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Spring Time Sight Casting Excitement

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We Still Call It Spring

As Texans we've been known to make up some rules as we go along. For example, March, the third month of the year is considered a spring month, even though the Spring Equinox doesn't arrive until 4:58 Central Time on March 20.

That means of the 31 days in this month, 20 of them are officially classified as winter days while 11 are classified as a part of spring. However, ask most native born, or long time residents of the Lone Star State if March is a winter or spring month, the majority will say that spring begins in Texas on the first day of March.

Now there are some that want to get more specific and describe the third month of the year as really a month in transition. That is certainly correct and there is a visual as well as responsive changes occurring with the aquatic, terrestrial and avian critters we observe.

Temperatures can be chilly at the outset of the month and it can get fairly warm toward month's end. Just to stir things up we can't forget about the wind. Oh, how the spring winds can really mess with the best laid plans.

There are days on the water when it doesn't seem to be enough drift socks to help slow a drift on coastal bays. Those same winds raise inquires about the availability of stronger trolling motors to help hold a position, or maneuver when dealing with howling fickle blustery weather.

Hunters also have to contend with the change from winter to officially spring. Those that hunt predators or turkey know how the wind can literally redirect their calls into the next county or beyond. With a chuckle it makes one wonder if the keen hearing of turkey, coyotes and other critters is ever stimulated so far away that they start seeking out the enticing sound source.

There is a progression across this state's diverse landscapes. It may start with grasses greening up and bushes starting to unfold new leaves, but is highlighted with a colorful display that last well into April.

Texas wildflowers bloom is spectacular and this could be one of those exceptional years to take a road trip or two to see the sights. If the first signs of Indian paint brushes, bluebonnets, Indian blankets and other flowers are missed, just adjust sights a little to the north and you'll certainly catch up with the beginning there.

Spring is a time of procreation for many aquatic as well as terrestrial species. March is known for big bass and even slab size crappie on inland lakes as spawning activity takes up a good portion of this month.

"On the coast" speckled trout capture the headlines but sheepshead and black drum will also provide memorable pulls. The biggest variable for anglers on inland lakes or along the coast will be finding days with light winds.

The best part of this month and time of year is that with each passing day things get better. It is once again a time of mind-over-matter and gradual improvement, no matter how slight a change occurs it is taken as a positive sign for the coming year.

Finally are the opportunities that await. It may be with family or friends. It could be with someone not seen for a long time, or with youngsters filled with an even greater of anticipation of what awaits. It is how most all of us began.

So enjoy this time in Texas we call spring — even if we perennially "hijack" a few days from winter.

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

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Tyler Man Named to Texas Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame

The Texas Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame committee announced Alan Haynes of Tyler, the former C.E.O and President of The Sportster Inc. retail sporting goods chain and lifelong sportsman, will be inducted into the hall of fame in 2019.

Haynes, who one nominee dubbed “the gold standard for judging a sportsman and conservationist,” began his career in the 1970’s founding The Sportster Inc. in Tyler – a fishing tackle and outdoor sports store that “had it all.” Noted in several nomination letters, Haynes’ forward-thinking and innovation as a fishing tackle retailer brought new products to Texas anglers along with educational opportunities to learn from world-renowned professional anglers and experts.

Professionally, Haynes served as chair of the Nation’s Best Sports Buying Groups fishing tackle buying committee representing 650 participating stores nationwide, was an advisory board member for Fishing Tackle Retailer Magazine and was a recipient of the National Leadership Award as Independent Sporting Goods Retailer of the Year by the Sporting Goods Dealer Magazine.

Outside of the store, Haynes also devoted a significant amount of time and effort serving with many non-profit and government organizations that promote conservation initiatives and share a common goal of building the next generation of youth into fisherman and hunters.

Haynes was a co-founder of the Tyler Woods and Waters Club, now called the East Texas Woods and Waters Foundation, a locally supported organization that helps fund and promote outdoors-related activities throughout East Texas. In addition to helping to develop the Tyler Nature Center, the foundation has opened public fishing access in the Neches River, provides youth and family fishing access to Tyler-area urban fishing lakes, and recently installed a handicapped accessible fishing pier at Tyler’s Faulkner Park.

Haynes also served as a leader on several boards and committees with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, including the TPWD Freshwater Fishing Advisory Committee, the planning committee for the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens and as the first

chairman of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation Kid Fish Program.

The Texas Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame is housed at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens and its mission is to “recognize and honor those who have made a lasting contribution to freshwater fishing in Texas, and to foster a sense of appreciation, awareness and participation in the sport of fishing.” Since 1997, the Hall of Fame has inducted 34 individuals and organizations.

Haynes will be officially inducted into the TFF Hall of Fame at the 2019 Toyota Bassmaster Texas Fest benefiting TPWD at Lake Fork May 2-6, 2019. 🌟🌟

RMEF Marks Decade of Record Membership Growth

Chalk it up as the 10th year in a row the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation registered record membership. As of December 31, 2018, RMEF had 234,982 members, marking a 3.2 percent membership increase from 2017.

“We greatly appreciate our members and volunteers who support our mission of ensuring the future of elk, other wildlife,

Cover Art

Spring is a much-anticipated time along the Texas coast. Warming water temperatures has the entire food chain active with a variety of crustaceans in our bays for gamefish to feed.

Popular South Texas based artist Larry Haines, “Reds Buffet” depicts a pod of redfish feasting on small crabs and shrimp over a bay bottom comprised of sand, grass and scattered shell. While March is a time many anglers will focus on speckled trout, redfish are also a willing taker of a variety of offerings that imitate the available forage.

For more information on “Reds Buffet” and other fine works of art or commissions by Larry Haines, visit www.spiartist.com, or call (956) 433-7034. 🌟🌟



“Reds Buffet”

their habitat and our hunting heritage,” said Kyle Weaver, RMEF president and CEO. “This continued growth is an indicator of the valuable conservation work we have done and momentum for the work to be accomplished. As we have always done, we will continue to open and improve access to our public lands and enhance wildlife habitat through tangible on-the-ground projects. We will also continue to advocate and expand hunting participation.”

2018 RMEF

Highlights include:

- * Opened/improved public access to 26,556 acres in five states
- * Enhanced 134,699 acres of wildlife habitat in 27 states
- * Permanently protected 13,431 acres of habitat across eight states
- * Provided funding/volunteer manpower to assist with West Virginia elk restoration
- * Surpassed 12,000 volunteers who raised a record single-year amount of revenue to advance RMEF’s conservation mission
- * Provided \$715,671 in funding to benefit ongoing elk research & studies

* Advocated Congress and state legislatures for many issues including forest management reform, Land and Water Conservation Fund reauthorization, Great Lakes states wolf delisting, Yellowstone area grizzly delisting, wildfire funding & more

* Participated in victorious court cases benefitting forest management & wildlife habitat management

* Reached 84.5 million people via its social media platforms, had 822,634 followers & more than 12.8 million video views. Totaled more than 5 million combined page views on rmeff.org and elknetwork.com

Since 1984, RMEF and its partners completed more than 11,800 conservation and hunting heritage outreach projects with a combined value of more than \$1.1 billion. These projects protected or enhanced 7.4 million acres of habitat and opened or improved public access to 1.2 million acres. **T★J**

14.57 Pound Bass Caught at Marine Creek Lake in Fort Worth

Angler Zach Sybert of Bedford caught

the first Legacy Class largemouth bass of the 2019 Toyota ShareLunker season out of Marine Creek Lake in Fort Worth January 26. The 14.57 pound, 27 inch largemouth bass is the second 13 pound or larger Toyota ShareLunker to have been caught from the lake in the last two years and outweighs the previous water body record set in 2018 by almost two pounds.

ShareLunker 577, as the 14.57 pound bass is now known, was transported to the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens where hatchery staff will monitor and care for her in preparation for spawning. Genetic confirmation of ShareLunker 577 being the second offspring was received February 1.

In February 2017, Marine Creek Lake produced the first ever confirmed Toyota ShareLunker offspring entered in the program, ShareLunker 566, a 13.07 lb bass caught by angler Ryder Wicker. Two years later, TPWD biologists confirmed that ShareLunker 577, a 14.57 pound bass caught at Marine Creek Lake Jan. 26, is a full sibling to the 2017 Marine Creek Lake fish, both stocked from the same group of selectively bred largemouth bass 13 years ago.

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“Having two confirmed ShareLunker offspring caught in Marine Creek Lake is very satisfying, because before we stocked it with ShareLunker fingerlings it didn’t have a history of producing trophy-sized bass,” said Tom Hungerford, TPWD Inland Fisheries Assistant Biologist from the Dallas-Fort Worth District Office. “But I thought if the genetics really play a role in producing double digit bass then a lake like that will truly show the potential – and it has.”

Genetic testing conducted by TPWD fisheries biologists using a clip from ShareLunker 577’s fin found she is not only the full sister to ShareLunker 566, the 13.07 pound bass caught by angler Ryder Wicker from Marine Creek Lake in February 2017, she’s also the daughter of ShareLunker 410, a 14.48 pound bass caught by angler Edward Reid from Lake Conroe in March 2006.

“In 2006 and 2008 we stocked thousands of fingerlings produced by spawning ShareLunker 410 and other 13 pound and larger bass as part of a research project to evaluate the growth of ShareLunker offspring in public reservoirs,” Hungerford said. “With the two confirmed ShareLunker offspring caught and entered in the program from Marine Creek Lake – along with other double-digit bass other anglers have caught there recently – it’s clear those fingerlings have absolutely survived and thrived. And the potential for even larger bass continues because we keep seeing bigger and bigger fish being caught in that lake every year.”

ShareLunker 577 is also the third confirmed ShareLunker offspring ever entered in the program, a list that also includes full sibling ShareLunker 566 and ShareLunker 567, a 13.06 pound bass caught by angler Larry Mosby from Lake Naconiche in February 2017.

“I will say that ShareLunker 577 was caught on the same kind of bait as ShareLunker 566 was caught on 2017,” Hungerford added. “So if you want to increase your odds of catching a ShareLunker at Marine Creek Lake, I wouldn’t stop throwing a jerk bait out there.”

ShareLunker 577 is the first 13 pound or larger “Legacy Class” largemouth bass submitted to the Toyota ShareLunker program so far this season, but anglers

have until March 31 to submit their catch for TPWD to collect as brood stock for spawning and to collect great prizes in return. “Legacy Class” ShareLunker catches can be reported 24 hours a day, seven days a week during the season, by calling (903) 681-0550.

All other bass eight pounds and larger can also be entered in the program for recognition and prizes through the Toyota ShareLunker app – available for free download from the Apple App Store and Google Play or on the Toyota ShareLunker website, texassharelunker.com.

The Toyota ShareLunker Program is made possible in part by the generous sponsorship of Toyota.

For updates on the Toyota ShareLunker program visit texassharelunker.com. 🌟🌟

Flooding, Cold Weather Curbing Giant Salvinia Growth in East Texas

In 2017, Caddo Lake was covered by more than 6,000 acres of invasive giant salvinia that was reproducing rapidly due to a warm winter and unusually long growing season. Access for anglers, boaters and waterfowl hunters was blocked on much of the lake, and hired contractors struggled to keep up with the demand for herbicide treatments due to the sheer size of the growing giant salvinia mats.

Two years later, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department biologists report giant salvinia at Caddo Lake has been reduced to just over 1,500 acres.

“We can thank Mother Nature for the cold snap and subsequent flooding that caused a massive decrease in giant salvinia on Caddo Lake and at our other infested East Texas lakes,” said John Findeisen, Brookeland Aquatic Habitat Enhancement Team Lead. “A hard freeze in January 2018 made a huge dent in the giant salvinia, freezing much of the plant material and loosening the dense mats. This was followed by high water inflows a month later, pushing the remaining giant salvinia to the open lake where it was destroyed by wind and waves and washed up on shore.”

Findeisen said the outlook for the 2019 treatment season looks good with much of the giant salvinia flushed out from the

recent flooding. For the remaining giant salvinia present in East Texas reservoirs, Findeisen said herbicide applications will do the majority of the heavy lifting to keep it under control.

Since September 2017, TPWD and its contractors have treated 18,390 acres of giant salvinia statewide.

“Additionally, we are utilizing giant salvinia weevils in areas where flooded timber is too thick to navigate a spray boat or areas where the giant salvinia is mixed with beneficial vegetation that we want to preserve,” Findeisen said.

Since September 2017, TPWD and the Caddo Biocontrol Alliance have released a total of 394,616 giant salvinia weevils to help control the invasive plant in East Texas lakes.

Although they are a piece of the overall control effort, Findeisen said one of the problems with relying heavily on weevils is they cannot tolerate as cold of temperatures as the giant salvinia, and weevil numbers decreased substantially after the January 2018 cold snap.

Boaters have a critical role to play to prevent giant salvinia from spreading to any new lakes. Boaters recreating on one of the 22 lakes infested with giant salvinia should be particularly vigilant. Texas lakes currently infested with giant salvinia include Caddo Lake, Toledo Bend Reservoir, Sam Rayburn Reservoir, Lake Texana, B.A. Steinhagen Lake, Lake Murvaul, Lake Palestine, Timpson Reservoir, Lake Naconiche, Lake Fork, Lake Nacogdoches, Lake Athens and Martin Creek Reservoir.

In Texas, transporting prohibited invasive species is punishable by a fine of up to \$500 per violation. Boaters are required to drain all water from their boat and onboard receptacles before leaving or approaching a body of fresh water in order to prevent the transfer of aquatic invasive species like giant salvinia. Other species of concern in Texas include zebra mussels, crested floating heart, water hyacinth, yellow floating heart, hydrilla and American lotus.

Because early detection is an important part of reducing or eliminating the presence of giant salvinia, TPWD encourages boaters to report new sightings to (409) 384-9965, aquaticinvasives@tpwd.texas.gov, or via the online report form. 🌟🌟

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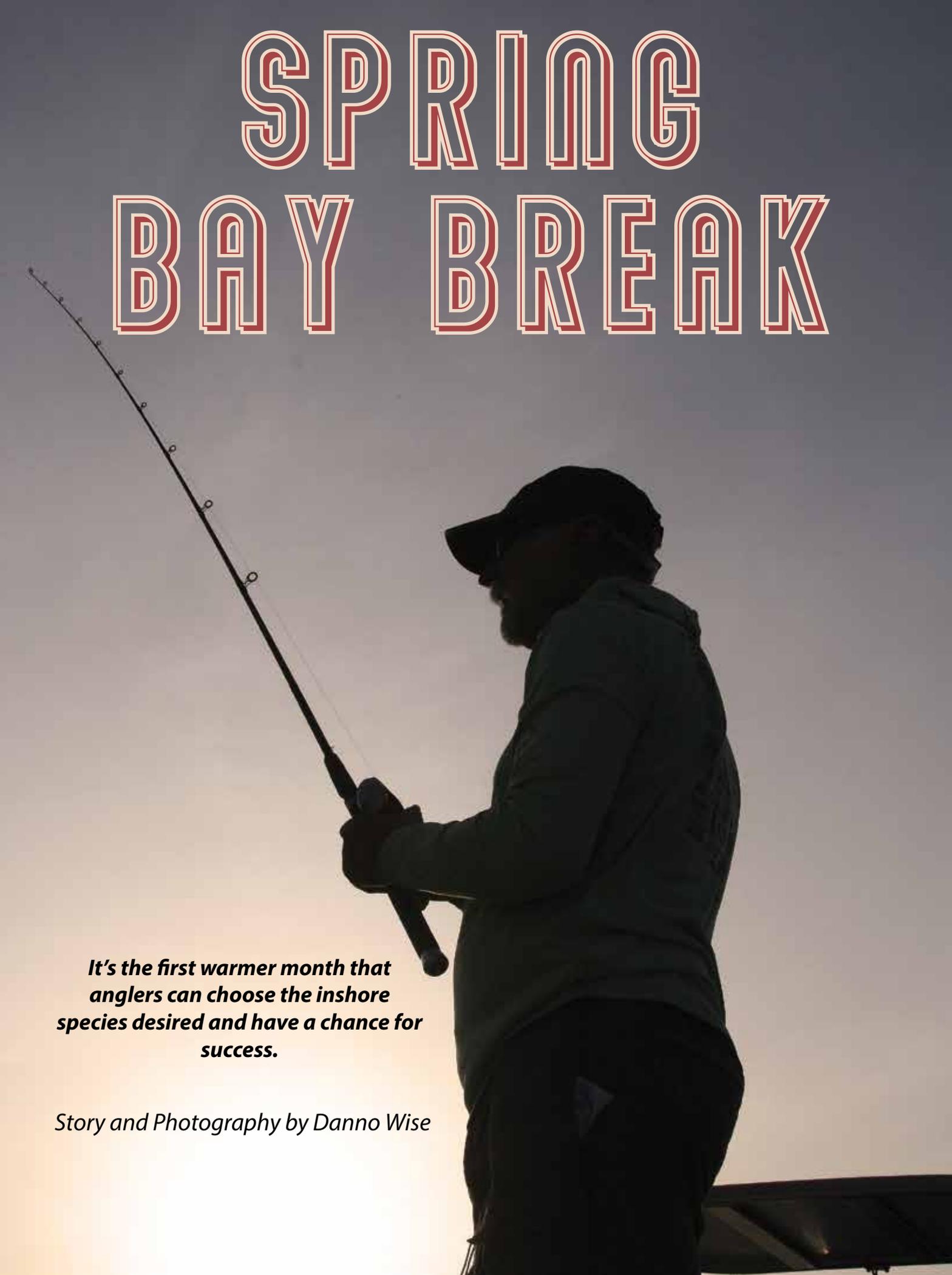
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SPRING BAY BREAK

A silhouette of a fisherman wearing a cap and jacket, holding a fishing rod, set against a bright, hazy sky at sunset or sunrise. The fisherman is positioned on the right side of the frame, facing left. The fishing rod extends from the bottom left towards the top left. The background is a gradient of light colors, suggesting a bright sun low on the horizon.

It's the first warmer month that anglers can choose the inshore species desired and have a chance for success.

Story and Photography by Danno Wise

March is a much anticipated month along the Texas Coast. Winter weather has finally broke. Although the water is still cool, at least by “warm month” standards”, but it is warmer than it has been since autumn and is warming more each day.

Of course, Texas beaches become covered with college students during their annual Spring Break ritual. However, college kids aren’t the only ones feeling more frisky as a result of more sunshine and warmer weather. A wide variety of saltwater species will be very active in March, including redfish, speckled trout, black drum, flounder, sheepshead and more.

During February, most fishermen who were on the water were seeking sow specks. To be sure, there are still plenty of trophy trout possibilities during March. Depending on weather and the bay system

fished, anglers may find speckled trout spawning are in either pre- or post-spawn patterns. Regardless of where they may be in the spawning cycle, there will certainly be plenty of top-end trout found in the shallows and along the shorelines in Texas bays this month.

Top water and slow-sinking plugs are still the “go-to” baits for trophy trout. However, as the bays fill with newly hatched baitfish, smaller topwater lures (Jr size) often become more effective. At times, however, rough and/or muddy water conditions – which aren’t un-



Dagan Wise-Herring with a solid keeper speck.



Black drum will be in high demand in March. Here Cindy Bonilla shows off a nice specimen.

common with strong March winds — still necessitate throwing full-size versions.

Soft-plastics can also tempt trophy trout. Anglers should adjust the baits they throw based on water conditions. Darker, rougher water calls from dark or bright colored paddletail baits, while clearer, calmer water allows for natural and subdued colors of straight tail models to be effective.

Anglers should also modify their approach based on conditions. On the rare flat-calm March day, poling a skiff is acceptable. Moderate winds allow for effective drift fishing. However, under the typical windy March conditions the odds favor wade fishermen as wading allows for a more thorough, con-

trolled coverage of water.

Good numbers of solid keeper specks are also possible during March. In fact, the third month is one of the best times of year to not just catch a full box of fish, but a full box of ‘solid’ specks – fish in the 18 to 24 inch range. More often than not, these fish will be found a little deeper than the trophy trout, but not as deep as schooling winter trout. Instead, these fish will be found in three to six feet of water on deeper grass flats, around reefs, over humps, and along ledges and channel edges. Soft-plastics and live shrimp are the two best options for collecting numbers of fish in March. Popping cork with either live or D.O.A. Shrimp dangled beneath are an almost sure to produce impressive stringers.

The longer days, warmer air, warming water and bright sunshine will also be getting redfish more active in March. By spring break, redfish will be straying further away from deep water channels and will be starting to cover up the shallow flats. Additionally, plenty of reds will also be found stacked in front of drains and schooling along shorelines. In fact, so many fishermen are focused on trout during March, redfish go almost completely unnoticed despite the fact they are found in shallow water in every Texas bay system this month.

Regardless of where they are found,

early spring reds will often succumb to topwater plugs. As water continues to warm, fish will become more aggressive and will travel greater distances to attack a bait, making weedless spoons ideal for “power fishing” the flats and covering wide swaths of water quickly. Roaming redfish can also be targeted along the guts that parallel shorelines by dangling cut bait, live shrimp or pinfish on bottom rigs.

In recent years, the redfish’s often overlooked cousin the black drum has been gaining in popularity. And, March is the black drum’s time to shine.

Drum will be running in March. As a result, large schools of black drum will be found not just around the jetties, but also the channels that crisscross various Texas bays. Limits are often easy. In fact, catching tremendous numbers of black drum is such an expected possibility in March that many anglers often cull their catch so they end up with the “perfect box.”

Live or dead shrimp are pretty much the standard fare for targeting black drum. However, soft-plastics, particularly grubs and small paddletail models, are very effective for drum, as are artificial shrimp. Anglers can up the odds of catching drum on artificials by tipping soft-plastic



Mark Nichols with a solid speck taken on a D.O.A. Airhead soft-plastic buzzed across the water’s surface.

jigs with scent strips or bits of dead shrimp. More often than not, it’s pretty easy to fill a box with “puppy drum” during March.

There are also plenty of over-size fish caught from these channels this time of year. Although oversize drum don’t eat as well and smaller, slot-size fish (and retention is restricted to one fish over 52 inches per fisherman), they can be a fun fight. In many instances, a giant black drum is the largest fish caught by anglers in Texas bays. During the run, fish up to 40 pounds are not uncommon, basically accounting for inshore “big game” fishing.

Spring flounder fishing is also heating up in March. While most fishermen think of flounder as a “fall” fish, their spring flounder run rivals that of autumn. April is typically the peak of the spring run,

which consists of flounder making their way back into Texas bays following a winter spent spawning offshore. However, depending on the weather, the last week or two of March can see a substantial uptick in flounder fishing. During warmer years, flatfish will actually return to the bays as early as late February, so the potential for great flounder fishing always exists during March.

As flounder make their way back into the bays, they can be intercepted around points and along shorelines and channel edges. After that they will generally settle in front of drains and over soft-bottom flats. A variety of live baits, including mud minnows, shrimp and finger mullet, will catch plenty of flatties, as will soft-plastic jigs drug slowly across the bottom. Again, tipping jigs with scent strips or bits of shrimp will attract more flounder and encourage the fish to hold onto the jig longer, giving anglers a better opportunity to get a good hookset.

Sheepshead often have to take a back-seat to the aforementioned species, but not in March. During the third month, “jailbirds” will often be THE target



The spring flounder run will be underway in March as flatfish return to coastal bays.



Sheepshead will be a main attraction for Texas' coastal anglers in March.

species for Texas saltwater fishermen. Like black drum, sheepshead will be spawning in Gulf passes during March. So, good numbers of fish will be found on flats near Gulf passes as well as any piers or bridges in the vicinity. Mass concentrations of "convict fish" will be found along the jetties. Then again, this is no secret so when the sheepshead bite is on, most Texas jetty systems will be fairly crowded with fishermen targeting them. Anglers working the rocks can fish most days in March. However, boating anglers should exercise caution, as high winds often result in rough seas along the rocks this time of year.

Live shrimp are hands down the best bait for targeting sheepshead, although fiddler crabs and sea lice are also effective. Some artificials, such as the D.O.A. Tiny Terroreyz, can also tempt sheepsies. This hard fighting fish has a reputation for being hard to clean, but the results are excellent fillets and March usually represents the best time to catch them in large numbers. A five fish limit of sheepshead accounts for a substantial amount of meat. So, without a doubt, it is well worth spending some time around the jetties and other structures near Gulf passes during March in order to take a box of sheepsies.

Of course, with so many species being active this month, it is also an awesome time to piece together the proverbial "mixed bag". It is very common when fishing around mid-bay structure such as reefs and humps to tangle with a variety of species in March. A Texas Slam (redfish, speckled trout, flounder) is very possible on any given day in March and catching

up to half dozen species in a single session isn't out of question. Anglers free-lining live shrimp or using popping cork with live or D.O.A. Shrimp are most likely to catch greatest variety, although soft-plastics can also account for a number of different species during early spring.

Regardless of what

species is targeted in March – be it one or all – every angler should take advantage of the break from winter weather and enjoy some early spring fishing along the Texas coast. More pleasant weather and a variety of active fish species makes March a welcome sight after a long, cold winter. And, March is truly the first time in quite a few months that anglers can literally choose which inshore species they want to target and have better-than-average odds of landing a good amount of those fish. **T★J**



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Fun Shooting!

