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(see page 75, #1 for more information)

From March - Into The Marsh

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JOURNAL



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TOJ READERS ARE WINNERS TOO!

With the October 1992 issue Texas Outdoors Journal was launched with several goals in mind. First to cover fishing and hunting across the Lone Star State like it should be covered. Rather than fishing coverage relegated to just the spring and summer issues, or hunting information only appearing in the fall and winter months, TOJ began covering both fishing and hunting in every monthly issue. Plus TOJ knew from the beginning how to count to 12 so that means an issue every month of the year.

The next goal was to provide seasonably timely information from top outdoor professionals. Our team of writers are experts in the fields and topics they cover.

On the hunting side most are hunting or shooting instructors while many have etched their name into one of the record books. Similar credentials on the fishing side with many holding or having held a variety of records. Those that cover the coast are U.S. Coast Guard Captains, but are not guides. That helps alleviate the chance of articles becoming self-serving or hire-me solicitations. What this means to TOJ readers is with this level of expertise the information that is passed on can be validated. Even our most veteran teammates occasionally have the information they provide confirmed by other outdoor professionals and even law enforcement – game wardens. Every effort is made to provide accuracy in our outdoor coverage. For those that only occasionally read a copy of TOJ are missing out. To properly chronicle outdoor events across the Lone Star State is not a sporadic story. It is ongoing and ever changing. Each month is different.

I am very proud and please to inform that TOJ's Team of outdoor professionals was recently honored at the Texas Outdoor Writers Association 60th Annual Conference and Excellence In Craft Awards banquet held February 24, 2018. This annual event attracts some of the best writers, photographers, publishers and broadcasters in the outdoor industry.

This year Texas Outdoors Journal was honored as one of Texas best publications when it received First Place in the highly competitive major Outdoor Publication – over 25,000 category. This marks an unprecedented 20th time TOJ has been honored. No other publication has ever achieved this level of consistency or sustained recognition.

The Judges' Comments stated, "What wonderful outdoor publications the judges had to review. All were excellent. Texas Outdoors Journal gets the nod for First Place because of its comprehensive and informative coverage, excellent writing and consistent organization. Stories like "Bucks from Above" and "Dreaming Big Bass" make this publication a "must" read for the avid outdoors man or woman. Well done, and we love "Just Shooting," for the fun that is . . ."

Several of TOJ's Team received individual awards. Whitetail Editor Bob Zaiglin received two awards for his excellent images that appear in these pages. Upper Coast Editor Nate Skinner also won awards for his skills with a camera.

The Judges acknowledged my writing and photography skills with awards. I was most pleased they recognized my tribute "Outdoors With Dad" to my father.

For 26 years I have teamed with Texas Hall of Fame broadcaster and TOJ contributor Harold Gunn on our syndicated, world-wide Texas Outdoor News radio. The judges once again recognized our news/interview format program. TON remains the most honored outdoor radio show in the Number One outdoor market in the country — Texas.

Congratulations to the entire TOJ Team for your professionalism, well crafted stories, photography and stellar layouts. Congratulations also to our loyal readers. Many times your inquiring questions results in great answers within one of our Team members' articles.

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

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SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

Call 1-800-222-4TOJ (4865); In Houston, 713/957-3997 to charge your subscription by phone. Subscription prices: one year \$18.95, two years \$29.95, three years \$39.95. Mail inquiries/changes of address to:

TEXAS OUTDOORS Journal

1706 West Sam Houston Parkway North
Houston, Texas 77043

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

E-MAIL ADDRESS: toj@airmail.net

TOJ Online: www.texasoutdoorsjournal.com

TEXAS OUTDOORS Journal is published monthly. Photographs and manuscripts for publication consideration are welcomed, but the publisher assumes no responsibility for such material while in transit or in the office of the publication.

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Six-Time Olympic Medalist Kim Rhode — ISSF Shooter Of The Year

The National Rifle Association reports and congratulates six-time Olympic medalist Kim Rhode, who was honored as the 2017 International Shooting Sport Federation Female Shooter of the Year on Jan. 26, 2018.

Rhode, renowned for her double trap and skeet shooting performances for more than two decades, had one of her best seasons in 2017, culminating in her first Athlete of the Year honor. Her other 2017 accolades include two ISSF World Cup gold medals, one ISSF World Cup silver medal, a fourth-place finish at the ISSF World Championship, a victory in the ISSF World Cup Final, and the USA Shooting Female Athlete of the Year Award.

"It feels amazing! It's been actually an incredible year for me, I worked so hard leading up to it, and it's great to see it all come together. This is just an incredible honor, and I'm super excited," Rhode told USA Shooting.

