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Magazine in Texas**  
(see page 75, #1 for more information)

**Bobs and Blues Over Texas**

# TEXAS OUTDOORS

*"Texas' Most Comprehensive Outdoors Publication"*

**JOURNAL**



November 2017 / \$3.99

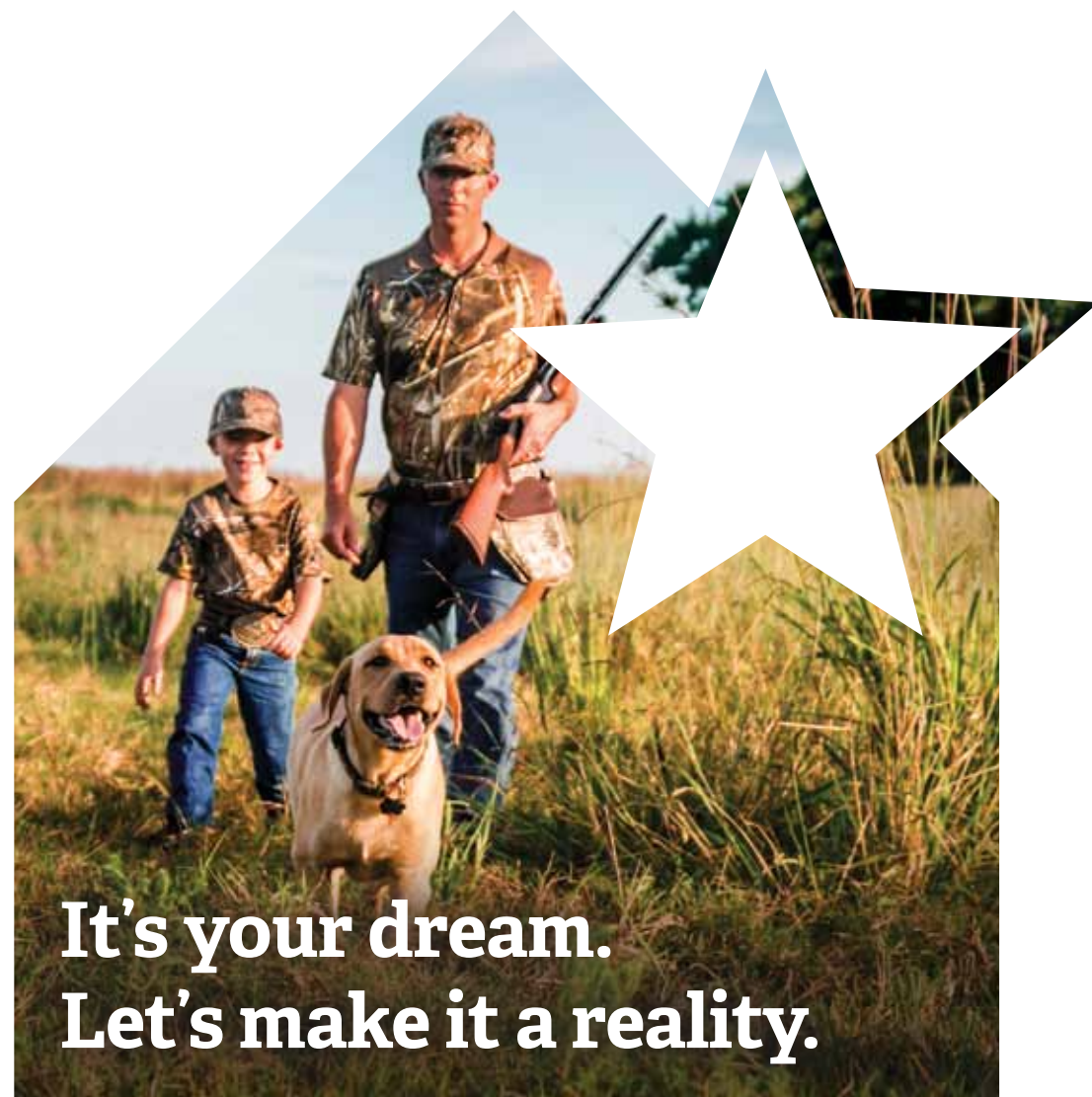


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**November 2017**

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"Little Dynamo"

For more information on "Little Dynamo" and other fine works of art by Lou Pasqua, visit [www.loupasqua.com](http://www.loupasqua.com), email [loupasqua@comcast.net](mailto:loupasqua@comcast.net) or call (412) 782-4869.



# Editor’s Insight | Bill L. Olson

## THANKFUL PAST

This time of year it is pretty easy to get excited. All of the fall hunting seasons are open, while whatever kind of fishing is preferred is pretty special too. As outdoor enthusiasts it is hard to think of a better time.

On the surface that is almost enough to be thankful. However, there is much more, particularly when it comes to how this country was founded, settled and has evolved.

Wild things and places have been there from the beginning. The vast and abundant natural resources were what natives knowingly utilized and pilgrims learned over time. Just a peak at an honest history book will reveal that fact.

What is also disclosed is how this land was settled and how America’s culture evolved. The contributions were in many different forms, from diverse contributors and came with a price paid in a variety of ways.

Later this month we celebrate Thanksgiving and remember the pilgrims arriving on the Mayflower in September 1620. The traditional Thanksgiving story says those 102 English Puritans learned from the native Indians and those natives received their initial introduction to people with a vastly different way of life.

Jamestown was the first permanent English settlement in the Colony of Virginia on May 4, 1607, almost 13 years prior to the landing at Plymouth Rock. But this isn’t the beginning of settlements by a European country on this continent.

To the south, St. Augustine founded September 8, 1565 by Spain, is the oldest continuously occupied European settlement in the United States. The French explored the St. Lawrence River in 1534 while Norseman Leif Erickson landed on a portion of this continent in 1001 well before Christopher Columbus arrival in 1492.

From the beginning this country has always been a melting pot of influences that originated in many places from around the World. The diversity and contribution of those people continued over our entire history and to this day.

Every European country had people wanting a new life and were willing to sacrifice in ways that most times were never chronicled in any history book. Many did not arrive with the skills to deal with the difficulties that lay ahead. However, they either adapted, overcame and learned, or were “consumed” by the land where they staked their future.

Today there is on-going discussion by some as to who traveled the most difficult road to this new land called America. The reality is there is no way to quantify whose influence was greater, paid a more significant price, or suffered or were oppressed more. The truth is each of those forefathers’ contribution played a role.

The opportunity to be in this land did not come without hardship. Nothing of value ever does. Freedom, a new beginning, or opportunities, even if it took generations to be realized, does not come without a price.

Eventually all of these different people, regardless of how willing or not, that arrived in this land united under one flag, spoke one language, and followed one set of guiding principles to build a country that remains the envy of the world. That is the reality of America’s history.

This month, in those quiet times we individually share with the out-of-doors, try to imagine what it was like without the modern equipment and conveniences of today. Try to place yourself in the array of struggles by those that preceded us.

Regardless of individual family origin, our forefathers sacrificed in order for us to enjoy the bounty of today. That is the larger Thanksgiving story for which we give thanks.

For many the outdoors is a constant reminder of where all of this began. That is a past we can all be proud and thankful.

*Until next month: Pursue all of your outdoor activities in a safe and ethical manner.*

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**TEXAS OUTDOORS Journal**  
1706 West Sam Houston Parkway North  
Houston, Texas 77043

TEXAS OUTDOORS Journal (ISSN 1082-5940) is a publication of Texas Outdoors Journal, Inc. Editorial and advertising offices are located at 1706 West Sam Houston Parkway North, Houston TX 77043. Phone (713) 957-3997. Fax (713) 957-3996.

E-MAIL ADDRESS: toj@airmail.net  
TOJ Online: www.texasoutdoorsjournal.com  
TEXAS OUTDOORS Journal is published monthly. Photographs and manuscripts for publication consideration are welcomed, but the publisher assumes no responsibility for such material while in transit or in the office of the publication.

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Volume 26, Number 11

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## TOJ Notebook

### Majority of Hunters Believe Scent-Masking Products are Effective

One of the most debated topics in the hunting world is whether or not products that are geared to hide or mask human scent while hunting are effective, but a recent HunterSurvey.com poll is shedding new light on the topic. 88 percent of hunters believe scent control products are effective for their intended purpose, according to Southwick Associates, the leading market research and economics firm in the outdoor industry. Among those hunters, 51 percent use them.

So, which products are used the most? Scent control sprays, applied just prior to going to a stand or into the field, are the overwhelming favorite choice of today's scent-conscious sportsmen with 85 percent using them. Following directly applied sprays, the survey found these other products to be quite popular:

- Scent-Control Detergent and Dryer Sheets, 71 percent
- Scent-Control Hygiene Products, 54 percent
- Scent-Control Hair Products, 47 percent

- Scent-Control Clothing, 28 percent
- Scent-Control Bags or Containers, 27 percent

Field wipes (20 percent), ozone products while hunting (4 percent), ozone products while stored (3%), and unspecified "other" items (2 percent) rounded out the survey results.

Among those hunters who don't use scent control products, the top reasons for taking a pass on them include: the belief that they do not work (42 percent), cost (21 percent), prefer the challenge of hunting without them (10 percent) and lack of product awareness (4 percent). More than 32 percent of respondents cited "other reasons," including not needing scent control for species, such as waterfowl and wild turkeys. **T★J**

### Recreational Fishing Participation Increased Nearly 20 Percent Over the Past 10 Years

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has released its initial report of the 2016 National Fishing, Hunting, and

Wildlife-Associated Recreation national survey. The survey, conducted every five years in partnership with the U.S. Census Bureau, shows that fishing participation is up nearly 20 percent over the last 10 years. Anglers also increased their overall spending by 2.4 percent during the past five years.

Overall, fishing participation increased 8.2 percent for individuals 16 to 65 years of age over the last five years. This is the highest level of participation since 1991. Revenue from equipment purchases to all trip expenditures also increased from \$45 billion to \$46.1 billion in the last five years. **T★J**

### Pheasants Forever's 2017 Pheasant Hunting Forecast

Pheasants Forever has released its 2017 Pheasant Hunting Forecast. While record snowfalls and a severe drought in 2017 contributed to significant bird population decreases in parts of the Midwest, expanses of the West and Great Plains show exciting signs for the season ahead.

## Cover Art

This month's cover art is entitled "Little Dynamo" by popular wildlife and sporting artist Lou Pasqua. He said his inspiration for this exciting painting came while quail hunting Texas' Permian Basin near Midland.

"During the hunt pointers were used to find the coveys of bobwhite quail," the hunting artist explained. "Once a covey of bobs was pointed, and hunters were in position, they would send in a Boykin Spaniel to flush the birds. The dog's enthusiasm also became the origin of the title."

Pasqua has built a reputation on painting a variety of upland bird and waterfowl hunting scenes featuring a variety of breeds of pointers and retrievers. This month's cover art is further proof that our hunting techniques are only limited by our own imagination and resource.

For more information on "Little Dynamo" and other fine works of art by Lou Pasqua, visit [www.loupasqua.com](http://www.loupasqua.com), email [loupasqua@comcast.net](mailto:loupasqua@comcast.net) or call (412) 782-4869. **T★J**



"Little Dynamo"

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Future pheasant hunting prospects will rely heavily on the quantity and quality of grassland habitat available, stressing the importance of the 2018 Farm Bill and the resolve of upland hunters to advocate and contribute to the work of habitat conservation.

Pheasant hunting prospects for 2017 are a mixed bag of good and bad news, offering the traveling bird hunter an expectation of remarkable wingshooting in certain states with a bit of boot leather mileage, intel, and personal grit.

On the flip side, Pheasants Forever remains steadfast in its task to help restore grasslands in the Midwestern states – South Dakota, North Dakota and Minnesota – where a perfect storm of extreme weather conditions and the loss of Conservation Reserve Program acreage have led to significant population decreases since last September.

Habitat in the form of diverse grasslands remains the key ingredient in the recipe for producing pheasants over the long-term. Pheasants Forever is working diligently to raise the national cap of the Conservation Reserve Program, from 24 million acres to 40 million acres, to ensure resilience of future pheasant populations.

Several states west of the Missouri River are offering up pheasants in larger quantities this fall, including Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, Idaho, Oregon, and the Texas Panhandle. "Texas's main 13-county pheasant range had average rainfall this summer," reports Robert Perez, Upland Game Bird Program Leader at Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. "No drought is a good thing, and it is the number one factor that's been bringing our birds back."

"Anecdotal evidence is that we had decent pheasant reproduction this year," says Perez. "Texas doesn't perform its upland game bird surveys until late November and early December, so we won't have hard data until then."

Texas's 2017 pheasant season runs December 2 - 31 with 37 counties open. The 13-county core range in the Panhandle is the epicenter of the ringneck harvest in the Lone Star State.

"The trend for pheasants has been good over the past few years," says Perez. "The drought leading up to 2012 and 2013 was catastrophic to habitat and reproduction. But 2014, 2015 and 2016, with decent rains but not too much moisture, were rebuilding years for panhandle

pheasants.

"We came into 2017 with decent precipitation as well," he adds. That helped the habitat. "Our pheasants are not yet up to those pre-drought levels, but there are definitely birds.

"Our pheasant populations haven't responded to the rain like Texas's bobwhites have," Perez points out. "But that's common in recovery situations when pheasants and quail are compared. Pheasants just don't respond as fast as quail. But still, there has been a steady increase from those all-time pheasant lows in 2012 and 2013. The western half of the panhandle is our main pheasant range," says Perez. "Our staff is seeing more birds. The anecdotal evidence is good. And harvest has increased year to year."

Texas has some fairly strong harvest numbers considering the small area that actually holds birds. From a low of 18,000 or so birds in the worst drought year of 2013 - 2014, last year's estimated harvest was about 28,000 pheasants.

"Dallam County, with Dalhart as county seat, is the heart and soul of our pheasant range," says Perez. "It's a real bird hunting community up there.

"Other top tier counties include Hartley, Hansford, Sherman, Ochiltrie, Deaf Smith, Moore, Carson and Roberts," says Perez. "Swisher, Briscoe, Castro, and Parmer counties will be supporting a few birds in localized situations.

"Particularly exciting for Texas pheasant habitat is the CP33 habitat buffer initiative on the corners of irrigation route circles," concludes Perez. "We've been trying to get those pivot corners enrolled. In 2015 it happened. The more we can get, the better. One corner is okay; four corners together make for a nice chunk of pheasant habitat."

To find Texas pheasants Perez says. "Go to the western side of the northern panhandle. Look for CRP next to agricultural fields." Hit those irrigation corners too. **T★J**

#### Toyota ShareLunker Program to Begin New Year-Round Season Jan. 1

After more than 31 years of collecting and spawning 13 pound or larger "lunker" largemouth bass, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Toyota ShareLunker Program is announcing big changes and an expanded mission in an effort to better

engage the public in the promotion and enhancement of lunker bass fishing in Texas public waters.

The ShareLunker participation season will now run each year from Jan. 1 through Dec. 31; a change from previous seasons. But similar to last year, only those entries collected between Jan. 1 - March 31 will be accepted as broodstock for spawning.

"This provides the greatest opportunity to obtain eligible fish for spawning while minimizing the risk of additional handling and possible mortality," said Kyle Brookshear, ShareLunker program coordinator. Outside of the spawning window, the new year-round participation season will allow for anglers catching bass 8 pounds or larger to submit information about their catch through a web application in four categories: 8 pounds or larger, 10 pounds or larger, 13 pounds or larger and 13 pounds or larger with a spawning donation.

The goal is to increase the number of participants in the Toyota ShareLunker program and expand large fish catch rate data for fisheries biologists, Brookshear said. As a bonus, the new size categories open up more ways for anglers to receive prizes and incentives for participating.

"This citizen scientist initiative will allow fisheries biologists to better monitor the impact of ShareLunker stockings across Texas and provide more incentives and opportunities for Texans to help us make our bass fishing bigger and better than ever," Brookshear said.

Other spawning program changes include converting the entire hatchery broodstock to pure-Florida ShareLunker offspring. Genetically pure offspring will be maintained on the hatchery, grown to adulthood, then distributed to production hatcheries and used as broodstock. Eventually, all hatchery-held Florida largemouth bass broodstock will be descendants of ShareLunkers, Brookshear said. Additionally, attempts will be made to spawn all donated eligible ShareLunkers — regardless of the degree of genetic introgression. Offspring of female genetic intergrades will be combined and stocked back to the source locations for all ShareLunker entries for the year.

For complete information and rules of the ShareLunker program, tips on caring for big bass and a recap of last year's season, see [www.tpwd.texas.gov/sharelunker](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/sharelunker). **T★J**



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Artist of the Year Award

Weatherby Award  
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Cocktails & Silent Auction 5:30 pm  
Dinner & Live Auction 7:00 pm

### THURSDAY

Evening Banquet & Auction  
6:00 pm - 11:00 pm

Conklin Award

Dave Baxter Literary Award

Dixie Yeatts Award of Excellence



### FRIDAY

Ladies' Luncheon & Auction  
10:30 am - 3:00 pm

Evening Banquet & Auction  
6:00 pm - 11:00 pm

Colin Caruthers  
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Educator of the Year Award

### SATURDAY

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8:00 am - 10:00 am

Evening Banquet & Auction  
6:00 pm - 11:00 pm

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# FLOATING FAKES

## *All Day Long*

The cool air behind a November cold front pumps fresh life into duck and deer hunters, but it's also a wakeup call for coastal fishermen looking to tap into some of the best topwater action of the year. As water temperatures chill speckled trout are on the move, along with redfish. And one of the best lures you can use is a topwater.

Contrary to what a lot of people think winter doesn't always set in along the Texas Gulf coast until the first of December. We'll get cold fronts throughout October and November but they don't have the punch that we'll get from hard northers pushing through in December, January and February.

Early last November I had one heck of trip to Sabine Lake. Guide Jerry Norris had called and said to get over their ASAP. We left the Sabine Pass Marina and headed up to the northeast end of the lake. It was a protected shoreline from a light southeast breeze behind a cold front that had moved through two days prior to our run.

"Look at all those mullet jumping," said Norris. "There's a ton of 'em in here. And the trout are running with them. Caught one weighing about 8 pounds yesterday, right up against the bank on a topwater. It's been pretty good and it's only going to get better for the next couple of weeks."

We were fishing anywhere from 10 to 50 yards off the bank. The key was to stay with the mullet. I had tied on my favorite topwater lure for fishing Sabine. It's a Top Dog with a chartreuse head and black

body. At almost five inches long it's a trout catching machine.

That's the lure I used several years ago to catch a trout weighing just over 10 pounds in Sabine Pass. This particular lure is like a big mullet. It can be cast a long distance and makes a lot of noise with



Veteran East Galveston Bay guide, Captain Jim West says, "A few days after a front things will settle down and with warmer temperatures the topwater bite will last all day long."



**Cool November breeze sets up an excellent topwater bite.**

*Story and photography by Robert Sloan*

low-frequency rattles.

Norris had tied on a five inch Super Spook with a red head and white body. We were after big trout so it only made sense to tie on big lures, and we weren't disappointed.

We had been fishing about an hour when a slick popped up in a small pocket of water right up on the shoreline.

"That's a shelf right there that drops off from two feet of water to about four feet," said Norris, who has been fishing

topwater plugs for Sabine trout for over four decades. He made a cast up past the slick, popped the Spook, stopped it and popped it again. That's when a huge trout blew up on it.

"That's a good one right there," he hissed. "You might want to get the net for this one."

Right about that time the trout came up on the surface with her head swinging and the lure flew smooth up into the air. "Well, at least we know there's at least one

trophy trout hanging out here," he said.

The combination of trout and mullet is tough to beat in November. The mullet are bunched up in big schools and trout are almost always hanging close to the food source.

Guide Jim West has been fishing East Galveston Bay for decades, and has caught some pretty impressive trout there. One of his favorite months to be fishing this particular bay is November.

"The crowds are gone, it's cool and



it's easy to catch a stringer of nice trout without having to worry about another boat moving in to spoil the action," says West. "Just prior to a front the reds and trout will be on a good feed. But a few days after the front things will settle down and with warmer temperatures the topwater bite will last all day long. It's a fun time to be fishing."

During November West says your best bet on East Bay for numbers of topwater trout, will be to fish the shell reefs.

"The main thing is to key on mullet," he says. "Find the bait, find the fish. Truer words have never been spoken, especially during November when the fish are chowing down on mullet. Certainly this is a good time to be fishing a topwater. I like to use a Top Dog or Top Dog Jr. I'll use the bigger one on days when the wind is blowing a little bit. If the water is pretty much calm I'll go with the Top Dog Jr. or a Super Spook Jr.

"One area I like to fish right after a cold front is the shoreline along the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. That's a good place to wade. It's protected from the north wind. If you can wade that shoreline a day or so after a front the big trout bite can be pretty good on topwater lures. What you need to do is cover a lot of water, but above all key on jumping mullet – that's where the heavier trout will be feeding."

West says that once a cold front has passed he'll fish the south shoreline of East Bay. It's protected from a southerly breeze.

"The south shoreline can be especially



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Over the years coastal anglers have found success with a number of topwater lures. These include: (counter-clockwise starting at top left) MirrOlure Top Dog, She Dog, Top Dog Jr, Top Pup, D.O.A. PT-7, Unfair Lure's floating Rip-N-Slash, DawgWalker, STORM Rattling Chug Bug Jr, Rattling Chug Bug and Heddon Super Spook.

good just before a front moves through," says West. "That's where I'll wade about waste deep and fan cast up shallow and out into deeper water with topwater lures. The reds will be up shallow and trout will be feeding in four to five feet of water."

On the middle Texas coast is where you'll find Port O'Connor and gin clear flats during November. A lot of that water is generally covered up with boat traffic and fishermen. That is not the case during November. Once the holiday season kicks into gear it's time to fish POC without the hassle of clueless anglers cutting in on the action.

Some of the very best wade fishing at POC is along Blackberry and Dewberry islands. Each is several miles long and offers perfect water for catching both trout and reds. Both will be hammering topwater lures throughout the day.

What makes these two islands so good is the perfect combination of grass and sand. The reds will more than likely be up along the shoreline. The trout will be out in about waste deep water. This is all protected water on a north wind. The best time to fish

these islands is on a gentle south breeze.

The smaller topwater lures will definitely catch more trout along these flats. A Super Spook Jr. in clown or chrome/silver is tough to beat. A lure that I like to use in this water is a Storm Chug Bug. They are made in lengths of 2-1/2 to 3-1/2 inches. The smaller one can be deadly on shallow, clear flats.

This is a cup faced topwater lure with a slim profile that trout love to pounce on. It looks exactly like a wounded mullet on the surface. This is one lure that I recommend to all my clients. Actually, this is one of my go to lures just about anywhere along the Texas coast. I've caught trout to seven pounds on a green/white Chug Bug. A pearl/chartreuse Chug Bug is pretty tough to beat, as well.

The warm climate of South Texas sets up some spectacular fishing on places like Baffin Bay and on down to Port Mansfield on the Laguna Madre.

November is prime time to fish the flats and Land Cut out of Port Mansfield. The Land Cut can be absolutely awesome during November. It's a pretty good run from Mansfield but definitely worth your time.

On my most recent trip to the land cut I was with guide Steve Ellis, who works out of Get Away Adventures Lodge. On that particular run the south wind was howling but that was not a factor.

The water was green and clear and we were sight casting to both trout and reds.

The best trout of the day weighed about seven pounds and smacked a pearl and pink Dawgwalker.