Most of the time when I go shooting, I'm doing it to test a gun or some new ammunition. Many other times I'm making sure a repaired gun is working correctly, working up custom loads, or teaching someone how to shoot their new gun. In other words, it's not very often that I get to go and have fun shooting.

For the last five years I have been lucky enough to be invited to the annual Motoschuetzen Ride & Shoot. This is where a dozen writers and editors of outdoor magazines get to tryout the newest guns and products from the best gun related manufacturers like Taurus, CZ, Remington, MTM CaseGuard, MG Arms, and Inland Mfg. We also get to ride motorcycles on some of the best roads in the United States. Last year's event took place at what is called the Tail of the Dragon that is just outside of Maggie Valley, Tennessee.

CZ showed up with several of their new upgraded side by side and over-under shotguns. We had reserved a small private area of a local shooting range. They had handgun and rifle shooting ranges from 25 to 200 yards plus our own personal trap stand for shooting shotguns. Now none of us were very serious and just decided to have fun.

The first gun I tried was the Taurus Judge in 45/410 for shooting close trap clays. I even managed to hit two out of the 10 I tried. Then I grabbed one of the

new CZ 410 bore side by side shotguns and hit the next eight out of 10 clays that went in the air.

I even got to shoot one of the new short barreled Remington pistol gripped shotguns after figuring out you cannot use the sights, and not to aim. I just started shooting from the hip in what I call "spray and pray you hit something." These thing puts out such a big pattern that you really can't miss ultra close targets.

All of the writers were having a great time but we were missing too many clays. We decided to have three shooters for each clay target — one main shooter with two back up shooters. That way none of those sneaky little clay pigeons could get away. It made for a fun morning.

After riding the rest of the day on motorcycles, we got to go to one of the best motorcycle museums in the country.

We all got a behind the scenes tour of how they restore the old cars and motorcycles, as well as heard some great stories about one of a kind bikes.

The next morning, we were back at the range shooting handguns and rifles. Taurus, CZ, Rock River and Remington had all brought 1911 type handguns. The guns that impressed me the most were the Rock River Double Stack 9 mm and the new Remington 10 MM.

The 10 MM from Reming-



Eric Pool from Guns & Ammo magazine shooting a 6.5 Creedmoore rifle built by MG Arms.



Jeff Herzog with Kawasaki, Al Minniman with MTM Caseguard, and Vince Abraham from Taurus having fun shooting clays with a variety of shotguns.



Besides shooting and testing some of the finest firearms made, the author and friends got to ride motorcycles on some of the best roads in the United States. Last year's event took place at Tail of the Dragon located just outside of Maggie Valley, Tennessee.

ton had less recoil and pointed better than any 10 MM I have ever shot. I asked about the lack of recoil and was told that was from a lighter slide and different springs. I was shooting less than two inch off-hand groups at 15 yards with this gun.

I had brought two customized Taurus revolvers that I had done. One was a lightweight five shot 44 Mag and the other an Ultra-Light carry revolver in 38 special.

Two things you'll notice very quickly about these guns are that the light weight 44 kicks darn well and five shots are just not enough. After shooting 12 to 15 rounds with the semi-autos and pick up a

five shot revolver you're always click the trigger on a fired cylinder or two before realizing you're empty.

Other than that, these revolvers are easy to carry, light enough to have in a backpack or on your hip. Plus, they will stop any evil critter you happen to run across in the woods or on the street.

On the last day of shooting we tried out the long range rifles. CZ had brought a suppressed 308 caliber rifle. It is fun to see and hear the bullet hit the steel plate at 100 yards and not have your ears ringing from the blast.

Inland Mfg. had brought several of their M1 carbines and one M2. The M2 is a full auto version of the M1 carbine. When you shoot the M2 you got through a 10 round magazine in about two seconds of shooting. I couldn't afford to feed one of these fun guns for very long, it is nice to shoot when someone else is paying for the ammo.

Eric Poole was shooting one of the MG Arms Ultra-Light rifles in 6.5 Creedmoor. He was shooting a two inch spinner at 200 yards and after about 10 rounds of shooting he started to get sticky fired cases. He asked me why it was doing that and I responded that the barrel of the gun was very hot and needed to cool down. After a five minute wait he went back to shooting a five shot string without missing and no more extraction problems.

One other rifle I had fun with was the Hi-Point rifle in 380 ACP. I asked Charlie why a carbine in 380 ACP — it makes no sense. You can't really hunt game with it and it is too big for a carry gun.

He said simply, "how many 380 handguns are there in the world? Why not have a small light weight rifle to go with your handgun." If you think of it that way it makes perfect sense. The carbine worked perfect and shot two inch groups at 100 yards and sub one inch groups at 50 yards which is range the rifle should be used at.

The afternoon was spent riding on the Deals Gap Tail of the Dragon. This road is famous for having 318 corners in 11 miles and very few police in the area. The roads are well maintained and wide enough to allow two cars to pass each other safely. Even at some of the stupid speeds people ride at.

You would think being an outdoor writer would be the greatest job in the world. In many ways it is, but shooting

and testing the same type of guns over and over again can get pretty dull. How many different AR-15's can you fire or how many different 9mm pistols can you shoot and still find new and good things to say about them.

By adding the extra excitement of riding different motorcycles and seeing different types of museums goes a long way to making an ordinary trip a superb adventure. Also hanging out with the best writers and editors in the outdoor industry is great fun, I just hope they never find out how bad I spell. 🌟🌟



The author shooting a custom 44 Mag at steel targets.

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Big Bass Season, Part II

March is big bass time in Texas and last month I got started down the path to catching a big bass. And when I say big bass, I'm talking about the bass of a lifetime, a double-digit or larger fish. The opportunity to catch a fish of this size won't come along very many times for most of us so it is imperative to understand what you must do to capitalize when, and if, the opportunity does present itself.

A brief recap begins with fishing lakes that have big bass. Seems like a no brainer right? Check the records for the ShareLunker program on the TPWD website to see what lakes have produced big bass over the years. Fork will be at the top of the list of course, but there are a lot of other lakes that you might not be aware of as big bass factories.

Secondly, you must have your gear in A-1 shape. Frayed line, weak hooks, or improperly set drags will catch the smaller fish, but a big bass will expose your weak spots and leave you crying over an empty livewell!

And lastly, I mentioned the mental aspect. I cannot stress enough how important it is that you be ready for a big fish to take your lure. Once she does, everything you do will be magnified in importance. From the initial hookset to the actual landing of the fish, each move you make is a potential escape opportunity for that fish.

Set the hook with authority. Play the fish down, that is, keep your rod tip low so as to make it difficult for the fish to jump. Reel only when you have gained line with the rod. To do this you'll pull against the fish with a firm, smooth stroke of the rod, then reel the line as you direct the tip of the rod back in her direction.

Never reel against a fish pulling drag. That means if the fish is stripping line off your reel, just let her run. When she stops, begin pulling with the rod and reeling that line when you can.

As far as whether or not to use a net, there are two schools of thought. First, a net is quicker and easier to get a big fish on board. And if you know how to



Sometimes you will find the big bass are in deep water.

properly net a fish, and have experience doing so, that is probably the best way to approach the landing. But I have also had folks with less knowledge and experience knock a fish off my hook while trying to get it in the net.

Personally, I like to go hands on and lip my bass. But everyone has to make their own decision on this.

If you decide to use a net, be sure it is out and at the ready. When you catch a big bass you won't have time to fish around in the compartments of your boat in order to find a net.

Also, dip the net in the water as you are laying the fish so it is wet when you actually scoop her up. That helps protect the slime layer on her body. Don't set her on the boat deck or carpet, and handle her as little, and as gently as possible. Lastly, get her back in the water as soon as possible.

So you've chosen your lake, checked your gear, and set your mind to catching a big one this year. Now what?

Spend some time looking around the lake selected. Ask tackle shop owners, guides, marinas and anyone you can find where the big bass are usually caught. Big bass have a preference in where they want to be. Over time, a given area of most any lake will produce more big fish than other areas. It's a matter of getting as much intel as you can, and then checking the results

for yourself.

Once you have an idea of where the big fish live, go look with your own eyes. Find the grass beds, find the channels and where they swing in close to the bank. Find the timber, not just what you can see, but the timber below the water line. With a little luck and a lot of hard work, you can find all three of these things in one location. Big bass like heavy cover. The more the merrier.

Big bass also like to have an easy meal. They are much less likely to chase a meal for any real distance.

Have you ever noticed how those schooling bass in the summertime are almost always fish under 20 inches? Those little guys will run around all over the lake bashing on shad schools, eating tons of little shad, all in an effort to fill their bellies. A big bass would rather rush out of a heavy-cover ambush location and eat something more substantial. So find that heavy cover, preferably shallow, but near deep water. Give that bass everything it wants, and it will be there.

Of course, food plays a role in the equation as well. Fortunately, a bass will eat just about anything that will fit into its mouth. Looking at an area that includes all of the other elements a bass needs will also show the prospects for forage species. Whether crawfish, bream, shad or any other forage, you should be able

to replicate what you find with one of the myriad of lures available today.

Big Bait = Big Bass

Many anglers are of the opinion that a bigger bait will catch bigger fish. I am one of those, to a degree. I'm not likely to be throwing a 12 inch swimbait in the hopes that a 'biggun' will eat it, but I do believe in bigger baits on the whole.

The reason I am not a fan of the swim-baits is not because they don't work. They can, and will, catch big fish. I believe that a slower approach is more reliable day in, and day out. I'd rather drag a big, 12" worm on a Texas rig than throw a big moving bait that a big bass has to chase.

There are exceptions to this rule. Look at the records on trophy bass that have been caught and you'll see that most come on slower baits. And by the way, a moving bait can be a slow bait.

One of my favorites is a seven to nine inch plastic jerkbait. My biggest bass to date (12.25) came on a Sluggo in bubblegum pink. I'd just thrown it into a weed choked ditch. The ditch ran alongside a roadbed that was about four feet under the surface of the water. Trees had grown along the side of the road, and were now stumps lining the ditch, with the treetops laid over in a criss-cross pattern throughout.

By casting down the center of the ditch, I could twitch the bait through the cover and over the tops, stopping occasionally to let the bait sink a foot or



Low light is the best time for big fish.

two. By using a moving bait I was able to cover the water a little faster, and by using the Texas rigged jerkbait I was able to penetrate the thick cover where that big girl lived.

What made this even more incredible is on the previous cast I hooked one going 7.95. That's twenty pounds of bass on two consecutive casts. I'm by no means the world's greatest angler, but I was fishing an area that had everything big bass need and they were there.

Another big bass lure is the jig-and-pig. If you're not adept with a jig you should learn to fish one immediately. These baits produce big bass like no other.

Primarily resembling a crawdad, jigs can be fished in almost any depth, any cover and any time of year. Typically jigs will be between ¼ and one ounce, but many sizes and specialty heads exist. Adding a big plastic crawfish trailer will add bulk and dimension. Trimming the skirt to just past the hook bend will help with the hook-to-catch ratio.

Jigs are also slow-moving baits. That said, you don't have to crawl them along at a snail's pace. Make a cast, hop the jig with small movements of your rod tip and reel the slack. Or simply drag the jig back along the bottom. Both tactics will work on a given day.

Probably the most common way to fish a jig is to pitch it into tight cover. This is my favorite method and while you're fishing slowly, it isn't painfully slow.

Pitch the bait into a likely looking spot and when it settles on the bottom shake your rod tip two or three times. This will make the jig come alive with a pulsing motion that is attractive to bass. If you don't get a bite you can shake it again, or reel it in and make another pitch to another spot. Either way, when you finally decide to reel in the bait, be ready for a strike. I can't tell you how many times I've picked a jig up off the bottom and started reeling, only to have the bait get a vicious hit on the retrieve.

Light-

I'm also a believer in light as a factor in catching big bass. Or rather, lack of light. Overcast days, nighttime and days when you have a sky full of big puffy clouds are my favorite times to hunt big fish.

As a predator bass take advantage of low light to help them ambush prey. An overcast day will see them feed more of-



Depending upon a number of factors pre spawn fish are simply fish in transition. They are holding in deeper water just prior to moving up to the shallow nesting grounds.

ten. Nighttime is also a preferred feeding time through much of the year.

As for the big puffy clouds, they are most prevalent during the hottest summer months. They are called cumulus clouds and as they float across the sky, they'll intercept the sun's rays and trigger a brief feeding period, especially among big fish. I don't have any scientific evidence of this, but personal experience has proven it to my satisfaction.

Additionally, big bass will stay shallow in heavy cover, even during the hottest time of the year, especially if there is grass or pads present. The vegetation provides shade, which provides both cover and cooling.

Next time you're in a pad field on a really hot day, put your hand in the water. Reach down a foot or two below the surface where there are no pads, then dunk your hand into the middle of a bunch of pads. The water under the pads will be significantly cooler.

So you want a big bass? Put the odds in your favor by fishing where big fish live, in the type of habitat they prefer, with the right gear, in the right conditions, with the right baits, and have the right mindset. If you do all of this, your chances of getting lucky get a whole lot better. Remember, luck is preparation meeting opportunity.



SPRINGTIME

SIGHT CASTING

EXCITEMENT

Warming water temperatures and clear water provide opportunities to hookup with redfish.

*Story and Photography
by Robert Sloan*

Anglers fishing the Land Cut can either sight cast to fish holding in the grass flats along either edge of the channel, or they can move out to the drop-off.

“See that mangrove bush up there right off that point,” said Victor Randazzo. “Look just to the left and you’ll see three reds slowly moving through the flooded grass.”

He was on the polling platform on the stern of his flats boat. We were floating in about eight inches of gin clear water on Pringle Lake, located along Matagorda Island just south of the very popular Army Hole. He turned the boat slightly to the left to put the sun at my back, and then I could easily see the trio of reds.

I was rigged up with an ultra-light spinning reel spooled with 14-pound test braid connected to a six foot section of fluorocarbon leader connected to a 3-1/2-inch-long Yum Money Minnow in white with a chartreuse back. It was the perfect imitation of a finger mullet, a baitfish that reds dine on daily.

“Hit that little pocket of water about four feet to the left,” he instructed.

I flipped the bail open on the reel and made a sidearm cast. It hit the water’s surface and was immediately pounced on by one of the reds. It was a 24-inch slot fish that took off like a bat out of hell. That was a classic day of fishing. We had plenty of sunlight, clear water and enough reds to keep us in the action for several hours.

Sight casting to redfish is the cat’s meow when it comes to shallow water fishing along the Texas coast. From West Matagorda Bay on the middle Texas coast and on down to the Texas/Mexico border is where you’ll find miles upon miles of crystal-clear shallow flats and surf.

Last spring I was with a couple of friends. We headed out of Port O’Connor and parked the boat at Sunday Beach at what is known as the J-Hook. We made the short hike across Matagorda Island and found what we were looking for – a dead calm surf with clear, green water up to the white sand. To make things even better we caught limits of reds in the first gut. All came on copper or gold 1/8-ounce spoons. And it was all sight casting. The thing about reds in the surf is that they are typically big – on the upper end

of the slot, and they put up a great fight. It’s not at all unusual to find reds feeding in the surf like that. You can catch them on a wade or by easing along in a boat parallel to the first gut.

There aren’t that many guides along the Texas coast that offer specific sight casting trips for reds. One is Capt. Nathan Beabout. He runs a lot of his trips out of Seadrift. From there he can fish the Port O’Connor area, San Antonio Bay and on down to Rockport. He’ll also set up some trips to fish the Laguna Madre out of Port Mansfield in the spring.

“I get quite a few customers that want to specifically sight cast for reds in the backwater lakes like Pringle, Contee and on down south along Matagorda Island,” says Beabout, who has been running sight-casting trips for four years.

He runs a 25 1/2-foot Majek center console that’s rigged up with a six foot high tower that two anglers can fish off of. The boat is controlled via a remote controlled trolling motor.

“Sight casting to reds from the tower is a lot of fun,” he says. “The water where I fish is usually crystal clear. The reds are easy to see and catch. I mainly use Down South soft plastics in red/white or pumpkin seed. Usually I’ll rig them on ¼ ounce jig heads. Another good lure is a 1/8 ounce

weedless gold spoon. The flash from that spoon is more than most reds can resist.”

Another guide that runs sight-casting trips is Capt. Steve Ellis. He works out of Getaway Lodge in Port Mansfield.

“We have miles and miles of some of the clearest water on Earth,” says Ellis. “I’ve got towers on both ends of my boat. I’ll work them both with a trolling motor. It’s a good way to fish two anglers at one time. The many miles of shoreline north and south of the Mansfield harbor provide easy sight-casting for reds. I also fish the Land Cut. That’s a pretty good run but well worth the trip. At the Cut I’ll keep the boat in the channel, while my anglers fish the clear water flats on either side of this navigational channel dredged decades ago through this mud flat.

Just about any place worth fishing on the Laguna has lots of weeds. That’s why I’ll use a D.O.A. Swim Bait hook to make my soft plastics weedless. The D.O.A. 4-inch shad is good. So is the 5-1/2-inch jerk bait. Some of the better colors are red/white, gold rush and electric chicken for reds. I’ll also keep a good supply of gold or copper weedless spoons on board.”

Randazzo has been fishing the flats out of Port O’Connor for decades. His 17 foot Mitzi skiff is set up with a polling platform on the stern and has a trolling



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

The author casts for redfish along clear shallow shorelines of the Intracoastal Waterway as well as mangrove lined spoil islands.

motor up front.

"I use both fly casting and spinning tackle," he says. "About half the time I'll use an 18 foot graphite push pole to get up on the really shallow flats. But there are days when it's easier to use the trolling motor to fish places like a lagoon or in Lighthouse Cove and some of the backwater lakes off the oil channel cuts.

"About 90 percent of the time I'll be using soft plastics in bone, chartreuse or green. A 1/4-ounce jig head is best when I'm fishing in a strong wind and need the extra weight for distance. But if I'm fishing the flats with lots of grass I'll use a 1/8-ounce jig head, or weedless spoon."

Never underestimate the value of a topwater plug for catching clear water reds. One of the best is a Super Spook Jr. That's a lure that is 4 1/2 inches long and is deadly on reds. On days when you have a slight chop on the water you might want to go with the 5 inch Spook for more action.



In super clear water anglers may need to downsize to smaller sized baits to prevent spooking redfish.



Sight casting success for redfish can also be achieved anglers that wade fish shallow clear flats.

Another very good topwater lure is the Mirrolure She Pup. It's 3 1/2 inches long. It's a compact lure that's got lots of action. Good colors are gold/black/orange and chartreuse/gold/orange.

The Super Spook Jr. in blue/chrome, bone or pink/gold is absolute death on reds. One of my favorite areas to fish topwaters is the Intracoastal Waterway from Port O'Connor and on down past Seadrift. That's several miles of shoreline where I can sight cast to reds or look for tails. Most of the time I'll use a trolling motor. But there are days when the tide is higher than normal and best for polling.

The reds along the ICW range from about 18 to 30 inches in length. They will hit jigs, spoons and topwater lures all day long. But if you really want to have some fun go after these reds with a deer hair popper or Horbey spoon fly.

Tom Horbey has been a full time fly fishing guide in Port O'Connor for years. One of his favorite places to pole for reds is along the ICW.

"The ICW has miles of flats that don't get a lot of fishing pressure," says Horbey. "Most of the boats anchor and fish live or dead baits. But to consistently catch reds on the ICW I'll ease along on the pole looking for reds. If you can put a spoon fly on them they will usually climb all over it. They also like poppers in gold, silver and orange."

When fishing for clear water reds

don't forget that they can be wary of over-sized lures. In super clear water it's best to use a smaller soft plastic jig or spoon. A standard size spoon that weighs an ounce will often spook reds. That's why a 1/8-ounce gold or copper weedless spoon is a killer on reds. It's a lure that easy to work close to tailing or waking reds.

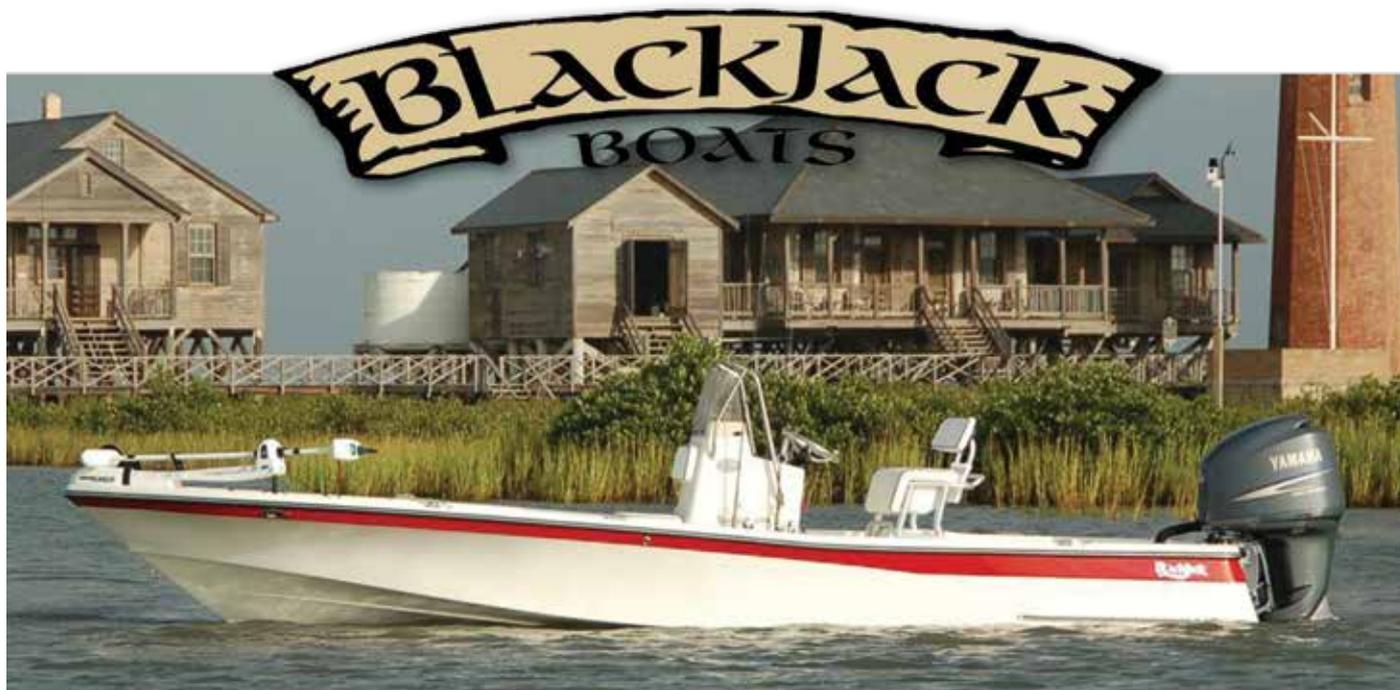
One of the best soft plastic jigs you can use for lure-shy reds is a Mirrolure Lil John. It's a twitch bait that's 3 3/4 inches long. This is a tube-shaped jig that's got all kinds of action when being twitched through the water. I like to use them with 1/8 ounce jig heads. The best colors are new penny, gold and watermelon/copper glitter.

If you have never hired a guide for a day of sight-casting you are missing out on some excellent action that most anglers haven't tapped into. But once you see how it's done, you'll be hooked. **T★J**



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Out of Seadrift anglers fishing with Captain Nathan Beabout enjoy sight casting to redfish along clear shallow shorelines.



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DIY Public Hunt Out West — Part II



The game animal to be pursued has been selected — so has the state, unit number and season. Now it is time to get serious with getting ready for the do-it-yourself hunt that has been dreamed about for months.

The physical conditioning, time at the range and other pre-hunt prep should continue. What now needs to be focused on is what will be put in the pack and taken with you. The decisions made could be the difference between success, failure, comfort or calamity.

Here are my thoughts on what is needed.

WATER

This is critical to sustaining life as well as offsetting effects of the strenuous nature of hunting out west. The first commandment is drink plenty of water to combat altitude sickness but also since you'll be hiking hard in a dry climate and sucking dry air, that will dry you out. You need to drink water to rehydrate and stay hydrated.

When I was young, I drank a lot of Cokes. Even then, I noticed, I'd take a six pack of Cokes up elk hunting and might only drink two of them. Remember, you're sweating and hiking so drink water. You're not sweating out Cokes or Gatorade. You're sweating out water.

If you need to drink that much water what do you do if you leave camp before daylight and hike up to the top of a mountain and hunt all day and don't get back until well after dark? If you're bow hunting during the warm weather early season you may drink close to a gallon of water each day. That's eight pounds you would be lugging around.

Instead carry a water filter. I use an Aquimira filtered water bottle or Frontier Straw. With the bottle you just scoop water out of a creek or high mountain lake. The water passes through a filtration system as you suck on the straw. The straw is in two pieces that breaks apart and will fit in your shirt pocket. You can drink right out of the river with it or it's more comfortable to dip a cup in the river and



Beautiful and inviting colorful country awaits hunters out west. Being prepared to deal with the terrain and altitude are just a couple of things that have to be dealt with.

drink out of it through the straw.

