECHNOLOGY



METICULOUSLY ENGINEERED
TO BE BETTER

SUZUKI'S LEAN BURN TECHNOLOGY

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



**THE
ULTIMATE
OUTBOARD MOTOR**

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



By Phillip Gentry

**HUNTING RABBITS
IS A CAROLINA
TRADITION.**

RUNNIN' RABBITS

Any great rabbit hunt is going to take place in the briars.

Phillip Gentry

Without question, **RABBIT HUNTING** is one of the most tradition-laden hunting activities in the Carolinas.

Many an experienced hunter can trace their beginnings to time spent in the woods and fields with friends and family, listening to the baying of the dogs, smelling the crispness of the cold morning air, feeling the weight and majesty of that first real gun, and learning under the watchful eyes of their elders. Those who have grown up with these experiences have memories they cherish often and forever.

Brian Tatham is one of those fortunate hunters who grew up in the full tradition of an outdoor family, hunting and fishing under the tutelage of his father. A native of Concord, N.C., Tatham's dad and grandfather were instrumental in raising him on hunting dogs and shotguns. Tatham said that rabbit hunting for him is a way to stay connected to his past and still enjoy the sport in the present.

"We rabbit hunted all over the Piedmont area of both

states," said Tatham. "And we still rabbit hunt pretty much the same way. Any great rabbit hunt is going to take place in the briars. The two keys to locating great rabbit habitat are cover and food."

In most situations, the Carolinas' Piedmont and Midlands regions will hold plenty of both. The bottomland areas and multitude of thick-growth briar patches offer plenty of new growth. This offers a combination of ready cover and available food.

"The best combination of rabbit hunting land is thick briar patches surrounded by young growth pines" said Tatham. "The pines offer some open areas to the hunters, both to set up standers and offering natural shooting lanes — pine rows, firebreaks and especially lots of edges."

BE PREPARED FOR CLOSE SHOTS >



Phillip Gentry

BE PREPARED FOR CLOSE SHOTS

Edges near thick cover are feeding grounds for rabbits and they will often hang up in the thicker grass before darting across an open area to escape the dogs. Savvy hunters have even been able to pick off stray rabbits walking into their stands or spotting rabbits that aren't being pressured by dogs and are just browsing in the edges.

The preferred tactic by Tatham and his regular group of rabbit hunters is traditional stand hunting. Once an area is designated for a hunt, standers set up in strategic locations around the perimeter of the area while dog drivers work behind the dogs and push the rabbits toward the perimeter of the area and the standers. The size of the area is determined by the number of standers in the group.

When stand hunting for rabbits, the standers need to be far enough apart for safe shooting but still close enough that rabbits can't slip between two hunters undetected.

"Distance is pretty similar to hunting a dove field," he said. "Some rabbit hunters may use larger calibers and ammo. But here in North Carolina, the best calibers are smaller, the shot size smaller, and open bores work better. With this much cover, hunters will likely get shots as close as 5 yards as rabbits tend to try to sneak by rather than bound way ahead of the dogs as

is typical with rabbit hunting in other areas."

As far as guns go, Tatham said most modern hunters gravitate toward a 12-gauge. But his preference is an over-and-under 20-gauge that he has been hunting with since he was a young man.

"I guess the best advice is to shoot what you're the most comfortable with," he said.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE DOGS

Speaking of preferences, short-legged beagles are preferred by Tatham and his hunting companions for their rabbit outings.

"For me, rabbit hunting is all about the dogs," said Tatham. "We use the old-style beagles. The smaller dogs have the ability to put it down in low gear. And when you see them coming full speed, they are really going no faster than walking speed."

A good pack of dogs will hunt together and work through the brush shoulder to shoulder. A well-balanced pack will work two or three dogs wide and will pull each other toward the scent. The owner of a pack can tell by the report of each individual dog what is going on and how the dogs are working a particular rabbit.

One mistake made by rabbit hunters is to overwork dogs, especially on warm days. The best conditions for beagles to work are cold, moist conditions where a dog's nose can pick up fresh scent and easily distinguish hot rabbit scent from old scent.



Traditional stand hunting still produces plenty of rabbits for Carolina hunters **OPPOSITE PAGE:** A six pack of dogs should be capable of going 100% for a half day of hunting, so long as the temperature isn't hot.

The ideal temperatures will be in the high 30s or low 40s — the cooler the weather stays, the longer a single pack of dogs can be effective. Cooler weather helps the dogs' endurance so they can last longer. On the other hand, rainy conditions remove scent and warm conditions wear the dogs down quicker and they won't hunt as well.

DRESS THE PART

A good pack of dogs should be able to work at 100% for ½ day, say 4 - 5 hours. If the hunt is scheduled to last all day, it's best to have two separate packs of dogs so that the pack can be changed out after lunch without overtaxing any of the dogs.

"A lot of hunters will run every dog they have," said Tatham. "In my experience, I like to run a six-pack at a time. Six dogs create a very competitive environment and each dog in the pack will push the others. That's another part of rabbit hunting that makes it special — the dogs love to hunt as much as the hunters do. They really enjoy it."

A heavy-duty pair of brush pants makes pushing through briar patches much easier work as well as a briar resistant jacket that won't get you bogged down. Tatham completes his rabbit hunting attire with a pair of rugged, lightweight boots.



"If you're running a pack of dogs, you're gonna cover as much ground as they do. And if there's any water around, you're going to be in it. So a pair of boots that's waterproof doesn't hurt either," he said. ■



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

GREENER PASTURES >

RABBIT FORECAST



Rabbit populations are reported to be stable, but loss of habitat is taking its toll on rabbit hunter participation.

Michael Hook is the small game coordinator for the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. Part of his annual wildlife surveys and studies includes keeping up with rabbit populations.

Hook said that SCDNR has been collecting rabbit hunter surveys since the early 1990's and compares each year's data with the previously collected information in order to gain an understanding of hunter participation and success.

"Over the past few years we have seen stable if not improving rabbit hunter success across the state. The latest data show a slight decline from previous years. But there are a lot of factors to consider when looking at this one statistic," said Hook. "The two biggest complaints we hear are a lack of rabbits on public lands and restricted access to private lands because most of those areas are leased for deer hunting."

State surveys measure the number of rabbits jumped per hour and the number of rabbits harvested per hour. From recent surveys, around 75% of the rabbits jumped are harvested.

As for species, the majority of rabbits harvested in South Carolina based on the most recent survey were cottontail rabbits at 93%, distantly followed by swamp rabbits at 4% and marsh rabbits at 3%.

Hook reminded landowners that proper management of land, particularly when clearing and cutting crops is to leave some areas unharvested for wildlife as well as creating edges.

"It seems the most common practice is to bush hog corner to corner. But that is not the best practice for small game like rabbits and quail," he said. "Ideally, we'd like to see the edges left and some areas remaining so that these small game animals have some food and cover throughout the entire season. ■

GREENER PASTURES

Jeff Burleson

Many sportsmen lease land for hunting, but purchasing land is an even better option for many reasons.



Jeff Burleson

PURCHASE YOUR OWN PIECE OF HEAVEN

BUY YOURSELF SOME HUNTING PROPERTY

Hunters across the country are steadily looking for a tract of land to hunt. Whether for a new place to hunt or to replace a lost lease, hunters are always on the hunt for hunting land. More and more hunters are shifting gears and purchasing hunting land over just the typical annual land lease. Land leases are becoming less available and purchasing your own piece of heaven is the solid method to end uncertainty and to invest in future wildlife and economic returns as a bonus.

Every year, hunters that get unsatis-

fied with their current place, in need of another tract, or just need a parcel to hunt, will scour the countryside looking for an available tract of land with a good opportunity to take wildlife. Hunting land is something that seems to be in great supply. But for many hunters, finding a tract of hunting land that isn't already leased can be an uphill battle in most areas of the state. Hunters must have good connections with rural landowners and a good track record to secure a good hunting lease, or any hunting lease for that matter. And then, these leases can be stripped away for any num-

ber of reasons.

At the end of the day, every sportsman needs their own piece of heaven and the best way to secure a parcel for the future is through land ownership. Of course, land ownership isn't always possible for many hunters. At least it may seem that way. For the amount of money hunters invest in land leases year after year, land ownership is a possibility. Sure, hunters typically will have to settle for fewer land acres to hunt with land ownership over leasing.

Investments in the land are more permanent. And owning land over leasing offers many financial incentives. Landowners have the opportunity to receive gains from timber sales, pine straw sales, farm leases, and mining opportunities to offset purchase and maintenance costs. Farm leases may seem like small potatoes for landowners when the payouts are 50-100 per acre. But farmers that plant soybeans, peanuts, and corn, can provide an

MARCH

WATER LILIES PLANTED

JULY

ADULT LILIES FULLY GROWN

OCTOBER

POND FULL OF DUCKS

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

See Us On **Amazing Banana Water Lily, Reborn.mp4**

DYNAMITE DUCK FOOD
(843) 240-0530

www.BANANAWATERLILIES.com
www.FROSTWATERFOWL.com



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.



excellent food source to hunt over. Hunters didn't have to pay a dime for these large food plots. And deer surely love these huge piles of food readily available to consume.

Timber proceeds can be a substantial income opportunity while improving wildlife habitat at the same time. Forest stands can be thinned or clear cut through strategic planning to provide income, to improve forest productivity, and for wildlife habitat improvement.

Disturbances in the forest from a logging operation will expose soils and provide additional sunlight to the forest floor that will improve food availability for many types of wildlife species, including deer, turkey, rabbit, quail, and many other non-game species.

Permanent landowners also can benefit financially from federal and state cost-share programs for conducting wildlife and forest habitat improvement practices. Afforestation, reforestation, prescribed burning, food plot establishment, waterfowl impoundment establishment, and disking are a few on a long list of permitted actions that can receive financial assistance as a landowner. Land ownership isn't just about forking out money. Owning land brings financial benefits that are right in line with what many hunters will want to do anyway. Just another benefit that landowners can receive from having deeded real estate.

How great would it be to have a nice fishpond on the property too and then earn money to build one? Typically, building a pond can be quite costly and then there is a massive pile of dirt to find something to do with. Yet, landowners may be able to partner with a mining company for mutual benefit. Roadway

STOP LEASING AND BUY YOUR OWN LAND

Specialized lenders are available to help sportsmen purchase their own land, which can lead to income opportunities as well as great hunting and fishing for years to come.

and commercial contractors are typically looking for fill dirt for large construction projects. In fact, fill dirt is generally in high demand. Landowners can get paid handsomely for their dirt while receiving a nice fishpond at the same time. But these fill dirt opportunities can only work when the tract is in the right place and suitable material is available. ■

FINANCING AVAILABLE

Good hunting tracts come available routinely, but usually don't remain available very long on the open market. Hunters looking to purchase land should initially figure out how much they are comfortable spending on a tract of land. Land can be financed with specialized land lenders and with a substantial down payment.