This is a relatively new topwater plug that's made by Unfair Lures. It's 4.3 inches long and one of the best built topwater lures I've ever seen. It's put together with a barrel swivel on the nose and has two needle sharp treble hooks. The water you'll find along the King Ranch shoreline out of Mansfield offers some of the very best topwater fishing you'll find in November. It's got the perfect amount of grass, sand and mud for holding plenty of mullet that in turn bring in trout and reds.

Keep in mind that duck season is open from Nov. 4-26 along the coast. This is the perfect time to do a cast and blast trip.

You can duck hunt early, catch some football and a nap, and then fish the flats during the afternoon hours. What I like to do is duck hunt early and fish topwater lures on the flats from about two o'clock until sunset. Life doesn't get much better than that.

For more information on fishing the Texas coast email me at [sloan288@aol.com](mailto:sloan288@aol.com), call (409) 782-6796 or go to [www.luckystrikeguide.com](http://www.luckystrikeguide.com). ★



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

The author fishes a topwater bait around mangrove islands on Texas middle coast. Catch a day with a light south breeze and the topwater bite can last all day, particularly on smaller topwater lures.



In November it can get real exciting when a solid trout comes up to the surface, with head swinging and pounces on a topwater lure.



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## The Long and Short of Actions & Calibers

Rifle actions come in two forms — long and short. There are a few special or custom-made actions for specific calibers like the 22 Hornet or for extreme calibers like the 411 Cheytac or the 50 BMG.

Short actions are made for short calibers that have an overall length of 2.800 inches or less. These calibers can be anything from a 223 to a 325 Winchester Short Mag. These short actions all have the same 2.800 inch long mag box. The only difference is the size of the bolt face and the feeding system inside the magazine area.

A long action is either 3.500 or 3.600 long in the area of the magazine. A Mauser or a Ruger action is a little shorter than a Remington or a Weatherby action. Anything can be made in a long action from a 25-06 to a 300 Win and even a 375 H&H Mag. The only difference will be the

bolt face and the magazine follower and spring inside the mag box.

Now let's look at cartridges to put into the long and short action rifles. Again calibers are made up into two groups long and short. But now we also have long calibers as well as long magnum calibers. We have short calibers, short magnum calibers and super small short calibers. We also have some special made calibers like the 22 Hornet or a 6MM Bench Rest or the 50 BMG which need special actions or major modifications to existing actions to make them work.

Things get a little more interesting. In short actions, you have what I call small calibers which are based on the 222 or 223 size case and bolt face. This is a small group of calibers starting with the 17 Remington, 204 Ruger, 222 Rem, 223 Rem, and 300 Black Out. There are some

old or custom calibers which can be made in this size but it is very uncommon.

There is also the short standard calibers which are made on the 308 family of cases. Calibers like 243 Win, 260 Rem, 338 Federal and several others all are made from using a 308 size case. You also have some special calibers like 22-250, 6.5 Creedmoor and 220 Swift which work in short action rifles.

The last group of short action calibers is the short magnum. This is the 270 Winchester Short Mag, 300 WSM, and the 325 WSM. This group used to be much larger but most of the calibers like the Short Ultra Mag are dead or about to be dead and are no longer made. The shooting market dictates that if it doesn't sell then there is no reason to keep making it.

In long actions, we have long standard and long magnum. The standard calibers are made in the 30-06 size cases. The 25-06, 270 Win., the 280 Rem, 30-06 SPG, and 338-06. Once again there are special calibers like 6.5-284, 280 Ackley Improved or 35 Whelen that work in this size case.

Then you have magnum calibers which are everything from 257 Weatherby to 458 Lott with the most common being the 7 Rem Mag and the 300 Win Mag. There is also all of the new super magnum calibers like the 300 Ultra and 338 Ultra Mag.

There is one more size of long action but it is limited to one manufacturer that is the Weatherby MKV which is used for calibers like the 30-378 or 460 Weatherby calibers. The same action can be used for calibers like 416 Rigby or 510 Wells if you don't mind getting your teeth loosened with every pull of the trigger.

If you are trying to build a very lightweight rifle or one that is very compact, a short action receiver should be used. A short action receiver weighs 4 oz. less than a long action and is  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch shorter. If trying to build a short light 300 Mag use a 300 WSM caliber on a short action receiver with a 23 inch barrel. When comparing it to a 300 Winchester built on a long action receiver with the

same 23 inch barrel it will start out 4 ounces lighter and almost an inch shorter.

On the other hand, the short action receiver in a 300 WSM caliber has some feeding problems and will usually hold one round less than a 300 Winchester holds. There is always a compromise in every thing you do.

In the semi-auto world of AR's there is standard AR-15 and the big AR-10. We also get into some special semi-auto actions for making small guns like 9mm or 45ACP.

The standard AR-15 is built around the 223 rem (.556 military) cartridge. This compact little action can be used for a variety of calibers for almost any type of hunting. For varmint hunting, you can use a 17 Rem, 204 Ruger or the 223 Rem. If you want to blast pigs at night with a suppressor, nothing beats the 300 Blackout or the 7.62X39 Russian calibers.

For long range hunting of deer sized game the 6.5 Grendel or the 6.8 SPC calibers are perfect. It is very easy to build a small, light, compact AR-15 that weighs nothing or go the other way and build

a nine pound varmint rig for planting prairie dogs.

The AR-10 always seemed to be an after thought to me. They are big, clunky and weigh too much. Just the bolt alone weighs a  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. more than an AR-15 bolt does.

If you want a big caliber or a true 800 yard long range semi-auto you will have to use the AR-10 receiver. The best and most common calibers for the AR-10 is the 308 Win (7.62X51) or the new 6.5 Creedmoor. However, if you want to build a better varmint rig, make a 243 Win and if you plan on hunting Moose in Alaska, how about a 338 Federal or a 358 Winchester. Both of these calibers will do the trick on big game.

Several of the more common calibers built on the AR-10 platform are the 243 Winchester, 7mm-08 and 260 Remington. One thing all of these calibers have in common is they are all made from the same 308 Winchester case, either necked down for a 243 or 260 Rem or necked up for the 338 Fed or 358 Win. The only different case used in the AR-10 guns is the 6.5 Creedmoor.

The most unfortunate thing about building a 308 AR-10 rifle is the size and weight. If you want a light carry rifle, about the lightest AR-10 rifle is 6.8 lbs. where an AR-15 rifle can be made as light as 4.4 lbs.

Once again there is always a compromise in getting what we want. 🌟🌟🌟



All of these calibers work in short action rifles (left to right) . 204 Ruger, 223 Rem, 300 Black Out, 243 win, 7-08, 270 WSM, and the 300 WSM.



It's easy to see the difference between a long action and short action when the rifle is taken apart.



A few of the long action calibers include (left to right) . 25-06, 30-06, 7 Mag, 300 Mag, and 375 H&H.





## Gettin' Jiggy

A few issues back I mentioned some jig fishing tips, and explained a little bit about the jig. At that time I promised to delve a little deeper into the subject at a later date. Since the jig is a wintertime lure, and November will usher in the beginning of our winter season in Texas, now is the time for more details.

Before moving forward, let's recap what a jig is. A jig is simultaneously one of the simplest, and most complex lures in our arsenal. Consisting of a lead head, a hook, and some type of skirt, the jig has no inherent movement built in to it. All of the action is created by the angler.

Often called a jig-and-pig, jigs at one time were fished with real pork trailers, hence the name. Although I just said the jig is a winter lure, it is not a winter lure. Yes, it is very popular in the winter, when bass can be sluggish and won't chase an active bait. But the jig is an effective choice in all seasons of the year. A jig will catch fish from the first day of November right through October 31. And big ones too.

Back in the day there weren't a lot of choices in jigs. They all had pretty much the same design and construction. Now there are different shapes of jig heads, different skirt materials, and different hook brands and styles used to make jigs. Jig sizes range from 1/8th of an ounce in a finesse jig, all the way up to 2 ounces in some of the grass jigs.

Earlier jigs were made with skirts of fur, feathers, and hair. Next in line came the "living rubber" skirts and then the silicone based skirt material surfaced. Living rubber has pretty much been replaced by the newer silicone skirts, primarily because you can do more with color in the newer material. All of these have their place. I still think a hand-tied, hair skirt is the best choice for finicky smallmouth bass.

You can find a jig to match any style of fishing you may like. There are football head jigs, flipping jigs, swimming jigs, grass jigs, finesse jigs, and more. Each of these is intended for a specific technique and will do the job for which it is intended.

However, as I said, jigs are both simple

and complex. Before worrying too much about which jig to fish, here are some basics to remember.

### Fishing the jig

Jigs can be cast, pitched, flipped, swum, fished vertically, and even Carolina rigged. The first three are the most popular methods. Casting your jig out alongside likely looking spots will allow you to cover more water. You may choose to hop the jig back to the boat, drag it, or even swim it back. You may even want to try all three methods to see which one the fish prefer.

Flipping and pitching involve a much more up close and personal approach. The jig is tossed a very short distance into likely looking cover, hopped a few times, and then brought out to be tossed again. When flipping, the angler lets out 10-15 feet of line and closes the reel. He will then grab the line at the first eyelet on the rod, and pull a length of line back to bring the jig about even with the reel. With a flick of the wrist he can send the lure into thick cover. Because the reel is "locked", should a fish hit the jig immediately the angler can set the hook right away. Otherwise he'll pull a length of line back and flip again. This is a technique for really thick cover and fishing really close to the cover.

Pitching is for fishing a little further away from cover and consists of a pendulum motion. Press the cast button on the reel and let the lure fall about even with the reel. Holding the jig in your off hand, with the reel still open and your thumb on the spool, release and swing the bait toward your intended target. As the bait swings in an arc toward the target, you'll release the spool with your thumb, allowing the bait to sail effortlessly to the target (if you've ever tried this you'll appreciate the sarcasm there) It takes



*A slimmer jig head is perfect when fishing vegetation, and the swimming technique.*

practice, but once mastered can be very effective. It's one of my favorite methods for fishing water shallower than eight feet deep and I use it with many lures in addition to the jig.

Another favorite shallow water specialized technique is "punching grass." Matted vegetation has an open area under the canopy. There are stems and such underneath, but there is plenty of room for fish to move around and do fish stuff.

Using this method an angler will use a very heavy jig, from one to two ounces, to punch through the matted surface vegetation and reach the fish holding water underneath the canopy. Pitching and flipping are both employed in this technique. Once the jig has broken through the canopy a simple up and down jigging motion is used.

Swimming a jig is just what it sounds like. Cast the jig beyond the target and swim it back past where you think the fish is hiding. I do this a lot around boat docks. Docks float, and bass like to hide under them. By casting my jig past the dock and swimming it back just next to and below the edge, I can often entice bass to rush out and grab the bait before it "escapes."

Vertically jigging your bait is usually reserved for some type of deep water structure. For example, you might find an old pond dam rising up off the bottom.

Perhaps there are some trees or brush on the dam. By dropping your jig straight down into the cover, you are able to jig it gently up and down, encouraging a strike. Remember to always work the outside edges of the cover before you get into the heart of the brush, to avoid spooking those fish holding around the cover.

Carolina rigging a jig is not a well-known technique. It was developed by anglers that Carolina rig a lot, and had the experience of fish actually hitting the weight they were using, instead of the bait. By substituting a jig for their weight they were able to catch these fish. There were even jigs made for this technique for a short time, but don't believe they are still around. You can make your own by tying your main line to the eye, and your leader line to the hook shank above the keeper.

**Jig Trailers** — Although a jig can be fished all by itself, a trailer will add color and realistic movement and appearance. The jig most accurately represents the crayfish that bass feed on so willingly. Therefore a trailer should be chosen to enhance that crayfish appearance. Soft plastic craws add a dimension to the jigs appearance that will really "sell" the offering. In addition, color can be chosen to match, or contrast, the jig color, according to the angler's preference.

When adding a trailer I will try to ensure that the claws of the trailer extend just past the skirt. That sometimes means I have to trim the body of some baits to the desired length. I do this by holding the bait up next to the jig, with the claws hanging just below the skirt line. Next I see where the bait lines up with the base of the hook shank. Any part of the body extending past that intersection is trimmed off. This allows the bait to thread onto the hook all the way to the base of the hook shank.

Pork trailers historically were difficult to store. They would dry out and gave you the devil of a time when you tried to take them off. Although still a go to choice in the coldest conditions, (where plastics tend to stiffen up) most Texas anglers rarely see water that cold. If you are a die-hard and insist on fishing in these conditions, pork trailers are still available from Uncle Josh Bait Company.

**Gear** — Jig fishermen will want to use a rod rated for the weight of the jig. If fishing heavy cover use a rod a little heavier than the lure weight. This will be medium heavy and heavy most of

the time. Extra heavy rods are used for punching grass, and a medium will be plenty for swimming light jigs.

Reels should have plenty of strength for pulling big fish out of cover, and I use a slower gear ratio only because I'm not usually doing a lot of reeling. Of course the exception would be swimming or Carolina rigging the jig.

As for line, it is hard to beat a braid for flipping and pitching, and the heavy cover associated with the method. I'll also use braid when swimming a bait around docks. Docks often have rust and sharp edges that will cut through a mono line like butter.

I've only scratched the surface of fishing jigs. In the future I'll spend some more time on this effect form of fishing.

Until then remember a few simple principles. A jig can be used year-round. Jigs are easy to fish. Jigs catch BIG fish. And finally, you have to actually FISH a jig to learn it, so leave everything else at home. Tie on two or three jigs and go fishin'! 🌟🌟



*The flat head of the flipping jig is designed to sit upright on the bottom, keeping the claws of the trailer in the up "fighting"*

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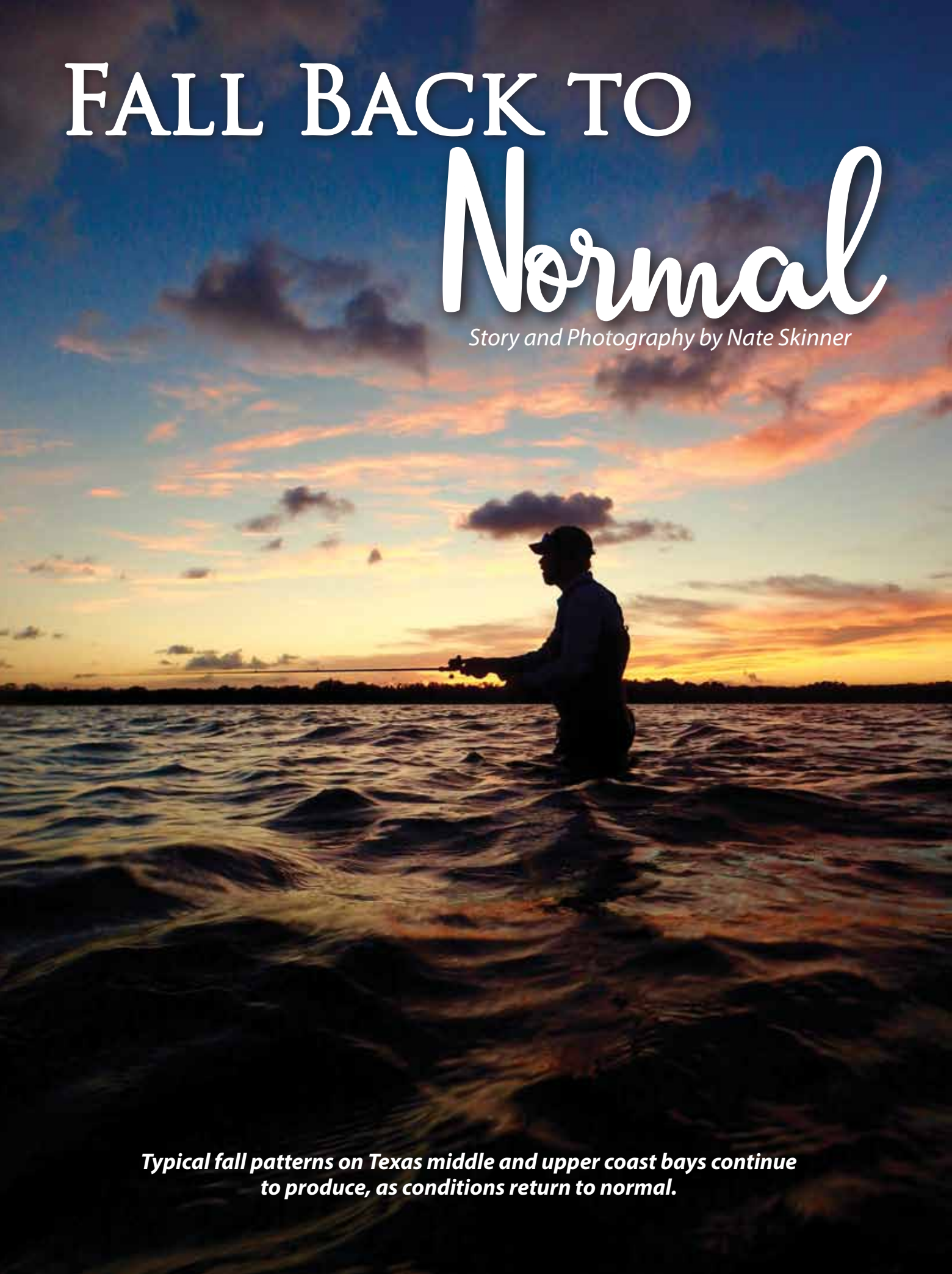
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# FALL BACK TO Normal

Story and Photography by Nate Skinner



**Typical fall patterns on Texas middle and upper coast bays continue to produce, as conditions return to normal.**

The end of the 2017 hurricane season was a doozy for the Texas coast, particularly from the Corpus Christi/Aransas Bay complexes to Sabine Lake. Hurricane Harvey brought damaging winds and dumped as much as 60 inches of rain in areas to close out the last few days of August. This left estuaries connected to major upstream watersheds with salinity levels more similar to a river or lake than a coastal bay.

The natural disaster brought concerns to the minds of anglers. Many wondered, “What in the world would freshwater inflows of this magnitude do to our systems?”

From Sabine Lake to San Antonio Bay, just about every bayou, creek and river flowed at a flood-level stage for some period of time as a result of Harvey’s ridiculous amounts of precipitation. And all of this water eventually drained into these bays.

Even in the midst of a historical flood, our estuaries and the fish residing in them proved they were just as resilient as the Texans that suffered great losses from the storm. In many places the fishing action picked up rapidly within a week of Harvey’s passing. Now things are returning to normal and fall is surely upon us.

Despite the destruction that Harvey wreaked upon our coastline for several days, there are many long-term benefits for bay systems from this major storm. According to Texas Parks & Wildlife Galveston Bay Ecosystem Leader, Glen Sutton, hurricanes that produce flooding events help to clean out estuaries.

“Hurricanes are a part of the natural cycle of bay systems,” he explained. “The major rains produced by these storms clean out an estuary like a fire cleans out the undergrowth of a forest. This cleansing makes room for new species to take hold and grow.”

Sutton states that massive amounts of freshwater bring a copious supply of natural nutrients in to bay systems. “An increase in nutrients fuels primary production and growth within an estuary,” he informed. “Flooding also helps to remove encrusting organisms that kill oysters as well as intolerant parasites and diseases that thrive in higher salinities.”

The results of these long-term benefits are starting to be seen. Fall fishing patterns are in full swing and bay systems

are rebounding nicely.

On Sabine Lake, one thing anglers can count on is to find redfish along the clamshell beds that are scattered along the estuary’s Louisiana Shoreline. Veteran guide, Captain Randy Foreman is about as reliable as it gets for in-tune fishing information on Sabine. Foreman claims that these clam beds are always a “go-to” hot spot when he is looking to bend some rods.

“The best time to fish the clam beds is during an outgoing tide,” he confessed. “In this situation bait is being pulled out of the bayous along the Louisiana shoreline and reds stage along the clamshell flats for an easy meal.”

Foreman says that locating the areas along this shoreline with the most clamshell is easy to do right after a front blows through. “When a northern blows the water out of the marshes, bayous and the main lake, the edges of the clam beds closest to the bank become exposed,” he explained. “This makes finding the densest clamshell reefs an easy task. Plus the fish will still be stacked up along them, just out off their edges in deeper water instead of right up against the shoreline.”

Flounder can also be targeted along the edge of these clamshell flats along Sabine’s Louisiana shoreline. The mouths of bayous will be the best bet to find piles of flatfish. As water temperatures continue to cool and November wears on, flounder will pull off the shoreline and stack up along the edges of Sabine Pass.

When it comes to Sabine’s trout bite anglers will have to be able to read the water. The north end of the

lake is closest to the freshwater sources that flow into this shared estuary. If the water on the north side appears chalky and fresh, a move to the southern end of the lake will be necessary to encounter the speckled-back predators.

Working birds will be the ticket for steady action on Sabine this fall. At times the entire lake will be stacked with gulls hovering over swarms of shrimp being chased to the surface by aggressively feeding specks and reds. When the bird action is in full force, the catching is easy.

My home waters on the Galveston Bay Complex are setting the stage to have a great fall. The flooding events filled the upper reaches of the system including nearly all of Trinity Bay with freshwater from the San Jacinto and Trinity Rivers. This pushed giant concentrations of fish into East Galveston Bay.

As a result, oyster shell reefs in the middle of East Galveston Bay are holding plenty of trout. Some excellent areas include Hanna Reef, Little Hanna Reef,



Capt. Ryan Battistoni says the upper portion of West Galveston Bay is going to be great for wade fishing this fall. Here he is pictured with a nice trout caught an Unfair Lures Rip-n-Slash.





*The clamshell flats along Sabine's Louisiana shoreline are a go-to spot to bend some rods in the fall.*

Ladies Pass, Bull Shoals and Moody's Pass. While fishing these areas it is a good idea to be on the look out for birds working over schools of fish.

Anglers can also plan to find tons of feisty sand trout over these mid bay reefs. Although typically not a targeted species, these fish willingly strike artificial baits and produce some tasty fillets when they are cooked fresh.

The upper portion of West Galveston Bay takes the cake as the honey hole for the Galveston complex this fall. This portion of the system has very few freshwater influences and bounced back much quicker from the floods than other areas.

Owner and operator of Battistoni's Guide Service, Captain Ryan Battistoni, confesses that the upper portion of West Galveston Bay is his favorite location to fish during the fall. "From Green's Cut to Mecom's Cut, and around North and South Deer Islands, there's a great deal of water to find numbers of solid fish," he professed. "Targeting heavy trout along Confederate Reef is also a great option

mullet present. Drifting the deeper guts along the reef can also be productive. When the water temperature starts cooling down Confederate Reef offers some incredible opportunities."

Battistoni also spends some time wade fishing the grass beds along the north shoreline of West Bay. The majority of this sea grass lies between Green's Cut and Carancahua Point. I've waded these grass beds with Battistoni many times and enjoyed superb topwater action for both trout and redfish.

The flounder run is also getting underway in Galveston Bay. Anglers can plan to encounter loads of flatfish along the edges of the Galveston Channel, around Pelican Island, and along the rocks of the Texas City Dike.

One area that may be overlooked this fall due to the flooding events months earlier is the San Bernard River Marsh along the Intracoastal Waterway near Freeport. Captain Kendall Kersh of Pure Salt Adventures states that the back lakes in this area tend to recover rapidly from floods.

"The redfish don't seem to mind freshwater inflows," he added. "Schools of reds can found cruising along the shorelines and reefs within the Cedar Lakes and Cowtrap Lake."