However, also carry a small bottle or two of water in case you don't cross a river for an hour or two. I remember once my buddy and I had shot two deer and had to drag them for a few hours. By the time we hit a road we were dead.

A ranger came up wanting to check our licenses. We asked him if he had any water and he said, "Yes, in my truck now let me see your license." We brushed him aside and dug every water bottle out of his truck and guzzled them down. We were about to die. I've never been that thirsty in my life.

CLOTHES

You're going to have to over pack because you never know what kind of weather you're going to encounter, especially on an early season archery or blackpowder hunt. I've encountered blistering hot T-shirt weather and have been caught in up to six to eight inches of snow on a hunt in September. On a June backpacking/flyfishing trip I nearly got

snowed in and barely made it out of the high country.

The morale to the story is, depending upon when you're going to be hunting or fishing you might need to pack for warm weather, cold, extreme cold, rain, snow or blizzards. Remember the old saying "Cotton kills" so wear moisture wicking under garments. I use a lot of XGO and Carhartt gear, and you can never go wrong with old fashion wool.

You'll definitely want some good quality hiking socks. I use Browning socks. You'll want socks that wick away moisture to help prevent blisters. I like mid-weight socks. Many people will tell you to carry an extra pair of socks and to change in the middle of the day. No doubt, it does refresh you. You'll feel as refreshed as if you took a shower.

Try moisture wicking underwear. They are a lot better than the normal cotton ones. For all of the lady hunters that wear a bra you may want to consider the same type of material for your

undergarments as well.

Boots — this is a big deal. If your feet hurt, you can't walk. You're toast. Never buy a new pair of boots and head to the mountains. Even if you buy the best boots on the market, if you haven't broken them in they'll kill you.

Buy a good pair of boots and they'll be a lot more comfortable plus, they'll last twice as long. I used to buy cheap boots and they'd fall apart in a hot second. I hunt and backpack a lot so even a decent pair of boots may wear out for me in a couple of years. Buy boots that are as light as possible or they'll tire you out.

For summer and September hunts, and actually on up to when the deep snow hit, I wear hiking boots. I have three or four different models of Irish Setter hiking boots. For some super light-weight summer boots check out their Vapr Trek boots. I like the canvas sided ones for up to the end of September and then I switch to the Drifter boots as it gets colder.

When the deep snow hits, you'll want some high-top durable leather boots like their Elk Hunters. Also wear gaiters or you'll step in drifts and the snow will get in the top of your boots — the curse of all curses. Gaiters will also keep the bottom of your pants dry.

Hats — I always wear a cap or hat and usually it's a cap. If it starts snowing or raining, I pull the hood over my cap. The bill will protect my face so the rain doesn't plaster my glasses.

Coats — depending upon how cold it is determines how thick my jacket will be. Usually due to all of my layering I don't wear a huge coat. Never buy a coat unless it has a hood. Otherwise snow/rain will go down your neck and that is miserable.

PACK

You'll want to carry a daypack. The problem is, everyone wants to over design them. They put on waist straps etc and when empty they weigh seven pounds plus with all of the gizmos they cost more. I want a lightweight pack or else you won't end up carrying it. The same if you carry too much gear. Keep it simple.

When you get in trouble you never have enough but if you don't need it, anything is too heavy. So, I go light.



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Weather can change rapidly in the high country. Do-it-yourself hunters need to be prepared to deal with whatever situation might arise.



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Several means of starting a fire could mean the difference between being warm or freezing in the high country.



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

A good compass and altimeter will help keep you oriented while a mini-weather station can alter to changing weather conditions beside temperature and wind speed.

You'll want fire-starting gear. Waterproof matches, fire starting material, a cheap Bic lighter, etc. You can break the lighter over you kindling. Carry water and snacks. A package of Lipton soup provides a hot meal if lost. My brother-in-law carries a canteen with the metal cup to heat water in for soup or you could carry a tin cup on a carry string.

I always have my Gore-Tex raincoat in my pack. Always! Don't trust your life on any of the yuppie wanna-be raincoats. Gore-Tex or rubber and rubber is too heavy.

I don't carry a lot of first aid gear but here's a few items you should have. Adventure Medical Kits makes great gear. I always carry their moleskin. I remember one backcountry elk hunt we had to shoot a horse that had rolled off the trail and got cut bad. After hunting super hard in extreme country all week, I couldn't ride out.

By the time I got to the trailhead after walking over 40 miles up and down mountains that week I even had one and a half inch blisters on top of my feet. I could not have walked another mile. Put on moleskin or a band-aid as soon as you feel any heat.

Someone in camp is going to get cut. Carry gauze, adhesive wraps for sprains, broke bones and bad cuts. Next time you're at the doctor have them

give you a prescription for Bactroban or (cheaper) Mupirocin. These are good antimicrobial ointments.

SLEEPING GEAR

In zero weather you'll want a sheepherders' tent with a wood stove. Bigger tents with cots are nice. You're off the ground and can store gear under them. You will also want a foam or blow up pad. Not only to pad you from the hard, cold ground but also to insulate the cold air if sleeping on a cot.

I use a lot of Alps Mountaineering tents, sleeping bags and sleeping pads. Everyone stretches the truth on their cold ratings so always buy with a lower temperature rating. Also get a fleece liner to put inside of your bag. You may put your bag inside of one of the big canvas sleeping bags or I've laid wool blankets over my bag.

COOKING GEAR

Decades ago I made me a wood camp box with my first bull riding winnings. A camp box will keep all of your cook gear together so you don't get to camp and discover you forgot a can opener, coffee pot or some other vital item.

It's fun to make a few Dutch oven



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Signs of a successful do-it-yourself hunt — coolers filled with boned out meat, a nice trophy, plus being back at the truck ready to head home.

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TRUCK SURVIVAL GEAR

I just wrote a whole article on this topic but at a minimum throw in a shovel, handy man jack, tow chain and tire chains. With the jack you can jack up your truck and put rocks and sticks in the mud hole or snow drift and get out. I've also run in badger holes and had to jack up my truck and fill it in with the shovel to get out.

MEALS

I don't have room to go into meals but one word to the wise. Have a canister of frozen chili for a night or two for when you get back to camp super late, are wet, dead tired and just want to eat then go to bed.

You may wonder why I've spent the majority of this article talking about the all of the pre-hunt preparation. I'll tell you why. If you aren't ready, then you are not even going to make it to the top of the mountain to shoot an elk or you might even die.

OPTICS

Hunting out West, your optics has to be impeccable or you're going to miss



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Once an animal is on the ground the work truly begins. It has to be field dressed, skinned, quartered and boned out, plus packed out either by man or beast.

seeing too much game. I got by in Texas as a kid hunting with and old fixed power 4x rifle scope. Upon moving out West I soon bought a 3-9x and then switched over to nothing less than 4.5-14x and prefer a 4-16x. Check out the binocs and scopes offered by a young and upcoming company named Riton Optics.

I'm not in the "shoot everything 10 miles off club" but due to the terrain and sometimes lack of cover and ridges you might not be able to slip closer than 300-400 yards. That's where the larger magnification helps.

As far as binoculars — in all of my "Glassing for Big Game" seminars for years I recommended an 8x42 but about 13 years ago I switched to carrying a 10x42. I decided I was missing way too much game. Yes, a 10x50 would be nice but they're too heavy to carry. And a 15-30x spotting scope can come in handy, but then again there is that weight consideration.

I'll provide more detailed information on glassing in an upcoming article.

PACKING OUT GAME

If you hunt where I hunt, you aren't going to be able to drive up to your game. You're going to have to bone it out and either backpack it out or pack it out on horses. You'll need a good backpack.

I use an old frame Kelty. I take off the canvas and put the meat in bags and strap it to the frame. You can use plastic bags but game bags are better because they don't hold in the heat.

To get your game ready to pack out you'll need some good knives. Get something with the design of the Knives of Alaska Pronghorn to skin your animal.

Keeping the meat clean is an issue. Carry a 6'x8' tarp to lay the pieces on as you bone it. Numerous times I've laid some sticks against a log to lay the meat on. This keeps it clean plus with a breeze blowing under the meat helps keep it cool.

There's more to this story but a lot of that refinement comes with experience. The only way to obtain that is to get out and do-it-yourself. 🌟🌟

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ShareLunker Leaders Hoping For A Little March Madness

The lunker bunkers at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center were still vacant two weeks into the New Year, but those closest to Toyota ShareLunker are hoping to see a full house by the time March Madness begins winding down later this month.

March is often associated with a tall wave of big bass madness. No single month has a history of producing more giant Texas bass. Since 1987, March has produced 247 of the 576 Toyota Legacy Lunkers weighing upwards of 13 pounds for Texas Parks and Wildlife's ShareLunker program.

The three-month spawning phase of ShareLunker got underway on January 1 and runs through March 31. Anglers who catch big Texas bass weighing 13 pounds or more during that time span are invited to loan the female fish to the Texas Parks

and Wildlife Department for genetics research and spawning efforts.

The ShareLunker program was built around the idea that trophy bass carry superior DNA that can be passed on to others by breeding them in a controlled environment. The theory makes good sense, but it hasn't worked out as well as scientists originally hoped it would when the program was launched in the late 1980s.

Still, ShareLunker has provided a great advertising platform for Texas bass fishing while serving as a catalyst in the promotion of catch and release and proper handling of large fish.

The program has seen numerous tweaks and name changes over the years, but it underwent a major overhaul in 2018 with a heavy emphasis on using program offspring to rebuild the state's Florida

bass hatchery program with ShareLunker descendants.

The restructuring also included the creation of multiple weight classes and a year-round participation framework aimed at boosting angler interest while providing fisheries scientists with valuable information about big bass distribution across the state and which lakes are producing them most frequently.

"Lunker Legacy" is the top tier of the four weight class categories in which anglers can now participate. Fish must weigh 13 pounds or more and be caught between January 1 - March 31 to qualify. It is the only category where fish are transported to the TFFC for spawning.

In exchange, each "Lunker Legacy" donar receives a free fiberglass replica of their catch, ShareLunker clothing and all sorts of other neat goodies. Additionally, Lunker Legacy anglers are entered in drawings for two, \$5,000 shopping sprees to Bass Pro Shops. The 2019 drawing will be held during the Bassmaster Toyota TexasFest event set for May 2-6 at Lake Fork.

The remaining ShareLunker participation categories are open for year-round entry. They include:

- * Lunker Class: For bass that measure at least 24 inches or weigh 8 to 9.99 pounds.

- * Lunker Elite Class: For bass weighing 10 to 12.99 pounds.

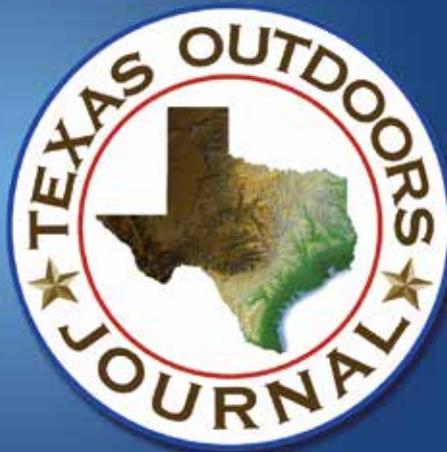
- * Lunker Legend: For bass weighing 13 or more pounds caught outside the January 1 - March 31 spawning window.

Entering is simple. Legacy Lunkers still require a phone call to ShareLunker headquarters (903-681-0550). Entry in the other three categories must be carried out online by creating a free account at texassharelunker.com using a Smartphone or home computer.

Electronic entries must be accompanied by two digital photos — one showing the fish on a measuring board and another showing it weighed on a digital scale.

There are plenty of incentives to spur participation. Every angler whose entry is accepted receives a category decal and

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fishing-related gear. All participants are entered in a drawing to win a Bass Pro Shops fishing package valued at \$5,000.

Gilbert Miller of Midlothian was the 2018 prize package winner drawn from nearly 500 program entries turned in from more than 80 lakes. Miller's Lunker Class ShareLunker weighed 9.4 pounds. It was caught from Lake Whitney last March.

Interestingly, five of the fish turned in last season were 13-pound-plus Lunker Legend entries. The biggest was a 14.0 pounder that set a new lake record for Lake Tawakoni. It was caught last by Warren Sprague of Wills Point.

Lake Joe Pool near Cedar Creek produced two of the giants, including a 13.72 pounder caught last May by Steve Warren of Burleson and a 13.79 pounder reeled during June by Gregg Huneycutt of Mansfield. Lakes Fork and Tradinghouse Creek produced the other two Legacy Lunkers, according to Brookshear.

The smaller weight categories accounted for most of the program's 486 entries. Brookshear said there were 368 Lunker Class entries and 107 Lunker Elite Class, including a 12.85 pounder from Marine Creek Reservoir, an 11.90 pound-

er from Palestine and Ray Hubbard whopper that also topped 12 pounds.

The program's new website contains a wealth of other information about the program including a fluid "Hottest Lakes" chart to illustrate which lakes have contributed the most entries.

Fork was the overall leader last year with 73 entries, followed by Conroe (41), Athens (28), Sam Rayburn (21) O.H. Ivie (17), Gilmer (14), Sheldon (13) Lady Bird Lake (13) LBJ (12) and Falcon (11).

To learn more about the program and detailed instructions on entering a fish, see texassharelunker.com. **T★J**



COURTESY PHOTO

Gregg Huneycutt of Burleson reeled in his 13.79 pounder at Lake Joe Pool last June. It was one of two "Lunker Legend" produced by the 6,500 acre lake near Dallas since last May.



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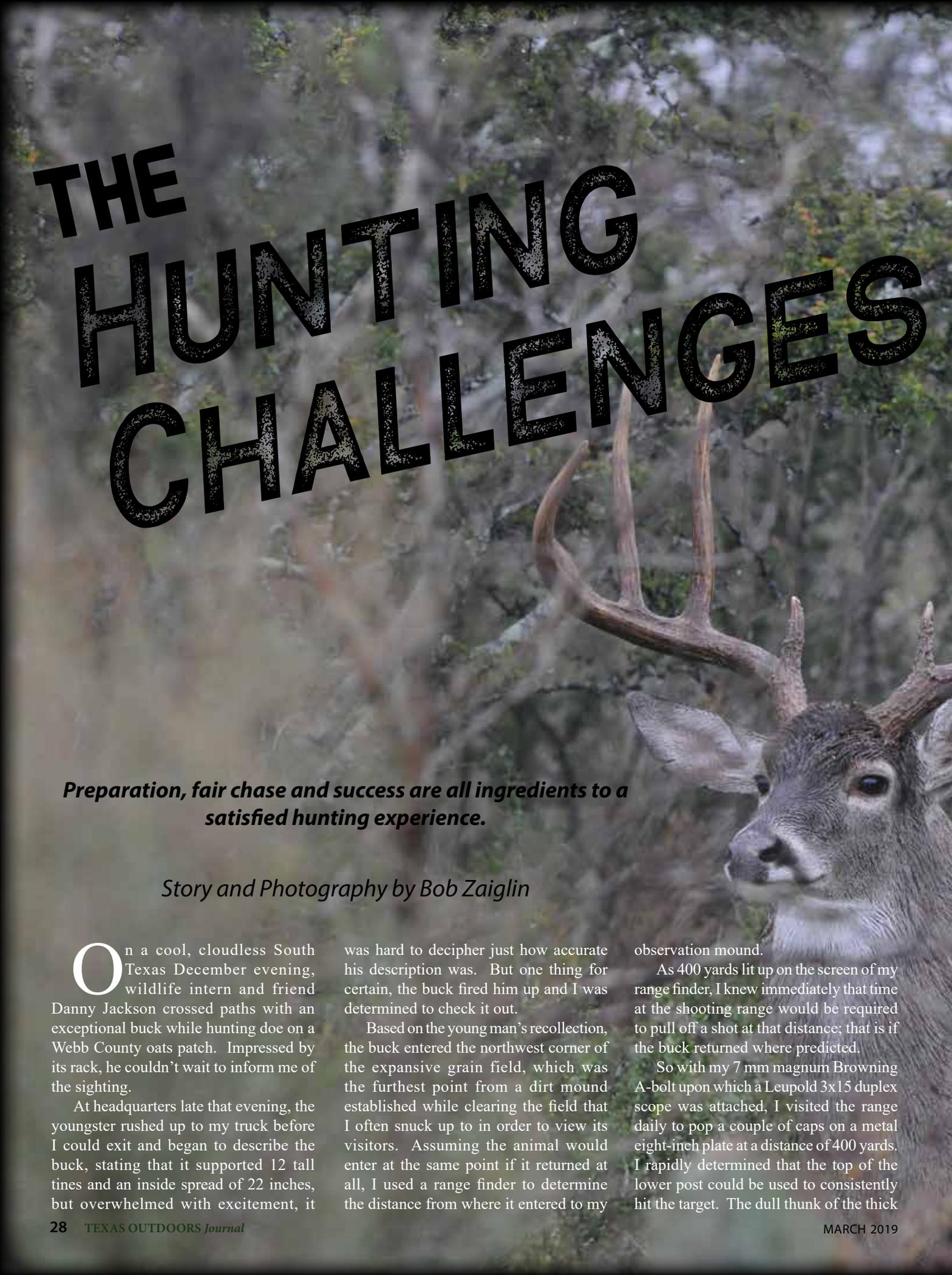


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THE HUNTING CHALLENGES



Preparation, fair chase and success are all ingredients to a satisfied hunting experience.

Story and Photography by Bob Zaiglin

On a cool, cloudless South Texas December evening, wildlife intern and friend Danny Jackson crossed paths with an exceptional buck while hunting doe on a Webb County oats patch. Impressed by its rack, he couldn't wait to inform me of the sighting.

At headquarters late that evening, the youngster rushed up to my truck before I could exit and began to describe the buck, stating that it supported 12 tall tines and an inside spread of 22 inches, but overwhelmed with excitement, it

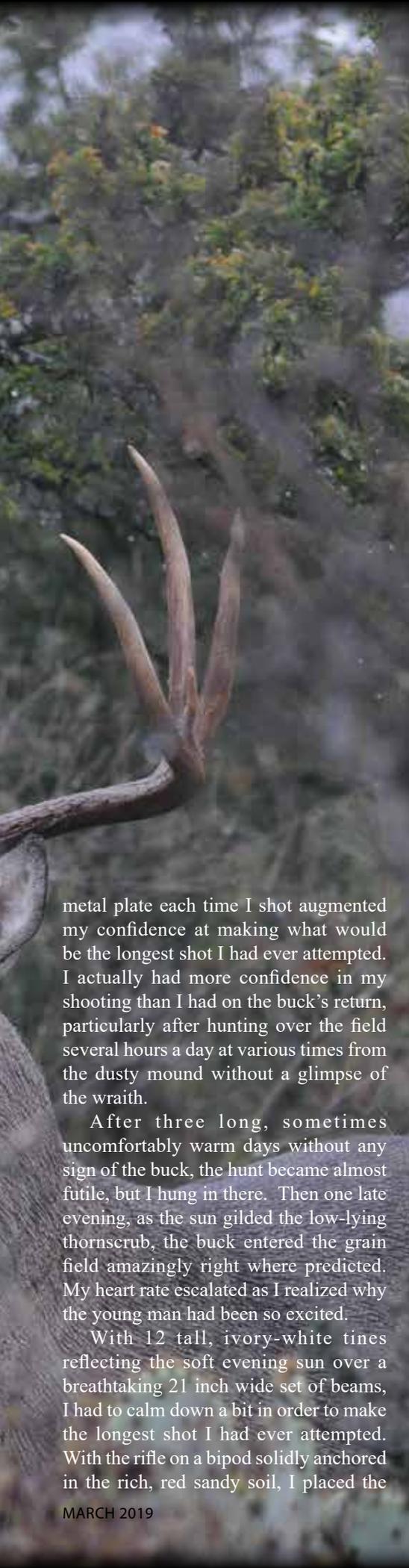
was hard to decipher just how accurate his description was. But one thing for certain, the buck fired him up and I was determined to check it out.

Based on the young man's recollection, the buck entered the northwest corner of the expansive grain field, which was the furthest point from a dirt mound established while clearing the field that I often snuck up to in order to view its visitors. Assuming the animal would enter at the same point if it returned at all, I used a range finder to determine the distance from where it entered to my

observation mound.

As 400 yards lit up on the screen of my range finder, I knew immediately that time at the shooting range would be required to pull off a shot at that distance; that is if the buck returned where predicted.

So with my 7 mm magnum Browning A-bolt upon which a Leupold 3x15 duplex scope was attached, I visited the range daily to pop a couple of caps on a metal eight-inch plate at a distance of 400 yards. I rapidly determined that the top of the lower post could be used to consistently hit the target. The dull thunk of the thick



Most often than not, a hunting experience is not measured by inches of antler, but with whom the event was shared.

metal plate each time I shot augmented my confidence at making what would be the longest shot I had ever attempted. I actually had more confidence in my shooting than I had on the buck's return, particularly after hunting over the field several hours a day at various times from the dusty mound without a glimpse of the wraith.

After three long, sometimes uncomfortably warm days without any sign of the buck, the hunt became almost futile, but I hung in there. Then one late evening, as the sun gilded the low-lying thornscrub, the buck entered the grain field amazingly right where predicted. My heart rate escalated as I realized why the young man had been so excited.

With 12 tall, ivory-white tines reflecting the soft evening sun over a breathtaking 21 inch wide set of beams, I had to calm down a bit in order to make the longest shot I had ever attempted. With the rifle on a bipod solidly anchored in the rich, red sandy soil, I placed the

top of the black bottom post of my scope slightly above the animal's shoulder into the lung area and gently squeezed the trigger. At the bark of the rifle, the animal collapsed onto the dusty soil before I even heard the solid 'whomp' of impact. Once again, I was overwhelmed by a rush of adrenalin proceeded by a grand sense of accomplishment, realizing that all the time preparing for this moment allowed me to realize an unforgettable experience.

What made this hunt even more unique was the fact that I had never laid eyes on the animal until the day I was privileged to shoot it. I wasn't even sure how big it was as I often got tips from the young men who worked for me, but seldom were those racks as big as they described. In reality, it was the anticipation of its potential size that coerced me to continually return to that particular field until I saw it with my own eyes. That expectancy is one of the most rewarding feelings in hunting, particularly when the animal being pursued is truly large.

The opportunity to enjoy the anticipation of what could show up, however, is rapidly being eclipsed by modern technology. Trail cameras have replaced hours of scouting, which is one of the most enjoyable aspects of the art of pursuit. Today's sportsmen can photographically catalog the bucks that inhabit their favorite piece of hunting turf, eliminating what I refer to as the surprise

factor that makes up an integral part of the hunting experience.

The employment of cameras is actually a Catch 22 situation because they can play an important role in deer management.

For example, conducting a deer population survey on 1,500 acres with a helicopter can cost as much as \$1,500.00 per hour. However, a substantial number of deer, particularly those older, reticent and normally larger-antlered bucks, go unobserved. In other words, only a sample of the population is accounted for, which is the reason the technique is referred to as a survey and not a census.

With three motion detection cameras (one camera per 500 acres) on that same 1,500 acres at \$400 per camera, it's entirely possible every deer on the property can be captured on film. Also, once paid for, the cameras can be utilized for years, reducing the cost of a survey even further.

Cameras can play a role in deer management, but they also erode away what I consider one of the paramount reasons we hunt in the first place, and that is the elevated adrenalin rush of seeing the unexpected. Scouting with cameras not only provides hunters an opportunity to determine just what caliber of bucks exist, but where they concentrate and more importantly when. It's unquestionably advantageous for a hunter, but not necessarily fair to the deer. Matter of fact, there has been some recent chatter



The ability to harvest an animal at any range as swiftly and humanely as possible takes practice.

about the use of cameras and the Boone and Crockett's credo relating to fair chase.

One of the Club's rules of fair chase related to hunting high country animals like sheep, goats, etc. is that a sportsman flying into a high mountain camp cannot hunt for 24 hours because of the possibility they may have spotted animals from the air. With a camera, a photo of a particular buck can be taken the same day the animal is harvested. What will

come of this is unknown, but the question remains whether or not cameras represent an unfair advantage to the hunter.

Justin Spring, Director of Big Game Records said, "When it comes to today's technology, particularly game cameras, if someone has to physically go retrieve the data card to download the images we are ok with that. However, if the camera has the ability to transmit images to a remote computer or other device it is conceivable

for someone to use that information to quickly pick up the trail and intercept the animal. That in our committee's opinion would not be considered fair chase."

Another controversial topic within the hunting world is the use of precision built rifles accurately shooting at extreme distances. I personally prefer to get as close to the animal as I possibly can, employing my experience to do so, which makes the hunt more challenging. However, there are times when a long shot represents the only opportunity of harvesting a particular animal.

Actually most of the deer I have been fortunate to take were shot at under 100 yards. Not only do I want to quickly and humanely harvest an animal I also enjoy the challenge of getting close, relishing the difficulty it represents. Certainly there are times when the distance cannot be physically breached, such as in a mountain hunting scenario, thus one must prepare by practicing to accomplish such shots. Today, however, one can acquire a firearm that can be dialed in to the exact distance with a scope, and the rest is history. Now, I enjoy long range shooting, and I am not condemning anyone that

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EXOTIC GAME HUNTS IN TEXAS



Hunters must rely on their knowledge of deer behavior to know where and more importantly when those big deer will show up.

does it on big game, but one must admit it makes it a little easier to capitalize on a particular animal.