MAKE MONEY WHILE BUILDING A POND

Many land owners sell dirt to commercial contractors, and in the process end up with their own fishing ponds. This is a great way to put your land to work for you, and to increase your outdoor opportunities on that same land.



Jeff Burleson

While some residential agents will list land occasionally, the best place to find land is from a dedicated land broker. These land brokerages are much different than your typical residential real estate companies. Land brokerages customize their marketing platforms to meet the needs of land buyers on a local, regional, and national level.

One of the best real estate companies serving the Carolinas for land is Mossy Oak Properties. Mossy Oak Properties agents are hunters, foresters, wildlife enthusiasts, fishermen, and outdoorsmen that can relate to a hunter's desires. Their website at www.landandfarmsrealty.com has been specifically customized for assisting land buyers in finding their perfect hunting property.

Hunting land seems to be dwindling across the Nation and is being replaced with subdivisions, golf courses, and other development. And hunting leases are temporary and always subject to re-lease.

Many families that have leased out their land for generations will halt when grandad or grandma passes. Basically, the heirs want to cash out leaving the hunters out in the cold. No doubt, hunting land is becoming more and more scarce and hunters that are relying totally on a hunting lease may find themselves scouring the county for an available hunting property to hunt. Tract ownership may be a long-term financial commitment, but that comes with numerous potential revenue streams on the right tracts of land. And having your own piece of heaven is the only way to secure a sufficient hunting tract for the future. ■



WINTER IS A GREAT TIME TO YANK A PECK OF YELLOW PERCH.

By Mike Marsh

YANKING YELLOW PERCH

Most anglers catch yellow perch by happenstance, as targets of opportunity when they are fishing for other species. However, during the chilly days of late winter to early spring, yellow perch begin to spawn.

Anglers who are fishing for crappie sometimes catch them because they eat the same small minnows, worms and crickets intended for crappie. They also attack crappie jigs and other small lures.

Like most anglers, fisheries biologists from the Carolinas do not finely focus their attention on yellow perch. Rather, they catch them during surveys of multiple species, usually during summer months. But for the dedicated perch-jerker, fisheries biologists in both states have turned up some consistencies that can help them target this tastiest-of-all panfish.

NORTH CAROLINA

SINGLETARY LAKE

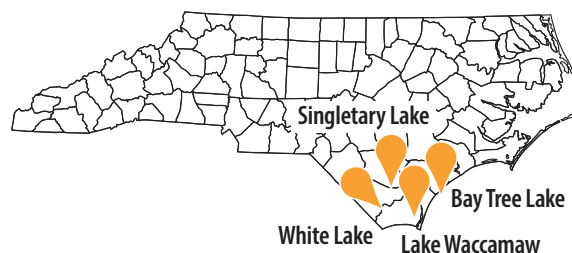
Singletary Lake, located near Elizabethtown, is a 572-acre Carolina Bay Lake. Like most bay lakes, it produces yellow perch. The low pH (high acidity) water of bay lakes results in lower abundance of other, more popular species including largemouth bass and crappie, said Singletary State Park Superintendent Lane Garner.

“The lake has yellow perch, chain pickerel, blue-spotted sunfish and bowfin, not species most anglers are interested in catching,” Garner said. “Our staff enjoy fishing and we catch yellow perch weighing up to a pound. But most are 5 to 8 inches. Red worms are the best bait. Anglers can fish anywhere there is a walking trail or from the pier.”

Fishing and boating were once limited to days when groups were not using the group camping facilities. However, 3 years ago, it opened to the public anytime during park hours. Anglers can launch small boats, kayaks and canoes at the spillway. But the park has no dedicated access.

BAY TREE LAKE

Garner said Baytree Lake access is more difficult. The access road to the 609-acre lake is gated. A four-wheel drive vehicle is needed to access the trail from N.C. 53. The lock combination is changed monthly. Anglers must request the combination from the park office and inform them anytime they enter the area. Trailering a boat is difficult, so anglers use paddle craft.



Yellow perch are abundant along the edges, along with largemouth bass and bluegills. Small lures cast along the bank and to cypress trees will light up yellow perch.

WHITE LAKE

Singletary Park also administers 1,065-acre White Lake. Its yellow perch population recovered from a 2018 fish kill caused by a municipal alum application aimed at clearing the water. The naturally low-pH bay lake now has a pH of 6.5 that can reach 8.5 in summer when powerboats stir the water and lawn fertilization increases the lake's fertility said WRC Dist. 4 fisheries biologist Kyle Rachels. The changing pH has resulted in excellent fishing for largemouth bass. And so far, yellow perch are still abundant.

“We are finding schools of 50 to 100 yellow perch during our electrofishing surveys,” Rachels said. “The schools are mostly in open water, where trolling with lures is the best way to catch them. They are usually smaller fish. But we see some really big ones. Anglers also catch them by casting lures and bait rigs along the bank and areas with aquatic vegetation.”

JONES LAKE ➤

Yellow perch are colorful, fun to catch, and great for filling the cooler. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Yellow perch are so aggressive they can be caught two-at-one time. Justin Marsh caught these yellow perch at White Lake. They struck a trolled Rapala minnow.



Mike Marsh

JONES LAKE

Jones Lake is a 2,208-acre, low-pH bay lake. Jones Lake Park Superintendent Shane Freeman said yellow perch are abundant.

"I have seen anglers catch 12-inch yellow perch, but most are 5 to 7 inches," Freeman said. "They also catch bullheads, chain pickerel and fliers. The best place is the fishing pier. But anglers can fish from the bank anywhere except the designated swim area and canoe-rental pier. Not many anglers come to fish specifically, but are here for a picnic or are staying at the campground."

LAKE WACCAMAW

At 8,936 acres, Lake Waccamaw, the largest bay lake, has excellent fishing for many species due to a neutral pH resulting from an underwater limestone outcropping. While the yellow perch are scattered most of the year, their early spring spawning runs yield plentiful catches.

The best place to fish is the dam, where a foot bridge with a fishing area was built a couple of years ago. If the water

is flowing deep enough, yellow perch swim over the dam to reach the lake to spawn. The fishing can be excellent for anglers who fish with float rigs baited with red worms, night crawlers and minnows.

WACCAMAW, LUMBER, AND BLACK RIVERS

In the acidic, coastal black water rivers, anglers fishing for crappie with minnows or jigs are often surprised to catch yellow perch. But yellow perch may strike many natural baits and lures.

"When they are in the lakes, yellow perch tend to school. But in the rivers, they are more widely distributed," Rachels said. "However, river fish are usually larger fish and we catch many of them in our electrofishing surveys. The best rivers are the Waccamaw, Black and Lumber. In the Lumber River, we catch some weighing a pound, with Big Swamp a great place to catch them."

SOUTH CAROLINA ➤



Mike Marsh



Tipping a jig with a live minnow is a good tactic for catching yellow perch. **ACROSS SPREAD:** Capt. Butch Foster of YEAH RIGHT CHARTERS shows off a nice stringer of yellow perch he caught at White Lake.



DESTINATION INFORMATION

HOW TO GET THERE — Yellow perch begin to spawn in late winter and early spring when water temperatures make other higher-profile species lethargic. Full moon periods in February and March are the best times to fish.

BEST TECHNIQUES — Yellow perch strike red worms, night crawlers and minnows. They also attack jigs, beetle-grub spinners, spoons and small crankbaits. Float rigs and bottom rigs, as well as baited jigs and beetle-grub spinners, work well for anglers fishing from boats and from the bank. Trolling with small lures in yellow perch patterns and jigging with small spoons are great tactics when the fish are schooling in lakes.

MAPS — Locations and maps of boating access areas for these water bodies are available at the NCWRC website, ncwildlife.org and the SCDNR website, dnr.sc.gov.

For maps, fishing information and contact information for North Carolina State Parks, visit ncparks.gov.

ATTENTION Mine Operators & Independent Contractors

Your Complete Mine Safety And Compliance Resource

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



Palmetto State Training

843-569-6872

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

www.PalmettoStateTraining.com

SOUTH CAROLINA

South Carolina's stretch of the Waccamaw River also yields yellow perch. SCNDR Region 2 fisheries biologist Jason Marsik said they turn up in electrofishing surveys.

"The majority of the population is from Conway downstream to the Bucksport area," Marsik said. "We also collected some around the Wacca Wache Marina. There is a small population. But I am not sure if there are enough yellow perch to target them unless you know what you are looking for. It's probably more of a bycatch situation when anglers are fishing for crappie or other species with minnows and worms."

BUSHY PARK RESERVOIR

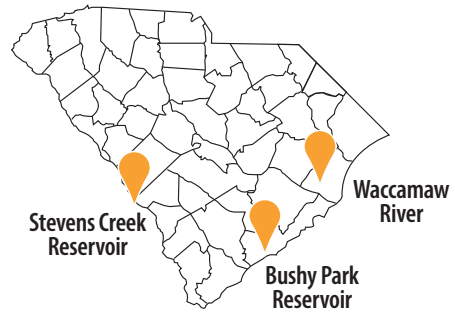
Bushy Park Reservoir is an 800-acre tidal lake near Goose Creek. The reservoir is fed by the Cooper River, Foster Creek and Back River. While the water level is affected by the tide, the dam-and-canal system creates more of a freshwater ecosystem than that area of the Cooper River, which is brackish. SCNDR

fisheries biologist Levi Kaczka said he has caught yellow perch in the lake.

"In Region 4, you are liable to find yellow perch just about anywhere," Kaczka said. "You might catch them in Lake Moultrie or



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



Lake Marion. But Bushy Park is as promising a place as there is in that part of the state. We have not surveyed that area. But I have fished a lot recreationally and I have seen some larger perch caught. Right out from the boat landing the bottom drops down to about 40 feet. It has a lot of vegetation coming out from the bank that attracts yellow perch. So anglers should fish the vegetation line with crickets, Beetle Spins, redworms - anything that gets down into the lower part of the water column."

STEVENS CREEK RESERVOIR

Located near North Augusta, downstream of J. Strom Thurmond Reservoir, 2,400-acre Stevens Creek Reservoir is a long, riverine lake that impounds the Savannah River and Stevens Creek. SCDNR Region 3 fisheries biologist Jason Bettinger said he was surprised when he saw anglers fishing for yellow perch.

"We were doing some other work and all of a sudden we saw a lot of boats grouped together and the anglers were catching yellow perch," Bettinger said. "The best way to target them is by



Small jigs, Beetle Spins and float rigs that are common for bream and crappie anglers are also great for catching yellow perch.

fishing with crappie minnows on jigs or Beetle Spins.”