Kersh is also full-time guide out of Matagorda where he claims East Matagorda Bay should experience an outstanding fall. "The drift fishing this time of year in East Matagorda can be

and it's something I look forward to every November. I like to wade the shallow edges of this reef along its north end and focus on areas where there are rafts of



*Birds working over schools of fish can be encountered in several different bay systems this month.*

extremely good," he confessed. "Birds are working across the bay and the reefs along the west end have an abundance of trout and reds feeding around them."

According to Veteran Matagorda guide, Captain Tommy Countz, East Matagorda Bay has recovered 100 percent since the floods from Hurricane Harvey.

"The freshwater that entered this bay only improved our fishing," he explained. "Reds are schooling along the back lakes, drains, and marshes while the trout are feeding over mid bay reefs or scattered shell."

East Matagorda Bay will also provide anglers with some excellent opportunities to land a trophy trout this fall. Captain Trey Prye is an authority on the subject of monster trout in this bay and spends his time wading the south shoreline.

"We catch a lot of our big specks during an outgoing tide while wade fishing the mouths of coves and marsh drains along the south shoreline during the major and minor feeding periods according to the solunar tables," he confessed.

In West Matagorda Bay, Countz suggests that the best option for trout is to wade the grass beds. "Seagrass beds out in front of Cotton's Bayou, Green's Bayou, and the Middle Grounds are phenomenal during the fall," he claimed. "These areas receive little pressure this time of year and provide some great action."

When looking for reds in West Matagorda Bay, Kersh informs that he always counts on finding schools of fish tailing along the south shoreline. "The



*The back lakes and marshes near the San Bernard River are often overlooked and offer great fall fishing opportunities for schooling reds like this one caught by Capt. Kendall Kersh.*

prime time to catch reds here is right after a strong cold front," he stated. "With the tides pushed out, the redfish will be forced to stack up in the guts near the mouths

of bayous. When this happens it's nothing to catch 100 fish or more in a day."

Down on San Antonio Bay, Captain Nathan Beabout of N&M Sportsman's Adventures claims that fall patterns have kicked off, plus the bay has fully recovered and is back to normal conditions. "The fishing has been excellent and will continue to get

even better as it cools off," he informed. "Back marshes with muddy bottoms become the key to success this time of year. Rafts of mullet pull back into these areas and the gamefish follow. Drains leading into the back lakes that have deeper guts are also used as a staging area for fish, especially during an outgoing tide."

Beabout suggests that anglers make a switch to slow suspending, mullet imitation plugs once the water temperature drops into the low sixties. "When the water drops close to 60 degrees, targeting hefty sow trout becomes my main focus," he confesses. "The best fishing of the year here is beginning right now."

As the days get shorter and things cool down, anglers can rest easy knowing that the fishing action is still heating up. Reading the water and looking for signs of activity is essential for success. Typical fall patterns will continue to produce, as everything falls back to normal. 🌟🌟



*Trophy trout become the main focus for Capt. Trey Prye along the south shoreline of East Matagorda Bay in November. This angler caught this fat sow while wading with Prye during an outgoing tide.*





## Pop-Up Blinds and Other Natural Options

This past January while attending the huge annual gathering known as the Dallas Safari Club Convention and Expo, TOJ Editor Bill Olson and I were discussing a number of potential hunting topics for the year. We thought it'd be interesting to delve into pop-up blinds.

I was born and raised in Texas, and have spent a ton of hours setting in tree stands or box blinds so I get it — Texans know their stationary blinds. So why write an article on portable blinds? Simple, there are a lot of applications for them depending upon the time of year or season, hunting opportunity and potential land use restrictions to name a few.

Consider this —

**Hunting On Public Lands** — Granted there isn't a lot of public land in Texas compared to her overall size but there is more than some might think. Plus if you hunt it, you can't build a box blind and even if you could, someone else might use it.

**Hunting Day Leases** — Obviously it's not worthwhile to build a blind on a day lease. Or maybe someone extended an invitation to let you hunt their ranch on a one-time basis?

**Change of Game Patterns** — Portable blinds aren't just for the above two scenarios when something more

permanent is not practical. It could be a situation where a new opportunity presents itself, like when filling a feeder and a big buck is noticed hanging around an area.

Or it could be after setting up a permanent blind the deer totally change their patterns. You sure can't relocate or set

up a box blind and then hunt it a couple of hours later — so why not set up a portable blind?

It could be those times as the season wanes when animals are holding up in the brush or other cover until right at or shortly after dark. If scouting has revealed the direction the deer or other game are coming in from, you can go up the trail, set up an ambush site and get a shot while they're meandering in at a slow pace.

Sometimes the hunter gets pattern by the deer and they may have grown accustomed to your routine and being in your normal blind. A change of pace with a popup blind might be the perfect change.

To make this point clear — if an animal comes in every night right at dark, I guarantee you that critter is just meandering along before you ever see him. He's browsing in the thick nearby-brush just killing time and slowly approaching as he waits on the sun to set. You can outsmart him by



*A few limbs in front of an Ameristar pop-up blind plus an in-the-field constructed shooting tripod for a rifle rest has this set up ready to hunt.*

setting up on the route that is being traveled.

I also use portable blinds a lot when turkey hunting. You never know where you'll stumble onto a turkey but with a pop-up blind you can set up anywhere. They are equally as versatile when setting up to call while varmint hunting.

A pop-up blind has a lot of benefits besides the obvious of providing concealment. Add a portable/folding chair makes them comfortable. While not necessarily waterproof (although you can apply spray-on waterproofing), they do provide protection from light rain and snow plus a break from the wind. You can also pack a magazine and read to pass time without spooking your game. Remember a more comfortable, quiet and still hunter will see more game.

If I am dead certain that big buck or boar will only be coming from one direction then I only open one window so they can't see through the blind and skyline me. I believe they also provide a little protection against a deer smelling me.

When setting up a pop-up place it against some brush for added concealment. You can cut out limbs on a cedar and nestle back against the trunk. Stack the cut limbs in front of or tied to the blind to further break it's outline and conceal it.

A number of the newer model popup blinds have ties or pockets where tufts of grass or brush can be affixed to further help it blend in. On older models attach some Velcro for similar use.

Some better-constructed models have a stout enough window or cross support to rest a rifle on. Super lightweight or entry models may not have this feature. In this case I like to have some shooting sticks inside, or make myself a set from available limbs.

Some pop-ups have netting the manufacturer boast you can shoot through with an arrow without altering the point of impact. I'm not fully convinced but then I've never tested that claim either.

At S.H.O.T. Show this year in Vegas, Josh of Traditions Media demonstrated the Ameristep supernatural full-size pop-up blind as well as his new Ameristep THROWDOWNBLIND. The Throwdown folds out into a C-shaped blind that is about 20 inches tall. It reminds me of a big umbrella when folded.

It is super lightweight so it can be thrown in your backpack or strap it to a daypack. It is super compact and lightweight, weighing only 1.8 pounds. Set it up with a tree or brush at your back.

It doesn't have a top so of course it doesn't provide as much concealment as a full-sized pop-up but in a run-and-gun situations I love it. We used one recently on a pigeon hunt and it worked great.

If you're leaving a blind set up overnight you'll want to stake it down so it doesn't blow away. You can do this with spikes or tent stakes. You can also tie lines to a tree but don't tie it to flimsy branches or the blind will be blown and jerk around more than it being stabilize.

For those just starting out or watching their hunting budget you may want to consider using a pop-up instead of building three to five box blinds on your place. They are affordable, portable and provide additional flexibility for a variety of hunting opportunities.

There is one other very affordable natural option I have used a lot of times over the years. Several decades ago we had a lease near Bandera. One of the older kids came up with the idea of making blinds out of logs and brush. I've since done this numerous times when needing a quick, all natural blind.

To construct one is fast and simple. Lay logs off the side of a tree in a C shape

and fill in the openings with brush, bark and grass. If there are no trees, lay a long log on the ground and then logs off both ends of it and build it up like a log cabin. Fill in the gaps the same way as mentioned above. You'll want a steady log on top to use as a rest for your rifle. I've used one

of these "field-made blinds" to hunt deer all over the country.

So just because you can't afford a Taj Mahal blind on stilts, don't let that keep you out of the woods. There are a lot of affordable and viable options that might just pop-up. **T★J**



*This is a simple C-shaped blind built around the base of a big tree. The beauty of brush blinds is it can be constructed anywhere anywhere in a few minutes with available natural material in the area.*



*When possible the author likes to tuck his pop-up blind in some brush to help it further blend in.*



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## Lake Roundup

### CENTRAL TEXAS

By John Jefferson

When life gives you the lemons, we're told to make lemonade. A couple of retired brothers did just that.

Brothers Dennis and Gale Haire got into bass fishing several years ago, about the time **Lake Austin** started making news as a bass fishing *Mecca*. Other writers called me and asked if what they were hearing was true. I told them the Texas Parks and Wildlife Toyota ShareLunker website was no fantasy baseball game; the results were as real as they were shocking. Big fish were being regularly caught in Lake Austin. I mean a number of bass over 13 pounds, large enough to qualify for the ShareLunker competition.

Then a severe overdose of grass carp burst the bubble and left the lake a watery desert. The habitat was devastated. Fishermen cursed and moaned.

I didn't know the Brothers Haire at the

time. Maybe they complained, too. They soon realized — like a lot of the regular Lake Austin fishermen — that the bass fishing Mecca had turned into simply a mess, and I don't mean a mess of fish.

As Lake Austin was declining, **Lake Travis** and **Lake LBJ** were being reborn. Although Lake Austin was little more than a mere long cast from where they lived, Dennis and Gale booked a trip on LBJ for a change of scenery and luck. Fishing with guide Jess Rotherham, they were introduced to the lake and even to its crappie fishing. A new bug began biting.

Rotherham mentioned Duke Kinley to them, telling them that Duke guided Austin, and was adept at catching anything that swims, including crappie. Kinley's name may be familiar to you; I've fished with him several times and regularly call him for fishing information. He is an excellent fisherman, an innovative one, and a fishing education all rolled into one. He has placed a 13-pound bass in the ShareLunker competition, and he has caught a number of big catfish, hundreds of white bass, and countless crappie.

My only appearance in the fish records was the white crappie water body record on Austin a while back. Duke broke it. Then his record was broken, but he has caught several crappie in Austin since then that would have re-set the record, had he not declined to enter them, preferring to have fish for supper instead of playing the paper chase. Some regular readers might recall a picture accompanying this column last year of a crappie Duke had to cut the



PHOTO BY DENNIS HAIRE

*Gale Haire is all smiles after just catching the new Lake Austin waterbody record white crappie in late August.*

tail off of to make it fit in the skillet. It was over 15 inches long.

Duke gave the Haire boys the benefit of his wisdom, and they set aside their bass tackle for crappie poles and lighter reels, line and bait. The lemonade they made out of the lemon-like grass carp invasion tasted like the best eating freshwater fish in Texas waters. They were hooked on crappie!

And it paid off for them in another way. Gale Haire just became certified as the new Lake Austin white crappie record holder with a 1.85 pound, 15-inch slab. He humbly credits his brother, Dennis, who owns the boat they fish on, Jess Rotherham, and Duke Kinley for teaching him the technique of catching crappie.

I accompanied the brothers on Lake Austin in mid-September, and watched how they did it. Dennis showed me how he would tie on a 1/8th ounce jig head, thread on a plastic Bobby Garland blue ice baby shad and hook a small, live minnow onto the hook through the jaw. Then he'd flip it out near a brush pile he had located on his electronic fish finder, let it sink, raise it up a turn or two of the handle, and wait for the gentle bite of a crappie. They were running low on minnows the day Gale caught his record fish, so he added a Gulp "nibble" instead.

Realizing the grass carp debacle mistake, TPWD Inland Fisheries staff



PHOTO BY JOHN JEFFERSON

*The Haire Brothers, Gale and Dennis, have turned away from bass fishing on Lake Austin in favor of crappie, like this white crappie Gale caught recently on the lake. Both white and black crappie exist in the lake.*

banded with Texas Tournament Zone and Friends of Reservoirs on June 7, 2015 to place ashe juniper (AKA cedar) brush piles in Lake Austin. It was a heckuvan operation. And perhaps the highest and best use of Central Texas cedar. A number of fishermen put their shoulder muscles where their mouths were and volunteered to help. The turnout and dedication were impressive. A lot of new habitat was created. TPWD even posted the GPS coordinates on its website to help fishermen find them. But the brush piles have gotten harder to find since they were first placed.

The best laid plans often meet unexpected obstacles. We had all been praying the drought would break. When it did, it broke all records. Heavy storms in back-to-back years rained torrents down on parched land, causing massive flooding. One of the lesser casualties was displacement of the brush piles. Current in Lake Austin caused by necessary releases of water from the dams above Austin washed away the new habitat to places yet unknown. TPWD Inland Fisheries District Biologist, Marcos de Jesus, told us that TPWD would try to locate as many brush piles as it could, but it would be later in the fall. Another large

habitat project would take precedence.

TPWD has acquired several large concrete pilings that are planned to be placed in the lake as artificial reefs. Reefs worked well in the Gulf, so why not try them where habitat needed help in freshwater lakes?

It sounds like the pillars will be placed near the mouth of Bee Creek in the vicinity of Tom Miller Dam at the southern end of Lake Austin. According to de Jesus, it shouldn't take fish but about a week to relate to the new structure.

In the meantime, lakes Travis and LBJ continue providing prime fishing in Central Texas. Trees and brush that came up during the drought provide excellent bass and baitfish habitat on Trav. Abundant shad also fed the bass. Anglers who fished deep in Travis during the late summer were rewarded with surprisingly large bass. Those who fished shallower caught plenty of bass, but more average-sized bass than large ones. Since the weather is cooling, bass will move back into the coves and creeks from the depths to which they escaped after the weather turned off so scorchingly hot. They should be easier to find.

It won't surprise me if a ShareLunker or two are hauled in on Travis and LBJ during the fall. If not in the fall, at least during the spawn. I know, such a prediction puts me in the

reliability class with Statesman sports writer, Kirk Bowles, who makes a "Crazy Prediction" each week that frequently turns out to be a flop, since Travis has never had a ShareLunker entered. The Travis lake record, however, is 14.21 pounds, caught by James Perry in January 1993, prior to establishment of the Toyota ShareLunker records. Perry may not have entered it in the program's forerunner, either, created in 1985, and called Operation Share a Lone Star Lunker Program. It would certainly qualify if caught today. If this is the catch I remember, he didn't know about the records and drove quite a way from the lake with the bass in the bed of his pickup truck before stopping at a taxidermy shop. The bass probably lost some weight during the drive.

Lake LBJ has had one ShareLunker, as have lakes **Belton**, **Dunlap**, **Lady Bird**, **McQueeney**, and **Waco**. Lake Austin has had 20.

It's time for more. **T&J**



PHOTO BY JOHN JEFFERSON

*Gale Haire fishes for crappie as his brother, Dennis, powers his boat near the shore along the upper end of the Lake Austin.*

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# Alternate Benefits to *Hunting*

*Sportsmen hunt to take an animal,  
but a shot doesn't have to occur to  
enjoy the hunt.*

*Story and Photography by Bob Zaiglin*

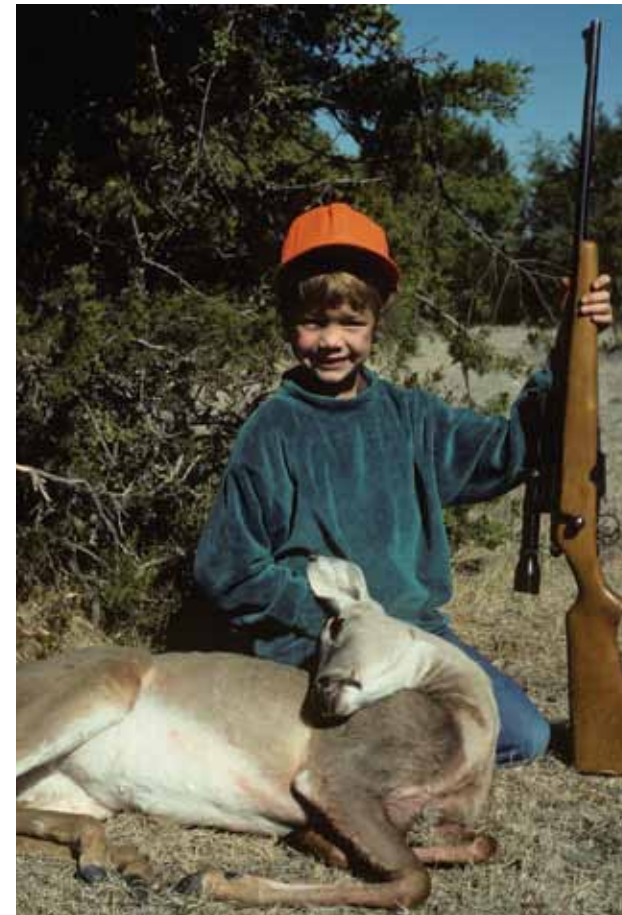
Hunting to many Texas deer hunters is simply the challenge to outwit their prey, often taking much preparation, which includes acquiring knowledge about the animal being pursued. And when it all comes together and that particular buck is down, a grand sense of achievement is realized.

It's truly a rewarding feeling when successful at taking a buck of huge proportions, but there are many other benefits to the pursuit of game that I refer to as the holistic experience. To some it's the mouth-watering smell of doves on the pit following a successful hunt with family and friends.

To others it's the thunderous sound of a

covey rise on a chilly November morning, or the excitement on a youngster's face on the first day of deer hunting season.

The benefits of hunting are many, and additional ones are only a plane ride away. Today's sportsmen are mobile, living out their dream hunts across the globe in search of unique species in sometime inhospitable terrain. This only



*Sometimes it's the reflection of joy in a young ones face after taking their first deer.*

magnifies the sense of accomplishment, not to mention the opportunity to dine on incredibly tasty cuisine.

For example, many folks can say they have visited South Texas, but few have actually witnessed the incredible pastel-orange-colored evening sky silhouetting a mesquite-lined horizon, or visually salivated over a spotted fawn sequestered in a thorny protective patch of prickly pear, sights that are rather common to the outdoorsman. Turkey hunters see the brush country in the spring from another aspect when it erupts into an array of colors as wildflowers litter the landscape, while the canorous songs of colorful migrating birds by the hundreds can be heard defending their breeding turf.

Turkey hunters in the Hill Country wade through a sea of bluebonnets, often getting the opportunity to see long beards take to their roost silhouetted by a flaming orange evening sky. These are just a few of the incredible views sportsmen enjoy, and with 10 distinctly different ecological regions throughout the state, they enjoy a front row seat in an amazingly diverse

outdoor theatre.

As a hunter, I have been privileged to hunt in eight countries, on four continents. What I have been privileged to experience has been firmly etched into my memory bank.

It's hard to imagine a place that could be more breathtakingly beautiful than a stand of brilliant yellow-leaved aspens rustling in the cool Colorado breeze while in pursuit of a Rocky Mountain mule deer. The robust golden-yellow leaves, gilded by the evening sun, and renders one speechless when describing their therapeutic beauty. But the flame-red-flowered ocotillo in the Sonoran desert ranks right up there, as does the sighting of one of its iconic inhabitants, the desert sheep.

I have never witnessed anything more impressive than the panoramic views of the pastel green-and-yellow-colored McKenzie Mountains in the Northwest Territories, especially when Dall sheep litter the caribou moss-

laden slopes along with grizzly bears gorging themselves on raspberries in late summer. I know of nowhere that one can feel closer to God than on the apex of the talus slopes while rivers below meander through the alders like ribbons in the wind with caribou grazing on the verdant golf-green-like flats high above.

It's natural wonders like these that make a hunting experience most fulfilling and unforgettable.

Pursuing muntjac and Chinese water deer in the United Kingdom is to me the only way to really get a visual sense of how beautiful this country is. Like all travelers, it starts at the intimidatingly large Heathrow Airport followed by a visit to London where one can view some of the oldest, yet uniquely designed archeological wonders in the world. But to a hunter, the anticipation of pursuing game override such marvels.

Two hours out of London, one is granted the opportunity to see a different aspect of the country as they enter the dark, dank forest where 'the oldest member of the deer family', the muntjac, resides. The search for this russet-colored, canine-clad cervid affords one the privilege to see the country as it existed long before people impacted it. Then there are the gently sloping, wide open agricultural lands where the Chinese water deer, often referred to as vampire deer because of the two long fang-like canines extending from their upper jaw, can be spotted along the live fence lines composed of briars and



*Spring turkey hunters often wade through a sea of flowers that have every color of the rainbow.*



holly, forming virtually impenetrable boundaries surrounding rape fields. An additional perk are the colorful birds, including ring neck pheasant, inhabiting the brush-entangled fences.

Ensconced on the side of a rocky bluff in Spain glassing for ibex while brown eagles soar high above, using wind currents to sustain lift, is a privileged sight, as are the chest-high hand-laid rock



*Sometimes it's the unexpected things like seeing a pair of huge bucks locked in mortal combat that eclipses all other memories of the hunt.*



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fences the Spanish built to prevent erosion and facilitate farming practices near their macias. These structures demonstrate the unparalleled effort denizens of the past demonstrated in order to survive. The ubiquitous rock structures appear throughout the region even on slopes challenging to walk, alone build such structures.

I eventually gravitated to Africa, the second largest continent in the world, representing 20.4% of the total land area on the planet. I have enjoyed the privilege to hunt the Dark Continent 10 times in several countries including South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Tanzania, all of which exhibited a unique and diverse array of flora and fauna.

Even after a day of viewing hundreds of animals, after the sun dips below the tall marula trees, like a factory, the night shift takes over. Sitting around a campfire watching sparks, like fireflies, levitate from the red ambers of Mopani wood, coyote-sized jackal can be heard barking while the deep, guttural roars of lion can be heard in the distance, often interrupted by the demonic whoop-whoop-whoop of hyena.

If one is lucky, the most unique sound in the bush is the hacksaw-like sound emitted by the most elusive animal in all of Africa, the leopard.

There is nothing even similar to the pursuit of this dapple-colored cat as it exercises an acute sense of smell complemented by incredible eyesight. Ensconced inside a meticulously designed blind in the dark, just yards from a bait, normally impala, is an experience second to none. The silence within the blind is deafening, as one remains motionless for hours awaiting the arrival of Mr. Spots. While hunting leopard in Zimbabwe, the sounds of the ink-black jungle night were firmly etched into my memory bank as I heard the clamoring of horns of herds of Cape buffalo as they approached to only a few feet of my blind followed by the calls of female black rhinos communicating with their calves. It was more than a hunt as I realized I was only a minor participant in a theatre occupied by some of the most dangerous animals on the planet.

Cape buffalo have always been my major interest because of their recognition as 'black death', which they so richly deserve. But how they are hunted is what intrigued me most. Pursuing buffalo spoor on foot, in such an inhospitable

environment, is an educational experience. Locating buffalo is often accomplished by watching and listening for the red-billed oxpecker. Its principal host is the buffalo upon which it will attach itself and feed on the insects that infest the bovine.

A few years back, we tracked a group of dagga boys several hours before a flock of loquacious oxpeckers suddenly dropped from the sky just a short distance from us, insuring us of the exact location of the animals we were pursuing. It made all the difference in the world as I then prepared for the opportunity I was about to entertain.

Most often than not, the extended hikes are in vain as the buffalo don't support desirable headgear or we simply bump them, but each excursion is an adventure as a plethora of animals, birds, and sometimes poisonous snakes, like the puff adder, are encountered along the way.

There's nothing more impressive than a lilac-crested rolla or as stimulating as a face-to-face encounter with a bull elephant capable of grinding an individual into mincemeat in a matter of seconds.