A more important concern about hunting with fine-tuned long-range animals is the fact that mistakes are possible and the wrong animal can be shot. I remember a time back in the 80's when my close friend Dale Earnhardt along with several others in camp proudly showed me their new custom rifles that could shoot accurately up to ¾ of a mile. Their \$10 shells were equally impressive until one of the gentlemen made an extremely long shot a few days later, but on a younger buck than the one he was after. I never heard about or saw those long-range rifles again. I personally must see the buck I am after up close in order to get a better idea of rack size, something I can't do when the animal is 500-plus

yards away.

The fact is, modern technology will continue to make our lives easier, and that includes how we hunt. Even bows and arrows are technologically more sophisticated, but the hunter must be in that effective range in order to shoot with confidence.

The bottom line is that hunting should be fun and this includes all the preparation prior to the hunt itself. True, we all dream of capitalizing on that buck of a lifetime, but even when it occurs, the experience is often measured in how difficult it was to outwit the animal. If the buck is a surprise, the event becomes that much sweeter. After all, it's not the size of the animal taken that is remembered most, it's how challenging it was to locate it, and more importantly with whom the event was shared. **T★J**



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CoastWatch | Danno Wise

Saltwater anglers across the state recognize March as the first “fishing” month of the calendar year. Warm weather, tides, and mass numbers of anglers will all return to the Texas coast during March.

Although hard core pluggers have been at it in January and February, March is the first month to see the crowds returning to the bays. Most of these anglers will be seeking speckled trout, although down south redfish will be a prime target while sheepshead will offer a nice diversion for Coastal Bend fishermen.

Additionally, snook action will be heating up in the Lower Laguna and the first few tarpon of the season should begin making their way up from Mexico. Some state water snapper fishing will be going on in March, although the prime offshore action is still a month or so away. **T★J**



Port Isabel/South Padre Island guide Capt. Austin Camacho says are a couple of different things he'll be focusing on in March

“There are a few different things we do in March,” said Camacho. “March is always a good month for trout fishing, but we'll also spend a lot of time fishing for sheepshead.

“How much time we spend targeting sheepshead really depends on the timing of their run. It is different each year and can happen anytime from the second week in February through March. When they're in, we can usually get them pretty good free-lining shrimp around one of the causeways. They'll also be thick around the jetties. I will fish for them around the



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPT. AUSTIN CAMACHO

The first place action for numbers and quality of speckled trout are on the Lower Laguna Madre around spoil islands and the ICW. Noemi Lee shows off a nice speck she caught while fishing with Capt. Austin Camacho.

jetties as well, but we've got to have the right conditions to fish out there and we don't usually have too many calm days in March.

“By the middle of March we'll have a lot of trout out front of Port Isabel. So, I'll be fishing Long Bar and the ICW spoils. I'll fish both the east and west side of those bars. I throw a lot of topwaters like Super Spooks, Super Spook, Jrs, and different MirrOlures during March. I really like Ghost or Bone that time of year.

“When I'm not throwing topwaters, we'll usually throw popping cork and shrimp. We'll have a lot of shrimp in the bay that time of year, so we do really well on popping cork and shrimp.”

According to the guides at Get-A-Way Adventures Lodge in Port Mansfield, big trout will still be the focus for most fishermen. Early in the month, the

fish will still be holding over muddy bottom. However, as the weather and water warms, fish will slowly begin transitioning to sandy bottoms.

For the most part, the best spots for locating big trout in March will be on the western half of the bay. Topwaters and slow-sinking plugs will be the best baits for fishermen targeting trophy trout. Although the fish will be getting more active during March, a relatively slow retrieve is still necessary to get consistent action.

Redfish will also be active in the waters of the Lower Laguna Madre near Port Mansfield during March. Top spots for reds during early spring include Peyton's and the Saucer. There will also be consistent redfish action along the flats adjacent to the ICW and gas well channels.

March means a couple of things for fishermen in the Corpus area, and both of those top options require running south. The King Ranch shoreline is a popular wade fishing area for trophy trout in March. Slow-sinking plugs and topwaters are the most commonly thrown baits for big trout hunters working along the King Ranch shoreline. The other heavily frequented spot this time of year is the Land Cut. Anglers making the run to the Land Cut can expect mixed bags of redfish, trout, flounder, and black drum. They also have a reasonable shot at a trophy trout in March. Topwaters, soft-plastics and live shrimp are the best bets while fishing the edges of the Land Cut. Anglers wishing to fish closer to Corpus will fare well on the grass flats of the Upper Laguna Madre during March as well.

Baffin Bay will also yield plenty of big trout during March. Kleberg Point, Center Reef and Alazan are all good spots to seek sow specks this time of year. Topwaters and slow-sinking plugs generally produce the most top-end trout in March. Baffin anglers can also expect good redfish action over the grass flats and plenty of black drum around Penescal Point. **T★J**

area. When they are located, the best bet for tempting black drum is live shrimp either free-lined or fished under a popping cork.

Beyond black drum, the bays surrounding Aransas Pass and Port Aransas will also have a lot of redfish around. Like the keeper size black drum, the redfish will be scattered on the flats. So, to increase your chances drifting is a better bet than anchoring. Although they will hit plastics and spoons, most fishermen will be throwing live shrimp under a cork for reds on the flats during the early part of March. Later in the month, schools of shad will start showing up and many fishermen will switch to cut shad as opposed to shrimp.

Trout fishing will be fair in early March, but should get better as the month goes on. Live bait is the go-to offering for most Aransas area trout fishermen, although which bait they use will change



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

As weather and water continue to temperature warm look for redfish to spend more time feeding on top of shallow grass flats.

throughout the month. Early in March, live shrimp under a cork will be the bait of choice for most trout fishermen. As the water starts warming up, croaker will start moving in. Once the croaker reach 2 3/4 to 3 1/2 inches in size, which is considered the ideal size for bait among croaker fishermen, many Aransas area

MIDDLE COAST



March offers Aransas area anglers several options. The black drum run will be winding down, but there will still be a lot of oversized drum up in the Corpus Christi ship channel. Those fish will be in 30-40 feet of water. The best way to catch them is using live shrimp and a 1/2-ounce slip sinker.

The shallow flats will also be holding schools of black drum. The fish found on the flats are much more likely to be in the keeper class than those found in the ship channel. Mud patches are usually a dead give-a-way that a school of drum is in the

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trout fishermen will switch to live croaker as their bait of choice.

Both speckled trout and redfish will be active in the waters around Rockport during March. The fish will still be holding primarily over soft bottom as the month begins. As the weeks pass and the weather and water continues to warm, specks and reds will be transitioning to the sandy bottom areas. Early on, the biggest concentrations of fish will be around the reefs in four to six feet of water. Over the second half of the month, fishing over knee to waist-deep sand and grass flats will be where the majority of quality fish will be found.

For fishermen looking for numbers of fish, soft-plastic and live shrimp will be the best baits to throw. Later in the month, there should be a supply of bait-size croaker readily available as well. Those anglers who are specifically looking for bigger trout should stick with slow-sinking plugs or topwaters.

The reefs around Rockport will be holding keeper size specks, as well as sheepshead and black drum. Freelineing shrimp around the deeper reefs should provide plenty of action with each

of these overlooked species. And, don't be surprised to pick up a scattering of specks and reds while fishing for sheepshead and drum.

Seadrift guide Capt. Nathan Beabout N&M Sportsman Adventures says he'll begin chasing trophy trout in earnest in March.

"You know, each part of the Texas Coast is different," said Beabout. "Here on the Middle Coast we start to see more big trout activity in the month of March than during the winter time. I'm not saying we do not catch big trout during the winter, what I'm saying is we see more concentration in areas of big trout. At any



PHOTO BY DANNO WISE

Taylor Garcia landing a redfish on a warm, sunny March day. More sunny, warm days along with great catches await anglers this month.

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given location, we have witnessed schools numbering from 10 to 12 up to 50 to 60 big fish.

"I believe this concentration has to do with the warming temperatures and the first trout spawns of the year. Every year when conditions are right, these fish consistently show up. A lot of this has to do with what kind of winter we are coming out of and how fast we start to warm up once winter's grip lets go. Timing is key on catching these big trout. You can bet I will be in position when it is ready to happen.

"Some of these areas we have seen these fish in are gin clear, knee deep water. For that, walking absolutely silently is a must. Small baits, either topwaters, Corkys, or plastics are the way to go. The smaller the bait the better it will produce. In the off-colored and slightly deeper water we throw the bigger plastics and even step it up to the one knocker



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPT. NATHAN BEABOUT

Capt. Nathan Beabout says in March the numbers of big speckled trout increases. This angler benefitted from that knowledge and fishing with Beabout that allowed him to land this solid speck.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BILL L. OLSON JR.

March will provide more action for sheepshead, redfish and big black drum like this one caught by Tamara Murray while fishing Packery Channel.

topwaters.

“Along with these bigger trout, there are also several scattered reds and keeper size trout working these areas. That can be the frustrating part. You have to be patient and get past the redfish that will bite almost every time. More times than not if you just keep fishing, eventually you will get that different bite, automatically knowing it’s a big trout.

“If I could only give one piece of advice for the month of March, it would be patience. Especially if all the signs are there in the area you are fishing. Many times this month we will re-wade certain areas.”

Port O’Connor fishermen can expect both redfish and speckled trout populations to begin moving back onto the sand, and sand and grass flats as the water warms during March. Among the better places for fishermen to spend time will be in waist deep water in Espiritu Santo and Mesquite bays. The guts and channels that criss-cross the shallow grass flats will also be holding plenty of speckled trout and redfish this month, with the adjacent shallows being most productive during the heat of the day. Potholes in grass flats will also be holding plenty of fish. Live shrimp, soft-plastics, slow-sinking plugs and topwaters will be the best bets for speckled trout, while topwaters, soft-

plastics, weedless spoons and cut bait will be the top choices for redfish. 🌟🌟

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DREAMING SUPER BIG



COURTESY PHOTO

Texas lure makers John Hale (left) and Lonnie Stanley recently announced a sales promotion called the \$100,000 Largemouth Bass Bounty. The promotion promises \$100,000 to the pre-registered angler who catches a world record largemouth bass in 2019 using a Hale or Stanley bait. The prize money is fully guaranteed through an insurance policy purchased from SCA Promotions of Dallas.

Just about anything is possible when it comes to casting for bass cash.

Story and Photography by Matt Williams

Fishermen who cast for cash are among the world's biggest dreamers. Though it doesn't hurt to dream big, it is never a good idea to go counting your prize money in any sort of fishing competition before you reel in the winning catch.

Fish and fishing are way too unpredictable to bet the farm on. While there are pots of gold to be found at end of watery rainbow, I've seen more than one tournament angler go broke gambling on the hope of finally reeling one in.

The folks at Hale Lures/Staley Jigs aren't in the business of running high stakes fishing tournaments, but they kicked off the New Year with a risk free promotional pitch aimed at getting bass anglers of all calibers to dream super big and buy a few baits in the process.

It's called the The \$100,000 Largemouth Bass Bounty.

The Huntington Texas-based lure company is offering the six-figure pay day to the pre-registered angler who reels in a largemouth bass with an official

certified weight of 22 pounds, 6 ounces or more. The fish must be caught from U.S. public waters during 2019 using a Hale or Stanley bait.

It's a good thing the promotion is free to enter at fishstanley.com. Otherwise, it probably wouldn't get many bites. Not from Texas anglers, anyway.

Texas' current state record of 18.18 pounds has been in place since January 1992. In 27 years of trying no one has come remotely close to breaking it.

Catching a fish big enough to claim

the \$100,000 bounty is a really tall order to anyone to fill, even out California way where some of world's heaviest lunkers have been caught over the years.

A bass weighing 22 1/2 pounds would be two ounces heavier than the current International Game Fish Association world record that is shared by two anglers — George Perry and Manubu Kurita.

That's not to say there isn't such a bass finning around out there somewhere. But the odds of somebody catching it are about as good as winning at Powerball. Maybe less.

"It's all in fun," said Clifford Wiedman, the company's sales manager. "We'd love to see someone win this deal. It is sort of like playing the lottery. The odds are not in your favor but just having the slightest of chances makes you think 'what if.' It's free, so the fishermen don't have anything to lose."

But there is plenty to gain should lady luck come calling. Wiedman said the prize money is fully guaranteed through an insurance policy purchased from SCA Promotions of Dallas.

The firm specializes in risk coverage for promotions, contests and games. SCA is under contract to make good on the bounty should an angler who pre-registers for the promotion reel in the winning fish.

While the odds of SCA having to make good on the bounty are slim at best, you can never say never when it comes to fishing.

Just ask Al St. Cyr.

St. Cyr is a Denton native who struck it rich in 2006 for catching a fish that not a lot of people care anything about — the common carp.

St. Cyr was among the 40 anglers who signed up to compete in the inaugural Texas Carp Challenge held on Lady Bird Lake in downtown Austin. The six-day derby was hosted by the American Carp Fishing Society.

Prior to the event, contest organizers bought a promotional risk insurance policy that guaranteed \$250,000 cash any contestant who reeled in a new Texas state record carp.

St. Cyr made fast work of the 41.5 pound former state record with a 43 pound, 2 ounce beauty he caught and released from a stretch of shoreline between Congress Ave. and Interstate 35.

Interestingly, St. Cyr's state record



COURTESY PHOTO

In 2006, Denton native Al St. Cyr caught a new Texas state record carp from Lady Bird Lake in Austin that won him \$250,000. The prize money was paid through a risk coverage insurance policy purchased ahead of the Texas Carp Challenge tournament hosted by the American Carp Fishing Society.

was broken three years later when another angler, K.C. Crawford of Ft. Worth, caught the exact same fish while competing in the Carp Angler's Group's annual championship in March 2009.

St. Cyr likely holds the record for the biggest prize ever awarded in a carp tournament, but he isn't the only Texas angler to cash in on a promotional stunt meant to stir some interest among fishermen.

In 2010, James Quisenberry of Emory collected on a SCA Promotions policy purchased by the Lake Fork Chamber of

Commerce as part of its Lake Fork Bounty Bonanza program.

The now defunct, Bounty Bonanza was launched in 2008 by the local chamber with the support of lakeside business owners and tackle icon Berkley. The idea was to generate some big bass hype around the lake and spur some friendly competition among local and visiting anglers.

Anglers paid a pre-registration fee of \$25 for eligibility to win lucrative cash prizes and tackle packages in exchange for catching big, Lake Fork bass between



COURTESY PHOTO

If you're feeling lucky, there may be a tagged bass intent on eating your bait. You'd better be entered and in the meantime, dream big.



COURTESY PHOTO

The BassCashBash format is unique from traditional fishing tournaments. BassCash events last for several months as opposed to a day or two. Nor is there any daily weigh-ins.

Oct. 1 and Sept. 30 each year.

The SCA insurance policy covered cash bounties in four categories:

- * \$10,000 cash rewards to the first three anglers to catch a Texas Top 50 bass.
- * One \$25,000 reward for the first Top 10 bass.
- * One \$50,000 reward for a new state record.
- * One \$100,000 reward for a new world record bass.

Quisenberry caught a 15.61 pounder in March 2010. At the time the fish ranked as No. 33 heaviest bass ever reported in Texas. The angler netted \$10,000 in the Top 50 category. He was the only angler to cash in on one of the top level prizes during the program's brief history.

Interestingly, the bounty bonanza concept never really caught on with Lake Fork anglers like organizers had originally hoped it would. Numerous tackle packages and other prizes went unclaimed over the course of several seasons, several because anglers weren't pre-registered to participate when they caught winning fish.

P.D. Vinson of Leesville, LA. knows the latter scenario all too well. Vinson is the founder of the BassCashBash tournament series, another low risk bass fishing competition where one lucky cast could do a wealth of good for anybody's bank account.

The BCB format is unique from traditional fishing tournaments. BassCash

events last for several months as opposed to a day or two. Nor is there any daily weigh-ins.

Instead, pre-registered anglers fish for hundreds of bass that are caught, tagged and released in designated lakes before the tournament gets underway. More than \$1.3 million in cash and prizes are finning around the water year.

Registered anglers who catch tagged bass can redeem those tags for valuable prizes like trucks, boats and cash pay days up to \$2,500. It costs \$50 enter (\$30 for youths 15 and under) and there is no limit on how many times you can win over the course of a four-month tournament.

Vinson doesn't rely on insurance policies to pay winning contestants.

"All of the prizes are paid out with entry fee money," he said.

The BassCash concept was launched in 2015 on Toledo Bend. It has since expanded to include events on lakes Sam Rayburn, Fork and Guntersville in Alabama.

More than once Vinson has seen anglers miss out on big prizes because they weren't aware of the tournament or they chose not to register. In 2018, he said there was 126 unregistered anglers who caught tagged fish and watched nearly \$200,000 swim away.

"It happens all the time," Vinson said. "In four years we've had two truck tagged fish and two boat tagged fish caught by anglers who weren't registered. Last year on Sam Rayburn the Ram pick-up fish was caught twice in two months by two different anglers who weren't registered."

The third annual BCB event on Sam Rayburn got underway Jan. 1 and runs through April 30. In addition to the boat and truck fish, 200 tagged bass worth \$1,000 each are finning around out there.

Some of the prizes have already been claimed. Not surprisingly, others have been missed by anglers that reeled in tagged fish, but were not registered for the contest.

One of those anglers was bass pro Greg Bohannon of Bentonville, Ark. Bohannon was competing in the FLW Tour event on Sam Rayburn on January 10-13 when he caught a bass that was wearing a \$1,000 tag.

Bohannon finished in 109th place and didn't earn a check in event. No doubt, that BassCash would have taken some of sting out of a poor performance in a tournament

that cost him \$5,200 to enter.

Two more Texas BCB events are set to get underway on March 1 at lakes Fork and Toledo Bend. Vinson said 100 fish valued at \$1,000 each will be tagged at Fork. There also is a \$2,500 bounty on the heaviest fish over the slot each month, March 1 through July 4.

The Toledo Bend payout structure mirrors Sam Rayburn, except every registered angler who lands a 10 pounder wins \$1,000 and the angler who catches the largest bass through July 4 wins \$5,000.

New to the BCB tournament format this year is an incentive guaranteeing that at least one truck and boat will be given away by draw should all of the boat/truck tagged fish go claimed.

According to Vinson, if no pre-registered angler catches a boat or truck-tagged fish by July 4, a drawing will be held among all registered contestants to determine the winner. To learn more about BCB or enter online, see basscashbash.com.

While you're at it, it might be a good idea to check out sealyoutdoors.com and get anted for the 2019 Big Bass Splash



COURTESY PHOTO

James Quisenberry of Emory was awarded \$10,000 in 2010 for catching this 15.61-pound Texas Top 50 bass during the now defunct Lake Fork Bounty Bonanza. The prize money was paid through a SCA promotional insurance policy purchased by the Lake Fork Area Chamber of Commerce.



COURTESY PHOTO

In 2016, Tonja Woytasczyk of Tarkington became the first lady angler win the Sealy Outdoors Big Bass Splash on Sam Rayburn. This year's event marks the amateur only tournament's 35th anniversary. More than \$1 million is up for grabs, including a first place prize/cash package valued at \$300,000 for the biggest bass of the three-day event.

set for April 26-28 on Sam Rayburn. It's a low cost, amateur-only fishing derby. This year organizers are offering life-changing prizes to anglers reel in big fish.

Based in Brookeland, the company has been producing the largest amateur fishing tournaments in the country since 1984. The upcoming tournament will be held in commemoration of the organization's 35th anniversary. It's going to be a biggie.

So is its advertising payout of over \$1 million in cash and prizes during the three-day event, which surpasses that of any other amateur bass tournament before it.

The top prize for the biggest fish of the tournament is a \$300,000

Sportsman's Package that includes a Ram Truck, 5th wheel camper, fully rigged bass boat and cash. Second place wins \$100,000; third, \$75,000; 4th, \$50,000; and 5th, \$25,000.

Additionally, anglers will fish for nearly \$377,000 in hourly payouts that will be awarded for the 15 heaviest bass of each hour. Heaviest bass of each hour wins \$5,000; the fifth heaviest wins \$1,000. Entry fee is \$285 per angler for three days.

The neat thing about the Sealy derby is that anybody is apt to make an ordinary cast that could result in an extraordinary payday. To wit:

In 2005, an 11-year-old fourth grader, Brandon Adams of Florence, took all the marbles in the tournament with an 11.57 pounder. Adams walked away with a \$102,000 prize package that included a new H2 Hummer and fully rigged Triton bass boat.

In 2016, Tonja Woytasczyk became the first lady angler in history to win the tournament. Woytasczyk caught a 12.04 pounder that won her a Ram Truck, fully rigged bass boat and \$10,000 in cash.

If you're feeling lucky, this is one derby worth entering. In the meantime, dream big. Just about anything is possible when it comes to fishing. **T★J**

Early Season Gobbler Challenges



Proven spring season techniques and calling will lure in reluctant henned up "Toms."

Story by Bill L. Olson

PHOTO BY JOHN FRANKSON

Texas Parks & Wildlife's web page on turkey in Texas repeats an often stated observation amongst turkey hunters. It states, "if wild turkeys could smell, they'd be nearly impossible to hunt. The eyes and ears of a turkey make it one of the toughest of all Texas game animals. Their vision is the keenest among all game animals in the Lone Star State. They are especially astute at pinpointing movement and can hone in on noises from a mile away."

In Texas a generous and lengthy spring season allows hunters the opportunity to be challenged in their pursuit of these birds. At the beginning of the season gobblers are anxious to breed and many times when conditions are right hunting can be difficult since gobblers are already with hens. During these times it is more difficult to lure a "Tom" away from a receptive hen with seductive yelps, putts, purrs and cuts made on box call, friction call or diaphragm.

Given the wet and fairly mild winter Texas has experienced, if weather forecasts are correct it looks as though we should have an early spring and one that should be conducive to a good spring hatch of turkey poults. Two years ago in 2017 a good hatch of poults added to the statewide population of Rio Grande and Eastern turkeys that are admittedly underutilized by hunters according to TPWD District Leaders. The hatch and survival of poults in 2018 was below average but there are plenty of mature gobblers that will test even the most experienced hunters this spring.

The challenge that awaits hunters pursuing long-beards during the early part of the season is how to call in a gobbler close enough to be taken with a shotgun or bow. Turkeys normally have started breeding prior to the opening of the season and will be at the peak of activity when legal shooting light shines on opening morning.

One of the best ways to shorten the learning curve on hunting these crafty birds is to consult and if possible hunt with a successful veteran turkey hunter. Some 30 years ago I had the privilege of meeting and serving six years (1989-1994) on the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation's National Board of Directors during that organization's formative years with renowned game caller, manufacturer

and hunter Wayne Carlton.

Right from the beginning I admitted to Carlton to having a passion for calling game. That admission resulted in a lasting friendship and mentorship that exists to this day. Over the years there has been numerous inquiring phone calls, personal conversations and time spent in the field observing this man. When it comes to hunting turkey, elk or calling other game animals Carlton has willingly shared his unique wisdom and abilities.

Back in 1998 Carlton was the featured game call instructor at Texas Outdoors Journal's Turkey Hunting School that was pattern after Carlton's Turkey Hunting School he held for a number of years at the massive Vermejo Park Ranch of northern New Mexico. TOJ's School was held at the 40,000 acre Hendricks Ranch that at the time was managed and hunted by Krooked River Ranch/Texas Best Outfitters. There outfitters Roy and Becky Wilson greeted 25 eager hunters that spent instructional and field time with Carlton, using his calls and learning his tricks of the trade.

A few years ago he sold his Carlton Calls & Hunting Stuff to a large outdoor marketing firm. Today that entrepreneurial spirit is still alive and a few years ago, together with his son Marc that grew up in the call industry and is a chip off the old block, have launched Native By Carlton. The products and innovated calls are some of the best this family has ever made.

With the challenging prospects for turkey season 2019 looming I called my

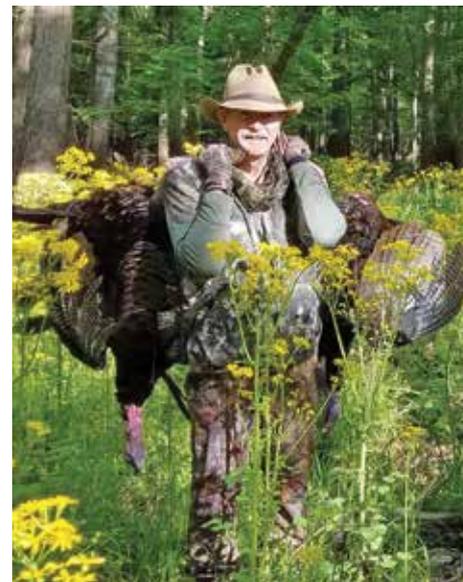


PHOTO COURTESY OF NATIVE BY CARLTON

Renowned game caller, manufacturer and hunter Wayne Carlton shows off two spring gobblers he lure in with his calling ability.

friend, explained what Texas hunters were potentially facing and asked for suggestions on how to successfully get off to a good start. Carlton's hi-pitched, cackle-laugh sounds somewhat similar to a young Walter Brennan. It puts a smile on your face as soon as his informative answers begin to enlighten and entertain.