Stevens Creek has four ramps. The best one for getting to the perch action is the Corps of Engineers ramp just downstream of Thurmond Dam. Bettinger said the clear water coming off the dam creates a dedicated fishery in cold weather. Anglers fish the main channel, but the flow volume depends upon the dam releases and that can impact the fishing. In the lower lake, the Stevens Creek area is difficult to navigate because it is shallow and stumpy. ■

SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY >



YELLOW PERCH PROFILE

Anglers call yellow perch (*Perca flavescens*) many names including redfin, redfin perch, raccoon perch and raccoon bream, deriving the names from dark bars resembling the bands around the tail of a raccoon and from the brilliant scarlet fins of the fish during spawning season.

Females tend to be larger and are most likely to be found in large concentrations during the spawning period. Males form very large schools during the spawn, but tend to be smaller fish. In rivers, yellow perch are more scattered than in lakes, but are usually larger individuals. ■



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

Carolina
SPORTSMAN

BACK ISSUES

shop.sportsmannetwork.com/collections/carolina-sportsman

Public waters are perfect locales for catching fish from a kayak, but their launches are often primitive.



DON'T FORGET PUBLIC LAND WATERS

Phillip Gentry

KAYAKS ARE THE PERFECT CRAFT FOR SMALLER PUBLIC LAKES

When most sportsmen think about public land, the thought that comes to mind most often is, well, land as well as hunting. The all-too-often neglected counterpart to public land is water. Public land waters come in the form of ponds, small reservoirs, swamps, and a myriad of flowing waters ranging from tidal creeks to major rivers.

Access to these aquatic areas may be as easy as paved parking spaces and boat launches to gravel roads that head off into the woods. Or it may be a vague footpath with little or no marking that leads to some distant water.

Public waters on these lands often get an undeserved bad rap for being over-pressured. In some cases, public land waters do get more fishing pressure than others. However, considering that every major reservoir in the country is technically public water and at one time

or another regularly produces excellent fishing, launching your kayak into a lesser known body of public water doesn't seem like a bad idea.

DON'T FORGET PARKS AND FORESTS

Both Carolinas have a myriad of state parks that are located in nearly every corner of both states. In many cases, state parks utilize larger bodies of water for their recreational purposes. In other cases, they may offer access to more remote bodies of water available only through state park-owned lands.

These waters are often managed more stringently than others. Special creel and size limits are often instituted to reduce harvest and keep fish stocks high. The types of bait and number of rods allowed to be used may also be restricted.

National or state forest service lands are also options. Access to these waters may

be more remote than state park lands.

To locate some of these bodies of water, the best place to start is a state or NFS map of the managed land. Little may be published about the type or quality of fishing. So in some cases, you'll need to vet these waters by trial and error.

You may find it useful to call or visit the local forest ranger's office to inquire about possible restrictions to these areas and ask about access to the water.

Vehicles may only be allowed in designated areas on state or National Forest Service lands. So if you intend to launch a kayak into one of these areas, a non-motorized cart or trailer may save a lot

of strain getting to the water. ■



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

WATER DISTRICT LAKES

Another great source of kayak fishing action that sometimes gets overlooked includes water district lakes. These are smaller bodies of water used to store raw water before it is treated and supplied to surrounding areas for consumption.

Water district lakes and kayaks go hand-in-hand as the water districts or other entities that own the lakes love to promote the green way of life, especially if the water is being used for public consumption. The other beautiful thing about these lakes is that if power boats are allowed on the water, it's typically with a horsepower restriction.

Another great detail about water district lakes is that all of them host pretty decent fishing for a number of species. Some lakes may even further restrict creel limits beyond what is allowed by the NCWRC or the SCDNR. That's a win-win for catch-and-release anglers.

Water district lakes may range in size from a couple of hundred acres to a couple of thousand acres. But most in the Carolinas settle between the 400- and 900-acre range. These lakes tend to be immune from seasonal turnover or winter drawdown that frequently plagues larger impoundments this time of year. ■

BEST BETS

NORTH CAROLINA

WHAT — Yellow Perch

WHERE — Singletary Lake State Park

HOW — Drift live minnows under corks near the bottom around offshore structure

LAUNCH — Singletary Lake has a designated ramp and pier area within the state park. The park office is located at 6707 N.C. 53 Hwy. East Kelly, NC

INSIDER TIP — Singletary Lake State Park, located near Elizabethtown, is one of the deepest Carolina bays in southeastern North Carolina. It serves as a group camp and retreat with dormitory cabins and restaurant-quality mess hall accommodations. It has access to swimming, canoeing, fishing and hiking.

SOUTH CAROLINA

WHAT — Largemouth Bass

WHERE — Lakes Robinson and Cunningham, Greer SC

HOW — During the winter, largemouth bass will hold in the main lake basin areas, suspending to eat schools of threadfin shad. Jigging spoons, deepwater blade baits and other vertically fished lures are productive

LAUNCH — To apply for a permit, visit the Lake Warden's office at Lake Robinson: 2544 Mays Bridge Road, Greer SC 29651

INSIDER TIP — Both lakes also have healthy populations of crappie and white perch. Anglers can expect to catch a mixed bag during the winter months.

HEAD FOR THE MOUNTAINS >

ICEMULE CLASSIC MEDIUM COOLER

Some public land launch areas require hand-carting your kayak, so don't weight yourself down with a heavy cooler. The ICEMULE Classic medium cooler carries like a backpack so your hands are free for other gear.

It holds ice for 24 hours and the medium size is plenty big enough to chill your drinks and food for an extended trip.

The ICEMULE Classic is available in other sizes, but the medium is perfect for hitting public waters with the 'yak.

This isn't just a bag you toss ice in, it's one of the best coolers on the market thanks to its ultra-sturdy construction and unique insulation. It comes in seven colors, including blaze orange which is always a good color to have with you when in the wild.

MSRP is \$69.95.

Available at: www.icemulecoolers.com



KAMMOK MANTIS UL

Public lands that offer fishing often also offer camping. It's a great way to get an early start on the water and to have a convenient place to rest once the fishing is done. The Kammok Mantis UL hammock tent is the perfect companion.

This tent includes everything you need for a bug-free, rain-protected great night of sleep, including the strapping system that does no damage to trees.

Weighing in at around 2 pounds, the Mantis UL packs away in its own sack. It's so light and compact you won't even know it's there until you're ready to rest. And if you're kayaking from one camping spot to the next, it won't weigh you down or get in the way while on the water.

The system comes with everything you need, including stakes, straps, bug net and rain fly. It holds up to 300 pounds and is available in three colors.

MSRP is \$259.

Available at: www.kammok.com





BETTER CASTING MEANS MORE FISH IN THE CREEL

THE RIGHT GEAR MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE

The starting point for anyone interested in learning the nuances of fly casting requires the proper gear for the job. The rod must be suitable for the fish being pursued. It also means selecting a line that is right for the job.

For beginners, a five-weight fly rod with a weight forward fly line is a good choice. An 8½-foot rod would be a good selection. As you advance, a lighter weight or shorter rod may provide a greater challenge and be more suitable. But the 8½-foot, five-weight is a good starting point.

In the early days of fly casting, most fly lines used were level lines. They were the same diameter and weight throughout the length. Anglers have plenty of choices now.

MODERN FLY LINE CONFIGURATIONS:

- **Weight forward** – Heavier and larger

diameter near the tip.

- **Double taper** – Suitable for small waters and good for roll casts.
- **Level** – Least desirable for most uses.
- **Specialty tapers**

FINESSE IT

The mechanics of fly casting is fairly simple. The rod is flexible and stores energy that the caster must utilize to be efficient. It is similar to a bow in archery. As it flexes, energy is stored, but that energy must be properly channeled to result in a successful cast.

In spinning or bait casting, the weight of the lure carries the line to the termination point of the cast. In fly fishing, the line carries a very light lure to that same point. Fly casting generally takes more finesse and good timing than the other two.

Fly casting for warm water species is more forgiving than casting for moun-

tain trout. However, the better caster will excel in both areas. Warm water species are more often pursued on open water where technical casting is not usually required. But the ability to cast under overhanging limbs, cast into the wind, or deliver the fly delicately is a plus.

Fly casting is about delivering the fly in a manner that simulates an insect. Several casts are essential to fly rodding.

USEFUL CASTS:

- **False cast** – Use this cast to learn the rhythm of fly casting. Do not use this cast excessively. Fish can't bite a fly that is not on the water.



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.

Practice will make any fly angler a better caster, which will result in more fish making it to the creel.



- **Upstream mend** – Use to provide “drag-free” drifts in moving water.
- **Roll cast** – Useful in tight conditions..
- **Steeple cast** – Use when low brush is behind caster.
- **Reach cast** – Similar to upstream mend, but performed while the line is in the air.
- **Relocation cast** – Applies when the re-location of the fly is desired and requires no false casting.
- **Roll snap pick-up** – Execute a roll cast and perform a back-cast while the fly is in the air.
- **Double haul cast** – Excellent for casting into a heavy wind. Stripping the line toward the reel as the fly line turns over during the back cast and the forward cast accelerates the fly line speed, thereby increasing distance and control of the fly.

LOAD THE ROD

Before you start to cast, be sure that you have a length of fly line out of the rod tip that is approximately equal to the length of the rod. This will serve to load the rod and take advantage of the previously

Landing a fly delicately on the water is an art that leaves fish undisturbed and entices them into biting.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT:

Refining your casting technique will result in improvements in fish response. Fly-casting is a skill that is within the capabilities of any reasonably coordinated individual. It is only a matter of knowledge and practice.

mentioned energy as the rod flexes.

During the initial cast, you should direct the fly toward a spot about 3 feet above the water. This will allow the fly to settle onto the water delicately, minimizing disturbance so the fish will not be startled.

Fishing for cold water species in running water creates challenges for casting that anglers must master. The goal is to accomplish a “dead drift.”

With the exception of caddis flies that may skitter across the water, most flies drift freely on the water without creating ripples or drag.

A good instructional resource for new fly casters would be the late Lefty Kreh’s book, “Fly Casting Fundamentals.” ■



L. Woodrow Ross



CHEROKEE RUN
◀ Hunting Lodge ▶

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



Trophy Managed
Whitetail on the
Great Pee Dee River



HOME OF THE 600 LB
"GREY GHOST"

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

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

704-301-7950 • eatsleephunt.com

SEEKING GIANTS





FEBRUARY IS PRIME TIME FOR GIANT BLUEFIN TUNA.

By Jeff Burleson

February is arguably one of the coldest months of the year in the Northern Hemisphere. Inshore anglers are squeezing a few reds and trout out of the backcountry waters. And most offshore anglers head to the Gulf Stream in search of a rip-roaring wahoo, bull dolphin, or chunky blackfin tuna.