To the sportsmen aware of their surroundings, the benefits derived from hunting are endless. And one does not have to travel across the Atlantic to realize them. Some of my most memorable experiences occurred around stock tanks in the hot South Texas summer months while filming whitetail deer.

While awaiting deer under the shade of whatever tree or bush was available, I enjoyed a variety of brush country denizens that preoccupied my time before deer began to move. Bullfrogs, partially submerged peeking out from the moss, lie still in the water while flycatchers precariously perched on twigs, and dashed out over the water to nail a flying meal. Dragonflies continually transect the surface while coyotes appear at the brush line to quench their thirst. But once the sun drops below the taller mesquite, all one's focus is on deer, and hopefully a buck supporting a rack of huge proportions.

Sportsmen hunt to take an animal, but a shot doesn't have to occur in order to enjoy the hunt.

Individuals with this philosophy can magnify their hunting experiences by recognizing the many opportunities that exist whenever they are in the wild and enjoy each one of them..T★J



*The difference between hunting and touring is the hunter is granted the opportunity to see unspoiled land along with its inhabitants*





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## CoastWatch | Danno Wise

Although fall actually arrived in September, more often than not, it isn't until November that full time fall weather settles over the Texas and Louisiana coasts. This change in temperature generally results in a change in fish behavior.

A few species, most notably flounder, even use the changing weather as a trigger for their annual migration. As most anglers are aware, the 'flounder run' usually starts in earnest after the first hard front pushes through the coastal curve. And, as most anglers know, it's rare to get through November without a flounder-run spurring front.

Although flounder are a highly anticipated target species during fall, there are several species available to coastal anglers to catch in November. Schools of bull redfish will still be working their way up and down the beachfront for the first few weeks of November. Conversely, herds of slot-size reds will be plentiful in the back lakes and bays.

The cooler conditions of November will also result in more active speckled trout. During November, the resident trout populations in most bays will be

working fairly shallow – taking the time to feed on the flats before being pushed into deeper water during December.

The other great thing about late fall fishing is the crowds – or lack thereof. With hunting and football seasons well underway, most Texas bays are void of boating traffic throughout the week and even on some weekends. **TJ**



Matagorda guide Capt. Tommy Countz says November is about as good as it gets for coastal fishermen.

"Most folks think that October is the best month of the year for fishing on the Texas coast," said Countz. "Maybe it is, but I think that November will run it a close second."

"If we are going to get any bird activity in East Matagorda Bay in the fall, by November it should be full blast. Shrimp in the bay is the key to bird action and some falls they take their own sweet time showing up. November can provide some serious bird action with trout and redfish chasing shrimp under them. In November we catch a lot of fish drifting scattered shell on the west end of East Bay. I like to throw 1/4 ounce

lead heads rigged with bright colored paddle tails. I prefer Mirrolure Marsh Minnows in chartreuse, pink, or Chicken on a Chain.

"I also like wading the south shoreline of West Matagorda Bay in November starting out throwing top waters in front of drains near shell reefs and later switching to Mirrolure Lil' Johns rigged on 1/16 ounce heads. My favorite colors are Glo and Purple Demon."

"One more November option is fishing the Colorado River north of the Intracoastal Canal. Drifting along the west bank and making casts with chartreuse tails on 3/8 ounce heads usually does the trick."

"Whichever option you choose, I don't think that you will be disappointed fishing in Matagorda in November."

Freeport guide Capt. Mike Segall of Reel Threel Charters says November sees him doing a lot of different things.

"In November, I'll be doing a little bit of everything," said Segall. "We'll have lots of bull reds and sharks still hanging around. We'll also still be fishing for kings. We might even start doing some state water snapper in November."

"And, I'll also be doing some bay fishing. We'll have some good trout fishing along the ICW. And, I'll be doing some trips into Bastrop Bay and Matagorda Bay. As it gets colder, we'll start having some real good trout fishing in the Brazos River."

"November is usually a real good month for me, because I've got a lot going on. Whether I'm fishing the beachfront, the bay or offshore, there's still plenty of fish around and fishing's usually pretty good."

Galveston guide Capt. Greg Verm says November is a great month to target any of the Inshore Big 3 in the Galveston Bay Complex.

"In November, we'll have great action for trout, redfish and flounder," said Verm. "The trout bite should be hot. A lot of these fish will be coming from under the birds. Usually we have good bird activity through the first couple weeks of November. We're mostly catching trout under the birds, but from time to time

we'll pull redfish from under the birds as well."

"I'll also be spending a lot of time in the marsh and back lakes during November. There will be lots redfish in the marsh and lots of specks in the back lakes and bayous. There will also be quite a few flounder in the back lakes and bayous. As it starts cooling off, the flounder will start moving out. This can happen at any time, just depending on the weather, but it is usually a good bet that by the end of November our flounder run will be underway."

"One of the things I do different during November is sight casting to flounder at night. We can't gig during November, but we'll still go out at night in our halogen light-lit boats and sight cast to giant flounder. That is a unique and exciting way to catch flounder."

Like other areas along the Upper Texas Coast, Sabine Lake saw its share of freshwater runoff following Hurricane Harvey. However, by November, things should be getting back to normal according to guide Capt. Randy Foreman, who is expecting good fishing during

November.

"We had a lot of freshwater come through after the hurricane, but by November the lake should be back in good shape," said Foreman. "Usually, November is about the same as October. Of course, this year our October was a little different because we were having to look for salty water. But, in November, our redfishing will pick up tremendously. When the northwest wind blows, those marshes will drain and those reds have to get out of the marsh. There will also still be some shrimp leaving the marsh. So, we should have some bird activity."

"For the most part, I'll still be fishing my 3/4-ounce spoon – slow-



PHOTO COURTESY CAPT. TOMMY COUNTZ

While anglers will be fishing shell in East Matagorda, West Matagorda's grass beds and bars will be giving up redfish this month.



PHOTO COURTESY CAPT. GREG VERM

Lots of options are available in November in the Galveston Bay complex. Capt. Greg Verm will put clients on redfish as well as sight casting to flounder this month.

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rolling it on the bottom. But, I'll also be throwing some Down South Southern Shad.

"We will have some trout mixed in

with the reds, but they'll mostly be smaller trout – keepers, but not real big.

"If I'm strictly looking for redfish, I'll usually go to Keith Lake. Keith Lake will



PHOTO COURTESY VASTINE HUGHES

Big bull redfish like this one caught by Vastine Hughes may have left Matagorda's Bays by November, but they will still be cruising the beachfront for anglers fishing the nearshore waters.



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have lots of redfish in November. I like fishing back up in there with a Southern SHad – glow/chartreuse – under a cork.

"Flounder fishing will be really good during November as well. The fish will start migrating out to the Gulf the first two weeks of November. That's when I'll start setting up on points and cuts and sand flats. I'll be keying on mullet and pinfish and looking for areas with good water flow.

"I'll also fish the grass banks that drop into a deep trough and have good water flow. I'll go along fishing all of the little eddies that are formed by the current. Usually, I'll be fishing a Southern Shad in either Red Shad or Midnight Money." **T&J**



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Out of Freeport Capt. Mike Segall of Reel Threel Charters says his offshore options will include red snapper in state waters plus kingfish.



In Lake Calcasieu, Capt. Mary Poe of Big Lake Guide Service is excited about the upcoming month.

"November is looking really good," said Poe. "We are looking forward to it and expect the fishing as well as the duck hunting to be exceptional. As of now the speckled trout bite is on and only getting better as the month progresses. Shrimp are making their way into the estuary with every outgoing tide and north wind. This will make for excellent fishing straight through the month and on into early December.

"During November the vast majority of our fishing will take place under birds. Our main area of concentration will be from Commissary Point north to the Intracoastal Canal. Shrimp imitations rigged on 1/4 and 1/8 ounce lead heads will be our baits of choice. Make sure while fishing birds that you cover the entire water column. Redfish are often mixed with these schools of trout. The key to catching them is letting your bait fall toward the bottom.

"Hopefully, all of you experience some excellent hunting and fishing this November. We hope to see all of you on the water soon."

Venice area anglers will be seeing the end of the offshore tuna action. Generally speaking, once the "mullet migration" ends, so does the fast and furious tuna action. This tends to happen during the first couple weeks of November so, although it will be over soon, good tuna fishing will still be going on at least early in November.

Inshore action, on the other hand, should be good in the Venice area during the entire month of November. Early in the month, redfish will still be in the marshes. As the water temperatures drop, the reds will start moving to the passes and outside beaches. Trout will follow more or less the same pattern of movement.

Early in the month, expect to find good concentrations of speckled trout in the river. However, once the water temperature begins to dip, the specks will move to the outside beaches.

Keep in mind, the water temperature in the Venice area isn't only affected by the local weather. The Mississippi River drains the entire Midwest.

An early winter up north means dropping water temperatures along the southern stretch of the Mississippi River, so anglers should always keep an eye on the weather along the entire length of the big river. **T&J**

When the north wind blows shrimp are pushed out of the Louisiana marshes, birds work overhead and anglers fishing Lake Calcasieu stay bowed up.



PHOTO BY NATE SKINNER

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## For the Love of Fall

There is much to love about fall, particularly if you are a die-hard bass guy who has spent the summer dreaming of cooler weather, moderate water temperatures and armies of head-hunting largemouths cruising the shallows, many of them wearing fuses so short that provoking a brawl with artificial lure can hardly seem like a challenge at times. Fall, which officially got underway on September 22, is the harbinger of all three.

My guess is plenty of bass anglers have already gotten a good taste of the fall bass bite because we are already more than a month into it. For those that haven't, the time is ripe join in the fun. That's because some of the very best fishing action of the year always comes down the pike during November and December.

Water temperatures should be in the low 70s or maybe even the upper 60s by now and the bass are going to be in a feel-good mood because of it. If you like to

catch fish, there may not be a better time to wet a hook on a Texas bass lake, other than spring.

One of the main things I like about fall fishing is there are a wide variety ways to run up the score using a number of different baits. Barring any unexpected disasters, here's some fall fishin' stuff you can bank on over the next 60 days:

### Up a Creek

Fall is one time of year when it never hurts to be up a creek — even if you don't have a paddle. Creeks always hold a ton of bass during fall, mainly because channels are full of the succulent baitfish they love to munch.

Filter feeders by nature, threadfin shad always gravitate towards the shallows during fall to take advantage of the final plankton bloom of the year. They make the move by way of creeks, drains and ditches that connect shallow water to deep.

Bass are quick to follow the smorgasbord so they can gorge their bellies ahead of the coming winter. The fish like to set up camp along the edges of creeks and will use any available cover such as grass, pad stems, stumps, lay downs or brush as hiding spots to ambush shad when they swim dangerously close.

### Beginning the Search

The best way to locate fall creek bass is to put the trolling motor down, cover water and hit as many "high percentage" spots as possible. Whenever possible, it's usually a good idea to begin the search at the upper portion of a creek channel and work your way out.

Well defined channel bends — both inside and out — are good places to look. If the channel is lined with hydrilla, be sure to check out indentions, guts or points in the grass that sometimes indicate a contour change. Grass flats adjacent to creek channels will also serve up a strong bite from time-to-time. The best stuff will have some depth to it and will be growing in clumps rather than solid mats. This provides the fish with plenty of ambush points and anglers with multiple open lanes to present a wide variety of baits.

### Baits to Bank On

**Topwaters:** With gobs of bait dimpling the shallows and armies of hungry fish on patrol looking for an easy meal in skinny water, it is never a bad idea to try scratching the surface during November.

It's not just an early and late deal, either. Topwater fishing can be an all-day affair during fall.

Surface scratchers come in many makes and sizes. There are hard body topwaters such as the Pop R and Zara Spook, and soft plastic topwaters like the floating lizard or plastic frog.

Another popular style of topwater is the buzz bait. Unlike many other styles of topwaters, the buzz bait demands forward movement to stay afloat.

It is also worth noting that the buzz bait is the most unreliable topwater out there. Some days you can't buy a strike on a buzz bait. Other days, bass won't leave it alone.

Certain conditions are more conducive

to better results on some topwaters. Chuggers are the best choice in calm waters, whereas buzz baits and big stick baits like a Zara Spook, Whopper Plopper or Stutter Step can be the ticket when there is some wind to put some chop on the water's surface.

**Spinnerbait:** Spinnerbaits are tailor made for fall fishing because they come through shallow cover extremely well and do a good job of simulating bait fish attempting to flee. Try moving the bait at varied retrieve speeds to determine what the fish prefer.

Working the bait fast enough that it wakes or bulges the surface without breaking through can work like magic at times, especially when fishing around clumps of grass, lay down logs and bushes. Baits weighing 3/8 to 1/2 ounce with tandem willowleaf blades work great for bulging the surface.

**Lipless Crankbaits:** Lipless crankbaits like the Rat-L-Trap will catch fish year-round, but they can be extremely productive when the fish are aggressive and feeding heavily on shad in the upper water column. The baits can be burned over open water to trigger fish that are schooling on shad or fished over the tops of submerged grass beds to trigger reaction strikes from fish that are laying in wait. Best colors for fall are chrome/blue, chrome/black or bone.

**Swim Jigs:** It's hard to beat a swim jig when bass are hanging around shallow cover like grass or flooded bushes. Swim jigs are designed with a bullet style head and line tie angle that helps it slither through underwater cover with ease while its skirt undulates with its every move. Most anglers will add a soft plastic trailer of some sort to enhance the action. A Baby Paca Craw by Net Bait works great. Best colors for fall fishing are white, pearl maybe even a bluegill pattern.

**Heading Offshore:** As productive as creek fishing can be, offshore structure on many lakes will continue to hold big numbers of fish right on through fall. Humps, channel ledges, points and ridges are good places to look, particularly if the bottom is hard. Assorted baits will get you bit out there. A shaky head, Carolina rig or spoon can be hard to beat. The trick is to use your electronics to graph structure to determine if fish are present. If so, pop a waypoint or drop a buoy to mark the spot for easy reference. **T&J**



The best way to locate fall creek bass is to put the trolling motor down, cover water and hit as many "high percentage" spots as possible.


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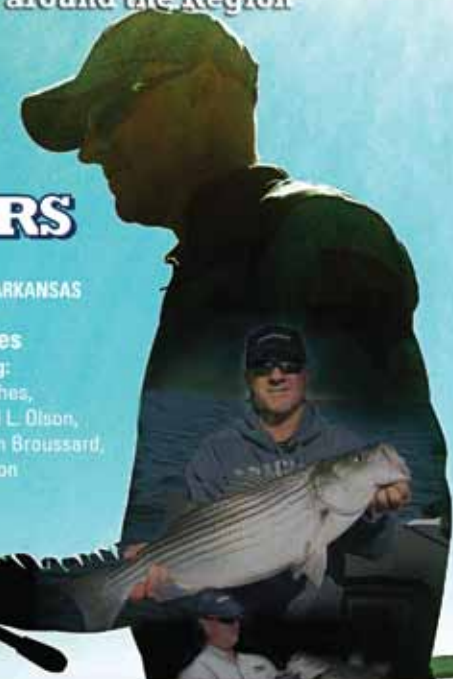
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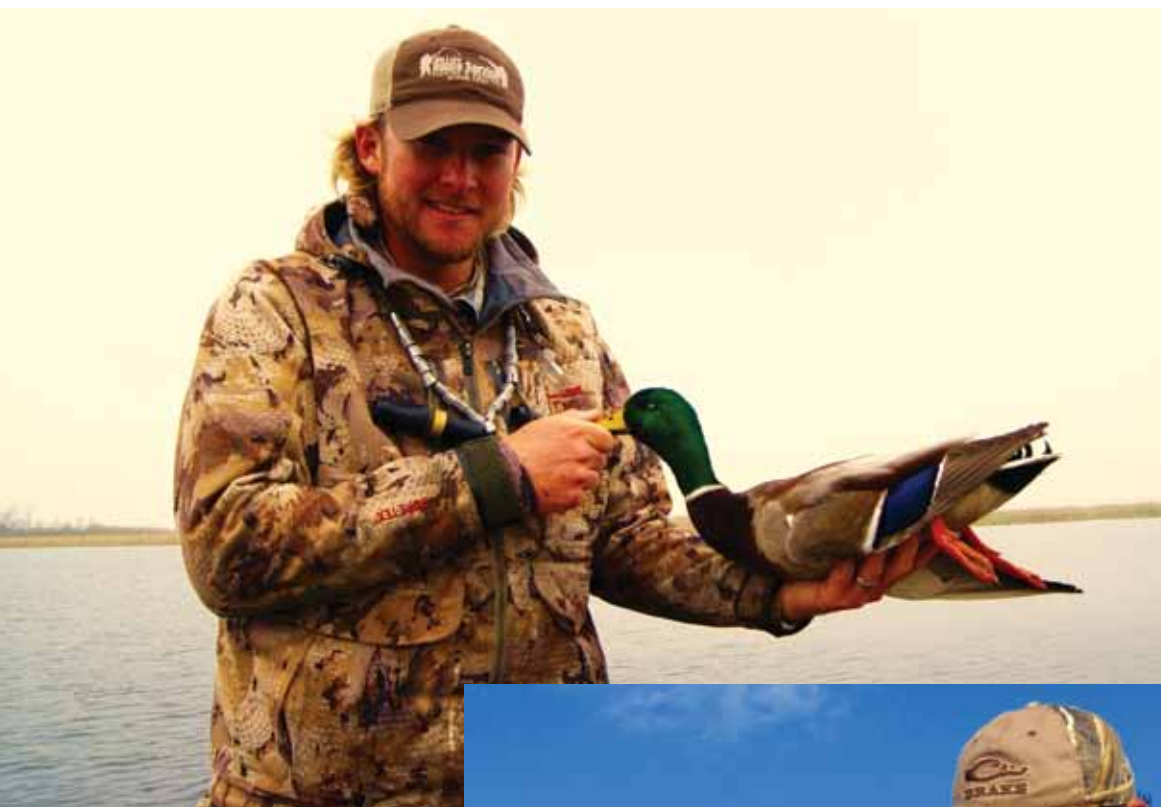
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# From Greenheads To Redheads

*Plan to target these highly sought after trophies in specific locales.*

Story and  
Photography  
by  
Nate Skinner



Above: Capt. Nick Poe of Big Lake Guide Service in southwest Louisiana proves effective calling will fool green heads.

Right: Capt. Ruben Garza of Getaway Adventures Lodge in Port Mansfield TX admires a fully plumed redhead drake.



When it comes to targeting particular animals, waterfowl addicts can be as obsessive as any other group of sportsmen or women. There is a plethora of species of ducks to target, and there isn't a duck hunter one that would complain about full straps mixed with a variety of birds.

However, many waterfowlers don their camouflage to brave the elements with a specific quarry in mind. It's not that one species of duck is better than the other. Their obsession is over certain characteristics that specific birds display. Whether it's the way a particular specie of duck responds to a call, how it lights into a spread, or the geographic area in which it can be found — there is a reason behind the madness.

Two ducks that receive loads of attention from hunters are mallards, often referred to as greenheads, and the other are redheads. The drakes of each species are beautiful specimens when they are sporting their full breeding plumage, and both can be an absolute hoot to hunt.

It seems their popularity is about the only thing these two ducks have in common. They inhabit different types of terrain, have different foraging habits and pursuing them requires dissimilar tactics. The good news is hunters can begin planning successful hunts for both greenheads and redheads right now.

I've hunted mallards in a variety of locations and experienced success across the board. Of all the hunts I have enjoyed, some of my favorite shoots for greenheads have taken place just across our Texas borders within the Cameron Parish of southwest Louisiana. Targeting mallards in freshwater marshes with Captain Nick Poe of Big Lake Guide Service is an adventure I look forward to every year and has produced some memorable hunts.

On one of our most recent outings, Poe and I spent two mornings hunting in some blustery, cold weather. A front passed halfway through our hunt on the first morning. It brought brisk north winds and significantly dropped temperatures. The birds started off slow, but the action rapidly increased as the weather changed. As more ducks began to fill the gray sky, Poe's calls did the trick to coax limits into the decoys. Plenty of plump greenheads filled our straps.

The morning of the second hunt presented us with even stronger winds.

I was convinced this would prevent the birds from decoying well and thought calling at passing ducks would be out of the question. These negative notions were quickly put to rest.

Poe waited until mallards flying by were directly downwind and then hit them with loud hail calls. The ducks seemingly slammed on their breaks and turned on a dime towards our spread. The scene was incredible. It was hands down, some of the best responses to calls I've ever seen from waterfowl traveling at a distance. Again, full straps with some gorgeous greenheads were obtained.

In addition to mallards, a smorgasbord of other ducks can be found in the freshwater marshes of the Cameron Parish. They include green-winged teal, canvasbacks, pintails, widgeon, shovelers, and gadwalls.

One of the most unique aspects of hunting greenheads in southwest Louisiana with Poe compared to other places is that some fantastic fishing awaits those willing to hit the waters of Lake Calcasieu in the afternoon. We've had some downright great fishing trips together after shooting limits of ducks early in the morning. Greenheads, speckled trout and redfish are an interesting combination that makes for an unforgettable day.

When it comes to pursuing mallards, effective calling definitely plays a huge roll in success. Knowing when to get aggressive with the call can be the difference in finishing a group of ducks into the decoys or watching them flare off into the distance.

"I truly believe that mallards respond to a call better than any other duck,"



Big Lake Guide Service targets green heads out of pit blinds in the freshwater marshes of southwest Louisiana. Calling at the right time will bring greenheads into the decoys.

explained Poe. "That's not to say they can't become call shy. There are without a doubt appropriate times to stay silent and let them work."

Poe informs that he likes to let the birds' behavior tell him what to do with a call. When birds are approaching and looking at a spread, he tends to let them do their thing. It's when ducks are passing by that he will get aggressive with his calling technique.

"Calling is all about getting the ducks' attention," he elaborated. "I don't like to call at a mallard's head when he is obviously coming in and interested in the decoys. Calling at their wing tips, or when they are traveling, is much more effective."

The wind is also an important factor to consider in order to be successful at calling greenheads. Poe claims it can either hinder or aid a hunter's calls. "Calling into a strong wind can pretty much be a waste of breath," he stated. "But if you wait till the ducks are downwind and hit them with a call at the right time, getting their attention can be pretty simple."

I've seen it happen many times during





*Just over 80 percent of the redhead duck population winters on Texas middle and lower coast each year.*

windy hunts. Mallards traveling several hundred yards away will turn and head straight towards my spread when I send out a call once they are downwind of the blind. It's a strategy that's hard to beat."

Excellent greenhead territory is littered across the Lone Star State in a variety of locations. Since mallards are driven to Texas by frigid weather, the northern

portion of the state will see huntable populations of these birds prior to other regions. Ponds, flooded timber, and oxbow sloughs off of creeks and rivers provide prime wintering habitat for greenheads in this area.

Purchasing an Annual Public Hunting Permit is a great way to obtain access to areas where mallards frequent. This

\$48 permit provides hunters access to nearly 1,000,000 acres of land including the coastal Wildlife Management Areas, state parks, and leased property from private land owners. Several public land areas lie within the High Plains Mallard Management Unit in west Texas and the panhandle. These locations can be found on the Public Hunting Area Map in the public hunting section of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Website at [tpwd.texas.gov](http://tpwd.texas.gov).

Upper reaches and back creek areas of inland lakes also provide exceptional hunting for greenheads. Some popular hotspots include Lake Waco, Lake Limestone and Lake Meredith, among many others. Hunters should research which entity governs whatever body of water they are hunting and adhere to all regulations that apply in the area.