"Well, I'll tell yah — the first thing is to find out where those turkey are roosting and where the water is located," he began. "To find the birds you want to hear one. Once you hear a bird note its location and back out of the area.



PHOTO BY JOHN FRANKSON

Early in the season gobblers are fired up and that aggression can be used by hunters. Sounding like a dominate hen, can sometimes lure the gobblers or even the whole flock of turkeys to the camp-hidden hunter.

“One of the best calls, that will make all of the turkey calls most any hunter will need, is a small box call. It will make sharp yelps that’ll rattle your eardrum, putts, purrs, kee-kee runs and sharp cuts. A hunter can also use it to help locate a bird when out scouting an area.”

One early lesson learned from my friend is his way to hold and use a box call. “Most people will have the paddle pointing toward their body as they work it over the lip of the call,” he explained. “Instead point the paddle away, placing the paddle between your index and middle finger. Hold the call loosely with your other hand and then work the paddle up and down just like you are shaking hands. It’s an easy way to make a very rhythmic yelp.

“Lift the paddle a little and pop it at an angle on the lip of the box to make a cut. It’s sort of a pop, pop, pop-pop-pop.”

Once a gobbler’s location is known Carlton suggests to throw away your schedule and playing to that bird’s timeline. “I remember hunting down near Goliad and had seen a gobbler late one morning,” he began. “I mentioned it



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Native by Carlton's tools of the trade include their small box call, a Zebra wood slate call and osage striker, plus a new series of diaphragm that any caller will appreciate.

to a man we were hunting with and he decided to take that spot for himself. However, that person had to leave to do something in town about 11:00 that morning so I eased on into the area and set up.



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Game call manufacturer Wayne Carlton suggests pointing the paddle away, placing the paddle between your index and middle finger. Hold the call loosely with your other hand and then work the paddle up and down just like you are shaking hands. It’s an easy way to make a very rhythmic yelp.

“It was kind of windy and I used that box call to bring in that long beard plus five jakes. I shot that mature gobbler because I had put in the time to find him, and came back to hunt him at the time we had seen him and felt that bird would be back in the area — on his schedule.”

Early in the season when gobblers are with receptive hens can be a challenge. Carlton says the best thing you can do is at last light to bust them off of their roost.

“Marc and I were hunting out of Uvalde and decided to wait near a roost until almost dark, he explained. “I told my son we should sound like a bunch of cowboys pushing cows through the woods, yelling, yee-ha, hup, hup, hup, and just making noise. One by one those turkeys flew off of the roost.

“The next morning we set up even closer to that area. With a few soft yelps it wasn’t 10 minutes before those gobblers were going crazy. They could not wait to get back to that area.”

Carlton stresses scouting and knowing the lay of the land will improve hunting success. Understanding where fences, creeks and other things that might keep a gobbler from coming in can be avoided.

My friend also likes to get up-close and personal with game he calls. “I don’t like hunting out of a blind,” he confessed. If you can’t sit still, or are trying to film a video with several people it might be an option.

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“My preference is to be in full camo, with facemask, gloves and use a tree, brush or rock to help break my silhouette. Just snuggle up next to it and blend in. Also use self-discipline to not jerk your head around or make sudden movements.”

During times when a hunter wants to make seductive purrs Native by Carlton has a Zebra wood Slate with an osage striker. “Slate makes a real soft purr, he said. “It also makes a great assembly cluck or you can crank it up and do an agitated purr. You can imitate so many sounds with a slate call.

“You can also switch back to the box call if gobblers are henned up and become the dominate hen. When trying to out call a live hen you have to be more emphatic. If you can drag her over then the whole flock will come with her.”

For those that like a diaphragm, or those that have trouble using a diaphragm call check out their RipIt line of calls. It has a bar that helps position the call in the roof of your mouth and makes it easier to use.

Carlton’s closing comment is to be aware of where and when gobblers are seen. If they are on the move and you can make a move to get ahead of the flock or bird and set up. If you can’t, or daylight is giving way to dark, then come back to that same area the next day at the same time.

Turkey hunting is a thrilling adrenalin rush of springtime fun. Just be careful because hunting a 20 pound bird can be addictive.

For more information on the calls available from Native by Carlton visit www.nativebycarlton.com.

Turkeys now inhabit 223 of the 254 counties in Texas. Spring seasons include:

Youth Only Season for Rio Grande Turkey — South Zone (54 counties) March 9-10 and May 18-19, 2019

Youth Only Season for Rio Grande Turkey — North Zone (101 counties) March 22-23 and May 4-5, 2019

Rio Grande Turkey — South Zone (54 counties), March 16-April 28, 2019

Rio Grande Turkey — North Zone (101 counties), March 30-May 12, 2019

Eastern Turkey — (13 counties), April 22 – May 14, 2019

Be sure to consult the Texas Parks & Wildlife Outdoor Annual or Outdoor Annual app for seasons and bag limits for the county that will be hunted. T★J



PHOTO BY JOHN FRANKSON

Renowned game caller Wayne Carlton suggest at last light to bust up the roosting turkeys sound like cowboys pushing cattle. After the turkeys have left the roost, a hunter can come back in the area before sunrise, set up and call the gobblers to entice them to return to the area where the hens had been.



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SPRING INTO COASTAL ACTION



***Instincts developed from past experiences combined with prevailing patterns
will keep anglers hooked-up.***

Story and Photography by Nate Skinner

Real life experiences and fishing our coastal estuaries have more in common than many might think. I came to this realization recently while spending some time on the water with some close friends that work in law enforcement.

These individuals regularly collide with challenges on a daily basis that require them to quickly make decisions. Their calculated actions can have tremendous repercussions, outcomes or consequences, yet they thrive under this type of pressure.

While drifting across Galveston Bay, they made light of several situations that they had encountered while on the job over the past several weeks. Then one of them made the following comment.

“Working in law enforcement is a lot like fishing to a certain degree. You have to examine the variables of a given scenario and then act based on knowledge gained from past experiences combined with what your gut instinct is telling you to do.”

As nonchalantly as my counterpart said this, his thoughts hit me hard. He was exactly right. The process he described is precisely what anglers must do in order to stay hooked up with multiple species while fishing during the wild transition period taking place right now that we call Spring.

On the upper coast, all anglers are going to have to be mindful of the influence of freshwater runoff. This is not a new phenomenon as flooding rains have plagued bay systems north of the Guadalupe River Delta for the past several years.

These significant precipitation events alter the playing field and concentrate schools of fish in specific locations. As the effects of freshwater runoff begin to increase or dissipate, the anglers that understand how certain species will react to the changes will be more successful than the rest.

Not too long ago, I was fortunate enough to witness this type of on-the-water savvy first hand while fishing along the east side of Calcasieu Lake in southwest Louisiana with Captain Nick Poe of Big Lake Guide Service. When we shoved off from his dock I was certain we were about to cast relentlessly without much to show for it. The water was about



The lower coast can provide new opportunities and challenges for those willing to try something different this spring as hoards of trophy trout await like this one caught by Getaway Lodge General Manager, Sandra Garza.

as dirty and off-colored as it can get due to recent heavy rains. In fact, I even voiced my thoughts out loud.

“This has got to be some of the dirtiest water I’ve ever fished,” I stated.

We started out the afternoon by working the east bank of the lake, south of Commissary Point. Poe had rigged our rods with bright, chartreuse scented curly tail jigs. We began casting parallel to the shoreline and bouncing them back towards his boat along the bottom.

“This presentation is our best bet for coaxing a bite with artificials,” he explained. “There’s been piles of redfish along this stretch of bank, but they’ve been tough to catch. Just about every time I’ve fished here schools of reds have come up, rolling at the surface, so I know they’re here. I just think the water is so dirty that they’ve been having trouble seeing a bait well enough to strike it.”

Feeling confident we were in the right area to find some action, we thoroughly worked the shoreline hoping the bright appearance and stench of our offerings would produce a strike.

After making what seemed like thousands of casts without so much as a nibble, I began to feel fairly pessimistic towards our efforts. Then Poe spotted something in the distance that immediately caught his attention.

“There’s a couple of terns picking at the water’s surface near the mouth of the weir up there,” he pointed out. “Let’s go check that out. The weirs have been closed for several days, but the birds diving out in front of that particular one may mean that it is open now. If the weir is open and water is flowing out of it there might be a bunch of fish nearby.”

As we idled over towards the mouth of the weir that drains Mangrove Bayou, we could instantly tell that Poe’s assumption was right. Water was flowing rapidly out of the weir that was open, allowing for an exchange between the marsh and the lake. The moving water was definitely cleaner than the main lake water we had been fishing for the past hour. Plus it was holding plenty of mullet that could be seen milling around at the surface.

“This looks promising,” exclaimed

Poe. "This weir was not open yesterday, but it usually doesn't take long for the fish to gravitate towards the flowing water. They should be stacked up and hungry."

For the next two hours we caught chunky reds as fast we could cast amongst an audience of pelicans that were taking advantage of the bait being pulled out of the marsh.

Our success was completely situational. It was the result of a knowledgeable pro understanding how to read the signs that nature provided and then following through on his gut feeling, all of which was based on what he had experienced over his tenure on the water. This type of approach can be duplicated just about anywhere anglers choose to focus their efforts this spring.

If the influence of freshwater creates poor water clarity on the upper coast then bait presentations must be adjusted accordingly. Adding scent and sound to a lure is a great way to combat these conditions. It will also help during times with gusty winds, which is almost a



The water along the middle and lower Texas coast holds its clarity in springtime winds, giving anglers a productive option this month.

guarantee during the spring months.

There are several options for soft plastics on market that come pre-scented or anglers can apply liquid and gel based scents to just about any type of bait.

Pairing soft plastic jigs with a popping

cork is a noisy way to produce more bites, especially along shallow flats or in the marsh. Chunking plugs with a built in rattle like a topwater is another option, and choosing baits that create plenty of vibration is a good idea.

As far as soft plastics are concerned, paddle tail baits can be the ticket as they tend to create more vibration through the water column when they are retrieved in comparison to rattail style baits.

An excellent hard plastic, sub surface lure option that emits significant vibrations and noise is the Rat-L-Trap. Although these plugs are typically used in freshwater applications, they are also manufactured in saltwater grade models that are deadly, especially for redfish.

Another way to deal with a significant influx of freshwater along upper coast bays is to focus on areas away from the main sources of run off. These locations include the lower portions of bays as well as areas near passes, deep channels, the jetties, and the Gulf.

In the Galveston Bay Complex, some of the best springtime action will occur in west Galveston Bay where the influence of freshwater is very minimal.

On Sabine Lake, the south end, jetties, and Sabine pass are going to be where the most productive hotspots lie.

Anglers fishing out of the Matagorda area should focus on stretches furthest away from the Colorado River and void of freshwater inflows. These include pretty much all of East Matagorda Bay, as well as the western portion of West Matagorda.



Varying conditions call for varying tactics. Capt. Nick Poe was able to score plenty of redfish near the mouth of a bayou on the east side of Calcasieu Lake once water started flowing out of a weir.

Traveling to fish bays and estuaries south of the Guadalupe River Delta that lack strong freshwater influences is an additional way to enjoy some outstanding springtime action. Learning how to approach unfamiliar waters is also an exceptional way to become a more well-rounded angler.

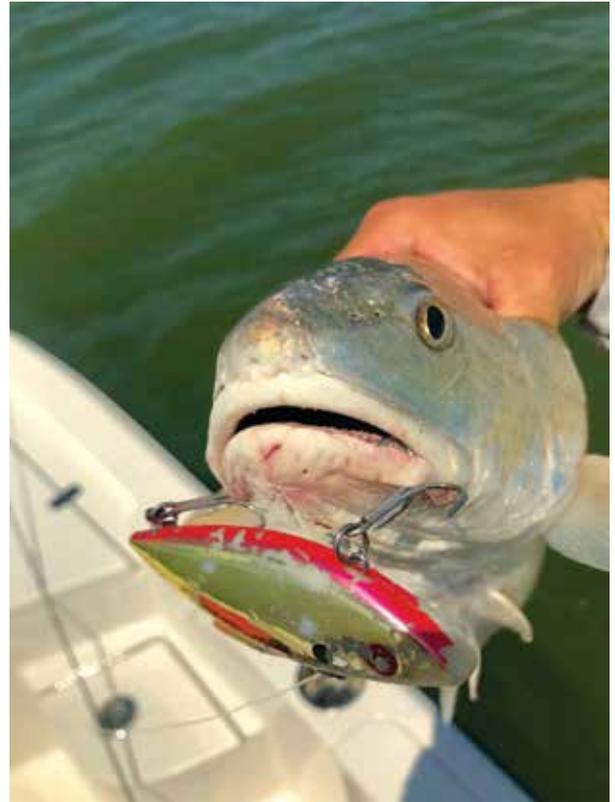
The waters of the middle and lower coast are much shallower and clearer than those found in upper coast bays, plus they tend to handle strong springtime winds better. They provide new challenges and opportunities, and I have become addicted to learning how to fish them. It's an adventure that provides a nice change of pace from what I normally encounter in my home waters on the upper portion of the Texas coast.

Studying charts and satellite images while looking for similarities along stretches of water in a new bay system in comparison to what is familiar back home is a great way to create an initial game plan. A fish is a fish regardless of where it is swimming. There are reasons why the scaly critters we pursue concentrate in specific areas. Hotspots up

and down the coast all sport comparable characteristics, and once anglers begin to find these areas and make note of them, the options for finding success become endless.

With spring upon us, varying conditions, patterns and scenarios are inevitable. This creates the perfect opportunity for anglers to put a variety of tactics and theories to the test. The results will reveal what works best in specific situations.

Take what's been learned from previous on-the-water experiences, make note of what signs the prevailing conditions offer, and stick to your gut. Make decisions based on confidence, and spring into action. Solid hook ups, bent rods, and a whole lot of fun awaits. 🎣🌟



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Lake Roundup

EAST TEXAS



By Matt Williams

CONROE - Water temperatures should be nudging towards the 60 degree mark this month and bass will be gravitating towards the shallows to create the next generation of bass for anglers to catch. According to fishing guide Butch Terpe, largemouth junkies headed to the 20,000 acre lake this month should be able to peck around in one to five feet of water and eventually get their fix.

"March is an awesome month on Conroe," Terpe said. "There are going to be a lot of big fish shallow either spawning or looking for place to spawn, and those fish are going to be easier to catch now than at any other time of the year. If you're in five feet deep less you can call it good."

The guide says some of the most productive water early in the month will be in creeks and pockets at the north end of the lake. These areas will warm up the quickest. By the middle of the month the whole lake should be good.

Terpe says any number of baits will work. Moving lures like Chatterbaits, crankbaits and spinnerbaits are good choices when the fish are still pre-spawn and cruising, but once they lock on beds you'll need to put the moving baits away and take a slower approach with a Texas rigged lizard, jig, wacky worm or Senko. Carolina rigging away from bank also can be productive for tempting pre-spawn fish

that haven't moved up.

Sight fishing will be a solid option if the water is clear and shallow enough to see. Otherwise, the best option will be blind casting over flats and points. Some of the bigger fish may spawn a little deeper; a Carolina rig is a good choice for getting at them.

Terpe says crappie will be pushing towards the shallows to spawn this month as well. He'll look for them in some of the same areas as bass with heavy emphasis on areas that offer plenty of cover like flooded bushes, stumps and logs in one to four feet of water. "Crappie love to be around cover," he said.

The guide says a small jig fished one to two feet beneath a cork can be hard to beat for spawning crappie, but there are times when fan casting the shallows without a cork can be more effective.

NACOGDOCHES - Lake Nacogdoches was at pool level as January gave way to February, but it was also a muddy, sloppy mess as the result of dirty runoff that's been barreling down Big Loco and Little Loco creeks since late fall. I haven't seen bottom since early November, but hopefully things will begin to clear up a little before March rolls around.

March is a good time for bass anglers and it's a grand time to visit the 2,200 acre Nacogdoches. The lake is full of quality fish and a bunch of them are going to be finning around in skinny water where they are more vulnerable to being caught than at any other time of year. That's because the spawn will be in full swing, or really close to it.

Either way, you can't go wrong fishing in water that's five feet deep or less. There is plenty of good stuff to choose from up and down the lake with some of the best found on the Little Loco/Big Loco flats, the pocket behind the island, Yellow Bank flats and Pine Cove flats and East Lake Estate Flats. There are several no name creeks and main lake points worth taking a look at too.

Early in the month anglers should be able to pick up some solid fish on moving

baits like swim jigs, and Chatterbaits. A Whopper Plopper or frog cast around new growth pads and other vegetation also could be effective at times. However, once the fish settle in around spawning beds it would be wise to put the moving stuff away and pick up a Texas rigged lizard, wacky worm or weightless Senko. Best color is green pumpkin with a touch of chartreuse dye on the tail or watermelon red.

Sight fishing probably won't be an option in most areas due to off color water. The best game plan is fan casting blind over shallow flats and fishing extremely slow through high percentage areas like flats or points near channel swings.

SAM RAYBURN - Just in case you haven't heard, it's been somewhat of a volatile year for water levels on Big Sam. After reaching pool level in early December the lake went on a steady rise that finally began showing signs of leveling off in late January at well over 10 feet above full pool. The lake level on January 26 was 174.83, just shy of the all-time record high of 175.1 set in March 1992.

Based on those conditions, it's a pretty safe bet anglers will face high water conditions of some sort when March rolls around. With the spawn in full swing, you can bet there are going to be a bunch of fish in the bushes or possibly far back into the timber doing their thing.

"Some of the bigger fish could still be hanging around the inside grass lines in water 10-12 feet deep, but the majority of the fish are going to up there in two to three feet of water," said veteran fishing guide Tommy Martin. "If the lake is still high, which is very likely, the fish will be so far back up in the brush that most anglers won't be able to get them. There are a few places where you can still get to shallow water by way of old logging roads, pipelines and stuff like that, but not everybody knows where they are. The fish are going to have a great spawn this year. That's for sure."

Martin says anglers should be mindful out there and be ready to put their moving

baits down once the bass tell them to do so.

"Once you quit getting bites on your spinnerbaits, crankbaits and jerk baits you need to put them down and pick up a Texas rig," Martin said. "When bass get on beds they won't hardly chase down a moving bait. You've got to slow down to catch them."

Sight fishing could be an option in or around flooded fields, pockets, road beds and other accessible areas with shallow water, provided water clarity is sufficient. Otherwise, Martin advises blind casting ahead of the boat using Texas rigged Zoom lizard or Brush Hog. A green pumpkin color is hard to beat.

TOLEDO BEND - T-Bend was in great shape heading into the spawn with the water level holding right around normal level. If this March is like most, fishing guide Tommy Martin says the spawn will be in full swing.

"It will start in late February and early March up north, where the water is shallowest, and gradually works its way south as water temperatures continue to warm up," Martin said. "There will be fish on beds all the way through April on the south end of lake."

Martin suggests targeting the backs of major and secondary creeks early in the month. To refine the search, key on flats and secondary points with flooded bushes, lay downs and other shore cover in water ranging two to four feet. The same types of areas should be holding fish down south later in the month as the spring warm up moves down the lake.

Martin says any number of baits can be effective during March. Moving baits like a Chatterbait, spinnerbait or square bill will work until fish start homesteading beds. Once that happens, Martin will switch to a Texas rigged lizard or maybe a Senko-style bait. He will fan cast ahead the boat to target bedding fish that he cannot see.

"I like to Power Pole down and blind cast ahead," Martin said. "You might catch several fish out of one area, then move up 20-30 yards and catch several more. It's all about covering water and fishing slowly this time of year."

March is also a good month to target spawning white bass up the Sabine River. One of the best stretches is between the Logansport Bridge and the FM 2517

Bridge near Deadwood. Small spinners, Roadrunners, crank baits and young-of-the-year crawfish are the best bets when fished in relation to underwater sandbars and still water eddies where prolific sport fish like to set up to spawn.

Fishing is always best when water levels are close to normal and the river is within its banks. High water or flood conditions slow the bite because the fish tend to scatter and become tough to find.

LIVINGSTON - Lake levels have been bouncing around between 131.00 and 132.50 since mid-January with some flooding and roadway closures reported at the lake's upper reaches. Hopefully things will be back to normal and the water will be back to "Lake Livingston clear" by the time this month's issue of TOJ hits the streets.

The main thing bass anglers should key on this month is cleaner water. That's what the bass are going to look for when they start hunting a place to spawn.

According to fishing guide Randy Dearman, the best place to find clear water is in the backs creeks and tiny inlets that are somewhat protected from the influx of muddy water that flows down the Trinity River.

"The Trinity can muddy things up in hurry after a big rain," Dearman said. "But there are isolated pockets and canals that usually clear up ahead of everything else. Those are the types of places I look for this time of year."

The best spawning areas will be shallow, one to three feet. Dearman suggests navigating suspect hotspots with a push pole as opposed to using a trolling motor. This reduces the risk of spooking fish before you realize they are there.

The earliest spawning activity historically has gotten underway in creeks north of the Highway 190 Bridge. White Rock and Harmon

are two of Dearman's longtime favorites. He also likes Carolina, Caney and Palmetto. Creeks farther down the lake will begin holding fish later in the month as the spawn progresses southward, Dearman said.

Crappie fishing is also a good option in March providing water levels are stable and the clarity is decent. Fishing guide Dave Cox likes to target the backs of major and secondary creeks at the lake's upper reaches using a small shiner under a cork. Cox says it's important to fish tight to logjams, lay downs any other cover in shallow water when going after spawning slabs on Livingston.

PALESTINE - Like just about every other lake in eastern Texas, Lake Palestine has seen some topsy turvy water fluctuations since last fall. The lake was still six inches high as of this writing in late January.

According to fishing guide Ricky Vandergriff, March is always a banner year for spawning bass on Lake Palestine. The guide says bigger fish are caught at the north end of the lake, but there are also some strong spawning waves down south.

"There are going to be a lot of fish



PHOTO COURTESY OF BILLY PAYNE

Regardless the size of the lake fished, March is a month to hook up with a big bass. Buck Payne shows off a bass he caught from a private East Texas lake that weighed 9 pounds 11 ounces.

roaming around in the shallows," he said.

During the early days of March, Vandergriff advises spending the most time up north targeting wind protected sweet spot areas around Cade's Lake, Kickapoo Creek, Old Folks Playground and Flat Creek. Senko style baits and Texas rigs blind casted over shallow flats or around ditches are hard to beat this time of year, but you can also catch fish on moving baits like a bladed jig, spinnerbait or square bill so long as the bass are willing to chase them. If not, slowing down with a plastic or jig is a must.

Down south, Vandergriff likes to key on flats and secondary points found in major and secondary creek arms like Saline, Ledbetter/Highsaw and Cobb.

The guide says there should be some crappie to be caught in the same areas using shiners or jigs under a cork to target spawning fish around shallow cover in one to three feet of water. Additionally, March is prime time to check out the upper Neches, where the white bass spawning run should be in full swing. Anglers can access some sweet spots from the lake, but most use the ramp off of Highway 31 near Chandler. It is easiest to navigate using a flatbottom rig or kayak. 🌟🌟



By Brian Hughes

Well here we are at what could reasonably be described as the big bass season in Texas. From now until sometime near the end of May lays the best chance at a trophy fish.

In addition, some of the best weather of the year is coming our way. Sure, there will undoubtedly be a few storms, a couple of late cold fronts, and surely some windy days that will test our resolve. But all in all, this is the beginning of some of

the best fishing Texas has to offer. So let's get out there!

FORK — Early March on Fork means pre-spawn. I've said before that pre-spawn isn't a real thing. Biologists only recognize fish as spawning or not spawning. However, "pre-spawn" as a term serves us well in identifying that period when fish begin to move shallow in order to prepare for the coming spawn. It allows us to identify the change in behavior that will guide us to their whereabouts.

In this case it sends us to the backs of the creeks to fish water 10 feet deep and less. By this time of year, male bass are beginning to make beds, while females are starting to cruise the shallows looking to find a bed.

You'll also find staging fish that are pausing in deeper water, waiting for their cue to move up to the shallows. Of course, several factors play into the timing of this move, including weather and moon phase, as well as the length of daylight available.

For those that want to catch a big fish there are a couple of options. You can spend the day fishing the pre-spawn patterns in the five foot range with jigs or hard jerkbaits. Hard jerkbaits will cover a lot of water in a relatively fast way, while jigs will plumb the cover for heavyweight fish. Black/blue is a good color choice as is brown/green and black/watermelon red in your jigs, while chrome/black, gold/black and firetiger will be acceptable choices in a jerkbait.

Keep in mind that this time of year fish will move in and out of an area throughout the day, as conditions change. If an area has all of the qualities that a big bass needs, fish it thoroughly, and return to fish it thoroughly several times in a given day.

For numbers of fish, target the area between four and eight feet deep, and cover water by throwing 'Traps and spinnerbaits. The Senko is another good bait for both big fish and numbers of fish. Try the five inch Senko in watermelon/red for numbers and a nine inch Senko in chartreuse/pepper or bubblegum pink for a biggun'.