The winter months are fantastic to catch a mixed bag of species. But anglers looking to challenge the king-of-all finned opponents will venture to the Outer Banks of North Carolina to wrestle with a giant bluefin tuna.

Out of every fish on the planet, bluefin tuna win the top position for international fame. That's for several reasons, from extraordinary payouts at the dock to being the celebrity focus on Nat Geo's Wicked Tuna TV show. Massive bluefins bless anglers all across New England's shores. But Carolina anglers don't have to travel halfway up the continent to get a shot at one of these giants because North Carolina's Outer Banks offers excellent access to the bluefin's migratory path.

Bluefin tuna are highly pelagic fishes with extraordinary migration routes across the globe. The Atlantic bluefin have been classified into two major groups based on their migratory patterns and spawning destinations.

Capt. Kevin Sneed of Rigged and Ready Fishing Charters and Rigged and Ready Tackle in Holden Beach, N.C. is an avid bluefin tuna angler. He has continued success each year along the North Carolina coastline.

BLUEFIN TUNA ARE HEADING SOUTH

Sneed said the first group of fish arrives in October/November and originates from the Mediterranean. The second group arrives after the first of the year and originates from the North Atlantic. Both groups of fish are traveling south toward the Gulf of Mexico. Unlike many other species, bluefin tuna are warm blooded and can efficiently adapt to the cold weather conditions in winter. But the bait and spawning grounds in the Gulf of Mexico are important for reproduction and fueling migratory travels.

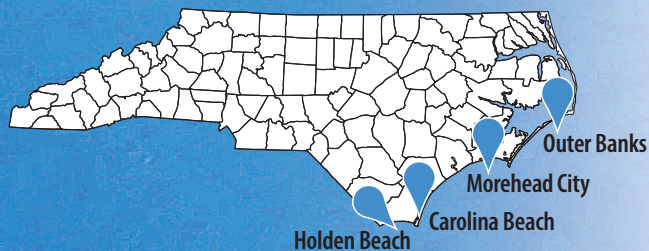
"The fish migrate to the waters off the Outer Banks to gorge on menhaden, bluefish, and whatever else they encounter," said Sneed (910-448-3474). "We first start catching them in late October and early November through the late winter."

North Carolina's coastline is quite unique compared to the rest of the Eastern Seaboard. And it is a destination for these massive fishes each and every year. Sneed travels north from his home in Holden Beach, but the fish can be caught all up and down the state's coast.

"The waters off Carolina Beach, Wrightsville Beach, Morehead City, and all the way to the top of the Outer Banks are great places to fish for bluefin. The huge schools of menhaden come down the coast traveling 5-10 miles per day," he said.

Early in the season Sneed fishes mostly off Onslow Bay near Morehead City but will shift toward the upper end of the Outer Banks out of Manteo during the coldest days of winter.

GO HEAVY ON THE TACKLE ➤



GO HEAVY ON THE TACKLE

“We head to the break 40 to 50 miles offshore out of Pirates Cove Marina right where the Labrador Current and the Gulf Stream current meet,” he said.

The intersection of these two currents provides ideal conditions for the North Atlantic group of bluefin to fuel their southerly travels. Typically, this area will have bait and adequate water temperatures.

In the early season, Sneed will slow troll live menhaden and bluefish similar to how he fishes for king mackerel, but with entirely different gear options. He hooks the live bait on an 8 - 10/0 Owner Mutu offset circle hook behind an entire string of heavy gear options made for giant opponents. He uses Reel Easy's Custom Trident Tuna Rods, Shimano Tiagra 130s rigged with 800 yards of 200-lb test Hollow-core braid, and 250 yards of 150-lb. Momoi Diamond Fluorocarbon.

“My setup may be a little overkill. But you have the potential to catch a 1,500-pound fish,” he said.

In the late season off Manteo, Sneed will switch over to ballyhoo on a keel-weighted Joe Shute Lure if live bait isn't available. He would still prefer live bait but finding it in February can become a challenge for offshore expeditions.

Nearshore, Sneed will find bluefin set up along the shoals that are funneling southerly migrations of menhaden or shad.

FIND THE TEMPERATURE BREAKS

“The bluefin will set up on the tips of these shoals and gorge on the menhaden when they are rolling through in massive schools. It's almost like these bluefin are pre-programmed to be there every year right when these massive groups of menhaden are migrating south along these shoals,” he said.

When fishing further offshore, he finds bluefin during the migration routes similar to where offshore anglers find other pelagic fishes in winter right where temperature breaks are present and bait is available. The bluefin are migrating along the Labrador Current and Gulf Stream. And a good accumulation of baitfish will pool these massive giants together.

Sneed trolls a multi-rod setup with an outrigger 250 yards back, a medium line, and a flat line with a 2- to 3-pound head-hooked bluefish.

“We put the circle hook in the head of the bluefish so he swims down and we get a lot of bites on that flat line,” he said.

Bluefin tuna fishing is in an entirely different league with stout gear and a long list of permits and licenses required. In order to target bluefin tuna, anglers must have a N.C. commercial fishing license, a highly migratory species permit with a sail endorsement, and a P-Number on the boat. But this enables anglers to catch and keep one of these



Brandon Sauls



Kevin Sneed



Kevin Sneed

LEFT: Downriggers, stout rods, and high-quality reels are all important pieces of the bluefin tuna puzzle. **ABOVE, LEFT:** February is one of the top months to catch giant bluefin tuna off the Carolina coast. **ABOVE:** Seeing giants like this one being weighed in is a regular sighting in February at North Carolina marinas. **BELOW:** The fruits of labor for a day of giant bluefin hunting.



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

massive fishes. Recreational anglers can keep one fish per day as long as it is under 73 inches in length.

“It’s a lot like king mackerel fishing until you hook up and then the fight is on after that,” Sneed said.

Fishing for these giants is definitely a different animal. When an angler battles with a fish two to three times their size, it can be the battle of a lifetime. ■

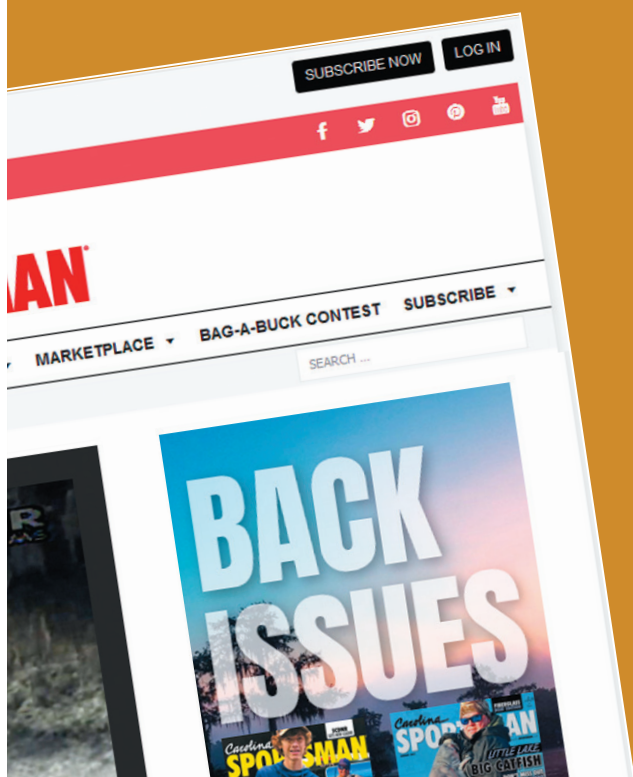
TAG A GIANT FOR RESEARCH ➤



ARE YOU A SPORTSMAN SUBSCRIBER?

then you are already a member!

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



GO SPORTSMAN:
CAROLINASPORTSMAN.COM



SEEKING GIANTS!



TAG A GIANT FOR RESEARCH

Most giant bluefin tuna weigh more than the angler catching them — sometimes much more.

Bluefin Tuna anglers contribute millions of dollars annually to the world's economy. The deep-red meat is a delicacy around the globe and especially within the Far East when sometimes one fish can bring in over \$100,000 at market. But sustainability of this highly migratory species is the responsibility of the world and global research is required to study them. In 1995, The Ocean Foundation created the Tag-A-Giant (TAG) project to study movements of northern bluefin tuna from around the world.

The program uses sophisticated electronic tags to study the movements of these fishes. Nearly 2,000 bluefin tuna have been tagged from more than 15 countries. The tagging data allows scientists to better understand their entire life cycles to be able to make better management decisions worldwide.

The tags are internal tags with the capability to record light transmission, ambient temperature of the water, body temperature, and water pressure. Scientists utilize this data through a series of complex equations to determine sunrise/sunset, when a fish eats, oceanography of the region, and geographic location. Since these fish don't surface, GPS technology isn't beneficial for these fish.

The Tag-A-Giant Program has tagged many bluefin tuna off the North Carolina coast over the years with notable recaptures.

A 250-pound fish was tagged and released off the Atlantic Beach Pier and was recaptured four years later in Greece where it weighed a whopping 650 pounds.

Bluefin tuna are some of the most interesting fish species in the world and in time scientists will gain more information about these fish from supporting anglers, sponsors, and organizations dedicated to these grand species. ■

GSi OUTDOORS PINNACLE PRO

Camp stoves are bulky, hard to clean, and never roomy enough for multiple pots and pans. Or at least they used to be. The GSi Outdoors Pinnacle Pro camp stove eliminates those negatives with its sleek design, stainless finish, and non-stick boil-over tray.

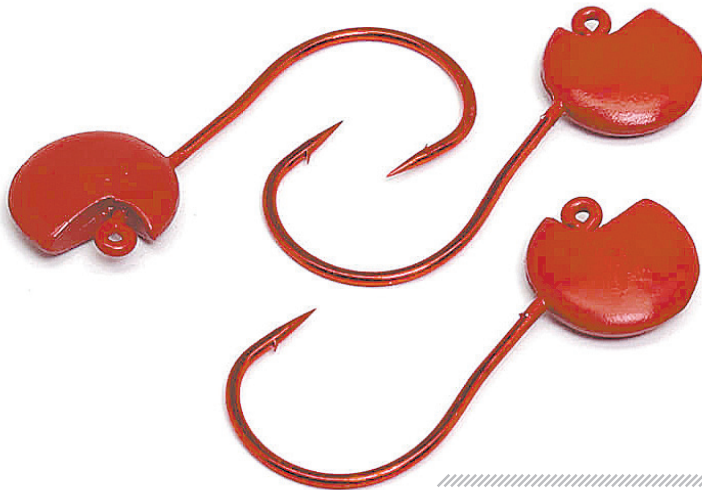
When not in use, it folds, and folds, and folds until it's out of the way. When it's time to cook, the design allows the full use of both burners, thanks in part to windscreens that do their job without getting in the way.