As far as redheads are concerned, these birds are no stranger to the Texas coast. In fact, data



*Spoil islands provide an easy and comfortable set up when hunting redheads in the Laguna Madre.*



*Add a cast to your blast while duck hunting. The author caught this hefty trout on an Unfair Lures Rip-n-Slash while wade fishing with Capt. Ruben Garza before an afternoon duck hunt.*

produced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service indicates 80 percent of the North American Population of redheads winters along the Laguna Madre.

I have experienced this population bounty first hand several times while hunting the Lower Laguna Madre out of Getaway Adventures Lodge in Port Mansfield. The swarms of redheads across this bay in south Texas are breathtaking. Especially when they cup their wings over a decoy spread by the hundreds.

I've had phenomenal hunts with Getaway guide, Captain Ruben Garza, several times, and each excursion saw limits of redheads come with ease. We've found success using makeshift blinds along shorelines and spoil islands, as well as over shallow flats out of Garza's duck boat.

This style of hunting is probably one of the easiest ways to duck hunt because the redheads fly nearly all day long. There is no reason to wake up

hours before sunrise and often times the hunting is best in the afternoon.

This allows hunters the option of fishing in the morning prior to the hunt. I've enjoyed some jam up fishing action on the Lower Laguna Madre with Garza before whacking the ducks in the afternoon. Nothing beats a cast-n-blast adventure.

The limit on redheads is only two birds per hunter, but the waters out of Port Mansfield winter several species of other ducks to round out a limit. Many of my hunts with Garza have also included a mixed bag of widgeon, pintails, teal, scaup, and mottled ducks.

Another outstanding guide that consistently puts hunters on limits of redheads is Captain

Justin Cooper, owner and operator of Laguna Adventures. Cooper offers coastal duck hunts in the Laguna Madre, Baffin Bay, and in the Land Cut. His operation

uses both permanent and mobile blinds. This flexibility allows shotgunners to be positioned in the best possible areas for a productive hunt.

Other locales along the Texas coast are also chocked full of red heads during the winter. These include just about every stretch of open water from Baffin up to East Matagorda, as well as back lakes and salt marshes.

Unlike hunting for greenheads, calling doesn't seem to make as much of a difference on redheads. These ducks tend to focus in more on the decoys. In the open waters of main bays, large decoy spreads of 10 to 15 dozen will catch the attention of massive flocks of redheads. Smaller spreads are effective in back bays and marshes.

Patterning large groups of redheads along the coast is perhaps the biggest key to success. Knowing where these birds want to be and the flight path they will take to get there is the recipe for a dynamite shoot.

Whether it's green or red that catches a hunter's eyes, a variety of opportunities are available. The migration is just getting underway, and the hunting is only going to improve with the onset of cooler weather.

From greenheads to redheads, waterfowl hunters should plan to pursue these incredible ducks this season. **T&J**



*When waterfowl hunting there is the added bonus of watching a good retriever work.*



## Lake Roundup

### EAST TEXAS



By Matt Williams

**CONROE** — If you thought October fishing was good, you haven't seen anything yet. That's the word from veteran fishing Butch Terpe.

"I always tell people fall is one of my favorite times to fish Conroe," says Terpe. "The water temp should be down into the low 70s by now and everything is going to be feeding up strong for winter."

Terpe says bass anglers can enjoy a strong bite for numbers as well as quality by following any number of patterns in deep and shallow water, alike. When fishing away from the bank, the guide prefers to target old pond dams and points in water ranging 8-15 feet of water. The go-to baits out there include a crankbait or Carolina rig, but a Texas rig, shaky head or jig also will get you bit.

Nearer shore Terpe will key on hard breakwaters and rocky rip raft at any number of bridge crossings as well as boat docks.

He likes to work the rock with a Texas rig or Senko but says there are times when a moving bait like a square bill crankbait, Chatterbait or spinnerbait are better ways to go.

November also is a good month to sample Conroe's bountiful catfish population. The lake is chock full of channel cat, and reeling in a limit is rarely a problem so long as you play your cards right. According to Terpe, fishing around baited areas is his ace in the hole.

"You don't catch a lot of non-keepers

this time of year, either," Terpe said. "During summer we catch a lot of one to two pounders but during fall and winter we see more two to three pounders."

Terpe likes to bait his sweet spots using range cubes made for cattle, but that's hardly the only thing that will work. Various grains like corn, milo or chicken scratch soaked in water and left to sour in a five gallon bucket will work equally well. It's just messier.

Terpe's bait of choice for fall channels is a cheese bait he places on a sponge hook, but other punch baits and night crawlers will get you bit, as well.

As for the crappie action, Terpe is looking for things to continue picking up from now right on through the winter.

"The fishing around the bridges is generally pretty good in fall, but you can also catch them around brush piles," Terpe said. "The fish will be suspended, so it's real important to try different depths until you find them. As a rule the best depth range will be 20-25 feet and the fish will be suspended about 12-15 feet down."

**NACOGDOCHES** — Lake Nacogdoches entered fall in great shape and was about six inches below full pool level. With hydrilla matted all the way to the surface in water as deep as 12 feet, things should be set for an outstanding bite at shallow and mid-range depth ranges.

As is the case every fall, November is a month when you can't go wrong being up creek. That's because shad migrate towards the backs of creeks during fall to take advantage of the final plankton bloom of the year.

Translation: Find the shad and chances



PHOTO COURTESY RICHARD JUE

*November is a good month to sample Conroe's bountiful catfish population.*

are pretty good the bass won't be very far away.

Any number of tactics could get you bit over the next 30 days. One of the most exciting by far is throwing topwater baits around hydrilla beds and lily pad stands that are beginning to wane with the season.

The density of the grass will dictate which style of topwater might work best. It's always best to think weedless around matted, clumpy or semi-matted grass. Hollow body and buzz frogs as well as buzz baits are tough to beat in these arenas.

A popper, 'Spook or maybe even a Whopper Plopper can be killer in situations where there is an open window of water above the grass. Wake baits also will get you bit over the grass from time to time.

If the fish aren't in the mood to look up it would be wise to probe beneath the surface with some sort of moving bait like a square bill crankbait, spinnerbait, Chatterbait or Rat-L-Trap, preferably on

grass flats in close proximity to some sort of channel break, defined channel swing or underwater slough. Shad pattern baits that are white or chrome in color will work best.

If moving baits aren't the ticket, make the swap for a light Texas rig, wacky worm or punch the edges of the hydrilla with heavy creature bait or grass jig. Baits weighing 3/4 ounce or more are the order of the day for vertical presentations.

There also should be a strong bite in progress away from the bank around the old pipeline, main lake points and any number of hard bottom spots up and down the lake.

This is more of a numbers deal than quality, but it's a great fun fishing option. It's nothing out of the ordinary to catch 40-80 bass in the one to two pound range per day using spoons, Carolina rigs and shaky heads.

**SAM RAYBURN** — Texas Parks and Wildlife fisheries biologist and local bass pro Todd Driscoll of Brookeland didn't

mince words when asked about fall bass fishing prospects on Sam Rayburn. According to Driscoll, the best game going will be all about grass.

"Fishing around hydrilla will be the main deal, no question about it," Driscoll said. "The grass is in the best shape it has been in several years. It's growing in just about every creek south of the bridge and it's some of the prettiest stuff that's been on this lake in quite a while."

Driscoll says the best techniques to use will depend heavily on the water level. How he'll go about fishing it will depend on the current water level. If lake holds stable or drops there will be lots of surface mats growing out to eight feet or more. If the water level rises it will put a layer of open water on top of the grass. Either way there are going to be a lot of fish relating to the backs of major and secondary creeks because that's where the shad are going to be.

"If the lake level happens to come up or it gets cold enough to knock the grass

back, then some sort of moving bait like a square bill, spinnerbait, Rat-L-Trap or Chatterbait could really shine," Driscoll said. "It would also be a good idea to give a topwater like a Whopper Plopper a try. You won't catch as many on a 'Plopper as you will other topwaters but the quality will be a whole lot better."

If the grass is matted on the surface the best approaches will be fishing slowly along the outer edges using a light Texas rig, Senko or punching it with a big jig or Texas rig matched with a 3/4 ounce weight. Fishing along channel breaks and or points will be the best bet. To refine the search, fish the upper reaches of creeks and look for oddities in the grass such as indentions, guts or small points. Fishing guide Stephen Johnston says fall crappie fishing

can be a hit or miss deal as the fish are prone to go on the move.

Brush piles are always a good bet, but you can also find fish hanging around the bridge support pilings at the Highway 147 Crossing. Live shiners and jigs fished on 8-10 pound test line are the ticket.

**TOLEDO BEND** — When T-Bend guide Stephen Johnston heads out for a day of bass fishing this month he'll follow one of two game plans: Fish shallow around scattered grass or fish deep over main lake ridges, humps and points in water ranging 10-20 feet.

In a normal year grass fishing would be the main deal on Toledo right now. Problem is, there just isn't much of the green stuff to speak of.

"Indian Mounds and Hausen Bay are the only places that have it," Johnston said. "The grass that's there is getting a lot of pressure, but the fish are relating to it. That's probably where you are going to catch your better numbers."

Johnston says any number of baits will produce around the grass but it'll be hard to go wrong with a swim jig, Texas rig, square bill, spinnerbait, Rat-L-Trap or a magnum topwater like a Zara Spook. "The main thing is to key on the backs of the creeks and cover a lot of water," Johnston said. "The fish are going to be running in groups, so where you catch one there are likely to be others. If you catch one, work out the area thoroughly."

Johnston's go-to baits when fishing away from the bank are a Texas rigged worm, Carolina rig or a big crankbait.

"It's real important to look for well defined changes in bottom contour," Johnston said. "It helps if there is some sort of cover down there, too—something like a brush pile or cluster of stumps on a hard bottom will have a lot of potential."

The guide says crappie fishing can be hit or miss during November, mainly because the fish go on the move with the shad. Johnson pointed out that creeks flanked by bridge crossings are always good places to look so long as the water is relatively clear.

"The crappie like to gang up around bridges in Lanam, Patroon, Carrice Creeks this time of year so they can pick off shad when they come swimming by," he said. "The bite can be really good if you get into them, but if we get some big rain and things get muddy it'll really kill the bite. Clear water is a big key on this lake."



PHOTO COURTESY RICHARD JUE

*Bass anglers fishing Lake Conroe can enjoy a strong bite for numbers as well as quality by following any number of patterns in deep and shallow water, alike.*



**LIVINGSTON** — Lake Livingston came into fall in really good shape with the water level at full pool and decent water clarity following weeks of muddy stuff on the tail of Hurricane Harvey. Barring any more big floods in October, the lake should be relatively clear from one end to the other and the bass should be ready to chomp when November rolls around.

“The fall fishing on Livingston always hinges on what kind of shape the river and major creeks are in,” he said. “The fish should be real active if everything stays clear and we’ve had some cool weather to drive the water temperatures down into the upper 60s.”

While Dearman likes to spend the majority of his time in a deer blind this time of year, he will occasionally slip off onto his home lake do some bass fishing. He will spend the majority of his time focused on creek channels.

“That’s where the shad will be and so will the bass,” Dearman said.

“To refine the search he will key on areas where the creek bank is in three feet of water and the creekbed itself falls into about eight feet of water. Fishing around wood cover is always very important. That’s because there isn’t any aquatic vegetation to speak of in Livingston.

“Wood is about all they’ve got to get around unless the lake gets high and floods some shore cover,” Dearman said. “Stumps, old laydowns and brushpiles are what you’ll need to key on. The bass will be holding in groups. So where you find one, there are likely to be others.”

Dearman’s baits of choice will be a 1/2-ounce white/chartreuse Strike King spinnerbait and a 1/2-ounce black/blue jig.

He’ll also keep a white buzz bait handy for instances when the wind blows and puts some attractive chop on the surface.

“The buzz bait won’t catch ‘em every day,” said Dearman. “But when they’re on it, they will hammer it.”

Fall cat fishing and white bass fishing on Livingston also can be outstanding. Dearman says the best way to score a limit of cats is drifting fresh shad along the edges of the river or fishing vertical over baited holes with punch bait or night crawlers.

The whites bass will be ganged and running shad. Find them schooling the surface and you can get right in a hurry with a lipless crankbait or topwater.

**PALESTINE** — On a scale of 1-10, Lake Palestine fishing guide Ricky Vandergriff rates the fall fishing on his home lake right near the top. That’s because the weather will be pleasant, the surface temperatures mild and, more importantly, the fish will be a feel good mood because of it all.

November on Palestine is always a good time to be on the water,” Vandergriff said. “A lot of people are going to be thinking about deer hunting, including me, so there won’t be near as much pressure on the fish.”

Vandergriff says bass, crappie and channel catfish are going to be feeding up strong ahead of the coming winter. Here’s how he’ll capitalize on the aggressive moods:

Bass: The guide says the best fishing for numbers as well as quality generally takes place at the lake’s northern reaches towards the backs of major creek channels. Kickapoo and Flat are among the best. He likes to key on any flooded vegetation or wood cover that he comes across using a Stanley Ribbit frog, buzz bait, Shimmy Shaker, Rat-L-Trap or a spinnerbait.

Fishing near the channel breaks themselves will usually produce better quality fish. Black/brown/amber jigs, Texas rigged brush hogs and shad pattern square bills are the main players along the channel breaks.

“That’s normally where you’ll find your better quality fish,” Vandergriff said.

Down south Vandergriff’s main game plan is fishing around main lake and secondary points from the bank out to about 14 feet with a Carolina rigged brush hog or a deep diving crankbait that is citrus shad in color. Boat docks on major creeks also will be holding some good numbers, especially those that have been doctored with brush. Cranks, bladed jigs and Texas rigs are the top producers around the shallow brush.

*Channel Cat:* Vandergriff says channel cat will be hanging tight to baited holes on humps near drains 16 feet as well as around the shoreline rock at the mouth of The Villages.

“The rod and reel fishing around the rocks can be real good in about 10 feet using night crawlers. It’s also a real good area for noodling if a guy can stand to get in the water.”

*Crappie:* Brush piles in 20-24 feet are the ticket. Vandergriff said the Highway 155 and Flat Creek Bridges also will be

holding fish around deepest cross member at 22-24 feet. Live shiners and small jigs are the orders of the day. **★**



November is a month ruled by the weather. Although this is true of all fishing, November is one of those months where it is even more true. That is because we could get anything in November. Cold, rain, snow, mild temperatures, anything goes.

I remember a deer hunt many years ago. It was late November and was hunting in the Pineywoods portion of east Texas. Camping in a National Forest, because I had no money for luxuries such as a hotel room, I had planned everything to the most minute detail. Except for the weather.

What must have been record high temps stayed with me the entire week. I was so hot I finally cut the legs off of my long pants to make shorts.

I probably would have done a lot better had I given up on deer, and gone fishing. Just sayin’.

If we remain mild through most of the month we should have an excellent shallow bite on active baits. If we get early and severe cold weather we’ll see the fishing slow down for the bass and it will be time for the slower approaches. Either way, it’s always a great time to be fishing in Texas.

**CEDAR CREEK** — Crappie at Cedar Creek will begin moving to the three bridges on Highway 198. This is a good place to start the day. Drop minnows on a crappie rig, or crappie jigs in chartreuse, down to about 18 to 22 feet.

You may also want to scan the main lake channels with your electronics. You’re

looking for brush piles in the same depths. Using line no larger than six-pound test, work the brush with jigs or minnows. Of course, you run the risk that a hybrid striper may come along and break off your minnow or jig.

Usually the crappie have left the docks for the most part, but in a mild month it will be worth checking. Look to the deeper boat docks with some brush if you want to find crappie there in November.

Sand bass, will be just a little deeper at 20 to 24 feet and you’ll be looking for humps and channel sides dropping to proper depth—look for fish marking on bottom. The sand bass will be on the move, so if you don’t see any signs of life you need to keep moving as well. You should be dead-sticking ¾-1oz slabs just off the bottom.

The hybrid stripers will mostly stay around the main, mid-lake channel, in 30 to 45 feet of water.

They’ll be suspended at 15-25 feet relating to the schools of shad. Once again, deadsticking big slabs will be your ticket to the ride.

Cedar Creek bass will be shallow if it remains mild. Check the rocks, docks and flooded vegetation with moving baits like a squarebill crankbait, spinnerbait, Senko and such.

There may even be a good topwater bite on buzzbaits, poppers and Whopper Ploppers well into November. Colder weather indicates a pull back off the back kind of month with fish holding around those deeper docks with brush, and deeper structure. You jigs and Texas-rigged worms will be catching fish with a slow presentation.

**WHITNEY** — This lake is on fire! And it has been for several months, going back into the early summer.

Working the flats east of the island and around Harbor Master will produce good November bites, as will fishing over the main lake channel.

Make long casts behind the boat and drift your Sassy Shad and Wild Eye swimbaits, along these areas.

On a wind-less day you will want to use the trolling motor to keep the boat moving. Always watch for the birds to help you find the schooling fish, with a particular eye to mouths of Big and Little Rocky creeks.

Topwaters may work early, depending on the weather. Colder weather is perfect

for stripers and while the largemouth bass may shut off, the striper fishing will just keep getting better.

**LEWISVILLE** — I always mention Lewisville in the winter months. The lake is a great fishery year-round but during the summer months there are way too many pleasure craft of all types. Combine that with the number of first time, or inexperienced boaters and I’ll take a pass on fishing then.

By November this is one of those lakes you can pretty have much to yourself. Try starting your day looking for hybrids and sandies at Hickory Creek, working the west side and up, around the main cut. You’ll be fishing fairly deep in 25-40 feet of water looking for concentrated fish following the bait.

When you find baitfish on your electronics, drop Sassy Shad swimbaits on a ¼ -1/2 oz. jighead down to the fish. These fish “feed up” meaning they come from below the bait upwards when feeding. So you need to keep your bait above the school. Chartrues/glitter and Glow-In-the-Dark are your best colors.

Windy points in the Twin Poles area will have a topwater bite. Use Mag-Spooks for Hybrids, and Tiny Torpedos for Sand Bass.

Bass fishermen will want to work the shallows and mid-depths. Start with your topwaters and work shorelines with vegetation, switching to spinnerbaits and Senkos later in the morning. As the day progresses move out to the 8-12 foot range with crankbaits.

**RICHLAND CHAMBERS** — Windsock Point, the Highway 309 flats, and the Old Highway 287 roadbed is where you’ll find hybrids and sandies on R-C.

You’ll need to fish the bottom most days, using a silver or chartreuse glitter slab, worked slowly off the bottom. This will produce good quantities, as well as quality fish. Look to the 25 foot depth and deeper.

Much like Cedar Creek, R-C can give you a surprise bite from a hybrid while you are catching sand bass. Monofilament in the 14 pound class (or a braid equivalent) is recommended, and remember to set your drag as the initial strike is usually when a break-off will occur.

Keep an eye on the birds. They’ll tell you where schools of baitfish are located, and both sandies and hybrids won’t be far behind.

Bass will be hanging around the deeper points. Put a Sassy Shad or Fluke on a lead head jig, or Carolina rig, and work up and down, and across, the points. If the weather stays mild, spinnerbaits in chartreuse and white, lipless crankbaits in chrome blue or chrome black, and jigs in black/blue are all good choices for bass.

**FORK** — November is a special time on Fork. The first ShareLunker was caught in November and the lake still puts out plenty of big, quality fish during the eleventh month of the year.

Of course, fishing for big fish is a bit of a gamble.

You can spend a lot of time on the water and come away with little to show for your efforts except a lot of time on the water.

Having said that, November is a good time to give it a go. We are supposed to have a colder, wetter winter this year. And that works out just fine. I’ve spoken to several guides on Fork and they all agree. Lake Fork bass are a funny lot. They’ll get downright cranky when cold nasty weather moves through. And I don’t mean they shut off, rather they will actually turn on, feeding as if they are mad at something.

Let’s also understand that I’m not talking run-of-the-mill guides, but anglers that have multiple fish entered in the Sharelunker program, or the first one, or many fish over 12 pounds. These guys (and gals) know big fish and they all say the same thing. If we get a few nasty days with cold, wind and a little rain, flip a jig and hang on.

Creek channels and the drop-offs along them will be the spot to fish. Look anywhere from 6 - 12 feet, especially early in the month. Later, you may want to look a little deeper.

And remember, big fish like heavy cover so you’ll be pitching into the nastiest stuff you can find.

Trees, stumps, laydowns all will conspire to break off that big fish, should you catch her. Use heavy braid and a reel that’s up to the task.

If you are not concerned about size, run the banks with spinnerbaits in white/chartreuse, from ¼ oz. to ½ oz. in size. “Traps in red, blue/chrome and black/chrome will also work.

November should be a fine month across North Texas for fishing, so let’s get out there and catch ‘em! **★**



# The Year's Final Transition



**Anglers fishing Texas bays  
literally need to be prepared  
for anything.**

*Story and Photography  
by Danno Wise*

November is a transition month along Texas coast. In fact, its final transition of the calendar year for coastal fisheries as fall turns to winter. It is also one of the more drastic transitions of the year — a time of weather extremes and extreme fish movement.

Anglers fishing Texas bays during the eleventh month of the year literally need to be prepared for anything. Over the next few weeks, inshore anglers in the Lone Star State may be sight-casting on shallow flats, fishing deep holes after a hard front or fishing channel edges, grass breaks and drops as fish move to their winter homes.

When and where fish will be found is all dependent on the weather during November and can change at a moments notice. This makes it one of the year's more challenging months in that anglers must be ready to adapt at any time.

The next to the last month of the year can also provide some unbelievable days on the water. Speckled trout, redfish, flounder, and snook (down south) will all be in play this month. And, there is a good chance every lure in the box will be thrown at some point during November as anglers adjust to the ever-changing conditions.

Topwaters, lightly weighted plastics, heavily weighted plastics, spoons, bottom rigs, popping corks — you name it, in November, it is all about being flexible and versatile in order to consistently catch fish



*Plenty of good "eating-sized" speckled trout will be available. The great thing is at some point just about everything in the tackle box can or will get bit.*

as they transition between the seasons and adjust to the changing weather conditions. In short, fishermen need to be aware of the prevailing conditions and map out when, where and how they fished based on that day's weather, knowing full well it can change at any moment.

## **Bird Activity**

Most bays will still see quite a bit of bird activity during November — at least during the first part of the month. As is always the case with bird activity on Texas bays, this is a great opportunity to get into fast action.

For the most part, the fish under the birds in November will be solid-sized speckled trout, so anglers can usually expect quick limits when they find a pod of active birds. If the fish beneath the birds are really hot, it won't much matter which lure or bait is thrown — just about anything will draw strikes. Single-hook baits usually make it quicker and safer for both fish and fishermen when the action is fast and furious.

The wind will be the biggest factor when setting up to fish under birds. Ideally, there will be a moderate breeze that allows for a controlled drift down into the fray. With very windy conditions, anglers should still set up above (up wind of) the birds but may need to use a drift sock once they get within casting distance of the school.

Dead calm conditions are even more challenging. Trolling motors or push poles can be used to close the distance once the big engine is shut off. However, fishermen without either of those items must determine the direction the school is moving, set up on an intercept pass and hope the school doesn't disperse before getting within casting distance.

## **Power Drifts**

Good concentrations of active fish are often found on mid-depth flats during November. One of the best ways to fill a box of solid keepers is to power drift these areas. This basically involves drifting at a fairly quick clip and throwing baits that can be productive with a cast-and-wind technique such as spoons and paddletail plastics or working live or artificial shrimp beneath popping corks.