Mustang, Little Mustang, Bell Branch, Williams, Dale, Ray are all creeks that have fish in them. Many will be crowded with anglers too. Little Caney creek has always been a good place to fish in

early March, and it might be a little less crowded than others. Of course, with all of the new development along Little Caney it may have as many anglers as the rest of the creeks.

The fisherman willing to explore the farthest reaches, smallest creeks and most out of the way locations will be the one that finds a little more elbow room. In any of the creeks, keep the following in mind — you're looking for 55-58 degree water. For a big fish, if you're willing to fish for one bite, look in water 10 to 15 feet deep on secondary points near a channel.

Once the fish have been located, double back over the area with a lizard in blue flake, black/blue or green pumpkin and a 1/8oz. weight, on a Texas rig. Another option is to use a shaky head with a Senko in watermelon or pumpkin/purple. Don't forget to add a dash of chartreuse dye to the tail every now and then.

CEDAR CREEK — Bass on Cedar Creek will be much the same as other lakes, that is, they'll be in some form of pre-spawn mode. Look to the deeper docks and fish the brush with Carolina rigged lizards or run a crankbait down beside them. If a dock is near a point or channel it deserves extra attention.

Additionally, try a jig around the back of the dock, and a 'Trap along the sides. Basically cover all of the dock with different baits until you lock in to where and how deep the bass are relating to these structures.

Later in the month most of the fishing will take place on the back of, and behind, the docks. This is because they'll be cruising and making beds in the really shallow water. But early on bass will relate to the structure itself out a little deeper.

Topwaters are not out of the question, especially after a few warm days in a row. Many times bass will not actually take a buzzbait or popper, but will slash at it, giving away their location. Always have a Senko ready to throw back in on a missed bite.

Also, this can be a great time of year for the Mogambo grub. At five inches, with a huge curly tail, the Mogambo can be fished weightless on a Texas rig. Throw it into shallow cover and reel it quickly to fish it on top like a buzzbait or frog. You can also fish it a little slower

like a spinnerbait, or kill it and let it fall like a Texas rig. You may even want to incorporate all three retrieves in one cast.

By early March Cedar Creek crappie will have started their transition to shallow water. Get in the creeks and jig around laydowns. The jigs to use are 1/8 oz. jigs in chartreuse. Work as far back into the creeks as you can, and work every side of the laydowns. If fishing Cedar Creek docks you want your jig to fall very slowly, so downsize to use a 1/16th ounce jigs, also in chartreuse.

Sand bass on Cedar Creek will act much like the crappie, with a good white bass run in the creeks. But first you'll find them early in the month on points, especially on overcast days. Throw 'Traps and jiggling spoons and you may also catch a few hybrids. By late March you'll almost always find them on the points, early morning and late in the day.

TEXOMA — For stripers I always consult with Dan Barnett, Texoma striper guide. His advice is simple, "Fish an Alabama rig." He goes on to say, "I don't know why anyone would use a single jig/swimbait rig anymore. Now you can offer an entire school of baitfish at once with this rig."

Keep in mind that he is not throwing a standard rig you can buy in the store. Dan makes his own rigs with stronger wire and components to withstand the larger fish. "A striper will destroy a rig designed for largemouth sized fish. Your rig has to be beefed up for these big stripers." In fact, many on Texoma have started calling these beefed up rigs the "Danabama" rig.

In addition to great striper fishing, Texoma has numerous smallmouth bass with many big ones. In March use small crankbaits, hair jigs, or whatever your favorite bait is.

You'll find smallmouth in pre-spawn, spawn, and post-spawn patterns. Smallies in all three phases can be aggressive towards your baits. You'll want to fish the many points and pockets, looking for big rocks next to little rocks. Citrus Shad and reds are the go-to colors in the crankbaits, and browns and blacks in the jigs.

If you want to go for numbers use the Alabama rigs. These can be the store bought variety as they are designed for bass. Just rig it with shad looking baits and fish alongside the bluffs.

PURTIS CREEK — March will see the majority of bass moving shallow,

looking to spawn. Start with a spinnerbait in a natural shad color with tandem willow leaf blades in nickel. Throw the spinnerbait as far as you can across points. These points are just outside the spawning coves. Another good choice on these points are the lipless rattling crankbaits in red, black/chrome or firetiger, depending on water color.

Always look for the warmest water in March. As you move along the shallow banks in between the points throw a hard jerkbait. The Rapala X-Rap, Husky Jerk or Original Floating Minnow are good choices. Use size 9 or 11 in firetiger.

Another good bait for covering water is the mini-Carolina rig. I've described this many times before. It's just a Texas rig with a rubber band threaded through the weight. This acts as a tension stop for the weight, and if I move it 18" or so away from the bait, I have a mini-Carolina rig. When I push the weight back against the bait, I'm back to a flippin' and pitchin' a Texas rig. I can cover both techniques with one rod, reel and bait. Usually I'll have a creature, craw or lizard on this outfit. Colors are black/blue, neon black/chartreuse, or red shad.

JIM CHAPMAN (Cooper) — Once thought to be the next big bass fishery on the scene, Cooper has developed a well-deserved reputation for hybrid bass fishing. In March you should be fishing shallow humps and windy points in less than 10 feet. Concentrate on the east end of the lake. Use a Sassy Shad with a 1/2oz. head, in chartreuse. Cast it out across the hump or point and reel it back fast enough to keep it off the bottom. The best fishing will be when the water temperature hits 60 degrees. That will probably occur in the afternoons in early to mid- March.

For those wanting to catch the crappie, they'll be moving into creeks like Noname and Doctors to spawn in the brush. Long poles and crappie jigs will catch them there. You can ease along and "dip" your jig into the brush.

RAY HUBBARD — If history holds



PHOTO COURTESY OF RICHARD JUE

Crappie will be spawning in March in lakes across the Lone Star State.

true, bass will move up to the railroad tracks in the Miller arm of the lake. Fish a Senko, a hard jerkbait, or any crankbait that sinks slowly at a rate of about a foot per second.

Bass will be looking for that magic water temperature number of 58. That's the temp where the fish begin to move shallow. When the rest of the lake is at 50 or 52, this will be a warmer area. In addition, it is shallow and the fish should be in just two or three feet of water. You should also fish the riprap with a 1/4 oz. white double willow-leaf bladed spinnerbait.

Another option for bass would be as far north as you can go on the Highway 66 side of the lake. Look to the levee at the old bridge, marked by a rock outcropping, and use the same lures.

Rowlett Creek, at the Chaha Road/Bass Pro Drive area, will be holding hybrids and sand bass. They'll be moving up the creek if they can. Fish from Bass Pro towards Robertson Park, and look from five feet to 25 feet, depending on temperature. You may also want to check the big cove below Chandlers Landing. It is protected from the south wind and fish will be chasing shad. They maybe spawning there by the end of the month. Use shallow running cranks and look for the birds. 🌟



CoastWatch | Danno Wise

March is certainly a time of transition along Texas' coastal curve. In fact, March essentially serves as a bridge between winter and spring. To saltwater fishermen along the Upper Texas and Louisiana coasts, this brings great change. February is most often the coldest, nastiest month of the year, whereas March begins to usher in more sunny, warm days. So, regardless of what else occurs, March is usually produces more comfortable days on the water.

This change is also beneficial to the fish in various bays, estuaries and near-shore waters. Redfish will be particularly active. Although reds have been on the flats during the warm, winter afternoons, they'll be spending much more time in the shallows as winter turns to spring.

Speckled trout will also be more active. March is usually a good time to catch trophy trout, but it also signals the start of 'numbers season.' In fact, often times trout fishermen must choose between chasing big fish or going after a cooler full of keepers.

Fishing pressure also transitions in March from a relatively few hardcore anglers to growing masses of casual fishermen. However, because there will be more active fish spread out over a greater amount of water, the increased number of fishermen will scarcely be felt.

Wind, on the other hand, can be an

issue. Throughout the winter, high winds prevailed immediately before and during frontal passages. However, anglers were typically afforded a few calm days between fronts. As March gets going calm days will become much more rare. But, a little extra wind is a small price to pay for warm weather and better fishing. 🌟🌟



Matagorda guide Capt. Tommy Countz says he'll be fishing in both East and West Matagorda bays during March.

"I'll be spending some time in both bays during March," said Countz. "March is one of our better trout months in West Bay, so I'll spend a lot of March in West Matagorda Bay. I'll start out throwing topwaters in the shallows. Then once the sun starts getting up high, I'll back out to the grass beds and the guts outside the bars. When I'm fishing the beds, I'll switch over to soft-plastics and will mostly be

targeting trout.

"We will also get a lot of redfish in West Bay in March. If we get a late northern that knocks all the water out of the bay, we'll have some really good redfish action. But, we usually have good redfish action in West Bay during March regardless.

"Even though I will be in West Bay most of the time in March, I will also be fishing in East Matagorda Bay at times. If I am fishing East Bay I'm usually drifting those mid-bay reefs. You can pick up a lot of good fish drifting East Bay in the spring. If you want to try and catch a little bigger fish, you can wade those reefs as well. If you're wading, you need to be throwing Corkys or topwaters and working them pretty slow. If you do that, it's possible to catch a really big trout. But, if you just want numbers, you can pick those fish up by drifting."

Big trout fishermen such as Sargent guide Capt. Trey Prye will be spending most of March wading in areas with mud and shell bottom, throwing topwaters and slow-sinking plugs for big yellow-mouthed sow specks. If a big trout is the goal, working the mud and shell along the south shoreline, on the east side of the bay and the southwest pocket will generally provide anglers with a good chance of hooking up to a trophy fish.

Freeport guide Capt. Mike Segal of Reel Threel Charters says both inshore and offshore action will be hot in March but as the month wears on he'll be spending more and more time offshore.

"In March, we start getting all those Spring Break trips going," said Segal. "We'll do some state water snapper around the reefs and rocks - and let me tell you, there are snapper everywhere. And, if we get the right weather, we might run out looking for kingfish. I'll also be doing some bay fishing trips in March.

"But, most of my stuff will be beachfront or nearshore. We'll do some bull red trips along the beachfront, near the mouth of Brazos River and around the mouth of the jetties. This time of



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPT. TOMMY COUNTZ

Anglers will be lining up to wade fish for speckled trout and redfish with Captain Tommy Countz. Countz says both East and Matagorda bays hold different options for anglers in March.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPT. MIKE SEGALL

Bull redfish trips along the beachfront out of Freeport are an option for anglers fishing with Reel Threel Charters. This angler hooked up with this big bull red and obviously likes the results.

year, you'll find those bull reds in 28 to 40 feet of water. We just fish for them with sardines on bottom. When we're fishing for bull reds, we usually pick up a few sharks as well. During March, most of the sharks are sharpnose and blacktip.

"People really don't think about fishing those bull reds much during spring, but we'll have some really good bull red action this month. Those fish are there - big fish. You just have to go after them. We can almost always catch big bull reds in March."

In Galveston, Capt. Greg Verm says he'll be spending most of his time around the jetties during March, although he will do a few trips into the back bay as well.

"In March, we are going to be gigging flounder and, mainly, going to be on the jetties catching big bull black drum on cracked crab in 20 feet of water," said Verm. "We'll also be catching spawning sheepshead around the jetties on freelined live shrimp. Ideally, we'll be at the jetties every day. But, of course, in March there are days when it is too windy to fish around the jetties.

"Usually when the wind is bad and we can't do the jetties, I'll take customers into the back bay and bayous to fish for specks and reds. When we're fishing back

there, we'll be throwing live shrimp under popping cork or live mullet on bottom. We will be catching some flounder in the bay as well. I actually do a fish/gig combo where we do some evening fishing and then some nighttime gigging. We're a little ahead of schedule this year because of the (warm) weather. The flounder have already started making their way back into bay. By March, the flounder run will be in full swing.

"Basically for me, March is a half and half month — half the time I'm around jetties and the other half I'm in the bay.

Again, my ideal trip during March is fishing around the rocks, but the wind will dictate where we can fish each day."

Sabine Lake guide Capt. Randy Foreman says the key to success in March will be finding mullet and fishing moving water.

"March is almost always one of the best months," said Foreman. "You can really catch a lot of fish, but you've got to find mullet and you have to fish on an incoming tide. If you don't have mullet and you don't have moving water, you won't catch nearly as many fish.

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“I’ll spend most of my time drifting the flats on the Louisiana side. Mostly, I’ll be fishing the mussel flats in two to four feet of water. This time of year, I mostly like throwing Z-Man soft-plastics in darker colors like Red Shad and Morning Glory. But, I’ll switch colors once the shrimp move into the lake. When shrimp become the primary food item, I’ll switch to glow/chartreuse. March is when we start seeing the shrimp come back into the lake. When they’re here, glow is the color you want to throw.

“The trigger for the shrimp moving back in and the fishing picking up is the warmer weather. Once it starts to warm up, the shrimp will be back in the lake. The tide also plays a role - if we have a good, strong incoming tide, it will push those shrimp in. On the south end of the bay, we’ll start seeing some good bird activity over the shrimp. Early in the month, it will mostly be small fish under the birds. But, by the middle of March you can catch some pretty good fish under the birds.

“We’ll also be catching a lot of redfish and flounder in March. The reds will still be on the banks in March. Just like



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPT. GREG VERM

Capt. Greg Verm shows off a nice bull redfish caught from the Galveston jetties. Verm will be at the jetties when weather allows for sheepshead, redfish, drum and trout.

February, the reds will be on the drops against the shorelines over shell. Plus, those big redfish will start showing up around the jetties. We can’t always fish the jetties in March because of the high wind

and rough water, but those big redfish will be there. When the weather allows us to fish there, we always catch plenty of big reds around the jetties during March.

“From mid-February through March, we have some pretty good flounder fishing as well. And, we’ll start seeing some good flounder fishing during March. I’ll be working the points and eddies and bayous along the Louisiana shore and using glow/chartreuse. I’ll also be using that same bait, fishing the drops along the Sabine channel. I’ll find areas where four feet of water drops to 10 feet and fish there for both flounder and trout.” ★★



On Lake Calcasieu, the guides at Big Lake Guide Service say big trout will be the top target in March. Fishermen looking for sow specks should concentrate on the shorelines – particularly soft-bottom shorelines – while throwing

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slow-sinking baits and topwater plugs. The warmer the day, the more productive surface offerings will be.

As the month wears on and the days get warmer, limits of trout will become much more commonplace as well. Fishermen looking to box numbers of keeper specks should concentrate on the reefs. When seeking school-size specks, soft-plastics and shrimp are usually the best bets for collecting a limit of specks during spring on Lake Calcasieu.

However, trout won't be the only option for Big Lake fishermen this month. Redfish will be roaming throughout the south end of Calcasieu during March, with most fish being found along the shorelines in knee- to waist-deep water. There will be plenty of reds around the weirs as well. A variety of soft-plastic lures and natural baits will tempt redfish during March.

For fishermen out of Venice, March is a prime tuna month. Offshore anglers making the run to the offshore lumps can expect to find plenty of tuna — and some really big tuna at that. Most of the fish found on the lumps in March are over 100 pounds, with 200 pounders being a real possibility. In fact, March is the month when most of Louisiana's record fish are caught, so anglers should expect to tangle with big bruiser tuna when working the lumps over the next few weeks.

March is also a great month for wahoo, which will also be thick around the lumps. Like the tuna, the wahoo run big in March, averaging around 50 pounds with 95 to 100 pound fish being common catches.

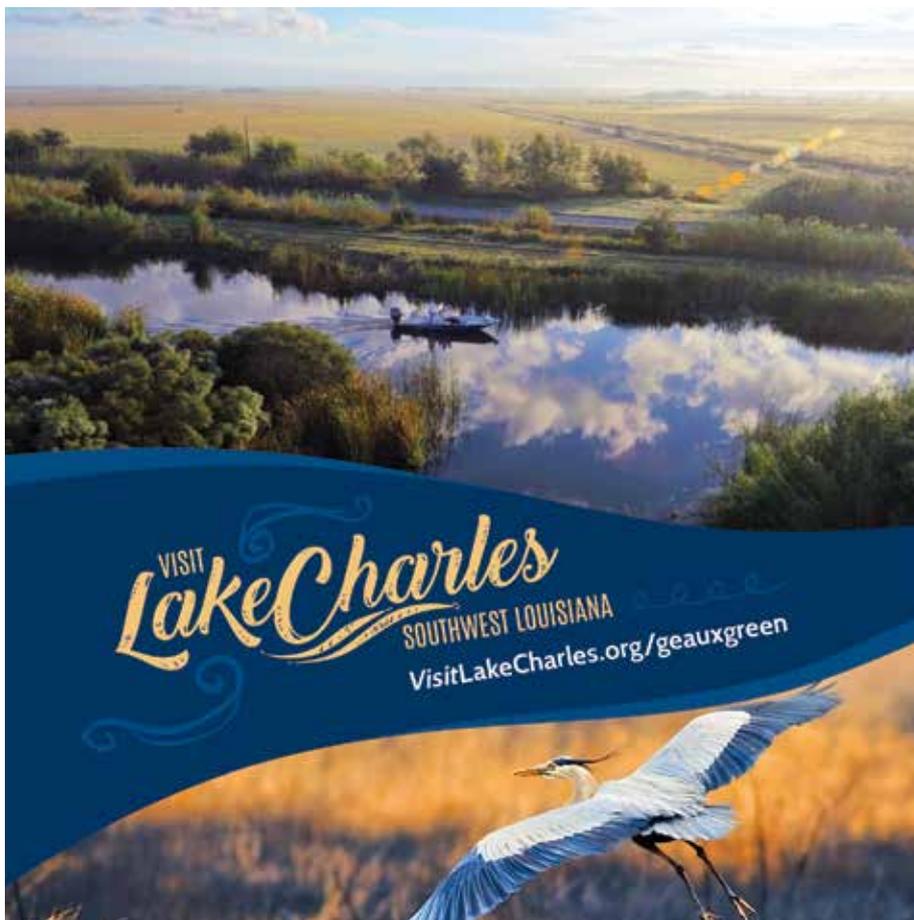
Back on the "inside," fishing for trout and redfish in the Venice area during March is mostly influenced by the condition of the Mississippi River in March. The three primary factors for inshore fishing in south Louisiana are water level, salinity and temperature. All three are controlled by the river. During March, the river water isn't influenced as much by local conditions as it is by the amount of snow melt and runoff up north. If the river is in good condition, low and salt, then anglers can expect good trout fishing with solid specks.

Anglers wishing to play it safe should target areas like the oyster bars around Hopedale which won't be affected as dramatically by the river conditions and will likely produce good catches all month regardless. **T★J**



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPT. RANDY FOREMAN

Captain Randy Foreman says Sabine Lake will start to see some good flounder fishing in March as flatfish spring run continues. He'll fish the points and eddies and bayous along the Louisiana shoreline.





What was HOT at SHOT 2019

Special and exciting times arrive in January for those who attend the annual Shooting Hunting Outdoor Trade Show, lovingly known as the S.H.O.T. SHOW. In addition to walking miles of aisles of all things shooting and hunting related that fills the Sands Expo and Convention Center, some of us are fortunate to be invited to Day at the Range. This highly coveted invitation takes place at the Boulder Rifle and Pistol Club's massive outdoor facility near Hoover Dam. A glorious day of test driving made even more challenging this year by a low 50's temperature and winds gusting to 50 m.p.h. Here are just some of the new goods touched and tested.

At the 2018 show Ruger tickled everyone with the reveal of their outstanding Ruger Precision Rifle originally offered in .308 Winchester and 6.5 Creedmoor scaled down to .22 long rifle. This year they have gone magnum with Precision Rifles starting with the .17 HMR and .22 WMR and growing up to .300 Win. Mag. and .338 Lapua Mag.

The rimfire magnums offer the same ergonomics, trigger and operation as the centerfire rifles. They even have a Big-Gun bolt throw adjustment for extending the bolt throw for centerfire training without the ammunition cost. The one-piece chassis and adjustable buttstock are molded from strong glass filled nylon. The



The Ruger Precision Rifle is now available in magnum calibers.

Quick-Fit stock allows easy adjustment for length of pull and comb height.

The 18 inch target barrel is threaded for popular attachments and is shrouded in a free-float handguard with many mounting opportunities for accessories. The Marksman Adjustable trigger can be externally tuned for 2.25 to 5 pounds. A great value for around \$ 500.00.

The centerfire magnums beef things up with 26 inch Cold hammer-forged chrome-moly steel barrels with 5R Rifling at minimum bore and groove dimensions, minimum headspace and centralized chamber and mounted on the business end is a Ruger Precision Rifle Hybrid Muzzle Brake to reduce recoil while minimizing noise and blast. Having test fired the .300 Win. Mag. at range day I can testify this brake works as promised. Also a competent gunsmith can replace barrels easily.

The upper receiver and one-piece bolt are precision CNC-machined from pre-hardened 4140 chrome-moly steel and the free-float M-LOK handguard is made of hard anodized aluminum. The lower magazine well halves are precision machined from aerospace-grade aluminum and are hard coat anodized for durability.

The MSR stock features a bottom Picatinny rail and soft rubber butt pad. The left-folding stock hinge is attached to an AR-

style buffer tube and accepts any AR-style stock. Length of pull and comb height are adjustable as is the aforementioned trigger. Whether you want to zip a 20 grain bullet down the barrel at 2,300 fps or slam a 225 grain bullet down range at 3,000 fps visit www.ruger.com and check out all the strength, adjustability and accessorizing of the Ruger Precision Rifles.

Brownells, long the to go to place for firearms parts and accessories entered the world of firearms manufacturing last year with their unique line of Retro Rifles in 5.56/.223 and 7.62/.308 with the correct styling and operation of the early AR rifles from the 50's and 60's. They did a great job on these and are selling all they can make.

This year sees the introduction of the BRN-PROTO based on AR-15 serial number 1, the Father of All AR-15's. This is a faithful replica of Eugene Stoner's very first AR-15 prototype. It has the distinctive trigger-like charging handle on top of the receiver, under the carry handle, just like the early AR-10 models (Note: The AR-15 was developed second.). It has the uncluttered "slick-side" upper receiver of the early rifles and stock, handguard, and pistol grip of brown reinforced polymer that replicates the look, but not the weaknesses, of the original fiberglass furniture. Internal dimensions conform to modern "mil-spec" standards, so it is compatible with off-the-shelf upgrade and replacement parts.



Mossberg Celebrates 100 years with the MC1sc 9mm subcompact.

The PROTO is chambered for 5.56/.223 and features a 20 inch barrel with 1-in-12 rifling, a forged/machined 7075 T6 aluminum receiver with matte gray anodizing, and a chrome-plated bolt/carrier group. It comes with one 25-round magazine and a "G.I. Operations Manual."

At present the M.S.R.P. is at \$ 1299.99, but I expect that to go down as manufacturing goes up.

Adding to the retro romance, Brownells introduced The Retro 4X Carry Handle Optic that closely replicates the look and performance of the original Colt 4X scope made for early models of AR-15-style rifles and carbines and it comes with correct mounting clamp included. Manufactured with high-quality Japanese glass to the original factory specifications, the Retro 4X Carry quickly and easily attaches to the AR-style carry handle. It has elevation adjustments marked in 100-yard increments out to 500 yards, and is calibrated for the trajectory of modern 5.56 ammunition. Announced retail is \$299.99.

Shooting the BRN-PROTO with the Retro 4X Carry Handle Optic was so enjoyable I almost wanted to re-enlist... almost. Also, Brownells announced a new line of precision optics and more on that soon. All can be viewed at www.brownells.com.

The Browning X-Bolt Max Long Range has been souped up for 2019 with the Composite MAX stock with fully adjustable comb and 1/4" and 2/3" length of pull spacers for adjusting length of pull to allow dial-in eye-to-scope alignment. This stock features three swivel studs for sling and bipod use and a black and gray textured stock finish. The X-Bolt's new three-lever Feather Trigger is crisp with no take-up or creep and minimal overtravel and is screw adjustable from three to five lbs.

The 26" stainless fluted heavy sporter barrel with a satin gray finish has a threaded muzzle brake with 5/8"-24 TPI suppressor threads and comes with a thread protector. The extended bolt handle helps speed the cycling of several hot calibers including the 6.5 Creedmoor. Pricing and more is at www.browning.com.

The big surprise from Mossberg was a handgun! In celebration of the company's 100th Anniversary, O.F. Mossberg &



Brownells BRN-PROTO Retro Rifle. The Father of all AR-15's.



The Browning X-Bolt Max Long Range.

Sons, Inc., has released the MC1sc (for subcompact). Interestingly, their first firearm design was a four-shot .22 pocket pistol named the Brownie.

The MC1sc is available in five initial 9mm offerings: the standard MC1sc and an optional cross-bolt safety version; two standard offerings with sighting systems choices of either TRUGLO Tritium Pro Night Sights or a Viridian E-Series Red Laser; and a Centennial Limited Edition with a production run limited to 1,000 commemorative models.

The MC1sc slide is stainless steel with a Diamond Like Coating finish, reducing slide friction and resisting wear. Multi-angle serrations ease the slide manipulation it has dovetailed-mounted, low-profile white 3-Dot sights. Frame is a glass-reinforced polymer. The barrel is stainless steel with the DLC coating. The flat profile trigger has an integrated blade safety and features a short reset, reduced over-travel, smooth take-up and has a five to six pound pull weight.