The dual starters are a nice touch, and the flexible braided propane hose allows the propane bottle to sit behind the stove, saving valuable food prep area.

The 11,000 BTU dual burners will have the whole camp fed pronto. The retracting legs and space-saving design mean you'll take it along everywhere.

MSRP: \$240

**For more info, visit:
gsioutdoors.com**



GAMAKATSU WACKY HEAD

Gamakatsu's Wacky Head jig is a uniquely-designed jig that will entice even the wariest of biters into striking. The side-to-side rolling action created by the flat-shaped head is too much for fish to resist.

The Wacky Head comes in a red epoxy head with short-shank, wide gap hooks. It's available in three sizes: 1/32-ounce, 1/6-ounce, and 1/8-ounce.

Add this to your tackle bag and show the fish something a little bit different next time you're on the water.

MSRP: \$8.66

**For more info, visit:
gamakatsu.com**

GAMO SWARM MAGNUM .22 AIR RIFLE

This air rifle is a squirrel hunters dream. Shooting .22 caliber pellets at 1300 fps, and featuring its Whisper Fusion noise-dampening technology and Rapid Reload 10-shot pellet magazine, you'll be shooting your limit of bushytails quickly and quietly.

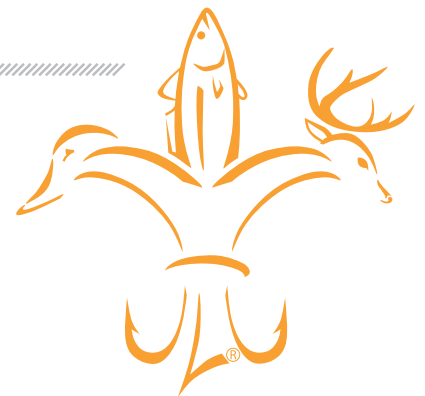
It's got high-visibility iron sights, but also comes with a fog-proof and shockproof 3-9x40 scope with mounting hardware.

cells, ensuring comfortable shooting. And the Recoil Reducing Rail absorbs shock waves, virtually eliminating recoil stress to the scope.

This gun weighs less than 7 pounds and is a dream to shoot.

MSRP: \$320

**For more info, visit:
gamousa.com**



The ShockWave Absorber recoil pad features three removable absorption

The Bimini twist is a great fishing knot for offshore, nearshore and inshore anglers.

THE BIMINI TWIST

LEARN TO TIE THIS USEFUL KNOT

Chris Burrows

It isn't possible to state what the "most important knot in fishing" is. Instead, a slew of knots can be adapted into different styles of fishing. Good anglers can quickly and consistently tie the ones that work best for them as they chase their target species. In essence, you don't have to know all of them. You just have to be good with the ones that you do know.

One mistruth about knots is that some retain 100% of their line's breaking strength when tied correctly. This simply does not compute. The very act of tying any knot in your line will weaken it to some degree.

Some knots, however, are better than others. In my angling experience when it comes to line strength retention, no knot beats a good, old-fashioned, well-tied Bimini twist.

GOOD FOR ALL SPECIES

No matter what type of line I am tying,

what species I'm after, or where I am fishing, I find myself using this knot just about every time I hit the water.

The Bimini twist was developed by big-game trolling anglers who needed a clean and effective way to double their line just before attaching their leader. It became a shock absorber of sorts, used to cushion a thinner and weaker main line (usually braided lines from an earlier era, well before the dawn of Spectra-based super braids) that sat behind a much stronger leader, which was generally made of single-stranded wire.

The Bimini became so common on big game boats that it was practically a given, even as those lines became monofilament. Slowly but surely, the Bimini crept into other types of fishing as well.

Going jigging offshore? Virtually every jig rod setup uses a Bimini at the end of the metered braid, going to either a wind-on leader with a Dacron loop spliced in or directly to a knot. Doubling up the line allows for a much stronger connection if

the jigger opts to go with a knot, such as a PR Knot or a Monster Knot.

In the inshore game, I have seen many a captain run 20- or 30-pound PowerPro as their main line, tie a short Bimini in the end, make a short fluorocarbon leader with a Perfection Loop in the end, and use a loop to loop connection to fish either bait or lures.

Smart kingfish anglers not only build their wind-on leaders with two Bimini twists and that same loop to loop, but also have swapped out their metal downrigger cable for 200- or 300-pound PowerPro, with a Bimini in the end of it where the swivel is looped on. This is one of those saltwater knots that every angler should know.



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.

A "THIRD HAND" HELPS

If you are new to the game when it comes to tying a good Bimini, don't stress too hard. It looks like a complex knot, but a few good practice sessions can turn it into second nature. Use these tips to get you started off in the right direction:

Learn to tie the Bimini twist with a modern, braided (Spectra-based) line rather than monofilament. The limpness of the braid will make things a lot easier as you learn what you are doing. Also, you will get a better sense of how the knot forms and where to apply pressure, which will make it that much easier when you try to tie the same knot with mono.

Bear in mind that you will have to make a good many extra twists in braid than mono, again due to how limp the braid is in comparison.

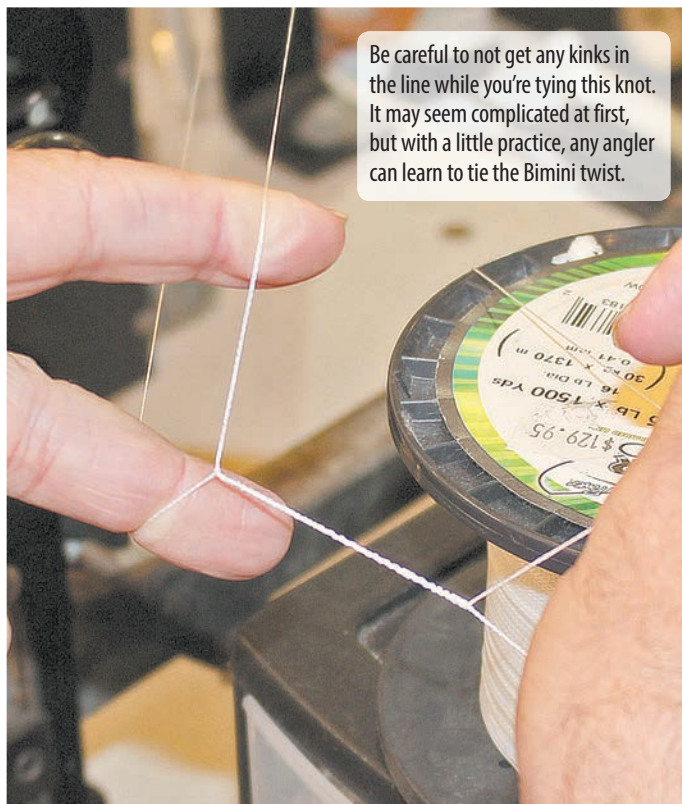
Use a stationary object to serve as your "third hand" when you tie a Bimini. I have had great success using a doorknob and my trailer hitch to hold the loop taut. But my personal favorite Bimini assistant is a dock cleat.

Some anglers want a live assistant, but I prefer that part of the knot to remain completely stationary. I can add tension at the right time by just putting my left hand inside the loop and spreading it out when necessary, all while holding the single strand of main line with my left.

WRAP IT UP

Keep the tag end of the line in your mouth just to keep it close to the action. At some point you will have to release tension on the tag end of the line so that it can wrap its way up to the crotch of the knot. But you don't want to completely release it.

Slowly release tension by dipping your head toward the knot as you hold it with your teeth while slowly pushing the crotch of the loop toward your right hand and still holding tension on the knot with your left hand. If you do this in a controlled fashion, the wraps will stack up perfectly, with no gaps.



When the wraps have stacked up perfectly to the crotch of the loop, tie a single half-hitch around each side of the loop with the tag end of the line, cinching

it down as hard as you can. Then tie a few half-hitches around the base of the loop (both strands) again with the tag end. To complete the loop, the finish knot is simply a half-hitch where the tag end goes through the gap twice. Cinch that down, trim the excess off of the tag end, and you are ready to fish it.

DO THE TWIST:

The Bimini twist is one of the most useful fishing knots, no matter what species you're after. With a little practice, you can tie this knot with various types of fishing line in quick fashion.

NO KINKS ALLOWED

Once you have perfected tying the Bimini in braid, it's time to experiment with mono. The knot is the same, you just have to find the correct number of twists you need to apply to each different gauge of mono. The key is to tie a good Bimini without kinking or otherwise damaging the line, which would negate the benefits of the loop in the first place.

I have found that a 14-turn Bimini works best for me with 80# mono, but everyone puts a different level of tension on their knots. Play around and find out what works best for you.

One final note about the Bimini twist: it's definitely not cheating if you need to watch a video on how to tie this knot. While it isn't the easiest, it's one of the most universal and adaptable knots in the saltwater fishing world. Whether you're chasing bluefish or blue marlin, knowing this one will make your time on the water more successful. ■

REDS • TROUT • FLOUNDER
UNASHAMED ADVENTURES
CAPT. STEPHEN FLOOK
McClellanville, SC
864-430-8830
UNASHAMEDADVENTURES.COM

Jerry Dilsaver

VENISON TIDBITS AND GRAVY

A GREAT USE OF OFTEN UNUSED
VENISON PIECES

TIP!

The often-unused portions of meat are full of flavor and worth the trouble to cut off and save.

This year has been a little slow transitioning into winter, but it should be here by the time this arrives. Because it's winter and hearty, full-bodied foods help us stay warm, I'm going to change gears a little from the healthy side of things to a dish with thick gravy. I can't remember ever meeting anyone that didn't care for gravy and this one will help warm you up on a cold day. The main ingredient is venison, so the low fat content there cancels out the gravy, right?

February is a tapering down month in the Carolinas. Deer season has ended and that takes a lot of hunters out of the woods. However, several small game seasons are open and feet and hands get just as cold following rabbit and bird dogs as they do staying still in a stand or trailing a deer. They may get even colder if you are one to take

advantage of the extended snow goose season. This recipe is tasty and warms frosty fingers and toes well. ■



This recipe is very filling and warms the body and soul after spending a cold day outdoors. **INSET:** Allow the ingredients to cook slowly so as not to leave the meal with a charred taste.

VENISON TIDBITS AND GRAVY

Things were tight growing up and wasting food or potential food was not looked upon kindly. I learned at a young age to keep my knives sharp and to run them along bones and skin as close as possible. Still, sometimes pieces of meat pulled off and stuck to the skin or stayed attached to a joint or bone. These pieces of meat have all the flavor of the larger cuts they pulled loose from and sometimes those pieces along the bone are even sweeter. The amount adds up if you're diligent about collecting them.