Obviously, for power drifting to work, some wind is needed. However, if the wind is too strong, it may make it difficult to effectively work baits and cover water. Ideally, winds around 10 to 12 miles per hour is best. These days are usually a couple days out from the passage of a front when a generous south wind begins



*In addition to speckled trout and flounder, copper-colored spot tail will be in the mix. Everywhere the other two gamefish might show up, redfish will also be available.*



to blow. When the conditions are right, this is one of the simplest, most effective ways to catch good numbers of fish during November.

#### Sight Casting

Anglers looking for a more technical challenge will have plenty of sight-casting opportunities during November as well. On calm days – which often occur between fronts – the water can become gin clear and give fishermen great sight-casting opportunities.

Early in the month, fish will still be found way back on the flats. Later in the month, as the water temperature continues to drop, fish will stray less and less from the deep water, so anglers should concentrate their effort on the flats closest to channels and holes.

In either situation, an early start is not necessary, as the sun needs to be fairly high in the sky to give fishermen good visual penetration into the water column. The sun is usually at a good angler for sight-fishing by around mid-morning. Anglers on the flats before that can look for other visual signs of fish – such as tails breaking the surface, V-wakes, etc.



Whether fishing the birds or doing a power-drift, solid sized speckled trout will be caught this month.

#### Topwaters

November usually sees a good topwater bite as well. Fishermen hitting the flats early can usually see good surface action throughout the morning hours. The size of topwater used during November will vary along with the conditions. On super calm days, small dogwalkers and lipped floater/divers (think Redfin) are the best options. However, on those days when the water is muddy and/or rough, a larger, louder topwater plug is necessary to draw fish's attention.

#### Going Deep

Following hard fronts, it is time to "go deep." Times like these are basically winter-pattern fishing, even though winter hasn't yet started. This means focusing on channels and holes.

There are a variety of ways to fish these areas. Anglers can fish deep under popping cork. While casting an extremely long leader under a cork can be challenging, saltwater angler can also borrow a page from freshwater fishermen and employ a bobber stopper, which is not used much in saltwater but works well.

The can also use various bottom rigs to keep natural baits low in the water column. Those looking to use artificials can use heavy jigs, lipless crankbaits or swimbaits. Or, they can go with vertical fishing techniques such as drop-shotting or jigging spoons. While the vertical fishing techniques are seldom used by Texas saltwater fishermen, they can be the most productive methods when fish are suspended along channel walls.

#### Transition Spots

While fish will be deep when it's cold and shallow when it's warm in November, during those "in-between times" (which seems to be most of the month) most of the fish will be hanging on the breaks and drops. From mid-November on, targeting these areas is often the most consistent way to find fish.

Fishing the drops and

breaks is usually most productive using moderately weighted (1/8 – 1/4 oz) jigs, live and artificial shrimp under popping cork with long leader, or freelined live baits. Fish will usually be fairly concentrated in these areas, so once one is caught, it is possible to pull several more from a small area.

#### Drains

When northers blow through and the water level starts dropping, the action near drains to back lakes and marshes can be outstanding. The strong outflowing current sweeps shrimp and baitfish along with it. Trout, redfish and flounder will stack up in front of these drains to feed. Additionally, any predator fish that were in the backwater areas during high tide will be coming out with the dropping water level as well. It all adds up to what can be some really fast action.

Anglers should station themselves near the drain, cast lures and baits up current and allow them to be swept out with the tide. Freelined live bait and light-weighted or unweighted plastics are often the best bets in this situation. However, if the current is too strong, fishermen may need to add some weight to get lures and baits down to fish holding near the bottom.

#### Mud and Mullet

By month's end, the vast majority of fish will have transitioned to muddy bottom areas. And, the majority of the shrimp will have left the bays. So, at point (and all through winter), the keys to finding fish will be finding mud and mullet – muddy bottom areas that have active mullet around. When fishing mud-bottom areas – whether shallow or deep – the best bets are either live mullet or mullet imitating lures – topwaters, slow-sinking plugs, paddletail plastics, swimbaits, etc. It is basically "match the hatch" in that once the shrimp are gone, specks and reds turn their attention to mullet. Since that's what they are feeding on, that is what will draw the most strikes.

The final thing about November is a lot of outdoorsmen will be in the field rather than on the water this month. Therefore, fishermen who do get out will usually have the bay to themselves. By adjusting their game plan based on prevailing conditions, these fishermen can experience some of the year's best bay fishing along the Texas coast as fish make their final transition of the year from fall to winter. 🌟

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# BOBS & BLUES Over Texas



***Numbers are not only increasing for these upland birds, but also for those that hunt them.***

*Story and Photography by Bill L. Olson*

There was a time when large, multiple coveys per day of bobwhite quail challenged and thrilled upland bird hunters across the Lone Star State. During these days blue or scaled quail frustrated bird dogs while enticing hunters to bust brush in pursuit of a quarry that would rather run than fly.

I experienced some of those glory days in the 70s as a teenager and young adult while hunting with my Dad. Cotulla in South Texas and Breckenridge in North Texas were destinations that helped satisfy Dad and his friends' urge to hunt these challenging feathered rockets that would launch themselves from grassy cover.

This was when big, tricked-out 4-wheel drive hunting rigs were becoming more common. Beside a number of hunters, several braces of pointers can be carried along with all of the needed hunting supplies, water, and other gear for a day afield, along with refreshments for when the hunt is over. This is the luxurious way to cover lots of ground and extended many hunter's careers as they got older.

Out of Cotulla the challenge was not only bobwhite quail, but also blue quail found near more open ground around prickly pear flats. These birds would rather run than flush which added a new challenge to the hunt with hunters having

to race after them in order to put enough pressure for them to take flight.

In North Texas around Breckenridge the gently rolling terrain was loaded with bobwhites. Vehicles were generally used to get close, but the "old fashion" way of walking behind dogs working the wind was the way we hunted.

Over the years, there have been other locations around the state I hunted. These include Haskell County, areas around Woodsboro and Tilden, where I would enjoy bobwhite quail hunts with my family, and south of Marfa where I busted brush with a longtime friend while chasing blues. These locales are just some

of the grounds where my boot print has been left. Then quail populations started to decline.

Part of their demise was loss of suitable habitat combined with persistent droughts. This sustained period of unfavorable conditions not only saw bird numbers drop, but many veteran bird hunters leave the sport. Some because of age, others lost interest due to fewer birds and sold their hunting rigs, while others didn't renew leases and even sold their hunting dogs or lost them to age as well.

One of the most revered and social forms of hunting was slowly fading away. However today, things are beginning to improve and a whole legion of hunters that have never experienced this sport are beginning to gearup and take to the field.

The biggest reason for the renewed interest is because of favorable rains and habitat for both blues and bobwhite quail. Robert Perez, Texas Parks & Wildlife's Upland Gamebird Program Leader said, "The drought of 2014 finally broke in 2015 with a boom hatch for scaled quail in the Trans-Pecos region. That was followed with another good hatch in 2016. The 2017 forecast, though not as good as 2016's, is still good.

"We have received reports of great hunts last year," he explained. "Plus the Wildlife Management Areas in west Texas that are available to hunt with the \$48 Annual Hunting Permit, had another



*Three and four years of good rainfall has resulted in excellent habitat for bobwhite quail and their numbers in parts of Texas that have recovered to record levels.*

good year.

"Generally scaled quail comeback a little more slowly than bobwhite," he said. "We also don't normally see the boom and bust cycles with scaled quail in West Texas like we do with bobs across the state.

"In South Texas the scaled quail are challenged with an influx of more exotic vegetation that covers the bare ground blues are drawn too," Perez explained. "The all time low in South Texas for scaled quail was 2006 and then we saw a bit of a recovery. However, numbers have again

slipped and we are below average for these birds."

Good rainfall in North Texas as well as the Panhandle the past three or four years has renewed interest in hunting bobwhite quail. TPWD District Leaders Calvin Richardson of Canyon reports solid numbers of bobs with a record number of quail last year. District Leader Kevin Mote of Brownwood reports his region has increasing numbers of bobwhite quail with all-time record numbers in Irion County in the western part of the district.

Richardson said the 2017 hatch is a little down and may be partially attributed to increased numbers of predators preying on the birds. Perez suggests that areas where the hatch is not as high may be more density dependant.

"In the Rolling Plains there is a record number of birds, the highest since counts began in 1976," Perez said. "However what can happen is when populations get to the point where birds are "bumping into each other" the urge to procreate may relax and production comes down. This occurs even if good conditions exist.

"In South Texas we could see something different where late rainfall may stimulate some late season bobwhite nesting," he said. "These birds are resilient when conditions are right and will continue to nest late into the year."

Another factor contributing to renewed hope for the future of bobwhite quail are new management practices that focus on developing suitable habitat



*A number of side-by-side ATVs are being tricked out to carry several bird dogs, hunting supplies, water for dogs and refreshments for hunters. This type of hunting allows a lot of country to be covered in a day.*





PHOTO BY JOHN FRANKSON

*The Chestnut bellied scaled quail is a subspecies found in south Texas. Their population have not rebounded like scaled quail found in west Texas, and are currently below average.*

for ground nesting birds. This type of management is also beneficial to all wildlife including whitetail deer. Some new landowners have even gone to the expense of plowing under improved grasses and replanting the more preferred native grasses and vegetation that quail prefer and thrive.

With the drop in upland bird hunter numbers there may be an increased number of birds that are carried over to serve as brood stock. Perez says, "There is a natural ebb and flow and we could see some additional carry over due to the mild winters we've experienced."

During years when quail numbers were low many upland bird hunters were drawn to bird hunting preserves where quail and other upland gamebirds are released. This has become a popular way

to introduce new hunters to this exciting action while providing an opportunity to either knock off the rust from the off-season or provide a convenient, close-to-home hunt with an extended season.

Regardless of quail numbers, part of the enjoyment to this type of hunting is watching good bird dogs work. A variety of pointing breeds use their sensitive noses to wind coveys and lock up on point. Then hunters line up in a skirmish line and ease up to where the dogs are pointing and flush the birds. Safe zones of fire are critical and each hunter must not swing on a fellow hunter or shoot low flying-away birds that may endanger a dog.

Another way to hunt quail is to use a combination of pointers and flushing dogs. The pointers will find the covey of quail and then a flushing dog will be sent



*The traditional way of hunting bobwhite quail is that once dogs are on point the hunters form a skirmish line and move toward where the covey is holding. As hunters precede forward eventually the covey rise will occur as birds rocket from their grassy hiding place.*

in to flush the birds. This may result in shots that are a little longer, but certainly adds a new dimension to the hunt and the opportunity to include another favorite breed of hunting dog.

Many quail hunters are first smitten by this bird while simply making their way to and from a deer stand or while scouting in the field. Being surrounded by a covey rise of flushed quail while simply walking through a pasture, will certainly make one stop and feel the excitement of the moment, as hair stands up on the back of one's neck.

Walking, running, and busting brush is the way scaled quail are hunted out west. Hunters ride the ranch looking for quail on roads or open country. Once spotted, a skirmish line is formed and moves through the low brush.

Experienced hunters know these arid county birds are on the move so the pace quickens to put more pressure on them. When a darting blue is spotted "hot-footing it" through the brush the race is on as hunters bust through brush and come to an immediate stop to take a shot at the fleeing birds that are flushed.

This same type of hunting can be done with bobwhite quail. The big difference is bobs will hold, preferring to bury up in grass or bush. This can work to the hunter's advantage as many times more reasonable shots are available at more birds.

With recovering quail numbers many hunters are looking to trick out jeeps, 4-wheel drive crew cab pickups and side-by-side ATVs. More and more aluminum fabricators are designing some unique components to accommodate a variety of hunting styles for a variety of game.

The biggest advantage to using a "hunting rig" is the ability to cover more ground. Good hunting techniques will improve success. When hunting with pointers, always release dogs so they hunt into the wind. With a "rig," once a property line is met, hunters and dogs can be loaded up and taken back to a new starting point down wind.

Hunting behind dogs from a vehicle also provides an opportunity to see a pointer get birdy as a snoot full of quail scent is inhaled. These dogs are easily excitable and facial or muscular responses are obvious when they not only smell but can see the quarry they have located. When bobs get nervous, they too will run, and a dog on point or one honoring another point expresses their excitement in a variety of ways. That is one of the bonuses of this kind of hunting.

Now is a time to once again enjoy or be introduced to quail hunting in Texas. There are bobs and blues in numbers that haven't been seen in years. 🌵🌵



*Part of the enjoyment of hunting quail is being able to watch good pointers work.*



*A covey rise provides the excitement and adrenaline rush every upland bird hunter covets.*



*A new wave of quail hunters are experiencing the benefits of hunting from big rigs that are tricked out 4-wheel drive crew cab pickups or full sized Jeeps.*



*It's about to get exciting as everyone is "locked on." A bird dog has gotten a snoot full of quail scent and is locked on point, another dog is honoring the point and the hunter is locked on to the spot with gun ready when the birds flush.*

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# POSSUM KINGDOM

## *Reigns Again*

***Recovered from algae fish kills and drought, this lake has reclaimed its glory of old.***

*Story and Photography by Brian Hughes*

I've often said that Mother Nature abhors a vacuum. I used those words in reference to fishing when asked about a couple of specific situations.

Often I'd get asked how fish came to be in a newly created farm pond or golf course water hazard when no stocking efforts were made. The answer? Mother Nature abhors a vacuum.

Another circumstance involves a piece of good cover on a lake or river. Given that everything a fish needs is present, you can consistently catch fish off of one of these "spots" time after time, even when you don't release the fish back into the water. Why? Mother Nature abhors a vacuum. If you remove a fish from a prime location, another will come along and take its place.

Recently however, I had a chance to experience this wonder of Mother Nature on a scale I could never imagine. It happened at Possum Kingdom Lake.

Popularly known as "P.K." Possum Kingdom is a reservoir on the Brazos River located primarily in Palo Pinto County Texas. A search of the interwebs tells us that it was the first water supply reservoir constructed in the Brazos River basin. It has an area of approximately 17,000 acres, with 310 miles of shoreline. Containing 750,000 acre feet of water, 550,000 acre feet are available for water supply usage.

Wikipedia reveals that PK was a project of the Brazos River Authority and the Works Progress Administration. The lake was originally created from the Morris Sheppard Dam. Begun in 1936 and completed in 1941, the dam is 2,700 feet long and 190 feet high. The construction is unique with buttressed arched wings on either side of the nine spillway gates rather than the usual filled concrete. Morris Sheppard was in 1938 one of Texas' United States Senators, and the dam was named for him in honor of his efforts in obtaining funding for the project.

Many theories exist as to the naming of the lake, but according to the FAQ section of the Possum Kingdom Chamber of Commerce website, one is most widely accepted. Ike Sablosky settled in the region in the early twentieth century. He went into the fur and hide business, dealing in, among other things, possum pelts. His best suppliers of these furs hunted in the canyon of the Brazos, and Sablosky began referring to them as "the boys from the Possum Kingdom." Apparently, the name stuck.

Because the lake was impounded where the Brazos River cuts through the hills of Palo Pinto, the canyon effect gives the lake deep, clear water, and dramatic cliffs with some stunning views. It is no

surprise then that the lake became the western playground of the wealthy from the Ft. Worth area, with countless multi-million dollar homes on the lake shores. In addition there are exclusive resorts and an upscale golf course community. PK is also the sight of an adventure-based series of airplane races and cliff diving.

As a fishery PK was once a renowned angling destination for striped bass, largemouth bass, white bass and catfish of all species. That was before the early 2000's. In January 2001 and continuing through July, an outbreak of Golden Alga (*Prymnesium parvum*) decimated the lake. Some residents believed that more than half the fish population on Possum Kingdom was lost in 2001.

In 2003, Possum Kingdom got hit again by a golden alga fish kill. It was less

severe than in 2001, but the lake reportedly lost more than 1.5 million fish. TPWD did their best to control and minimize the damage, but not much could really be done, other than to wait.

According to the Resource Protection Division of TPWD, once the lake was alga free for a couple of years, the department began an aggressive restocking program. The TPWD website shows that since 2003, an astounding 10 million plus striped bass, (fry and fingerlings) have been stocked into PK. In addition, largemouth bass



*Year round fishing opportunities are available on PK - anglers simply need to fish the appropriate seasonal pattern for the intended specie being sought.*





Possum Kingdom is once again growing fish that will continue to help it regain its prominence as a top angling destination.

look for include deep water near shallow flats. There are some spots where five feet of water will drop off into 80 plus feet within a couple of rod lengths. These areas provide an ambush point for stripers chasing baitfish. They can corral the bait and push it up onto the flat.

Once trapped on the flat, the baitfish are at the mercy of the feeding stripers. Almost any bait throw into the frenzy will catch these fish, but a ¼ ounce jig head with a swim body is probably the easiest and best choice. Allowing for long casts, this bait will cover the water quickly and efficiently. In addition you only

Although many fishermen at PK are fishing for stripers and sand bass for the most part, bass fishing has also been on fire. Monte Reagan, manager at Fun-N-Sun Boat Sales, was the host of the BCT (Bass Clubs of Texas) Top Six Tournament held on PK in September. This brings together bass tournament anglers from across the state to see which club has the best “sticks.”

Under tough, post front conditions, the teams still had a great event. “It took 28 pounds to win, but the most impressive part of this event was the numbers of fish caught,” said Reagan. He went on to say, “They were catching them all over the lake, and in all ways you can imagine. From topwater baits to deeper approaches like crankbaits and drop-shot rigs, almost anything you threw would catch fish.”

The down side, if there was one, was the size of the fish caught. “There were a lot of fish caught that couldn’t be weighed in due to the small size, but that just tells you that this lake will be on fire for many years to come.”

Indeed, like many other Texas lakes the drought created an opportunity for shoreline vegetation to grow, which provides much needed cover for the

newborn fry each year. With higher survival rates comes better fishing down the line. Reagan added, “The lake is in great shape, with plenty of good, clean water.”

As mentioned, bass can be caught on a variety of baits with seasonal patterns being the guideline. As winter approaches, I would imagine jigs and Texas rigs will dominate, but as long as conditions remain mild the topwater bite should be good.

Active baits like a spinnerbait and shallow diving crankbaits will be effective in water eight feet or less, especially around the full moon, when shad look to spawn and the bass move shallow to feed. While there is ample brushy cover along the shoreline, don’t forget about the plethora of boat docks on PK. Pitching jigs and shakey-heads around these will catch a lot of good fish.

As winter gives way to spring, the bite will be found on the flats with cover. Areas where the brush is still inundated will draw spawning bass. Along the scout camp, Cedar Creek, and up by the dam are a few spots that have what the fish need. Of course you can also go upriver, which

will be the first place you’ll see fish moving up. As the spawn ends look to main lake points for topwater bites early.

Once the spring passes and summer takes over, you’ll be back to fishing deeper. Docks and rocks will be source of good cover for bass. Look to the boat docks near deep water, and the bigger rocks off the bank, that offer shade and cover

Another fishing tournament garnering plenty of attention at PK is the Possum Kingdom CatMasters catfish tournament. Held in October this event has an impressive guaranteed first-place payout of \$20,000.00, which is the highest payout of any catfish tournament in the nation. As of this writing the event is a few weeks out, and by the time

you read this it will have been concluded, but in speaking with the organizers, they expect somewhere in the area of 100 pounds will be needed to win. In a February event it took 82 pounds, with a 49.75 big fish to take first place. That’s a lot of whisker fish.

Yes, Mother Nature abhors a vacuum. And at Possum Kingdom she’s filled it quite nicely thank you. 🌟🌟



The picturesque landscape and impressive homes have once again become a vista visitors to Possum Kingdom Lake enjoy.

fingerlings totaling 2,398,987 have been stocked.

Of course, during this time one of the worst droughts Texas had seen in many years was in effect, and with the drought came fire. The drought was bad enough, but when devastating wildfires swept through, many homes were lost. Even those that came through it without loss had a hard time coping with the feeling of ominous bad luck surrounding Possum Kingdom.

But Mother Nature came to the rescue providing ample rains that filled the lake. The fish that were in residence had all of the requirements to proliferate, and proliferate they did. Today the lake is as good, or better, than ever.

Recent conversations with anglers and guides bear witness to this fact. “It’s as good as I’ve ever seen it,” said one angler, “We’re catching limits on every outing, and we don’t really have to work that hard at it.”

Electronics play a key role in finding fish on PK. Starting the day graphing likely areas is a common practice. Many times it will be an hour or more before a line is wetted. Common features to

have one hook to contend with.

When stripers are schooling the action can be furious for a few minutes, with fish hitting every cast. That is not a time to have multiple treble hooks flailing about the boat.

Topwaters like the Whopper Plopper, Pencil Poppers, and the like, can also be a fun way to catch fish once they are located. If and when the topwater bite dies, a weighted jighead with a sassy shad style bait, worked over the shallow flats adjacent to deep water, can help fill out a limit.

While most guides might prefer to use artificial lures, many circumstances can conspire to make live bait necessary. Sometimes the fish just won’t touch lures. This is especially the case when there is more than enough bait present. When shad have a banner year, fish don’t have to work very hard to find a meal. They key on shad and it is difficult to entice them with anything else. This is true in the summer months more than any other time of the year.



A ¼ ounce jig head with a swim body is probably the easiest and best choice when stripers are feeding on baitfish trapped up on a flat.



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## CoastWatch | Danno Wise

November weather can be so drastically different from day to day that anglers often don't know what to expect until they are out on the water. Technically a fall month, November often begins as an extension of October, with fish following traditional fall patterns.

However, as experienced Texas coastal fishermen know, early cold fronts can also push into an early winter pattern. Therefore, November usually brings a "wait and see" attitude for fishermen, with the most successful guides and anglers taking the month day by day and week by week, re-assessing the fishery and adjusting their tactics and techniques as conditions dictate.

One thing that makes the decision-making somewhat simpler in November is the reduced number of target species. Most of the seasonal species such as Spanish mackerel and tarpon have left the Texas coast. But, late fall fishermen can still chase the "big three" - reds, specks and flounder - as well as snook on the Lower Coast.

Of course, like most fall and winter months, November finds the bays nearly empty of traffic. This allows anglers to cover more water, if necessary, to find fish. As the temperatures begin to drop, this freedom roam plays an increasingly

important role. With fish spending mornings in deeper, more insulated water then moving up onto the flats when the sun is high overhead, fishermen find themselves having to follow the fish to make a full trip. **T&J**



November is a transition month for fish in the Lower Laguna Madre according to Port Isabel guide Capt. Gencho Buitureira, Jr. "We start seeing a few things change with our fishing pattern in November," said Buitureira. "We'll start having a lot more cold fronts and the fish will be moving. What we do in November, really has everything to do with the weather.

"For one thing, November is when I really start catching snook down in the Brownsville Ship Channel. But, we don't



PHOTO COURTESY CAPT. GENCHO BUITUREIRA JR.  
Everette Corson of Dallas shows off this speckled trout he caught while fishing near the old causeways out of Port Isabel.

just catch snook up there - we actually catch a pretty good variety of fish up the ship channel. By mid-November, we'll be catching snook, drum, mangrove snapper and redfish. A little later in November, we'll start catching quite a few good trout up there, too.

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PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

By November the bull redfish will have already left the bays for the Gulf. What will be available are solid slot sized reds like this one caught by Capt. Steve Ellis of Getaway Adventures Lodge in Port Mansfield.

"I spend a lot of time up the ship channel in November, but I go pretty much everywhere this month. When I'm not up the ship channel, I may be fishing the side channels near Three Islands, Mexiquito, South Bay, Gas Wells, or south of Cullen - all popping cork and shrimp.