All models have a reversible magazine

release located behind the trigger guard. More innovation is an aggressive patent-pending Mossberg signature grip texturing, added palm swell and grip angle similar to a 1911, plus the new Mossberg Clear-Count single-stack magazines.

Constructed of a transparent, lubricious polymer compound, the magazines offer low friction and high wear-resistance, while providing quick at-a-glance assessment of the number and type of rounds loaded. The magazines also feature easy-to-remove floor plates and high-visibility followers. Each model comes with a flush six round and extended seven round magazine. Mossberg thought long and hard on the creation of this pistol because even though it is a 9mm subcompact weighing just 19 ounces, it was a joy to shoot at the range proving accurate with a superb trigger, low felt recoil and easy to hold on target. It is a value at a MSRP of \$ 421.00. Visit www.mossberg.com. Much more next time from S.H.O.T. 



Tackle Failure

The expression on his face told the whole story. Moments earlier, a trophy fish had crashed his offering and took off at burst speed, trying to put all the distance possible between its body and the boat. That's when things started to go wrong. Instead of pointing steadily at the fish, the angler's rod jumped back and forth like the arm of a giant metronome keeping time to each pulsating tail beat.

There was no question that the drag on the reel was going to fail. It was merely a matter of when. The reel began to screech in defiance as the spool started to hang up and yield line grudgingly. No one stands a chance against a fast running fish unless the reel boasts a smooth drag and the tackle functions perfectly. In this case, the line popped long before the first explosive run had subsided.

Tackle failure far exceeds angler error as the primary cause of lost fish. Rods, reels, and line require frequent inspection



This angler would not have stood a chance against this fast running fish unless his reel boasts a smooth drag and the tackle functions perfectly.

and a full measure of preventative maintenance. Keep in mind that salt water boasts corrosive elements that can create problems even when you don't use the tackle frequently.

Serious fishermen constantly monitor the performance of their tackle, even if they are using it every day. That means evaluating rods, reels, and line after every day on the water. Line and knots must be checked carefully. Any fraying must be cut off immediately and knots retied. Replacing line should be done frequently. It's cheap insurance. Consider, too, that anything less than a full spool of line produces a major handicap both in casting and in fighting a fish. It also affects the performance of the drag.

There is simply no excuse for tackle failure. Blame rests squarely and solely on the shoulders of the angler. It's totally frustrating to lose a good fish when a reel malfunctions or a frayed line parts before it should. A few minutes of reasonable care at the end of a day on the water can give you the advantage when that heavyweight fish strikes. If you watch leading anglers, you'll see them prepare for the next day's sport. It's been said that trophy fish are landed the night before you're on the water. Tackle preparation prevents tackle failure and that's the key.

Rods and reels should be cleaned after each day on the water and inspected for any signs of failure. That does not mean a major overhaul, but rather lubrication where necessary and removal of any salt. You want to make sure that the reel cranks smoothly and the drag releases line easily at its setting. A little lubrication can make a significant difference. Periodically, you may have to replace the drag washers, so it pays to keep spares on hand.

It's not a bad idea to maintain a log on each major item of equipment, noting the dates and the maintenance performed. The type of fishing you do and the frequency will dictate the primary maintenance required. As a bare minimum, all of your major fishing tackle should be overhauled at least once a year and more often if you fish hard.

Let me emphasize again, that after each trip, all the tackle should be washed off carefully and dried before being stowed. A mild detergent will help to remove salt deposits, particularly on those days when the salt spray seems to be everywhere. When you spray water on a reel, tilt the reel downward so the water flows across it and off instead of filtering through the insides. A sponge or chamois can also be used.

Wiping a reel with a rag saturated



PHOTOS BY BILL L. OLSON

A few minutes of reasonable care at the end of a day on the water can give you the advantage when that heavyweight fish strikes.

with a demoisurizing spray can also help. Many anglers make the mistake of squirting oil into a reel frequently. On levelwinds, you can lubricate the worm gear and pawl that holds the line guide. A drop of oil inside the handle knob will also improve performance. However, putting a lot of fresh lubricant inside a reel without removing the old oil compounds the problem.

When you take a reel apart for major maintenance, use a degreaser to clean all of the old lubricant. Then, inspect the parts for wear and change any that need replacement. Be sure to put new oil and grease in the appropriate spots. Otherwise, old dirt mixes with the new oil or grease turning it into an abrasive grit that can damage parts of the reel.

Fishing rods seldom receive much attention, but they should. Clean the entire rod after each outing and then wipe the reel seat with an oily rag or one saturated with demoisurizing spray. This will keep the threads from clogging and hanging. If the rod has roller guides, check them periodically to make sure they are turning. And, don't forget to clean and lubricate them. A roller that doesn't roll



Replacing line should be done frequently — it's cheap insurance. Anything less than a full spool of line produces a major handicap both in casting and in fighting a fish, plus it also affects the performance of the drag.

can cause problems.

Periodically, check the guides on the rod to make sure they haven't grooved or generated rough spots. Even the slightest nick in a guide can fray the line and cost you a good fish. If you have access to an old nylon stocking, work it back and forth through each guide on the rod. If it

catches at all, change the guide. If you don't have a stocking handy, study each guide with a magnifying glass.

Leading fishermen will tell you that if you take care of your tackle, it will perform to perfection when the fish of your dreams feels the barb of the hook.

T★J

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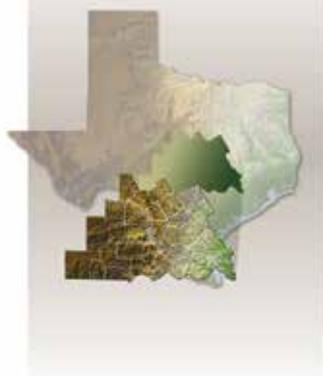
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Lake Roundup

CENTRAL TEXAS



By John Jefferson

Returning from the Hill Country on Saturday, January 12, I swung by Kingsland to see how the work was progressing on the 2900 Bridge over the **Llano River** that was ripped apart by the powerful fall flood.

Surprisingly, there was much activity at the reconstruction site for a Saturday afternoon. Boats, barges and workers in hard hats were hard at work.

Texas Department of Transportation chose a highly qualified company that it had utmost confidence in to rebuild the bridge. I called TXDOT to see if there was an estimated time for completion. They said sometime in *April – this year!* I'm no engineer, but that's a lot sooner than I expected.

It looks like a long way to go by April, but from TXDOT's opinion and the diligence I observed, I wouldn't wager against it.

From a fishing standpoint, it's hard to say how spring-spawn fishing for white bass in the Llano River will be affected. White bass are about as persistent as salmon when it comes to getting upstream to make baby bass although the whites don't have to swim up fish ladders to get past dams to the gravel spawning areas or fear grizzly and black bears or hungry eagles along the way. White bass – called sand bass in North Texas – do have to deal with needle-nose gars, striped bass,



PHOTO BY JOHN JEFFERSON

A large sandbar emerged as Lake LBJ was lowered recently for damage repairs resulting from the October flood. It's reported that the sandbar existed beneath the lake's surface but was enlarged by the silt and debris coming downstream in the flood waters.

intrepid fishermen, blue herons, ospreys, occasional eagles and outboard motor propellers along the way.

They seem to succeed each spring and will probably swim through the bridge reconstruction area this spring to spawn in the moving waters of the Llano, a traditional hotspot for white bass fishermen. Practically all flowing streams leading away from every Central Texas lake can be choice fishing haunts this year. The streams are gushing after the fall rains and are expected to continue flowing past the end of the spawn, which usually plays out in late March or April. As you read this, the run is likely on right now.

After looking at the 2900 Bridge work, we continued back through Kingsland, grabbed a Blizzard at DQ, crossed **Lake LBJ** and took 1431 toward Marble Falls. Winding to the top of the big hill southeast of Kingsland, we pulled into the scenic overlook that affords one of the most photographed sights in Texas. It's a splendid view of LBJ (the lake), the mouth of the Llano River and some of the surrounding Hill Country.

But I had to blink twice. Something I had never seen before stunned me. There is now a sandbar near the middle of the river/lake that is 400-500 yards in length. My first thought was that it was caused by the fall flood on the Llano and debris coming down the **Colorado River** from lakes **Inks** and **Buchanan**. Apparently, that is only half the explanation.

The Lower Colorado River Authority said the floodwater and debris had probably created the sandbar. TPWD inland fisheries biologist Marcos de Jesus says the sandbar has always been there, but it was not visible until Lake LBJ was lowered, beginning in late December 2018. It appears both agencies are right. The lowering of LBJ and **Lake Marble Falls** was done to allow Lakeside landowners to repair docks and other damage caused by the October flooding. It was originally planned that LBJ would be lowered a little more, but the company constructing the new 2900 Bridge requested through TXDOT that the lake level not be lowered additionally since that could interfere with

the company's barges and equipment. The request was granted in order to get the bridge completed as soon as possible.

Will that affect fishing? Possibly. Practically any shoreline attracts fish. During spawning season, it would seem to be more pronounced, since many species prefer building nests in shallower water. Think about the *Sometimes Islands* in Lake Travis: As the droughts lengthen, the islands begin to appear. During prolonged droughts (are there any other kind in Central Texas!), the islands get larger. During one of the last droughts, Phillip Walker caught an eight-pounder that was the "Big Bass" in a tournament. Walker caught it fishing the *Sometimes Shoreline* with a wacky worm.

If given the chance, I'll fish around the new *Sandbar Island*. It looks to me like silt and debris from up-rivers settled out onto the previously existing sandbar causing it to be enlarged. As Marcos de Jesus told me, "I'm interested in seeing



PHOTO COURTESY OF PHILLIP WALKER

Phillip Walker is mentioned in the text as catching the "big bass" in a Lake Travis tournament, an eight-pounder. He seems to have an affinity for eight-pound largemouths, having won the "big bass" in a January tournament on LBJ (pictured here), fishing shallow rocks with square-billed crankbaits. He says LBJ was not hurt by the flood.

if it becomes an island at full pool in a few days." Me, too.

The two lowered lakes should be back to normal by now, so we'll see.

On another jaunt, I ended up at the small park at the Cypress Creek boat ramp on Lake Travis. A man was sitting on a concrete block on the far end of the park wearing waders and a fishing vest. Beside him was a fly rod. I told him it seemed like a set-up question for Bill Engvall, "But, was he going fishing?"

He smiled politely and replied, "No, just coming from. Wind's picking up; hard to fly-cast."

We talked. He hadn't done any good that January afternoon, despite it being just ahead of a cold front. Clouds were forming and the wind was rippling the lake. He told me he has had good luck in that cove in the past – even showed me the picture of a six and a half pound largemouth and pointed across the lake to an area below and to the right of the large white house built there about 10 or 12 years ago. He said he had caught the bass there.

I looked with envy. I had lived in a small cabin there – now long gone — that Thoreau wouldn't have lived in right where he pointed. I had fished that area unsuccessfully for years. I took the gentleman in waders for a lifetime fly-fisher that knew secrets I needed to hear.

Wrong. His name was Joe Rudyk – pronounced "Rude-ik". That may be the way to say it, but rudeness is no part of his nature. And he's only been *successfully fly-fishing* for four years although he's owned a fly rod for 45.

"I would take it out once or twice a year, scare some fish away and break out my spinning gear," he admitted. I identified with that.

He took his family to northern New Mexico on a winter ski trip and hired a fly-fishing guide for some winter fishing.

"I learned more in 10 minutes than I knew my entire life," he said. "The next



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOE RUDYK

Joe Rudyk holds a 6.5-pound largemouth caught on fly-tackle in the Cypress Creek arm of Lake Travis.

day, I went out on my own and caught a wild, high-mountain brown trout." That started an obsession. He now owns eight fly rods. And he's buying another this year. So far, he's caught 21 different species on fly rods. His guide told him he could catch anything on a fly rod that he could catch on spinning gear. He has.

He caught his biggest bass on a top-water wiggle worm fly, but usually uses baitfish streamers. "I try to imitate the baitfish in the water I'm fishing in," he said, pointing to a school of glass minnows in the shallows behind him. Then he showed me pictures of crappie and white bass he fly-caught.

He said he was heading the following week to Reimers Ranch on the Pedernales for white bass. It's a traditional white bass honey hole in the spring. I may tag along to learn. **T★J**



"Easing" Into Offshore Fishing!

Although many anglers think of "offshore" fishing as taking place over the horizon, out of sight of the shoreline, realistically anytime we venture past the breakers at the beach we have begun our entry into the "offshore" realm. While some of the fish species that might be encountered in the "close" offshore waters are virtually the same as those found in the bays, there will usually be a mixture with fish types encountered farther from land, in deeper and wider waters.

If we consider the "near" offshore grounds to extend to perhaps 10 to 12 miles from the beach; however, the chance of finding Spanish and king mackerel, ling (cobia), and even occasionally school dolphin increases. Structure in these waters might also hold red snapper – also the yellow stripes of lane snappers will be more common. Various grouper may also occasionally roam almost to the beach in some areas. More common, of course,



PHOTOS BY BILL L. OLSON

Anglers armed with trout tackle while fishing for specks around the short rigs off Texas upper coast may be battling jack crevalle too.



Out of Port Mansfield where the Continental Shelf moves closer to shore and deep water is within sight of the beachfront, anglers can catch grouper as well as red snapper and other ground fish.

are jack crevalle, various sharks, and bull reds.

Most of these species prefer clear water conditions – especially closer to shore. However, they also use the sometimes murky water as "cover" for themselves, as well as habitat bait species use for their protection.

As an angler who spent many days – and nights – watching surf rods cast from the beach, I have caught nice kings from the beach, seen trophy sized tarpon jump on a tight line in the inshore guts, and "wrestled" with big stingrays over the 100 pound mark while standing with my feet on solid sand. I have watched as a 6/0 reel was emptied of line by a big shark and as a larger one took a lot of line off a 12/0 reel! These fish were hooked on large baits that were waded or swam past the second sandbar, or even rowed further out past the third bar in an inflatable raft or kayak. One of my most exciting experiences was watching a blacktip shark that I honestly believe would have been

a state record jump several times while my fishing partner and I watched, and tried to hold on, from my 16' dory hulled beach-launched skiff. While we ended up "losing" that battle, several times we did tow sharks in the 100 pound range back to shore tail roped behind that little boat.

One of our most proud achievements was when outdoor writer Ken Grissom of the Houston Post newspaper ran a picture of Dave and I with a 105 pound stingray, a 46 pound blacktip shark, and bull reds of 41 and 32 pounds hanging from a pole after a successful night's fishing from the beach with baits taken past the breakers on a small inflatable "life raft" powered by our legs and swim fins.

Fishing the "near shore" waters can be done from small craft launched from the beach, or larger vessels that venture near shore after entering the Gulf through a "pass" or river outlet. When my personal goal was to seek big fish close to shore, my friends and I used either fiberglass "dories." These are crafts with shallow draft hulls with enough "flair" to ride over moderate height seas in a measure



Kingfish are a willing specie along the Texas coast. Trolling, drifting weediness or fishing around nearshore rigs or jetties will find these pelagic.

of safety and comfort, yet light enough in weight for one of two anglers to launch them.

Normally we simply backed the boat trailer to the waters edge behind a 4WD vehicle until we could slide the boat off in enough water to at least partially float the hull off. Then the “drill” was to pull the small vessel past the first or second sandbar – depending on water depth over the bars until the depth was enough to tilt the 15 – 25 horsepower outboard down enough to crank the engine and get raw water circulation sufficient for cooling while allowing the engine to warm up enough for efficient operation.

When the engine was “ready” and tilted deep enough for the prop to get a good “bite” in the water (remembering that sometimes there is a large amount of “suds” that consist more of air bubbles than water!). Then the real fun begins.

With the water depth still shallow enough to be able to climb into the hull, both boat operator and passengers get aboard as best they can and the trip past the breakers begins. I would never advise anyone to take needless “chances” in this sort of operation, but in truth a good “surf boat” will surprise most at how well they handle moderate waves.

Long before I tried this myself, I spent quite a bit of time watching commercial fishermen launching their

much larger plywood dories from the beach on Galveston Island to head out for shrimping and other netting operations in the same sort of near-shore waters I wanted to fish. Most of these guys were happy to help me fish for sharks by donating baitfish, as it was not unusual for them to feel an occasional “tug” as a big shark went into – and through – their nets, always causing some degree of damage.

Once past the surf line, you are



On light wind days with calm seas, the “mosquito fleet” will be found working around rigs located within sight of shore. A variety of species hold around this structure.

already in “big fish” water. Either drifting or fishing from anchor, depending on current speed and direction, can produce bull reds, jacks, and shark close to the beach. Venturing a bit further out into deeper water increases the chance of larger sharks and even tarpon being encountered.

Chumming either from anchor or when tied to a close rig or simply drifting along the shoreline will always increase fishing action. Chum can be “left over” bait from a previous outing, or freshly captured small shad and finger mullet caught with a cast just off the beach. When the surf is clear and calm, this sort of fishing can be very productive and exciting.

With “target” species running from “pan-fish” like Gulf trout, croaker, and Spanish Mackerel to trophy shark and tarpon – with a lot of prized fish species to be found between these extremes – the “Near Shore” Gulf has a lot to offer the fisherman.

Of course, while fishing close in, it is usually difficult not to keep glancing further offshore to monitor water conditions and watch for evidence of fish schools working the surface. This is a normal situation for most of us, but in the right water conditions, in the right boat properly equipped, given stable weather, there are times when a journey a bit farther “out” is very, very appealing. 🌟🌟



Lake Roundup

SOUTH TEXAS



By Danno Wise

March usually offers the first signs of spring across South Texas. The gradually warming weather encourages more activity from both fish and fishermen in the region. This past winter was up and down, weather-wise, starting with a few early cold fronts, but never really developing into the extreme winter many had expected. Nonetheless, more consistent sun and warmer weather is still a welcome sight to South Texas anglers.

Most all South Texas lakes are in fine shape, water-wise. The spring weather seems to be on target. This combination should result in excellent March fishing for a variety of species on lakes across South Texas. Black bass, white bass, crappie, bluegill, catfish – virtually every species will be more active and more aggressive. This all adds up to more action for fishermen on South Texas lakes as spring gets underway.

COLETO CREEK – According to Victoria bass pro Dennis Lala, shallow water fishing will be heating up on Coleto this month, including some late season spawning bass action.

“We should have some good shallow water fishing in March,” said Lala. “Those fish will be coming in to spawn, so they’ll be up shallow. A lot of the fish will have already spawned by March, but there will still be some big ones on the beds that haven’t spawned yet. Those fish will be up shallow this month.

“My favorite bait in March will still be a Power Jerkshad. Watermelon/red and Baby Bass are colors that will work well. I’ll use it rigged Carolina-style when the fish are deep. But, when the fish are shallow, I’ll fish it weightless, with just a hook.

“You can also drag chartreuse and white spinnerbaits off the shorelines and across beds and do real well. I like throwing one with double gold willowleaf blades. Spinnerbaits can also work well on the edges, if you just let them fall off the drops. We’ll have some topwater action in March, too. It won’t be real strong – because the water’s still warming up – but there will be some fish caught on topwaters. My favorites are noisy topwaters like the Rattlin’ Buzz.

“In the afternoon, I’ll fish a little deeper, concentrating on points, drops and offshore structure. I’ll mostly use a Carolina-rigged Power Jerkshad or a Shaky Worm.

“After those fish spawn, they back off the beds and move a little deeper. But, those post-spawn fish will eat just about anything once they get straightened out. This time of year, you can do real well with a Rattling Frenzy. You can also do real well be slow-rolling a spinnerbait.

“If they’re generating on the lake, there will still be plenty of fish around the hot water discharge. The fun thing about fishing the discharge is you never know what you’ll catch from that area. You can catch hybrids, black bass, catfish, crappie, white bass – everything hangs around the discharge when it’s pumping. You can throw Rattlin’ Frenzies, spoons and crankbaits for black bass and white bass. Jigs and minnows work well for crappie and white bass. Nightcrawlers and shrimp are good for catfish.”

MEDINA – Entering spring, Medina is full and fishing should be good, according to Jim Gallagher of Jim’s ReBait tackle.

“March should be a real good month for us,” Gallagher said. “In March, we’ll have spawning fish throughout the lake. Look for the spawning to get started in

the upper end of the lake and move down to the lower end of the lake within three or four weeks. It is a progression from the upper lake to the lower lake, but it all happens within weeks. So, if you’re catching spawning fish on the upper end of the lake today, don’t go back there next week. Go to the middle of the lake. And, the week after that, go to the lower end of the lake. Don’t keep going back to the same old beds week after week, because they won’t be there.

“If you can see the beds, you can try sight-casting to them. All of the old standard spawning bass baits – lizards, creature baits, that sort of thing – will work. Usually, it boils down to perseverance. Sometimes you just have to keep throwing until you get that bass mad enough to take a swipe at it. A lot of people just don’t stick with it long enough.

“The bigger fish will be off the ledges and points. We’ve had good water levels for the past couple of years and I think the bass have been able to grow a little because of it. I would expect several fish in the eight pound class to be caught. I wouldn’t be shocked to some double-digit fish caught, too. We have those fish in this lake, but they are awfully hard to catch.

“By the end of March, the spawn will pretty much be over so most of the lake will be in a post-spawn pattern. The spawn is pretty tough on those fish. Once it’s over, they’re off the beds and out of the shallow water. They go deep and shut their mouth. They’re there, but they’re tough.

“Just as the black bass spawn is ending, the white bass spawn will be getting going. Early in the month, the male and female whites will still be in the lake. By mid-month, they’ll start breaking off and heading into the rivers. The hybrids will start up the rivers to. They’ll go through the motions (because they can’t spawn), so they’ll be up there too. There will be some big hybrids in pretty shallow water.

“Overall, I think March fishing is as good as it is in October. So long as we

don't have any really late fronts or floods, we should have a real good month."

CHOKO CANYON — Choke Canyon usually sees its bass population spawn a bit earlier than other Texas lakes. So, while anglers may still be able to come across a few spawning fish on Choke Canyon this month, the majority of spawning activity will be over by the time March begins. Any fish that have yet to spawn will be located on the lower end of the lake. Anglers determined to find any late spawning fish should look for bedded fish along sandy shorelines.

The spawn always starts in the river and upper portion of the lake, so the fish in these areas will already be in a post-spawn pattern by the beginning of March. When the fish transition to post-spawn mode, they'll be concentrated around mid-depth structure. Look for deep grass beds, points and channel edges to be holding plenty of fish.

Spring of 2019 sees the water level in Choke about twice as high as it was a year ago, so there is plenty of fishable water. As of early February the lake was 13.96 feet low compared to about 25 feet low at the same time in 2018.

Although the black bass spawn will be pretty much over, the crappie spawn should be in full swing. Most spawning crappie will be holding tight to shorelines in flooded brush. Minnows, as well as small jigs and downsized crankbaits, will produce plenty of slabs this month.

FALCON — Although much of Falcon Lake will have already experienced the spawn by March, fishermen will still be able to find a few bedding fish in the lower portion of the lake. As has been the case over the past few months, many of these fish will be able to spawn in relative peace thanks to the heavy canopy of newly flooded brush covering much of the shoreline. Anglers looking for spawning fish should push back as far as possible into the flooded brush.

Post-spawn fish will be the norm on Falcon this month. Those fish will be located on the secondary points, as well as along the outside edges of the flooded timber. These fish should be much easier for anglers to reach and will greedily gobble crankbaits and spinnerbaits drug along the edge of the brush line.

Whether fishing for spawning or post-spawn fish, anglers headed to Falcon

are encouraged to spool up with heavy braided line in order to get fish out of the thick cover where they are generally found on Falcon. **T★J**



By TOJ Staff

AMISTAD — When the third month in the past four years has arrived, "Big Friendly" has been about 24 feet below conservation pool. That will once again occur in 2019.

Anglers should refer to their notes and will probably find that most of the action will be near the mouths of creek and rivers. If black bass are not spawning in those areas then work upstream until fish are found.

Texas rigs, Senkos and jig and pigs are all good options for fish on beds. In areas of the main lake where fish have not yet move up, try spinnerbaits to find fish. Once the buck bass are found, look to deeper water for staging females.

In the deep water in front of the dam stripers should be feasting under the birds. For fish on the surface throw Red Fins or broken-back lures. For sub-surface fish try Rat-L-Traps or spoons.

Catfish will still be in deeper water. Look for catfish in water over 65 feet deep.

O.H. IVIE — What difference will an additional 20-30 feet of water make on this big bass producer? Anglers are going to have an opportunity to find out this spring. As of early February Ivie was 16.8 feet low, a level not seen since 2009.

Veteran Ivie guide Kevin Burleson says, "fishing could be tough because of all the newly flooded vegetation with lots of areas being tough for anglers to reach. Plus I expect a good shad hatch with all of this cover. That means there is going

to be plenty to eat."

In the longer and bigger scheme of things look for some big bass to come from Ivie, but it is going to be to those anglers that are willing to work for 'em and maybe get a few scratches on the fiberglass. It could well be later in the season when the deep spawn occurs in May or June.