Several times, I have gathered two to three pounds of these little pieces and that's a surprising amount. Used wisely this could become several meals. The first thing I did with these pieces was to add them to the boned meat to be ground into burger and sausage. That was a

PREPARATION:

1. Chop the onion and mushrooms.
2. Cook the bacon in a cast iron pan and remove it, leaving the drippings.
3. Add the onions, mushrooms and garlic to the pan and sauté just enough to break the glaze, then remove and hold.
4. Place the venison bits in a flat pan and sprinkle them with pepper, and salt if desired. Roll and do both sides.
5. Put the flour in a shallow bowl and use it to lightly coat the venison bits.
6. Pour the oil into the cast iron pan and heat to medium/medium high.
7. Add the venison bits into the pan and brown them lightly.
8. Add the vegetables back into the pan.
9. Add water to the pan to barely cover the venison and vegetables. A little less water makes the gravy thicker and a little more water makes it thinner.
10. Stir in the beef bouillon until it is totally dissolved.
11. Sprinkle in 4 rounded teaspoons of the flour remaining in the bowl and stir to mix it in well.
12. Heat this until it begins to bubble, stirring well and often.
13. Crumble the bacon and stir it into the mixture.
14. Reduce heat to low and let simmer 20-30 minutes, stirring well occasionally and taking care to turn everything to prevent sticking.
15. Remove from heat and let it sit and thicken

simple use for them. Next, I began putting them into half-pound and one-pound bags to be used in stews and soups. This was an even better way to use them. This recipe is the third way to use them and may be the tastiest. By lightly browning them, adding onions, mushrooms and simmering them in gravy, they taste really good and can be spread out over more meals.

This could be made without the onions and mushrooms, but they add flavor and make the dish more filling. How about gravy? Who doesn't like it? The gravy is adaptable too. You can use a little pepper to just help create more flavor, or you can get heavy-handed with the pepper and spice up the gravy. ■

about 5 minutes before serving.

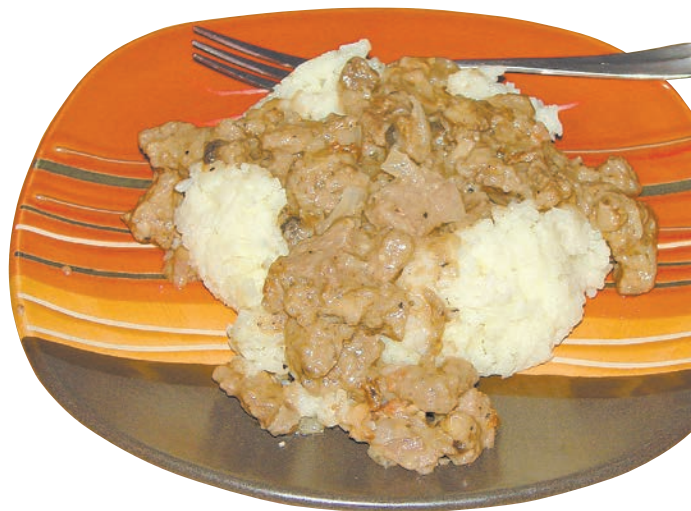
I prefer to serve this over brown rice. It is also tasty served over white rice and wild rice. It is a bit healthier served over wild rice with a minimum of gravy. It also serves well over mashed potatoes, especially homemade mashed red potatoes. Steamed broccoli, steamed squash or mixed vegetables are all good sides. This has to have bread; hearty wheat or multigrain rolls are just right. This might be a good meal to skip dessert, but if you feel the need to satisfy a sweet tooth, try a slice of freshly baked pound cake. You'll agree it's the right choice. ■

TIP!

Adjust the amount of pepper, onions, mushrooms and garlic to suit your dinner guests' taste-buds.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 Pound of venison pieces
 - 2 Slices of bacon
 - ½ Large sweet onion
 - ½ Package fresh sliced mushrooms
 - 1 Tsp granulated garlic
 - ½ Cup all-purpose flour
 - ⅓ Cup vegetable oil
 - 1 Tsp beef bouillon
 - ½ Tsp coarse ground black pepper
 - ½ Tsp white pepper
- A light sprinkle of smoked sea salt may be used (optional to taste),
Water.



This meal is worth the little bit of trouble it takes to save the pieces of meat that usually get tossed out.



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.



IT'S TROPHY TIME

FEBRUARY IS WHEN THE BIG BASS BITE

I look forward to February every year, because it's the start of a couple of months when you have your best chance of catching the biggest bass of your life.

As a tournament pro, you're always looking to catch your five biggest fish every day. But if you're just a weekend angler or a club fisherman, if you're like me, you're looking to catch big bass. We all like catching a big bass. When hunting season is in, we all want to kill the biggest buck. Bass fishermen are the same way. And in February and March, you have the opportunity to catch your personal bass, the fish of a lifetime.

So I'm going to be fishing for big bass this month and next, and I don't fish the same way in most other months. Say, in May, June or July, you have a chance to catch a 20-pound stringer. But February and March are for that great big bass. And the first thing I'm going to do is tie on baits that I've used to catch big fish in the past, two of them in particular: a Shad Rap and a Mop jig. I will always

have them tied on in February and March, along with maybe a Rapala DT6 or DT10 crankbait.

KEEP LURES HANDY

I will have Nos. 6, 7 and 8 Shad Raps tied on and on the deck of my Phoenix bass boat, along with a rod with a Mop Jig. They'll be on deck every time I drop my trolling motor.

The size of the Shad Raps doesn't matter as much as the depths you can fish them. There's only about 5/8-inch of a difference between a No. 6 and a No. 8, but they're very different baits. A No. 6 will run 6 to 8 feet deep, a No. 7 will run 8- to 10-feet deep, and a No. 8 will run 10- to 12-feet deep – depending on how far you can cast them, and the length of your rod, whether it's a spinning or casting rod, and how and where the wind is blowing will play into that.

You can have a full-fledged discussion on what kinds of rods and reels you can use to fish a Shad Rap – the same way you can argue about fishing a floating

worm. I throw a No. 6 or 7 on a 6½- or 7-foot, medium-action Lew's baitcasting rod with a Lew's BB1 reel spooled with 10-pound Sufix advantage fluorocarbon. The line is invisible, and it won't float, so that helps the bait get down. And you can throw a light bait with a good bait-casting reel. But if you want to throw it on a spinning reel, that's fine.

Which bait you pick will have a lot to do with conditions. The weather in February can be very inconsistent. You can have highs almost in the 80s, and highs definitely in the 20s. Wherever you're fishing, there can be a lot going on. You will have some fish that will almost immediately be prespawn fish, who aren't far from spawning. I'm certain that I've seen a lot of bass spawn in 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.

February is one of the best months to catch bass in the Carolinas.

Carolinas in March, so they won't be far. Those fish will be in around 5 feet of water. And then, you'll have fish that are still deep, still relating to baitfish in 20 to 40 feet of water.

Even if the weather is cold, there will be some bass that really want to get up in shallow water. The approach of the spawn will make them move. I've fished with snow on the ground and caught them up in 5 or 6 feet of water. When you find fish like that, a No. 6 Shad Rap is a great bait to throw. You want to make contact with the bottom, but you don't want to bury the bait in the bottom.

This month, you can have some groups of fish on shallow flats in creeks or in flat pockets. Or they can be on 45-degree angle banks; fish are so iffy from day-to-day or week-to-week. You'd throw a No. 6 or 7 on the shallow flat and a No. 8 along the deep bank.

Last crankbait thing: color. A lot of our lakes have blueback herring. And bluebacks are close enough in color to the baitfish in the other lakes that blueback herring is a great color. So is the Rapala color they call demon, which is a lighter red, like a faded candy apple red. It's a

CHECK THE SHALLOWS:

February is a cold month, but on many Carolina lakes, the bass are staging to prepare for spawning next month. So don't overlook the shallows this month, even on bitterly cold days.

crawfish color. Those two are all you need. Crawfish and herring are like filet mignon to bass in February.

What I'm going to do is go to an area I have some confidence in, put the trolling motor down and go fishing, throwing the No. 6 or No. 8, depending on the particular area. And I'm going to have a Mop jig tied on with a Yamamoto Flappin Hog trailer. If I get in an area where I get a few bites on the Shad Rap, I'm going to slow down and fish the Mop jig; brown/green pumpkin in clear water and black/blue in stained to dirty water.

I'm looking for about six to eight bites on a February day, but when you get them, they'll be good fish – and one of them might be the biggest one you ever get a chance to land. ■

The Flappin' Hog is a great jig trailer to use this month.



Nos. 6, 7 and 8 Shad Raps allow anglers to reach bass at a variety of depths.



Don't get on the water without a Mop Jig tied on during February.





SPORTSMAN FISHING HOTSPOTS

Catching smallies at Fontana this month is all about finding the right rocks, which the fish find attractive for numerous reasons.

TARGET ROCKS FOR FONTANA SMALLMOUTH

Find the right rocks, you'll find Fontana's smallies

C By Tony Garitta
apt. James McManus of 153
Charters said the February winter
drawdown at Fontana Lake exposes as
much as 60 vertical feet of bank revealing
a variety of rock.

"Our smallies like rock, some days big
rocks, some days cliffs, some days pebbled
shoreslines," said McManus (153charters@
gmail.com).

This drawdown exposure gives fisher-
men an excellent idea of where and what
to fish.

"They should note what type of rock their
first fish comes off of because chances are
the fish will prefer the same kind of rock
the rest of the day," said McManus.

Other critical factors include cloud cover
and wind, which can determine tactics
and choice of baits.

"A rippled surface and a cloudy day is a
great time to fish jerkbaits. A calm, bright
day dictates fishing deep-diving crank-
baits, jigs and plastics," said McManus.

"The fish may be in the same areas on
cloudy and clear days. But they'll be a little

deeper on calm, bright days."

In February, McManus searches for smal-
lies halfway toward the dam since that
stretch holds more smallies than spotted
bass, though both species can be caught
throughout the lake.

Convenient launch sites include Lem-
mons Branch, Almond Boat Park and
Fontana Village Marina.

The veteran guide begins looking for
smallies from Point 6 to the dam, an area
which contains numerous jutting points
with the better ones featuring gravel or
scattered rock. McManus scans the points
with his electronics expecting to find
smallies in 40 feet of water or less.

USE LIGHT LINE

If a point looks promising, he'll toss a jig
near the bank and walk it slowly down the
structure until it reaches 40 feet. If live bait
fishing, he sets out several rods, lowering
the bait on one rod close to the bottom
while throwing another bait close to the
bank.

If the smallmouth are deep, he may

resort to slow-trolling.

Whether casting or slow-trolling, McMa-
nus favors light spinning gear with reels
holding 6- to 10-pound line to counter
Fontana's clear waters.