"One of my favorite things to do that time of year is fish on top of the bars for redfish. If we have a north wind, I'll start on top of the bars for reds and work my way down to deep water for trout. If we have a south wind, I'll do the opposite

- start deep for trout and drift up to the bar for reds.

"Generally, the wind dictates where I'll go in November. If we have a north wind, I'll go north. If we have a south wind, I'll go south.

"Even though I fish out of Port Isabel, when there is a north wind I'll run through the north wind to work a north side flat behind the Island. When you're over there, look for mud boils or mullet jumping while you're running. That will tell you where the fish are.

"When fronts start hitting more consistently, start looking for birds working along Intracoastal. Usually, they'll be working between Markers 67 to 75. I like to get on the edges and throw right on top of bars. There's some nice mud flats along the ICW, so you'll have a lot of trout holding there when it starts cooling off. The birds will be gone by mid-morning, so hit them early if you can find them."

In Port Mansfield, guide Capt. Steve "JR" Ellis at Get-A-Way Adventures Lodge says speckled trout action is always good in November, regardless of the weather.

"We usually have some good trout fishing in November," said Ellis. "Where we find them will depend on the weather, but there is usually a good trout bite either way. The fish will stay on the flats as long as the weather stays warm. Once we start getting a few hard fronts and the temperatures start dropping, those fish will start moving over the muddy bottom areas.

"That's when we'll be finding them along the channel edges and around the spoils that have a real muddy, mucky bottom. Usually, we can do pretty well with big old topwaters that time of year.

"But, we'll also have redfish all over the place in November. They don't get as bothered as trout with the temperature, so we'll have redfish on the flats the entire month of November.

"If it gets really cold, they might drop into a channel for a day or two. But as soon as it warms up, they'll pop back out on the flats. But, once the fronts start pushing through more and more, they won't move as far from the channel. So we'll be concentrating on the flats nearest the channels.

"We should also have some nice flounder fishing in November. That's the time of year when they start pushing out

of the bay. Once we get a couple good, hard fronts, look for the flounder to start stacking up in the East Cut."

Corpus Christi and Baffin Bay guide Capt. Justin Cooper of Capt. Laguna Adventures says November fishing should be outstanding. And, although he spent most of late summer and early fall recovering from Hurricane Harvey, he said he is back to being fully operational and looking forward to some great fall fishing in the weeks leading up to Thanksgiving.

"Fall is really our best time to fish," said Copper. "The water temperatures are dropping and the fish are more active. We have a little bit of everything biting in November. You can expect to catch redfish, trout, flounder and drum. We really catch a lot of mixed boxes this time of year.

"In November, I will be focusing on drift fishing using a popping cork and live shrimp along the Kennedy Shoreline. That time of year, I use a long leader - at least three feet long - and cast as far away from the boat as possible, so as to cover more water.

"This time of year, most of the redfish caught in the bays will be within the slot as most of the bull reds have already made their way to the Gulf. When I'm going after redfish, I'll use cut bait or live mullet. But,

you have to be patient with the reds and let them play with the bait before taking it. At times, you may even have to give them some line just like fishing with croaker for trout." ★★



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Snook is a specie many anglers target during the late fall and winter months on the Lower Laguna Madre. The Brownsville Ship Channel holds a good population of both the fat and common snook.

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## MIDDLE COAST



Although the area is still recovering from Hurricane Harvey, Aransas area fishermen will see good action for speckled trout, flounder and redfish during November. As the weather cools, fishermen looking for speckled trout would do well to head into Nueces Bay. The mud and shell in Nueces will be holding plenty of specks from late fall through winter.

Another good spot to seek specks once the temperatures plummet is Corpus Christi Bay. The deep water surrounding the wells will be holding plenty of fish. Generally, as it gets cooler, the fishing around the wells gets even better. The only limiting factor is rough water during periods of high wind.

Anglers looking for redfish will find plenty on the flats of Aransas Bay as well as Redfish Bay. There will also be plenty of bull reds around the jetties and along the beachfront.

Over the final couple weeks of the month, anglers should expect the flounder

run to kick into high gear.

Typically, flatfish will get moving as soon as the first hard front hits. At that point, it's a simple matter of following the migrating masses of flounder out to the Gulf.

Rockport, too, is still picking up after Hurricane Harvey, but fishermen who do get to spend some time on the water in November will have plenty of options. Redfish should be plentiful in the shallows. Anglers should look for good numbers of reds to be stacked in front of the drains and back lakes, especially on a falling tide. Good numbers of specks should be hanging around the reefs in San Antonio Bay. Some large specks will also be cruising the shallows in areas with muddy bottom and scattered shell. The area's smaller bays, such as Copano, Mesquite, and St. Charles, will also be holding plenty of specks and reds this month. Once the first few cold fronts push through, look for flounder to start making their way out of the back lakes.

Seadrift guide Capt. Nathan Beabout of N&M Sportsman Adventures says November is a time of change along the Mid-Coast.

"November marks the start of many changes in our bay system here on the Middle Texas Coast in Seadrift," said Beabout. "It is all driven by the first major cold front. From what I have seen in my years down here, is it can be in the 20s before Thanksgiving or we can still be wet wading in the right areas.

"If winter shows up, you can witness some epic pre- and post-front bites. On the other hand, if winter doesn't show, feeding patterns will remain just as constant as they were in late summer and early fall.

"For that, we will spend the day wading down some of my favorite stretches of shoreline looking for that trophy trout or pods of redfish.

"While most outdoorsmen have indulged themselves fully into duck hunting, I will play the weather. Although not all days are sunny and warm, there are many great days of fishing during the month of November. With water temperatures falling from the previous month, baitfish start to seek refuge in the muddy bottom back lakes. These shallow, often semi-clear lakes, retain heat and therefore can be a few degrees warmer than surrounding waters. In turn, if a fish wants a meal they must congregate where the bait is. All our back lakes are different in bottom structure and size, but they all offer cover from harsher climates. A few of the most popular lakes offer five to seven foot holes and also shallow grass flats that fish will pull up onto when the sun pops out.

"Usually, shortly after the opener of duck season has passed, our boat ramps and water ways become empty. Partly due to the fact that the weather may not be as good as many hope for, but mostly because folks have moved onto their deer leases until Christmas.

"This is one of the reasons I like fishing this special time of year. Having areas to yourself is great, and because of this, fish are not run over all the time and can return to their normal feeding patterns allowing anglers that do seek a screaming drag over a shotgun or rifle, the chance to more easily pattern and stay on a successful bite.

"I do enjoy watching bucks chase doe around and the thrill of stalking a trophy buck. On days I am not on the water fishing, I can be found on the family ranch outside of Seguin, Texas, enjoying the abundant wildlife and guiding hunts. Our family has been managing our native whitetail herd for more than 30 years now, and we take pride in what we have accomplished.

"I discuss weather patterns and how important it is to know your weather each time you leave the dock, and coming into the winter is the most important time to be on your game.

"I have seen the bays turn dangerous in a matter of minutes with the approach of a cold front.

"We always try to time these fronts knowing the fishing is getting good. Although it is hard, don't make that last cast, pack it up and get in before you are trapped riding it out in a duck blind." **TJ**



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Captain Justin Cooper of Laguna Adventures says he will drifting shorelines or grass flats adjacent to deeper water or channels looking for speckled trout and redfish.

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## Pursuing, Processing, Preserving, and Preparing

**PURSuing:** The first new product needed for general deer season is a rifle. Listening to the current cry for more long-range performance, Savage Arms has delivered the very versatile and capable Savage Model 10 GRS. This rifle carries a tool box full of accuracy enhancing features locked in the GRS stock constructed of 15 % fiberglass-reinforced Durethan with 65 % glass bedding.

The pronounced pistol grip is great for pulling the rifle into your shoulder and the textured rubber surfaces on the grip and slimmed down forestock provide a great hold in any weather. Also, the stock is fully adjustable for length of pull and comb height to fit any shooter.

Mated to the strong Savage action is a fluted heavy barrel with precision button rifling and a threaded muzzle. 6.5 Creedmoor or .308 Win. cartridges are fed from a 10 round magazine and touched off with the popular user-adjustable Savage AccuTrigger. The Savage Model 10 GRS is a lot of long-range hunting and even longer range target capability for under \$1,500.00.

For those on a tighter budget there is no better deal than the Savage Axis Combo. The package features their super strong bolt action with a button-rifled carbon steel barrel all set in a synthetic stock with a factory mounted 3 X 9 scope, usually a Bushnell or Nikon. These rifles come in a wide range of calibers and as an example of their value. Carter's Country in Houston and on line recently offered the Savage Axis Combo in .270, .308 or .30-06 with rebates for \$249.97! The ever-growing lineup can be viewed at [www.savagearms.com](http://www.savagearms.com).

Hunting at long range requires an



*The versatile long range Savage Model 10 GRS.*



*The Browning Buckmark Hunter is a big value for the bucks.*

extremely accurate bullet that still expands, holds together and penetrates. You also want those attributes at short range.

Federal Premium has just come out with the Edge TLR offering match-grade long-range accuracy in a bonded hunting bullet. The Edge TLR uses the exclusive Slipstream polymer tip with high heat resistance preventing deformation in flight to initiate expansion at long range.

At close range, the bullet's copper shank and bonded lead core retain weight for consistent penetration. Its long, sleek profile offers an extremely high ballistic coefficient for less wind drift and drop and their AccuChannel groove technology improves accuracy and reduces drag.

Tests have shown excellent expansion out to 900 yards. Imagine what it does at 100. Currently available in .308 Win., .30-06 and .300 Win. Mag. both standard and short. Read more at [www.federalpremium.com](http://www.federalpremium.com).

**PROCESSING:** We have all experienced ground shrinkage. "That deer sure looked bigger standing up."

We usually field dress the deer before winching it up on a gambrel for the preferred method of processing while hanging the carcass, and most of us don't keep a scale handy we usually end up guesstimating the weight. The folks from Ranew's Outdoor Equipment have come up with

the proper tool to remove the guesswork.

The Hanging Judge combines an all-inclusive gambrel and digital scale into one easy-to-use tool. It allows you to hang, weigh, dress and quarter game without the

hassle of first hanging the animal on a scale if you have one, then switching to a gambrel or cleaning table to process the deer. With the Hanging Judge, you can easily get the live and dressed weights of the deer without interrupting processing.

Knowing the actual weight of your deer will help you better judge weight on the hoof plus, recording these weights from season to season is an important management tool as to the success of your habitat management, food plots, feeders, etc.. The Hanging Judge Gambrel with Digital Scale can be ordered at [www.thehanging-judge.com](http://www.thehanging-judge.com) for \$69.99.

To begin the processing we need a good knife and Browning has just revealed the new Buckmark Hunter. Designed by Russ Kommer, this knife has a mirror polished 3 1/8 inch stainless steel drop point blade with anti-skid grooves on the blade spine.

The knife features full-length tang construction for strength. The gorgeous looking handle is two-tone zebra and ebony hardwood with brass accents and a finger groove cutout for control during cutting chores. The knife also comes with a top grain leather belt sheath stamped with the Buckmark logo.

This is a very capable and great looking knife for the bucks. The new Buckmark Hunter knife sells for a suggested retail price of just \$34.99.

**PRESERVING:** Everyone would love the convenience of a cooler at their ranch or lease, but they are very expensive and if you don't have a metal barn to put one in you are going to have to build one. Koola Buck, a leader in state-of-the-art meat processing products and the inventor of the Koola Buck portable refrigeration system for hunters and outfitters, has introduced the new Koola Buck Junior.

This new smaller, portable refrigeration system was designed with the regular hunter



*The Federal Edge TLR with Slipstream tip.*

in mind. Tipping the scales at only 205 pounds, the Koola Buck Junior is compact and lightweight, yet it has a large storage capacity. This pop-up cooler is 3 feet wide by 3 feet deep by 6.5 feet tall with an interior cooling area of 58.5 cubic feet. Its 600-pound ceiling strength easily supports hanging an elk or two to three deer.

The refrigeration system operates on standard 110V electrical power, requiring only 15-amp service to maintain the temperature between 34 and 41 F, even when outside temperatures reach the 100's and in the boonies you can run it off a generator. It is easily set up by one person in a few minutes. With its zippered access, hanging and aging meat is now convenient.

When not in use, the unit can be collapsed for transporting, rolls on its own casters and doesn't take up much space. The Koola Buck portable refrigeration system is available at [www.koolabuck.com](http://www.koolabuck.com) and at dealers with a suggested retail of \$2,495.

**PREPARING:** Everything tastes better when it is cooked outdoors and a great new cooker for the patio or the deer camp has hit the market. The FireDisc portable propane cooker is designed to be easily transported. Unlike charcoal grills that don't disassemble and are difficult to transport, FireDisc is easy

to bring along. It fits easily into a truck, boat or RV. The flexible stand also adapts to uneven surfaces.

The FireDisc system has two stand sections that lock together without tools or hardware and the disc itself, which sets on top of

the stand. It takes seconds to assemble or disassemble, and the three pieces lay flat for easy portability.

The FireDisc is constructed of heavy-duty, high polished, tempered, ultra-high carbon steel. The stand and burner are powder coated with a premium thermoplastic pure silicone resin that is baked on at 450° F to form a virtually impenetrable protective skin.

The FireDisc comes with either a deep or shallow pan. The deep pan is for deep frying, soups, stews and chili and larger volumes of food. Perfect

for my favorite, chicken fried everything.

The shallow pan is like a wok and great for anything non-liquid and it takes up less space. Both pans provide an ample cooking surface that allows users to cook multiple food items at once due to the varying temperatures on different areas of the disc.

FireDisc Cookers are available in both a 36-inch countertop height stand and a more compact 24-inch tall model. Their slogan is "Built to Haul, Cooks it All." Check the cooker and accessories at [www.firediscookers.com](http://www.firediscookers.com). **T★J**



*The portable flexible FireDisc.*

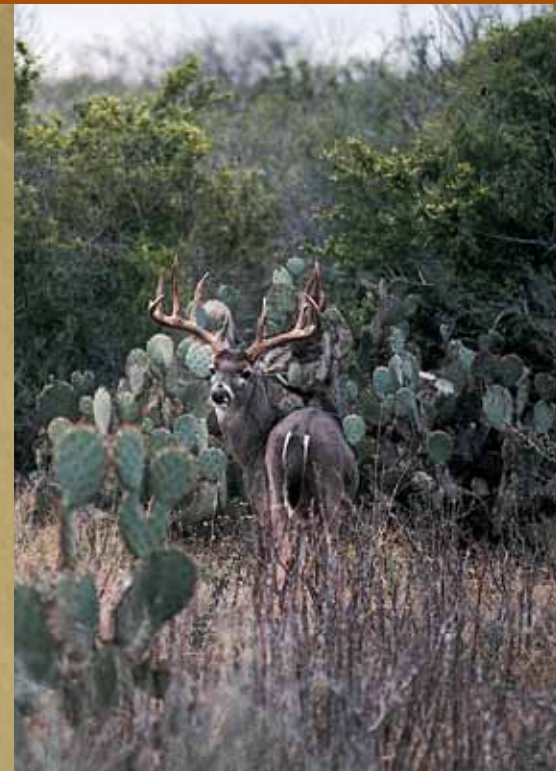


*The Koola Buck portable cooler.*

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## Lake Roundup

### SOUTH TEXAS



By Danno Wise

October is generally viewed as the best overall month to fish lakes across South Texas. However, most would agree November isn't far behind.

In most parts of South Texas, November is really just an extension of October, at least for the first few weeks of the month. After Thanksgiving, the weather can change from fall to winter in a hurry. On the other hand, autumn weather can extend well into December.

Such is the life of South Texas fishermen – the weather can change rapidly and radically and over the back half of November, it often does.

However, the first three weeks of November usually offer some of the most consistent weather of year. Northerners are frequent, but generally fall into a reliable weekly pattern which is easy enough for anglers to work around. Additionally, many coves and flats on various South Texas lakes that may not have cooled sufficiently to encourage fish to return during October will certainly consist of an inviting water temperature during November.

This early portion of November also allows anglers to use a variety of shallow water techniques. Topwater plugs, spinnerbaits and weightless soft-plastics are top choices. Later in the month, as the fish move deeper, jigs and heavy Texas and Carolina-rigged soft-plastics will be the better methods for targeting fish.

**COLETO CREEK** – According to Victoria bass pro Dennis Lala, anglers

should expect some outstanding shallow water activity on Coletto Creek this month.

“In November the water will be cooling off and the fish will be coming up into the shallows,” said Lala. “We still have a little bit of coontail moss around the lake. The bass will be in the grass and also working right up against the bank.

“There will be a lot of fish caught on topwaters and spinnerbaits. But, the number one way to fish will be a weightless Power Jerk Shad in watermelon/pearl. You can work that bait over the grass, in the grass, along the edge of the grass or right up on against the shoreline.

“Noisy topwaters work best on this lake. A buzzbait works real good, or some kind of noisy topwater plug like a Frenzy Popper. The new Rattlin' Buzz has also been really catching a lot of fish.

“Later in the day is when you'll want to add some weight and go with a Texas or Carolina rig along the outside edge of the grass if you can find some or over some of the drops and points. Again, I'll be using a Jerk Shad or maybe a lizard.

“Once the water really starts cooling, I'll start throwing spinnerbaits a lot more. I like a white/chartreuse bait with gold, double-willowleaf blades. Basically, I'll throw that thing all over the grass. I'll work down the edge, over the top, in the potholes – wherever you can throw it without getting it covered in moss.”

“Of course, our water never gets really cold because we're a power plant lake and the plant is up and running again.

Once we start seeing the water getting really cool on the main lake, the hotwater discharge will turn on. Besides black bass, we'll have crappie, hybrids and catfish around the discharge. That's part of the fun when you're fishing by the discharge – you never know what you're gonna catch. And, that fishing just gets better as it gets colder.”

**MEDINA** – Jim

Gallagher of Jim's Rebait Tackle says November is usually one of the best months to fish this picturesque lake.

“November means things are cooling off a bit and we're starting to get back into a fall pattern,” said Gallagher. “So, we should have a reasonably good topwater and crankbait bite. The fish will stay up shallow a little longer. And, during November we get a few more overcast or cloudy days, which encourages the fish to stay up a bit longer. And, when they fall back to the deeper water, they won't go down as deep as they were in summer.

“This time of year, small topwaters and stick baits – soft or hard – are really the best bet. One of my favorite baits is the Bomber 14A. That's a great little bait. It casts well and is just about the right size for this lake.

“For most of November, fishing will be pretty much like October. But, once the weather turns cold, the pattern to change. This could happen in late November or it might not happen until December. You never know.

“If it does turn cold, it will be kind of like spring fishing. We always talk about how rocks are important on this lake during spring. Well, it's the same thing once it starts getting cold at the end of fall. You want to look for the rocks that are facing the sun. Often times, the water around a rock that's facing the sun may be as much as five degrees warmer than the rest of the lake.

“Once they settle into their winter



PHOTO COURTESY DENNIS LALA

Victoria based pro Dennis Lala says a double willow leaf spinnerbait will be one of his go-to lures for bass.

pattern, that means deep, mostly vertical fishing for us. However, the fish won't be as deep as in the summer. The fishing areas and techniques will be roughly the same, but where they might have been at 35 feet in summer, they'll only be at 20-25 feet in the winter. And, as usual, they'll primarily be on main lake and secondary lake points – just a little shallower.”

**CHOKE CANYON** – Fall is always a great time to fish Choke Canyon. Of course, October is more or less considered the apex of the fishing year on this lake, but the first few weeks of November will be more or less an extension of October.

Fishermen should expect bass to be feeding fairly shallow. Noisy surface baits such as Pop Rs, artificial frogs and buzzbaits will be among the most productive lures, especially early and late. During the middle of the day, spinnerbaits, Texas-rigged lizards and soft-plastic jerkbaits will be the best choices.

Fishing patterns over the second half of November will be dictated by how many fronts pass through. As long as the weather and water stays relatively warm, fish will continue in their fall feeding patterns. However, once the first few hard fronts hit, expect fish to start dropping off into deeper water and resuming their winter pattern. This usually happens sometime after Thanksgiving, but can occur much earlier in the month depending on the fronts. Once the water cools enough to push the fish off the shallows and shorelines, look for them in 15 to 20 feet of water over humps, tank dams and other offshore structure. When fish are on this deep structure, Texas-rigged lizards, jigs and deep-diving crankbaits are the best options.

**FALCON** – On Falcon Lake, bass will remain in a fall pattern for most, if not all, of November. That is good news for fishermen, as topwater and shallow water action should be outstanding this month. Buzzbaits, Spooks, Pop Rs and artificial frogs will all produce plenty of fish around the flooded brush. On mild, overcast days, fishermen can expect the topwater bite to last all day or at least well into the afternoon.

Even if the topwater bite slows, anglers can generally do well with other shallow water techniques. Spinnerbaits and shallow running crankbaits will produce well on the outside edge of the flooded

brush. Jigs and Texas-rigged plastics can also be worked in and around the flooded brush.

Later in the month as the temperatures begin to drop even more, fishermen can expect fish to start moving toward the points. If the water temperatures drop substantially, which is possible later in the month, fish will move to the offshore structure. As the fish work deeper, Carolina- and Texas-rigged soft-plastics and deep diving cranks will be the best choices.

Throughout the month of November, fishermen on Falcon can expect decent schooling activity from black bass. Casting spoons and lipless cranks are among the best baits for targeting schooling fish. **T&J**

### WEST TEXAS



By TOJ Staff

**AMISTAD** — As of early October “Big Friendly” was on a slow rise from recent rains and was about 27 feet below conservation pool. That is about the same level as last year.

As is often repeated, even with a less than full lake there is plenty of water to fish, plus the fishing has been very good most of this year. With cooler water temperatures look for black bass to be aggressively feeding in shallow water and hitting topwater lures, frogs, Senkos, spinnerbaits and crankbaits.

Stripers continue their annual move up the Rio Grande, Pecos and Devils Rivers. Normally their annual trek puts them this time of year around Markers 19-25. Look for the best catfish action to occur in water 10-25 feet deep.

**O.H. IVIE** — This popular bass producing lake is also about the same level as this time in 2016. Look for water temperatures to continue to slip and black bass to hit topwater lures through a good portion of the day. Once the bite slows

switch to Texas or Carolina rigs around points and structure.

Also expect bass to make a move north to stage near the mouths of the rivers as November progresses. Bass will also start to relate to slightly deeper water as colder weather settles in.

**BROWNWOOD** — Expect this lake to continue to produce through the month of November. In early October it was about two feet low but the black bass were hitting anything in the tackle box. In November that voracious bite will continue as water temperatures settle through the 70s. White bass should continue to be active at night under the lights in water 12-16 feet deep. The crappie bite will be good throughout the day with fish around brush piles. **T&J**

### HIGH PLAINS



By TOJ Staff

**ALAN HENRY** — Look for black bass fishing to turn on this month as the water temperatures drops out of the 70s and through the 60s. Buzzbaits and big noisy topwater lures will produce early and late. Blue fleck 7 - 10 inch Power Worms are good through the day around the drops in water 25-35 feet deep.

Look for school bass in water 25-50 feet deep. Jigging spoons are the best choice.

**OTHER OPTIONS** — Stamford, Oak Creek, Nasworthy and Coleman will provide good fishing options across this region. As water temperatures fall through the 70s look for black bass to move up and hit topwater lures, buzzbaits and frogs.