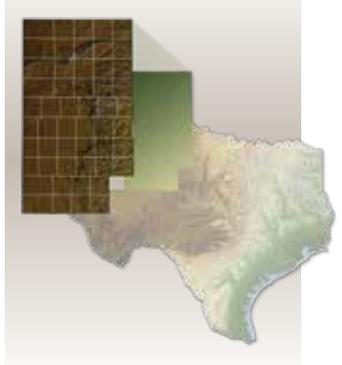
Ivie should see a recovery with lots of old spawning flats back in play. Look inside and outside of the mouths of creek and river channels this month.

With all of the flooded woody vegetation square bill crankbaits will be a good option. Rat-L-Traps will cover pockets of open water. Jigs and Texas rigs will be go-to choices once spawning areas are located.

BROWNWOOD — As of early February this lake was about a quarter of a foot above pool. With the exception of March 2018 when the lake was three and a half feet low, this slightly above full level has been what spring has offered anglers each March since 2016.

Look for bass to be in a pre-spawn transition or on beds to start March. Jig-n-pigs are a proven "old school" offering. Jigs and Senkos are options to irritate bedded females. **T★J**

HIGH PLAINS



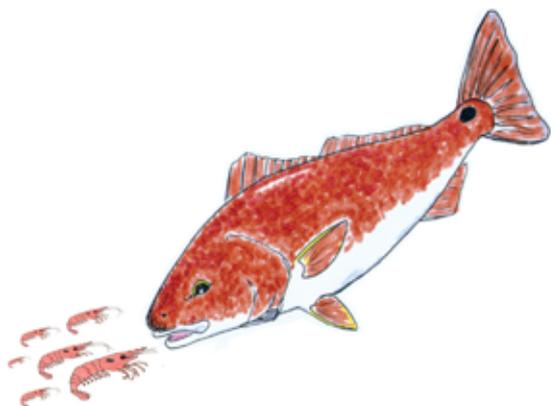
By TOJ Staff

Most of the lakes in the High Plains will have black bass in a pre-spawn mode. Water temperatures will still be on the cool side for a consistent spawn to occur until the middle-to-late in the month.

With cooler water temps anglers should try for walleye on Lake **Meredith**. Lake **Nasworthy** or **Oak Creek Reservoir** could show some early spring bass activity. **T★J**

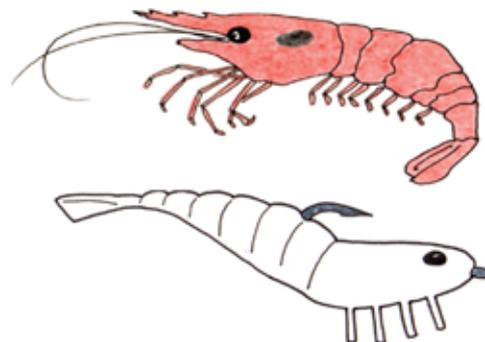


Matching the Spring Hatch

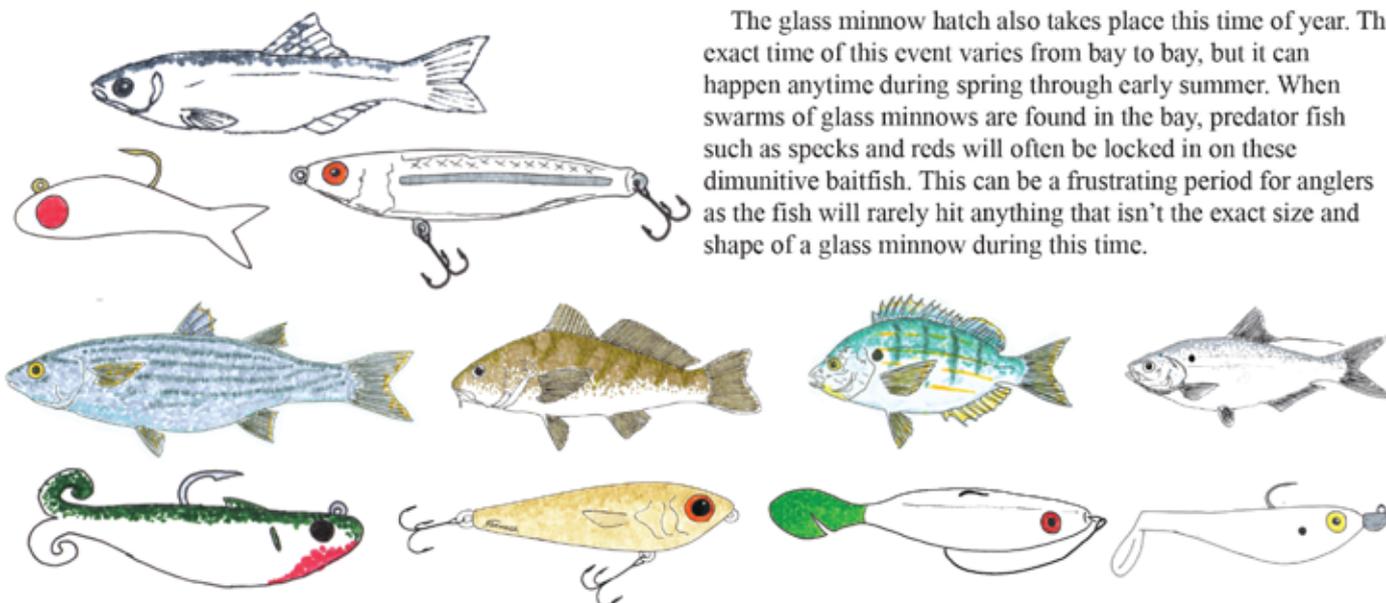


As spring gets underway during March, the warming weather and water will usher in spawning season for a variety of prey items in Texas coastal waters. Throughout the month, predator species such as redfish and speckled trout will continuously change their diet based on which prey item is most prevalent in their surrounding waters at that moment. Not only will the type of prey change often, so will the size as the newly spawned shrimp and baitfish grow throughout spring and early summer. Often times during this period, fish will be so ultra-focused on the prevailing type and size of bait, that they won't hit anything else. As a result, over the next few months anglers need to be observant and versatile, altering their lure and bait offerings to "match the hatch."

Shrimp are the "catch-all" bait of the coast. And, during March, shrimp will be found throughout the bays, marshes and estuaries along the Texas coast. When anglers see shrimp skipping across the surface, they can be assured fish beneath are feeding on these tasty crustaceans. Live shrimp or shrimp-imitating lures such as the DOA Shrimp are a sure-fire way to draw strikes. Anglers can also work soft-plastic jigs. However, when fishing around shrimp concentrations, colors such as glow and glow/chartreuse tend to produce the best results. Additionally, the size of the jig should more or less match the size of the shrimp - 2.5- to 3.5-inches, depending on the size of the shrimp at that particular time.



The glass minnow hatch also takes place this time of year. The exact time of this event varies from bay to bay, but it can happen anytime during spring through early summer. When swarms of glass minnows are found in the bay, predator fish such as specks and reds will often be locked in on these diminutive baitfish. This can be a frustrating period for anglers as the fish will rarely hit anything that isn't the exact size and shape of a glass minnow during this time.



From spring through summer, a variety of other baitfish will alternately take top spot on the dietary list for speckled trout and redfish. Mullet, croaker, pinfish and shad will all take their turn as the primary forage fare. Obviously, live bait fishermen should choose to throw the version of baitfish that is the most prevalent at the time. Artificial lure fishermen, likewise, should choose lures that closely imitate the size, shape and color of what the fish are feeding on at that moment.

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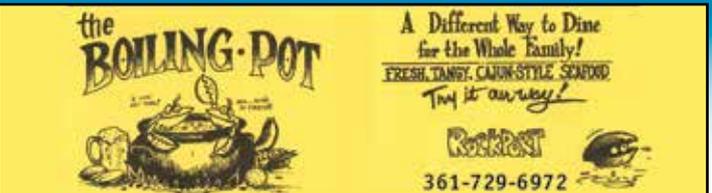
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The Other Fish of Spring

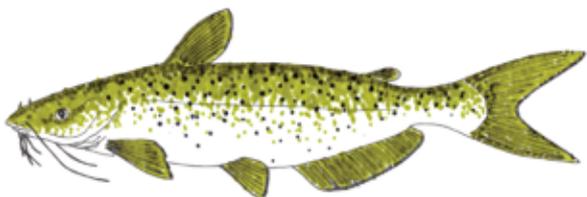
March means warming water and more active fish in Texas lakes, rivers, ponds, streams and creeks. Of course, black bass are always at the forefront of freshwater fishermen's minds. But, beginning in March a myriad of other freshwater fish will also be actively sought by anglers.



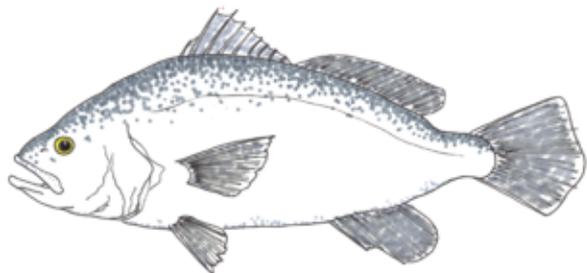
Crappie -- "White Perch" are in the midst of their spawn during March. In most instances, crappie will find their way into coves or feeder creeks and bayous to spawn in the shallows. They most often find some sort of structure, such as grassy shorelines, overhanging brush, or standing timber. Live minnows and grass shrimp are among the top crappie baits, but fish will also hit a variety of small lures, jigs and spoons.



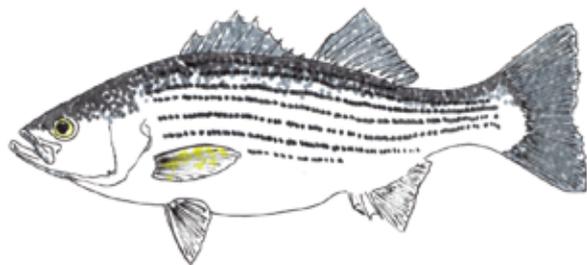
Bluegill -- A variety of "sunfish", including bluegill, will be found in coves and along shorelines during spring. They will be there to spawn and will often be found over their disc-shaped nests, usually in sandy bottom areas. It is not uncommon to find fairly expansive bluegill "beds" consisting of numerous nests situated in a relatively small area. Bluegills will hit a variety of natural and artificial baits, including nightcrawlers, grubs, crickets, grasshoppers, small spoons and jigs.



Channel Catfish -- Channel cats are among the most popular and accessible freshwater fish species in Texas. They are found in virtually every body of freshwater in the state. However, not near as much attention is given to their spawn as to that of other species. Like most freshwater fish in Texas, channel catfish spawn during spring and early summer. They usually do so in areas such as undercut banks or around brush piles, logs or rocks. They can be caught on just about any natural bait - nightcrawlers, grubs, crawfish, shrimp, grasshoppers and crickets being among the most popular.



Freshwater Drum -- Commonly called "gaspergou," freshwater drum are found in most Texas creeks and rivers, as well as a number of lakes in the Lone Star State. They, too, will be spawning during spring and can usually be taken on crawfish or nightcrawlers.



White Bass -- One of the most famous spawning "runs" is that of the white bass. During spring, these popular gamefish will make their way as far upstream as possible in rivers, creeks and streams across Texas. They spawn in shallow, swift-moving water. Huge concentrations of white bass are found at this time and can usually be caught on various small plugs, spoons and jigs.

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A Noisy Spring — Calling Turkey & Predators



Hunters across the Lone Star State will be making some noise this spring as turkey seasons will get underway this month and predator hunting continues. There is something special about seeing the varied landscapes across Texas begin to awaken from its winter nap. The green up is gradual and slowly spreads from the South Texas Brush Country, through the Hill Country and on into the Panhandle. Add in the Piney-woods on west to the Trans-Pecos region and spring is a special time for hunters that take advantage of this exceptional opportunity.

In addition to the landscape green up — it is the time for procreation by both Rio Grande and Eastern turkeys as well as for coyotes, fox, and bobcats. The time to mate provides the opportunity to call and harvest, as well as call and control numbers.

Predator hunters have been in the field using mouth blown calls or electronic callers since the whitetail deer seasons closed back in January. They know that controlling the numbers of predators will be beneficial to the survival of fawns that will hit the ground in late spring and early summer.

Turkey hunters have been looking forward to being able to call in a mature gobbler since this season closed at the end of last April or mid-May. Being able to imitate calls of a receptive hen and raise a gobble-response and seeing a Tom-on-the-trot coming to the call creates an unmatched adrenaline rush for the hunter. The only other animal that provides similar excitement is the response of a rutting bull elk in the fall.

Both turkey hunters and predator hunters should match camo to the changing color of the landscape. Wear patterns with green on the lower portion of the body will blend with grasses and forbs as they sprout. Stick with gray patterns on the upper body until bushes and small trees leaf out.

“Old school” is hard to beat for hunters pursuing both species that want to really experience that “close encounter” with called game. Besides matching the camo pattern, make sure to wear long-cuffed gloves, facemask, and long dark green or black socks.

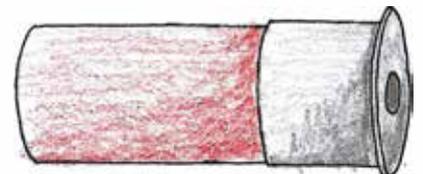


Shotguns, bows and rifles are good choices for predators. Shotguns and bows are options for turkey. Practice with the choice of weapon used and practice with calls will tell if enough preparation was done prior to the hunt.



Use the terrain and vegetation to your advantage and to breakup the human silhouette. The use of a tree or big, thick bush does this well when a fully camouflaged hunter quietly sits in front of it.

Turkey hunters and predator hunters many times use a small square, low profile stool that provides enough a few inches of height to provide comfort as well as visibility. Older predator hunters may want to try using an elevated stool or short chair when using an electronic caller. With the caller situated away from the hunter the incoming coyote, fox or bobcat will be focused on the location of the sound and not on the still, silent hunter.



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Outdoor Calendar

THROUGH MARCH 17,

Light Goose Conservation Season, **West Zone** (151 counties). For more information consult the Texas Outdoors Annual, or call (800) 792-1112.

THROUGH MARCH 17,

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

THROUGH AUGUST 31,

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

THROUGH AUGUST 31,

Squirrel Year-Round Season, (**open counties with no bag limit**). For more information refer to TPWD Outdoor Annual, or call (800) 792-1112.

MARCH 1,

Conroe Chapter Ducks Unlimited fundraiser banquet, **Conroe**. For more information call (936) 537-1561 or (936) 520-4944 or visit www.ducks.org.

MARCH 1,

Red River Valley Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation fundraiser banquet, **Paris**. For more information

call (903) 401-0142 or visit www.nwtf.org.

MARCH 1,

Mineola Chapter Ducks Unlimited fundraiser banquet, **Mineola**. For more information call (903) 569-3050 or (903) 245-1263 or visit www.ducks.org.

MARCH 1,

Highland Lakes Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation fundraiser banquet, **Marble Falls**. For more information call (830) 693-7520 or visit www.nwtf.org.

MARCH 1,

Smith County Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation fundraiser banquet, **Tyler**. For more information visit www.nwtf.org.

MARCH 2-3,

Texas Independence Day, Washington On The Brazos State Historic Park, **Washington**. Celebrate Texas Independence Day on March 2nd and 3rd, presented by H.E.B. There will be music, traditional dance groups, along with historic medicine show, magic show, and a Punch & Judy show. This is in addition to vendors and historical activities.

This annual two-day living history celebration on the 293-acre Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site celebrates where 59 delegates bravely met in 1836 to make a formal declaration of independence from Mexico in 1836.

The admission-free event features live music, food, demonstrations and sales of traditional crafts (blacksmithing, candle makers, woodworking, quilting and more), living history presentations, musket and cannon firings, pageantry and more.

Historical re-enactors set up a bonafide 1836 Texas Army camp where visitors can wander freely among

the tents to learn how soldiers and their families lived in Texas in 1836. Admission fees are waived for the site's attractions (Independence Hall; Star of the Republic Museum and Barrington Living History Farm). Admission to the grounds, on-site shuttles and parking are also free.

MARCH 2,

Greater Texas Hill Country Chapter Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Big Game banquet, **Fredericksburg**. For more information call (830) 864-5400 or visit www.rmef.org.

MARCH 2,

Northeast Texas Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation fundraiser banquet, **Mount Pleasant**. For more information call (903) 573-5022 or visit www.nwtf.org.

MARCH 2,

Kaufman County Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation fundraiser banquet, **Terrell**. For more information call (972) 965-7768 or visit www.nwtf.org.

MARCH 2, 9, 16, 23, 30,

Fishing With A Ranger, Inks Lake State Park, **Burnet**. Come out and try to catch the big one. Everyone welcome for free catch and release instructional program. No fishing license required while on State Park property. We have the poles and the worms. Meet behind the Park Store. 1:00 p.m. until 2:00 p.m. The program is free with entry fee. Entry free with a Texas State Parks Pass. For more information call (512) 793-4689.

MARCH 6-10,

44th Annual Houston Fishing Show, George R. Brown Convention Center, **Houston**. For more information and show times visit www.houstonfishingshow.com.

Mail your Outdoor Calendar items to:

1706 W. Sam Houston Pkwy North
Houston TX 77043
Fax: 713.957.3996
Email: toj@airmail.net

Tide Tables

MARCH 2019

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
H12:21A 1.1 L8:22A 0.2 H4:06P 1.3 L9:50P 1.0 31					L7:03A -0.3 H3:42P 1.1	L7:50A -0.3 H4:10P 1.1 L9:29P 0.9
H12:20A 1.0 L8:30A -0.3 H4:27P 1.0 L9:18P 0.9 3	H1:15A 1.0 L9:04A -0.2 H4:41P 1.0 L9:16P 0.8 4	H2:06A 1.0 L9:34A -0.1 H4:56P 1.0 L9:34P 0.7 5	H2:56A 1.0 L10:03A -0.1 H5:12P 1.0 L10:04P 0.6 6	H3:48A 1.0 L10:31A 0.1 H5:29P 1.0 L10:39P 0.5 7	H4:43A 1.0 L11:01A 0.2 H5:46P 1.0 L11:16P 0.4 8	H5:44A 1.0 L11:33A 0.4 H5:58P 0.9 L11:55P 0.3 9
H7:53A 1.0 L1:09P 0.6 H7:04P 0.9 10	L1:36A 0.2 H9:13A 1.0 Low1:51P 0.7 H6:54P 0.9 11	L2:23A 0.0 H10:42A 1.1 L2:41P 0.9 H6:25P 1.0 12	L3:17A -0.1 H10:16P 1.2 L2:41P 0.9 H6:25P 1.0 13	L4:20A -0.2 H1:40P 1.3 L2:41P 0.9 H6:25P 1.0 14	L5:30A -0.2 H2:42P 1.3 L2:41P 0.9 H6:25P 1.0 15	L6:41A -0.3 H3:27P 1.3 L2:41P 0.9 H6:25P 1.0 16
L7:49A -0.3 H4:03P 1.3 L8:47P 1.1 17	H12:58A 1.2 L8:51A -0.3 H4:33P 1.3 L9:17P 1.0 18	H2:24A 1.3 L9:48A -0.2 H5:00P 1.2 L9:57P 0.8 19	H3:41A 1.4 L10:43A -0.1 H5:26P 1.2 L10:42P 0.6 20	H4:55A 1.4 L11:36A 0.2 H5:50P 1.1 L11:30P 0.6 21	H6:08A 1.4 L12:29P 0.4 H6:12P 1.1 L11:30P 0.6 22	L12:18A 0.2 H7:23A 1.4 L12:26P 0.7 H6:33P 1.1 23
L1:09A 0.0 H8:41A 1.4 L2:33P 0.9 H6:50P 1.1 24	L2:01A 0.0 H10:04A 1.4 L4:23P 1.0 H6:52P 1.1 25	L2:57A -0.1 H11:35A 1.4 L4:23P 1.0 H6:52P 1.1 26	L4:00A 0.0 H1:07P 1.4 L4:23P 1.0 H6:52P 1.1 27	L5:10A 0.0 H2:23P 1.4 L4:23P 1.0 H6:52P 1.1 28	L6:22A 0.1 H3:15P 1.4 L4:23P 1.0 H6:52P 1.1 29	L7:28A 0.1 H3:47P 1.3 L9:58P 1.0 30

APRIL 2019

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	H1:36A 1.2 L9:06A 0.2 H4:18P 1.2 L9:48P 0.9 1	H2:37A 1.2 L9:42A 0.3 H4:31P 1.2 L9:57P 0.8 2	H3:33A 1.3 L10:14A 0.4 H4:44P 1.2 L10:16P 0.7 3	H4:27A 1.3 L10:45A 0.5 H4:57P 1.2 L10:42P 0.6 4	H5:20A 1.3 L11:16A 0.7 H5:10P 1.2 L11:11P 0.4 5	H6:15A 1.4 L11:51A 0.8 H5:18P 1.2 L11:43P 0.3 6
H7:11A 1.4 L12:30P 1.0 H5:20P 1.2 7	L12:18A 0.2 H8:13A 1.5 L1:13P 1.1 H5:08P 1.2 8	L12:58A 0.1 H9:20A 1.5 L2:02P 1.2 H4:45P 1.3 9	L1:44A 0.0 H10:34A 1.5 L2:02P 1.2 H4:45P 1.3 10	L2:39A 0.0 H11:53A 1.5 L2:02P 1.2 H4:45P 1.3 11	L3:44A 0.0 H1:05P 1.6 L2:02P 1.2 H4:45P 1.3 12	L4:59A 0.0 H1:59P 1.5 L2:02P 1.2 H4:45P 1.3 13

Times are for Galveston, Galveston Channel

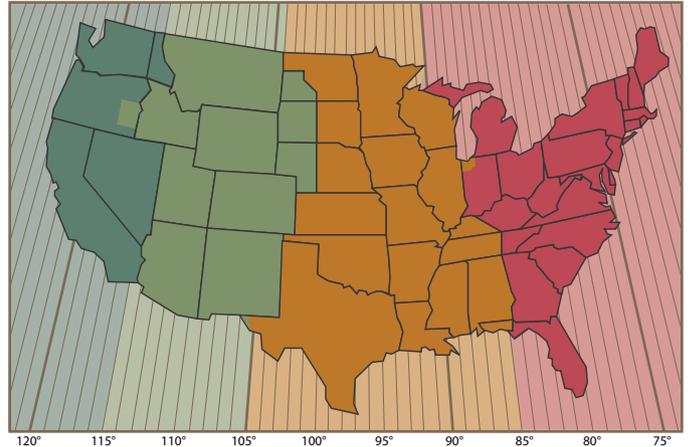
TIME DIFFERENCES	High	Low
Calcasieu Pass, Louisiana	-2:14	-1:24
Sabine Pass Lighthouse	-1:46	-1:31
Sabine Pass Jetty	-1:26	-1:31
Sabine Pass	-1:00	-1:15
Mesquite Point, Sabine Pass	-0:04	-0:25
Galveston Bay ent. south jetty	-0:39	-1:05
Port Bolivar	+0:14	-0:06
Galveston Bay		
Texas City, Turning Basin	+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

US TIME ZONES

PACIFIC < (+) (-) > MOUNTAIN < (+) (-) > CENTRAL < (+) (-) > EASTERN < (+) (-) >



MARCH 2019

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
31 ☾					1 ☽	2 ☽
10:20A - 3:20P					8:45A - 1:45P	9:20A - 2:20P
3 ☽	4 ●	5 ●	6 ● NEW	7 ☽	8 ☽	9 ○
10:00A - 3:00P	10:40A - 3:40P	11:20A - 4:20P	12:30P - 5:30P	1:20P - 6:20P	2:15P - 7:15P	3:05P - 8:05P
10 ○	11 ☽	12 ☽	13 ☽	14 ● FQ	15 ●	16 ●
4:25A - 9:25A	5:15A - 10:15A	6:05A - 11:05A	6:55A - 11:55A	7:50A - 12:50P	8:40A - 1:40P	9:25A - 2:25P
17 ☽	18 ☽	19 ●	20 ● FULL	21 ☽	22 ☽	23 ●
10:15A - 3:15P	11:00A - 4:00P	12:00P - 5:00P	1:00P - 6:00P	2:00P - 7:00P	3:00P - 8:00P	4:00P - 9:00P
24 ●	25 ☽	26 ☽	27 ☽	28 ○ LQ	29 ☽	30 ☽
4:30A - 9:30A	5:30A - 10:30A	6:25A - 11:25A	7:20A - 12:20P	8:10A - 1:10P	8:55A - 1:55P	9:45A - 2:45P

APRIL 2019

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1 ●	2 ●	3 ☽	4 ☽	5 ☽ NEW	6 ☽
	10:55A - 3:55P	11:30A - 4:30P	12:05P - 5:05P	12:50P - 5:50P	1:35P - 6:35P	2:25P - 7:25P
7 ☽	8 ○	9 ○	10 ☽	11 ☽	12 ● FQ	13 ☽
3:15P - 8:15P	4:05P - 9:05P	4:40A - 9:40A	5:40A - 10:40A	6:40A - 11:40A	7:40A - 12:40P	8:35A - 1:35P

● 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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