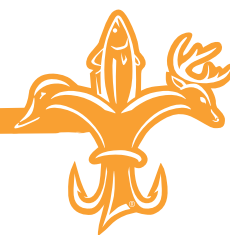
Later in the month with warmer weather,
he moves further and further into the
creeks, fishing small secondary points.

"A warming trend can heat up the
aggression level of smallies," said McMa-
nus. "Places like the mouths of Hazel Creek
or Fortney Creek can be covered with fish."

A period of cold rain turns the fish off.

"It may take a week for the fishing to
return to normal," said McManus. "How-
ever, a small snow event is one of my
favorite times. Smallies love snow. Don't
know why. They just do."

During February, McManus said small-
mouth cruise the banks seeking out their
future nesting areas. The females have fat
bellies, ripening roe and a real attitude,
which makes this a great month for hook-
ing big smallies. ■



LAKE MURRAY BASS FISHING

is dynamic in February

If By Pat Robertson
asked to pick a month for fishing on Lake Murray, many bass fishing enthusiasts would circle February on the calendar.
“February on Lake Murray offers the most dynamic fishing opportunities,” said veteran tournament angler Andy Wicker of Cayce, S.C. “There are countless ways to catch fish from 3 feet of water to 30 feet of water.”
Although the water is the coldest it gets in early February, fish can still be caught shallow, Wicker said.
“I fish a shallow running crankbait between docks as I’m covering water. This bite can be really area dependent and it seems to continually change. So you have to fish a little bit of everything until you have success.”
Wicker said the bite is better in the creeks at times. At other times it may be better in the main lake area.

““” *February on Lake Murray offers the most dynamic fishing opportunities. There are countless ways to catch fish from 3 feet of water to 30 feet of water.*

LOOK FOR BAIT AND BIRDS

“There are also fish out deeper in the 8- to 20-foot depth range. I am normally looking for long tapering points in the mid-lake area,” said Wicker, who described his strategy for fishing these areas.
“I will fish a deep crankbait and jerkbait first to catch the aggressive fish. Then I will slow down and drag a green pumpkin-colored worm on a Shakey Head in the same areas.”
If these tactics do not produce, Wicker said he looks for bait and fish on his depth finder in 30 to 35 feet of water. Once he locates bait and/or fish, he drops a jigging spoon down to them and vertically jigs it.
“It’s imperative to see bait when doing this type of fishing and not to waste time if you are not noticing bait, birds, or activity,” he said.
Wicker said a bonus to this type of fishing is it is not uncommon to catch perch and stripers. If you catch these other species it’s an indication you are around the bait in a good area.
Wicker, who grew up fishing lakes Murray and Monticello with his father, currently fishes local team tournaments and the BFL tournament trail. ■



Guide Scott Wood holds a chunky striped bass from the Neuse River.

Scott Wood

STRIPER CENTRAL

New Bern waters hold stripers, specks

L By Craig Holt
 ow-water levels and generally cool temperatures have concentrated striped bass and spotted seatrout in medium- to shallow-depth waters around New Bern.

Healthy mixes of salt and freshwater also have filled the Neuse and Trent rivers with thousands of baitfish — and sportfish.

“I generally concentrate on striped bass this time of year,” said guide Scott Wood of Cove City (252-671-7836). “But stripers and trout will be spread from the mouth of the Neuse all the way to the bridges at New Bern.”

Until weather turns brutally cold, striped bass gather near the town’s bridges and feeder creeks. Specks concentrate around the artificial reef a mile downstream from New Bern.

“The ledges also hold plenty of bait, mostly small menhaden from 2- to 2½-inches long,” Wood said.

He casts Z-Man soft-plastic grubs in chartreuse or chartreuse-glitter colors for both species.

Wood also finds stripers beneath circling sea gulls that dive on baitfish schools forced to the surface

“Birds are big keys” he said. “It’s not a topwater bite. But the stripers bust baitfish on top after herding them up from 10- to 12-feet deep.

WATCH FOR BIRDS

“As it gets colder, baitfish go into the creeks. Stripers and trout follow them.”

He also uses MirrOlure 2⅝-inch Heavy Dine sinking twitchbaits (⅞ ounce) and 17MR-49 twitchbaits.

Wood prefers medium- to medium-light 7-foot rods mated



to 3000 series spinning reels. His leaders are 2½ to 3-feet long 20-pound test fluorocarbon.

“It’s nothing to hang a 27-inch striper in winter around New Bern. So you need something to turn his head,” he said. “I’ve also caught 20- to 24-inch trout when it’s cold.

“I put Pro-Cure Menhaden Super Gel on all my lures. It definitely helps me get bites.”

Spotted seatrout head to backwaters once water temperatures fall toward freezing.

“The closer you can find water that’s 52 degrees, that’s where you’ll find winter trout,” Wood said. “Specks like sunny days and warmer temperatures.

“But water temperatures don’t matter to stripers. Just watch for birds that’ll be hanging over them. That’s their key.”

River herring begin to migrate up the Neuse during late February. Stripers prefer river herring above all other natural food.

To match river herring, Wood casts 5-inch jerkshads. ■

Trusted By Sportsman For 30 Years

Sarah Judy's
INSURANCE AGENCY

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

Personal Service Guaranteed

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

www.sarahjudysinsurance.com

Your Pontoon Restoration Specialist

TOON TIME, LLC

Ryan Stewart
 366 Neeley St.,
 Sumter, SC 29150

803-720-4105
www.ToonTimeSC.com
rstewart@toontimesc.com

f @ToonTimeSC

803-720-4105 • www.ToonTimeSC.com



STRIPERS ON THE HILL

Clarks Hill stripers can't resist live bait

By Brian Cope

For guide Eddie Mason of Modoc, S.C., February is just another month on Clarks Hill, where stripers and hybrids can't resist live bait fished on down lines no matter the weather.

"It's all a matter of finding fish that are willing to bite. Sometimes that happens right away first thing in the morning. Other times, you might have to try a few spots before you get a few fish in the boat," said Mason, who operates Mason's Guide Service.

With more than 20 years of experience chasing stripers and hybrids, he's got a pretty good handle on where to start each morning.

"It changes from day to day, but when you fish several times a week, you get a good feel for what the fish are doing and where they are and at least have a good idea of where to start each day," said Mason (706-829-0428).

And once he's got a spread of baited rods in rod holders around his boat, he'll give the fish about 15 minutes. If he doesn't catch at least one fish in that time, he reels in and moves to another spot. He'll repeat this process until he's on the fish. If he doesn't catch anything right away, he's usually got them biting by his third spot.

Corey and Philip Hunt doubled up on stripers early and often while winter fishing on Clarks Hill Lake with Mason's Guide Service.

KEEP FRESH BAIT ON THE LINE

"These fish will bite like this year-round. Live bait on down lines is a fool-proof method on Clarks Hill for stripers and hybrids," he said. But one thing that isn't fool-proof, he said, is where to fish.

"There's no secret spot to go and know you'll catch fish. These fish move around a lot, so you just have to stay on them from day to day. You can find them on your electronics, then just drop bait to them and see if they're ready to eat. They don't really have a favorite place; they're just following the bait. But you do it enough and you'll get a feel for what to look for," he said.

Rather than toss out an anchor each time he stops to fish, Mason uses the anchor locking feature on his trolling motor. This saves time and keeps from disturbing the fish. And instead of holding the rod ready to set the hook, he advises anglers to leave the rod in the rod holder until it doubles over. Then he says it's best to reel fast enough to feel the fish, hold the rod tip up, and keep reeling.

Mason also checks his bait often to keep it fresh.

"If a fish hits a bait but doesn't take it, reel that in and put a fresh bait on," he said. "Fresh bait is key to catching these fish." ■

CAPE FEAR RIVER STRIPERS

Stripers thrive in February's weather

C By Jerry Dilsaver
ape Fear River system stripers and striper fishermen received great news late in the fall of 2021. The Corps of Engineers announced they had completed the redo of the rock arch rapids at Cape Fear River Lock and Dam Number 1 to make it easier for larger anadromous fish, like stripers and sturgeon, to cross the dam headed upstream.

The redo has larger pools. Larger fish can easily swim upstream to the next obstacle at Cape Fear River Lock and Dam Number 2.

This river was considered one of the top five striper rivers on the East Coast before three lock and dam systems were constructed in the early 1900's. After that, fish couldn't reach their traditional spawning areas farther upstream. Fish ladders still don't exist at the upper two lock and dam sites.

Still, stripers perform limited reproduction in the river and the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission is stocking. A moratorium on possessing stripers in the entire Cape Fear River System has been in place for more than a decade. But many fishermen enjoy catch and release striper fishing.

The primary location for striper fishing in the Cape Fear River System is in the Cape Fear, Northeast Cape Fear, and Brunswick Rivers and adjoining creeks around Wilmington. A few stripers are present all year. But the fishing picks up late in the fall and remains pretty good into the spring.

TRY SOFT PLASTIC SWIMBAITS

Capt. Rennie Clark of Tournament Trail Charters (www.CaptRen.com, 910-465-8943) in Wilmington is better known for catching lots of trout and redfish a bit farther down the river. But when the weather chills during the winter, he guides fishermen to fun days catching stripers.

Clark likes to fish higher stages of the tide and work the shallow areas along the banks, especially those with trees and stumps or where small creeks run into the river. However, he said fish are located around lower tide stages when they tend to move out to where the bottom drops into the channel.



Rennie Clark

Capt. Rennie Clark of Tournament Trail Charters said striper fishing is hot during February on the Cape Fear River

"I primarily fish Suicide Croaker lures from Category 5 Outdoors," Clark said. "They are soft plastic swimbaits that I can fish on 1/8- or 1/4-ounce Eye Strike weedless jigheads. Being weedless is important in the rivers, especially the Cape Fear, as there is an abundance of lure-grabbing structure.

"Stripers like them, so I stay with them to fish deeper also," Clark said. "I simply add a plastic bobber stopper above the jig head to hold a 1/8- or 1/4-ounce pinch weight just in front of the jig head. ■



Brandon Huskins

LITTLE RIVER, LOTS OF REDFISH

F By Jeff Burleson
 rom Dunn Sound and upper Calabash River to the large flats behind Bird Island, Little River is small. But it has plenty of winter habitat to satisfy a large fishery of redfish.

Redfish congregate in large winter schools. Guide Brandon Huskins of Any Tide Charters prefers conditions that allow for a 2–3-degree temperature increase that occurs during the middle of the day.

“With the right shallow draft boat, you can get to where the fish are in winter,” Huskins said. (843-877-7068) “In February, I find redfish schooled up in potholes in the back of creeks.”

“Anytime you have a low tide in the middle of the day with full sun is the best time to target reds in winter,” he said.

The sun will quickly heat up the dark mud and the shallow waters on low tide.