Should winter arrive a little early look for bass on area lakes to make a move toward deeper water. On warm days they will rise up to the first drop, but will not be as shallow as they were to start the month. **T&J**





## Fall Coastal Patterns and Adjustments



November sees what is perhaps the most drastic transition of the year for coastal fishing patterns. As the weather changes throughout the month, fish will be found on the shallow flats, deep holes and channels, and everywhere in between. As a result, anglers need to be ready to throw virtually every bait in the box based on prevailing conditions.

When redfish and trout are being targeted on the flats, topwater plugs work really well. Dog walking plugs are hands down the most popular models on the Texas coast. Early in the month, when temperatures are mild, "Jr" sizes work best. Once the water turns cold, it is better to go with full size versions.

When fish are a little more finicky -- post-front for instance -- floater/divers and slow-sinking plugs can often entice a bite. Floater/divers can also be used to "wake" across the flats -- reeling the bait just beneath the surface to cause a V-wake -- when the fish are more active.

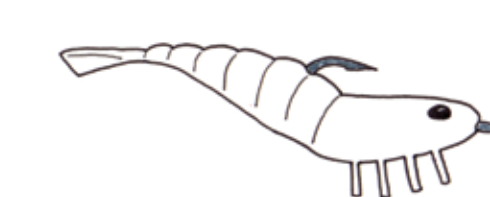
When it comes to covering water, nothing is simpler than a spoon. Weedless spoons are best over grass flats, while traditional spoons can be used where fouling grass is not a problem. Gold, silver, copper and red/white are the most popular colors.

The traditional Texas "tout" tail is also a good choice this time of year. When the fish are active, the lure can be retrieved quickly and "jigged" as it returns to the rod tip. When fish are sulking on the bay floor, a tout can be bounced across the bottom.

Paddle-tail plastics are good for covering water as well, as they can be used with a simple cast-and-reel method. When fish are acting sluggish, these lures can be slow-rolled across the bottom.

Soft-plastic jerkbaits are the ticket when fish are feeding visually (good water clarity is necessary) or when a subtle presentation is necessary. Often times, these lures can finesse a strike out of lethargic fish.

Artificial shrimp such as the DOA Shrimp pretty much are their own category these days. These versatile baits can be fished beneath a popping cork, free-lined or used on a Carolina-rig or other bottom rig.



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## A Time for Daily Adjustments



Choosing the right lure given the conditions is always a challenge when bass fishing. However, there is perhaps no other month in which Texas bass fishermen need to rely on as many different types of lures as November. Because of the changing weather, seasons and fishing patterns, November sees bass ranging from super shallow to very deep depending on the current conditions. So, bass fishermen need to be ready to adjust and alter what they throw on a near daily basis.

For the first couple weeks of November, virtually every Texas lake will have a good topwater bite. Traditional topwater plugs such as Pop Rs and Zara Spooks will work well. However, in some southern Texas lakes, there will still be some hydrilla, making it necessary to go with weedless topwaters such as artificial frogs.

Buzzbaits are another type of topwater lure that works well during November. Because bass are extra aggressive during the early portion of the month, buzzbaits are a great way to cover water while still producing plenty of fish.

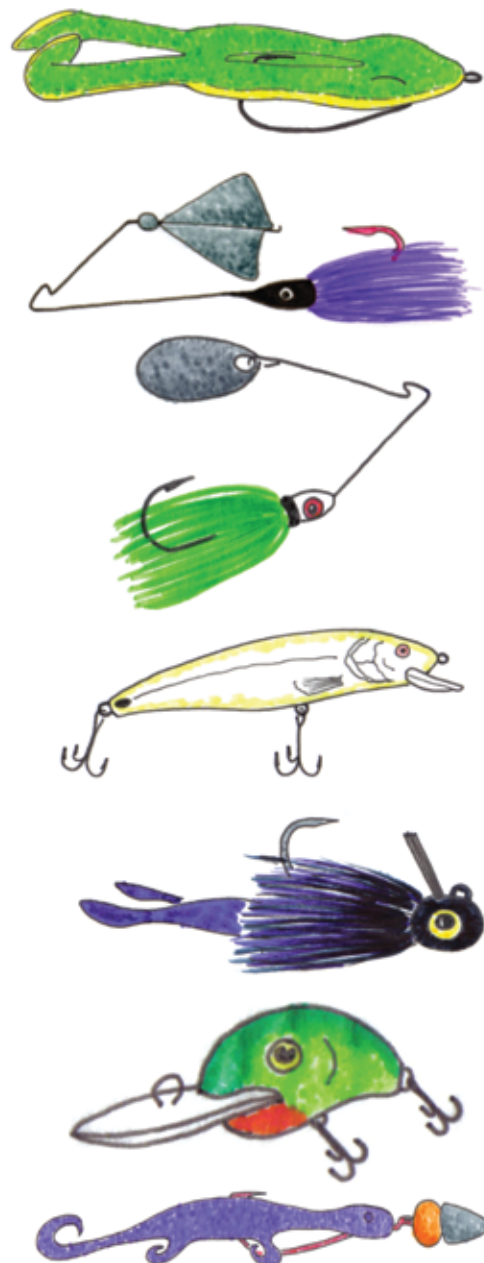
Spinnerbaits come into play when the topwater bite dies down but fish are still up shallow. Spinnerbaits can be used to cover wide swaths of water quickly when fish are aggressive or they can be slow-rolled when the fish turn finicky.

Often times bass become finicky after fronts. At times such as these, suspending jerkbaits are good choices. These lures can hang in the targeted portion of the water column much longer and be retrieved much slower, which often entices a strike.

When fish are sulking on the bottom, jigs are a good way to target them. Heavy jigs get down deep quickly and stay there. When the weather begins turning cold, it is usually a good idea to dress a jig with a trailer in order to give the bait a bulkier appearance.

Fish on deep structure and points can also be targeted with crankbaits. Anglers can choose the model crankbait they need in order to target the specific depth fish are holding at.

Texas rigged worms and lizards are also good choices when fish are holding deep. Texas rigs can be worked extremely slow when the fish are sluggish or can be bounced a quicker clip when fish are more aggressive.



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## Setups For Early Season Waterfowl

Waterfowl season is finally here, but the south migration of ducks and geese is only beginning. November typically provides the mildest weather conditions of the season, and the birds have not yet made it to their final wintering grounds. The results of this pattern allow waterfowl hunters to target specific species in different geographic regions.



Northern areas of the state within the High and Rolling Plains will experience some colder weather prior to regions further south. Playa lakes along with peanut, maize, and cornfields within this sector will attract some of the first flights of mallards and Canada geese. Plenty of specklebellies will be arriving here as well.

Massive spreads using a combination of full body and sillosock goose decoys are the ticket for pursuing geese within peanut, maize, and cornfields. The spread should be shaped like a teardrop with the fat end oriented upwind and the narrow end tapering off downwind. Hunters should conceal themselves using lay out blinds and stubble while hiding amongst the densest concentration of decoys along the widest portion of the teardrop.

Hunting a playa calls for a smaller decoy spread consisting of both floater duck and goose decoys. Full body goose decoys can also be used along the bank of the playa near the blind. Hunters should position their blind so that the wind is at their backs. The floater decoys should be set out in two symmetrical groups, with one concentration on the right and one on the left, at about a 45 degree angle from the front of the blind. The area right in front of the blind should be left open.

Stock ponds and cattle tanks within the central portion of the state will be loaded with green-winged teal, shovelers, gadwall, and widgeon. Half a dozen to a dozen floater decoys is all that's needed to draw in ducks on these small bodies of water. Hunters should hunt the upwind side of the pond because this is where the birds are going to want to land.



Blue-winged and green-winged teal along with hoards of specklebellies will cover coastal rice prairies this month. Shovelers and pintails are also going to be prevalent here.

Prairie ponds, gravel pits, and flooded rice fields are the perfect location for a morning duck hunt. A larger pond or body of water requires hunters to use decoy spreads with up to 10 dozen or more floater duck decoys to be successful. Smaller holes will only need to be hunted with a few dozen to six dozen floating fakes. Throwing a few floater goose decoys into the mix is always a good idea, as specklebellies will often willingly land on bodies of water along coastal prairies.

Hunting cut rice fields with large white spreads of sillosock and rag style goose decoys is a sure fire way to bag a limit of specklebellies. Hunters should conceal themselves with white cloaks or lay out blinds within the center of the spread while facing down wind. The decoys should be densely concentrated around hunters and become more spread out as they taper off towards the downwind edge.



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# Outdoor Calendar

**THROUGH NOVEMBER 3,**

Rio Grande Turkey – Fall Archery Only Season, *Statewide*. For more information refer to TPWD Outdoor Annual, or call (800) 792-1112..

**THROUGH NOVEMBER 3,**

Whitetail Deer – Fall Archery Only Season, *Statewide*. For more information refer to TPWD Outdoor Annual, or call (800) 792-1112.

**THROUGH NOVEMBER 3,**

Mule Deer – Fall Archery Only Season, *Trans-Pecos & Panhandle*. For more information refer to TPWD Outdoor Annual, or call (800) 792-1112.

**THROUGH NOVEMBER 5,**

Dove Season, *Central Zone*. For more information refer to TPWD Outdoor Annual, or call (800) 792-1112.

**THROUGH NOVEMBER 12,**

Dove Season, *North Zone*. For more information refer to TPWD Outdoor Annual, or call (800) 792-1112.

**THROUGH NOVEMBER 18,**

Dove Season, *South Zone*. For more information refer to TPWD Outdoor Annual, or call (800) 792-1112.

**THROUGH JANUARY 28, 2018,**

Sandhill Crane season, *Zone A*. 103 counties. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**THROUGH FEBRUARY 11, 2018,**

Wilson's Snipe (Common snipe or Jacksnipe) season, *Statewide*. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**THROUGH FEBRUARY 25, 2018,**

Javelina season, *North Zone*. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**THROUGH FEBRUARY 25, 2018,**

Squirrel Season, *51 East Texas counties*. For more information consult the

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**THROUGH FEBRUARY 25,**

Quail season, *Statewide*. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**THROUGH AUGUST 31, 2018,**

Javelina season, *South Zone*. For more information refer to TPWD Outdoor Annual, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 3 – JANUARY 28, 2018,**

High Plains Mallard Management Unit: Regular duck season. *Second Split*. For more information refer to TPWD Outdoor Annual, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 4-5,**

North Zone Duck: *Youth season*. For more information refer to TPWD Outdoor Annual, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 4-26,**

Duck regular season, first split, South Zone, *59 counties*. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 4 – JANUARY 7, 2018,**

Rio Grande Turkey fall season, North Texas, *123 counties*. For more information you can consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 4 – JANUARY 7, 2018,**

Whitetail Deer general season, *North Texas*, *226 counties*. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 4 – JANUARY 21, 2018,**

Rio Grande Turkey fall season, South Texas, *26 counties*. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 4 – JANUARY 21, 2018,**

Whitetail Deer general season, South Texas, *30 counties*. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor

Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 4 – JANUARY 28, 2018,**

Light and Dark Geese season, East Zone, *123 counties*. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 4 – JANUARY 28, 2018,**

"Dusky" Duck season, High Plains Mallard Management Unit. *92 counties*. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112..

**NOVEMBER 4 – FEBRUARY 4, 2018,**

Light and Dark Geese season, West Zone, *151 counties*. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 4 – FEBRUARY 25, 2018,**

Rio Grande Turkey fall season, *Brooks, Kenedy, Kleberg, Willacy counties*. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 4 – FEBRUARY 26, 2018,**

Chacalaca season, *four Rio Grande Valley counties*. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 2,**

Waco Chapter Ducks Unlimited fundraiser banquet, *Waco*. Call (254) 313-2625.

**NOVEMBER 2,**

Corpus Christi Chapter Ducks Unlimited fundraiser banquet, *Corpus Christi*. Call (361) 793-3535.

**NOVEMBER 4,**

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**NOVEMBER 8,**

Oyster Creek/Southwest Houston Chapter Ducks Unlimited fundraiser banquet, Braeburn Country Club, *Houston*. Call (832) 541-8550.

**NOVEMBER 9,**

Aggieland Chapter Ducks Unlimited fundraiser banquet, *Bryan*. Call (903) 681-3343.

**NOVEMBER 9,**

Katy Chapter Ducks Unlimited fundraiser banquet, *Katy*. Call (713) 858-7669.

**NOVEMBER 9,**

Victoria Chapter Ducks Unlimited fundraiser banquet, *Victoria*. Call (361) 571-0717.

**NOVEMBER 9 – 26,**

"Dusky Duck season, first split. South Zone. *54 counties*. Consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 11,**

Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund & Fishing Tournament, The West End Restaurant & Marina, *Galveston*. Four man Team Tournament for heaviest trout and redfish, jointly hosted by: Texas Boys Outdoors & West End Anglers. Sponsor Opportunities! Vendors and Donors or for entry information call: Roy Crush - [www.texasboys.org](http://www.texasboys.org) or call 832-647-9750 or Coe Parker – [www.fishwestend.com](http://www.fishwestend.com).

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**NOVEMBER 11 – 26,**

Duck regular season, first split, *North Zone*. 139 counties. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 14,**

48th Annual Taylor Chapter Ducks Unlimited fundraiser banquet, *Taylor*. Call (903) 570-5124.

**NOVEMBER 16,**

Falls County Chapter Ducks Unlimited fundraiser banquet, *Marlin*. Call (254) 424-3413.

**NOVEMBER 16 – 26,**

"Dusky Duck season, first split. North Zone. *139 counties*. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 18,**

Amarillo Chapter Mule Deer Foundation fundraiser banquet, *Amarillo*. Call (806) 584-5891.

**NOVEMBER 18 – 26,**

Mule Deer general season, Southwest

ern Panhandle, *14 counties*. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 18 – DECEMBER 3,**

Mule Deer general season, Panhandle, *40 counties*. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 21,**

Pittsburg Tx/Camp County Chapter Ducks Unlimited fundraiser banquet, *Pittsburg*. Call (903) 235-1893.

**NOVEMBER 24 – DECEMBER 10,**

Mule Deer general season, Trans-Pecos, *19 counties*. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 24 – DECEMBER 10,**

Mule Deer general season, *Brewster, Pecos & Terrell counties*. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 24 – JANUARY 28, 2018,**

Sandhill Crane season, Zone B. *63 counties*. Consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or (800) 792-1112. 🌟🌟



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Tide Tables

NOVEMBER 2017

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			H2:47A 1.6 L8:56A 0.8 H3:14P 1.5 L9:00P 0.9	H3:03A 1.5 L9:21A 0.6 H4:15P 1.7 L9:49P 1.0	H3:19A 1.5 L9:55A 0.3 H5:14P 1.8 L10:37P 1.2	H3:35A 1.6 L10:34A 0.1 H6:14P 1.9 L11:25P 1.3
H2:53A 1.6 L10:17A 0.0 H6:15P 1.9 L11:15P 1.5	H3:13A 1.6 L11:05A -0.1 H7:19P 1.9	L12:10A 1.5 H3:34A 1.6 L11:57A -0.1 H8:27P 1.8	L1:24A 1.5 H3:47A 1.6 L12:55P -0.1 H9:37P 1.8	L1:59P 0.1 H10:42P 1.7	L3:13P 0.2 H11:36P 1.7	L6:44A 1.2 H8:59A 1.3 L4:33P 0.4
H12:17A 1.6 L7:03A 1.0 H11:09A 1.2 L5:55P 0.6	H12:48A 1.5 L7:31A 0.8 H12:47P 1.3 L7:05P 0.7	H1:13A 1.5 L8:00A 0.6 H2:06P 1.4 L8:05P 0.9	H1:34A 1.4 L8:28A 0.4 H3:09P 1.5 L8:56P 1.0	H1:51A 1.4 L8:54A 0.3 H4:03P 1.5 L9:39P 1.1	H2:06A 1.4 L9:1A 0.2 H4:50P 1.6 L10:16P 1.2	H2:19A 1.4 L9:45A 0.1 H5:33P 1.6 L10:45P 1.3
H2:29A 1.4 L10:12A 0.0 H6:15P 1.6 L11:10P 1.3	H2:34A 1.4 L10:41A 0.0 H6:58P 1.5 L11:36P 1.3	H2:30A 1.4 L11:14A 0.0 H7:45P 1.5	L12:13A 1.3 H2:14A 1.4 L11:50A 0.0 H8:36P 1.5	L12:30P 0.1 H9:30P 1.4	L1:13P 0.2 H10:21P 1.4	L2:03P 0.3 H11:02P 1.4
L3:00P 0.4 H11:33P 1.3	L7:41A 0.8 H10:03A 0.9 L4:06P 0.5 H11:56P 1.3	L6:56A 0.7 L10:03P 1.0 L5:19P 0.6	H12:15A 1.3 L6:58A 0.5 H1:24P 1.1 L6:30P 0.8	H12:31A 1.2 L7:21A 0.2 H2:30P 1.3 L7:35P 0.9		
26	27	28	29	30		

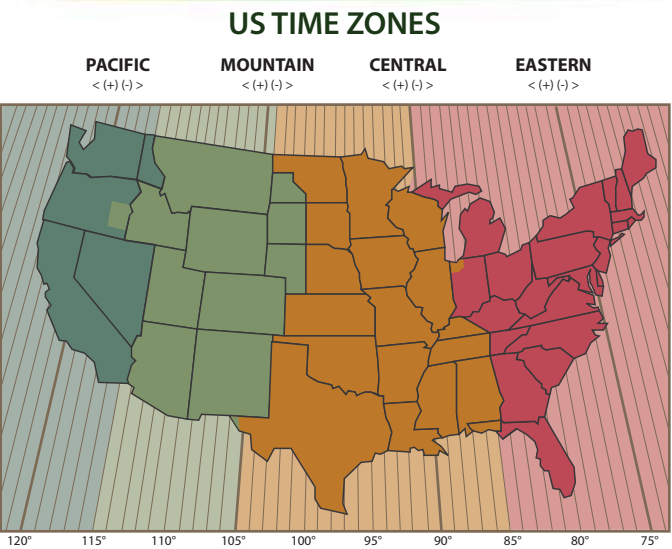
DECEMBER 2017

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					H12:48A 1.2 L7:53A -0.1 H3:28P 1.4 L8:32P 1.0	H1:08A 1.3 L8:32A -0.3 H4:23P 1.6 L9:24P 1.1
H1:33A 1.3 L9:15A -0.5 H5:18P 1.6 L10:13P 1.2	H2:03A 1.4 L10:02A -0.6 H6:14P 1.6 L11:01P 1.3	H2:28A 1.4 L10:52A -0.6 H7:11P 1.6 L11:55P 1.2	H3:18A 1.3 L11:45A -0.6 H8:09P 1.5 L11:24P 1.2	L1:09A 1.2 H4:03A 1.3 L12:41P -0.4 H9:05P 1.4	L1:42P -0.2 H9:57P 1.3	L4:56A 0.8 L2:50P 0.0 H10:41P 1.2
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Times are for Galveston, Galveston Channel

TIME DIFFERENCES	High	Low
Calcasieu Pass, Louisiana	-2:14	-1:24
Sabine Pass Lighthouse	-1:46	-1:31
Sabine Pass Jetty	-1:26	-1:31
Sabine Pass	-1:00	-1:15
Mesquite Point, Sabine Pass	-0:04	-0:25
Galveston Bay ent. south jetty	-0:39	-1:05
Port Bolivar	+0:14	-0:06
Galveston Bay		
Texas City, Turning Basin	+0:33	+0:41
Eagle Point (1)	+3:54	+4:15
Clear Lake(1)	+6:05	+6:40
Morgan Point (1)	+10:21	+5:19
Round Pt.,Trinity Bay (1)	+10:39	+5:15
Point Barrow, Trinity Bay	+5:48	+4:43
Gilchrist, East Bay	+3:16	+4:18
Jamaica Beach, West Bay	+2:38	+3:31
Alligator Point, West Bay	+2:39	+2:33
Christmas Point, Christmas Bay	+2:32	+2:31
Galveston Pleasure Pier	-1:06	-1:06
San Luis Pass	-0:09	-0:09
Freeport Harbor	-0:44	-1:02
Pass Cavallo	0:00	-1:20
Aransas Pass	-0:03	-1:31
Padre Island (South End)	-0:24	-1:45
Port Isabel	+1:02	-0:42
Tidal adjustments are not predictable for Port O'Connor, Matagorda Bay; Port Lavaca, Matagorda Bay; and Riviera Beach, Baffin Bay since they are driven by wind and weather. — NOAA		

Fishing & Hunting Times



NOVEMBER 2017

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1 ☉	2 ☉	3 ☉	4 ☉ FULL
			8:50A - 1:050P	9:35A - 2:35P	10:25A - 3:25P	11:15A - 4:15P
5 ☉	6 ☉	7 ☉	8 ☉	9 ☉	10 ☉	11 ☉
11:15A - 4:15P	12:15P - 5:15P	1:15P - 6:15P	2:15P - 7:15P	3:15P - 8:15P	4:10P - 9:10P	4:35A - 9:35A
12 ☉	13 ☉	14 ☉	15 ☉	16 ☉	17 ☉	18 ☉
5:25A - 10:25A	6:15A - 11:15A	7:05A - 12:05P	7:55A - 12:55P	8:45A - 1:45P	9:35A - 2:35P	10:25A - 3:25P
19 ☉	20 ☉	21 ☉	22 ☉	23 ☉	24 ☉	25 ☉
11:10A - 4:10P	11:55A - 4:55P	12:40P - 5:40P	1:30P - 6:30P	2:20P - 7:20P	3:10P - 8:10P	4:00P - 9:00P
26 ☉ FQ	27 ☉	28 ☉	29 ☉	30 ☉		
4:25A - 9:25A	5:20A - 10:20A	6:15A - 11:15A	7:10A - 12:10P	8:10A - 1:10P		

DECEMBER 2017

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
31 ☉					1 ☉	2 ☉
8:50A - 1:50P					9:35A - 2:35P	10:25A - 3:25P
3 ☉ FULL	4 ☉	5 ☉	6 ☉	7 ☉	8 ☉	9 ☉
10:55A - 3:55P	11:50A - 4:50P	12:45P - 5:45P	1:40P - 6:40P	2:35P - 7:35P	3:25P - 8:25P	3:50A - 8:50A
☉ BEST	☉ GOOD	☉ FAIR	☉ POOR			

Fish, game and all wildlife move in search of food in cycles relative to the moon's location to the earth. The time spans listed above are the prime times to start each day at and along each time zone meridian of longitude 75 degrees (Eastern) 90 degrees (Central) 105 degrees (Mountain) and 120 degrees (Pacific) during Standard time and Daylight Saving during the time it is in effect. To determine the feeding cycle time for best fishing and hunting in the area you plan to fish or hunt advance the sum of 4 minutes for each degree west and back up 4 minutes for each degree east. The next prime feeding cycle (not listed on the calendar) will be approximately twelve and one-half hours later. There are minor periods that occur between the prime or major periods. The minor periods are typically fair periods and last only about half as long as the prime periods.

Feeding Times by Dan Barnett have been proven by analysis of 124 – 3 day bass tournaments between 1967 through 1983 to be reliable and accurate in predicting wildlife feeding activity. The Feeding Times are not a cure-all. Weather and other environmental conditions affect wildlife feeding activity. Annual vest pocket books, which show all the major and minor periods, can be ordered by sending a check or money order for \$19.95 per book. For S&H, please add \$4.95 to an order of 1 to 4 books. Make check or money order payable to: Feeding Times. Send to: Feeding Times, P.O. Box 2240, Covington, GA 30015. After Oct. 1, please indicate book year. For questions or comments, you can call 404-373-7151.

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