“Two to 3 degrees warmer is a huge difference to a fish,” he said.

Huskins sets up in an area an hour or two before low tide and allows the fish to fall out of the shallower spots and come right to him.

“The fish will either be in the potholes, or they will be feeding along oyster bars or sand flats that lead up to the potholes,” he said.

Redfish like this are a dime a dozen in the Little River area throughout February.

USE A SLOW PRESENTATION

The creeks aren’t flush with food as they were several months ago. But some mullet and mud minnows overwinter in these creeks. So the reds are not too picky, but expect a slow presentation under these conditions.

“Mud minnows on a jig head are great. But fresh shrimp off one of the local shrimp boats can work well,” he said.

While a live swimming minnow is ideal, artificial lures will produce excellent returns if fished correctly.

Huskins likes lightly-weighted Ned Heads with small Z-Man soft plastics.

“I cast over there and wiggle it or bounce it a little bit and if they are going to eat, they will take it,” he said.

Winter redfish can be an exciting time to fish because 20-30 fish days are common without moving the boat. And redfish are homebodies as long as they don’t get run out of the house. Expect the fish to routinely come to the same potholes every day for a week or two until the tides or something else pushes them out. ■



HUNTING/FISHING SCRAPBOOK



Zach Scoggins, Cruse Carpenter

Zach Scoggins and Cruse Carpenter killed this pair of green-winged teal — a drake and hen — near Peachland, N.C., on Dec. 30, 2020.



Ben Wall

Ben Wall, 8, killed his first tom in Hampton County, S.C., last March 25, with a .410 TSS load. The bird weighed 19½ pounds.



Anson Gilliam

Anson Gilliam, 3, of Louisburg, N.C., caught this 2½-pound bass in September 2020 in a farm pond.



Rob O'Berry

Rob O'Berry killed this nice buck on Nov. 7, 2020, near Brown Summit, N.C., with a Mathews bow.



Rusty Orrell, T.J. Morrison

Rusty Orrell of Linwood, N.C., and son-in-law T. J. Morrison of Winston Salem, N.C., caught these reds fishing with Yeah Right Charters out of Southport.

GOT PHOTOS? WE WANT 'EM

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

images@CarolinaSportsman.com

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



Will Wilson

Will Wilson killed this nice buck on Nov. 6, 2020, in Robeson County, N.C.



Carson Atchison

Carson Atchison of Six Mile, S.C., caught and released this flounder fishing with guide Noah Lynk of Harkers Island, N.C., on June 28.

CLASSIFIEDS

Display Ads

1/32 Page \$75/mn
 1/16 Page \$107/mn
 (vertical or horizontal)
 1/8 Page \$155/mn
 (vertical or horizontal)

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

INSHORE

UNASHAMED ADVENTURES



REDS • TROUT FLOUNDER



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

WEBSITE:
UnashamedAdventures.com

ADVERTISE

Your Charter Boat or Guide Service here!

Reach 1000's of potential customers each month starting at **\$70**

Call for details at **252.299.2138**

FRESHWATER

BLACK'S CAMP

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

FOOD TO GO, ORDER ONLINE

Come Catch Some Fish!!

Please Call Us For Campground, Lodging & Guide Service Availability

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

HUNTING

CHEROKEE RUN
 Hunting Lodge

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

Trophy Managed Whitetail on the Great Pee Dee River

HOME OF THE GOOD BOY "GREY GHOST"

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

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

704-301-7950 • eatsleephunt.com

Need Food Plots?

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



WeBuildFoodPlots.com
 704-904-3851

CLASSIFIEDS

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

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

BECOME A MEMBER

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

\$2.99 PER MONTH

VISIT: WWW.CAROLINASPORTSMAN.COM/SUBSCRIBE



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

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

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

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

AVAILABLE PRODUCTS:
The 2022 PrimeTimes Wall Calendar. \$13.95 (plus \$4 s&h). Know the best days, best times, and their relative strengths for all of 2022 with this information-packed, full-color, 11-inch by 17-inch, graphic peaks

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

2022 Ultimate PrimeTimes software for PCs. \$29.95 (plus \$3 s&h, or no s&h if downloaded from web). The world's best forecaster allows you to fine-tune the peak times to your exact location, quarry, and even weather. Too many features to list here, including making your own App. For more details, please call us or visit our web site (see below).

SPECIAL PACKAGE OFFERS:
 #1: **Wall Calendar, Astro Tables and "How to Know..." book...** \$19.95 (plus \$5 s&h).
 #2: **Same as #1, plus Software...** \$47.95 (plus \$6 s&h).
 #3: **Same as #2, minus book...** \$38.95 (plus \$5 s&h).

Send to: PrimeTimes 2022 - Dept. LS - 2487 NW 75th Ave., Ste. 100 - Ankeny, IA 50023

For credit/debit card orders, call **515-964-5516**, or go online to **primetimes2.com** and click **Catalog**.

2022 FEB		BEST DAYS			
		POOR	FAIR	GOOD	VALUE
Tue 1					59
Wed 2					51
Thu 3					43
Fri 4					35
Sat 5					32

Sun 6					34
Mon 7					41
Tue 8					52
Wed 9					44
Thu 10					39
Fri 11					39
Sat 12					38

Sun 13					48
Mon 14					57
Tue 15					67
Wed 16					73
Thu 17					61
Fri 18					50
Sat 19					38

Sun 20					31
Mon 21					28
Tue 22					32
Wed 23					41
Thu 24					30
Fri 25					25
Sat 26					26

Sun 27					36
Mon 28					46
Tue 29					
Wed 30					
Thu 31					

25 50 75
AVERAGE

For more, visit primetimes2.com

LUNAR PERIODS					
TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED					
MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT		
7:51 am	12:28 pm - 1:36 pm	6:19 pm	12:02 am - 12:54 am	●	New
8:30 am	1:13 pm - 2:39 pm	7:30 pm	12:53 am - 2:01 am	●	
9:03 am	1:53 pm - 3:39 pm	8:37 pm	1:38 am - 3:04 am	●	
9:32 am	2:29 pm - 4:35 pm	9:40 pm	2:18 am - 4:04 am	●	
9:59 am	3:03 pm - 5:29 pm	10:41 pm	2:54 am - 5:00 am	●	
10:26 am	3:36 pm - 6:22 pm	11:41 pm	3:28 am - 5:54 am	●	
10:54 am	4:11 pm - 7:13 pm		4:01 am - 6:47 am	●	
11:23 am	4:49 pm - 8:05 pm	12:40 am	4:36 am - 7:38 am	●	Half
11:56 am	5:28 pm - 8:58 pm	1:38 am	5:14 am - 8:30 am	●	
12:33 pm	6:13 pm - 9:49 pm	2:36 am	5:53 am - 9:23 am	●	Apogee
1:16 pm	7:00 pm - 10:42 pm	3:33 am	6:38 am - 10:14 am	●	
2:05 pm	7:51 pm - 11:33 pm	4:27 am	7:25 am - 11:07 am	●	High
3:00 pm	8:43 pm - 12:23 am	5:17 am	8:16 am - 11:58 am	●	
3:59 pm	9:39 pm - 1:09 am	6:02 am	9:08 am - 12:48 pm	●	
5:00 pm	10:35 pm - 1:51 am	6:42 am	9:58 am - 1:34 pm	●	
6:03 pm	11:30 pm - Midnight	7:17 am	11:00 am - 2:16 pm	●	Full
7:05 pm	Midnight - 2:30 am	7:48 am	11:55 am - 2:55 pm	●	
8:08 pm	12:25 am - 3:07 am	8:17 am	12:50 pm - 3:32 pm	●	
9:11 pm	1:20 am - 3:42 am	8:45 am	1:45 pm - 4:07 pm	●	
10:16 pm	2:15 am - 4:17 am	9:13 am	2:40 pm - 4:42 pm	●	
11:22 pm	3:14 am - 4:52 am	9:42 am	3:39 pm - 5:17 pm	●	
12:31 am	4:12 am - 5:34 am	10:15 am	4:37 pm - 5:59 pm	●	
1:42 am	5:12 am - 6:18 am	10:54 am	5:37 pm - 6:43 pm	●	Half
2:51 am	6:17 am - 7:09 am	11:39 am	6:42 pm - 7:34 pm	●	
3:56 am	7:20 am - 8:06 am	12:33 pm	7:45 pm - 8:31 pm	●	Low
4:54 am	8:25 am - 9:07 am	1:36 pm	8:50 pm - 9:32 pm	●	Perigee
5:43 am	9:24 am - 10:12 am	2:45 pm	9:49 pm - 10:37 pm	●	
	10:18 am - 11:16 am	3:57 pm	10:43 pm - 11:41 pm	●	
				●	
				●	
				●	
				●	

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

ADVERTISERS INDEX

BLACK'S CAMP	22, 65	FROST WATERFOWL TRUST, LLC	34	SARAH JUDY'S INSURANCE AGENCY	60
BOST ARGO	23	GAMBLER BASS BOATS	25	SUZUKI MOTOR OF AMERICA, INC.	28, 29
BQ GRILLS	22	MARINE WAREHOUSE	67	TOON TIME, LLC	60
BROOKFIELD BRP CANADA CORP.	3	NICHOLS STORE, INC.	9	UNASHAMED ADVENTURES	53, 65
CAPPS TRAILERS	25	O'BRIAN TARPING SYSTEMS	21	WAKE COUNTY WILDLIFE CLUB	5
CAROLINA COMPOSITES, LLC	68	PALMETTO STATE TRAINING	39	XPRESS BY ALUMA-WELD, INC.	2
CENTRAL CAROLINA HABITAT SOLUTIONS	65	PG & BOATGIRL SHOW	3		
CHEROKEE RUN HUNTING LODGE	45, 65	SANTEE COOPER COUNTRY	25		

Subscribe Today and SAVE

..... 27, 41, 50

WITH
MARINE
WAREHOUSE
CENTER



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



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



TRAILERS



OUTBOARDS



ACCESSORIES



SERVICE

910.799.1277

6921 Market St
Wilmington, NC



843.974.5353

3881 Savannah Hwy
Johns Island, SC

MARINEWAREHOUSECENTER.COM

220 BaySport Creek Cruising



For more information, go to PioneerBoats.com
or call 843-538-6604
or like us on Facebook at Pioneer Boats
for the latest available information.



Avenger



Born on the
Bayou of Louisiana,
Raised in the
Lowcountry of
South Carolina



For more information, go to
AvengerBayBoats.com
or call 843-538-6604
or like us on
Facebook at
Avenger Bay Boats
for the latest available information.



MODEL 2400

From The
Back Water
To The
Blue Water



For more information, go to
BullsBayBoats.com
or call 843-538-6604
or like us on
Facebook at
Bulls Bay Boats
for the latest available information.