The ISSF Shooter of the Year award is

assigned by the ISSF according to the vote of the ISSF Coaches Advisory Committee, the ISSF Athletes Committee and a selected panel of media representatives. Rhode will joined Japanese pistol competitor Matsuda Tomoyuk, the 2017 ISSF Male Shooter of the Year, at the 2018 ISSF Season, which kicked off in Guadalajara, Mexico with the first stage of the 2018 ISSF World Cup Series held March 1-12, 2018.

Rhode's storied shooting sports career has seen her earn Olympic gold at the 1996 Atlanta games and 2004 Athens games in double trap, as well as a gold medal at the 2012 London games in skeet.

She earned silver at the 2008 Beijing games, and bronze at the 2000 Sydney and 2016 Rio games. Rhode has also medaled in three World Championships and in five Pan-American Games.

Outside of shooting, Rhode is an honorary lifetime member of the National Rifle Association, and currently serves on the NRA Board of Directors. **T★J**

The Protection-Oriented Consumer

Insights into the needs, motivations, habits and purchases associated with the self- and home-protection market for firearms and accessories have been released in a report by Southwick Associates in conjunction with the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF). This report better defines this segment of the shooting marketing and identify products and services with greater appeal to protection-oriented consumers.

"Protection-oriented firearm owners represent two-thirds of total spending in the market," said Nancy Bacon, Vice President at Southwick Associates. "With a significant amount of these consumers having little understanding of firearms, it's imperative that businesses understand how to best connect with them. The reasons why they decide to finally buy - and why they choose one product over another - are much more than just price and 'keeping my family safe.'"

Cover Art

When it comes to April most Texans think of beautiful colored fields of bluebonnets, Indian paintbrush, Indian blankets and other wildflowers with additional sounds and sights of gobbling and strutting turkey. That remains true today, however there has been more than a few turkey hunters surprised when a bobcat jumps in having been attracted by the yelps and purrs.

Wildlife biologist, conservationist and popular artist Chuck Black has captured one of these beautiful, stealthy predators in his "Always Watching." Bobcats certainly prey on turkey, quail and other ground nesting birds. They are also a fun, challenging animal to hunt.

Hunters need to remember that predator control is an important part of any successful game management plan. When it comes to bobcats you can be assured they are "always watcing."

For more information on "Always Watching" and other fine works of art by Chuck Black, visit www.wildlifeandart.com, email charles@wildlifeandart.com or follow on Facebook. **T★J**



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Compared to the hunting and recreational firearms markets, the protection-oriented market is much more likely to be first-time owners, female, younger and more ethnically-diverse.

People who maintain a firearm for protection purposes spend 52% more annually on equipment, accessories and services versus non-protection-oriented firearm owners. **T★J**

Government Recognition of Outdoor Recreation Industry as GDP Contributor

The Outdoor Recreation Roundtable applauds the release of the first-ever government report recognizing the outdoor recreation industry as a significant economic contributor to the U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Released by the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)-the government agency responsible for reporting U.S. GDP-the report calculated the outdoor recreation industry's annual gross output to be \$673 billion, surpassing other sectors such as agriculture, petroleum and coal, and computer and electronic products.

The report marks a critical step for-

ward for the outdoor recreation industry by formally recognizing its economic influence.

"Today's report affirms what those of us in the outdoor recreation community already know - outdoor recreation has a far-reaching positive impact across the U.S. and our economy," said Thom Dammrich, ORR chair and president of the National Marine Manufacturers Association. "As an industry, we are proud to generate millions of American jobs and be a driving economic force from coast to coast, and we are grateful that BEA and the Department of Commerce have decided to recognize that. This report is further evidence of the need for sound public policy that encourages continued growth in the outdoor recreation industry."

ORR was formed in February 2018 with the merger of the Outdoor Recreation Industry Roundtable, a coalition of America's leading outdoor recreation trade associations, and the American Recreation Coalition, an organization of recreation interests that has had a significant and positive impact on outdoor recreation for more than three decades. ORR is committed to advancing the basic elements needed to grow this vital

economic sector, including sound and sustainable management of U.S. public lands and waters, and updating infrastructure and technology on those lands to create quality experiences in response to changing recreation preferences.

In addition to reporting on the outdoor recreation industry's annual gross output, the BEA's initial findings report that outdoor recreation makes up 2.0 percent of the U.S. GDP. More importantly, the outdoor recreation industry's GDP has increased an average of 4.4 percent since 2012, significantly greater than the 3.6 percent average increase in the overall U.S. GDP.

"This is a welcome signal of the critical economic role outdoor recreation plays in the United States," said Frank Hugelmeyer, ORR vice chair and president of the RV Industry Association. "We are thrilled to represent a rapidly growing industry that helps keep America's economy strong and brings enjoyment to millions of Americans. Given the right public policies, outdoor recreation will continue to be an American economic engine for years to come."

Source: American Sportfishing Association. **T★J**

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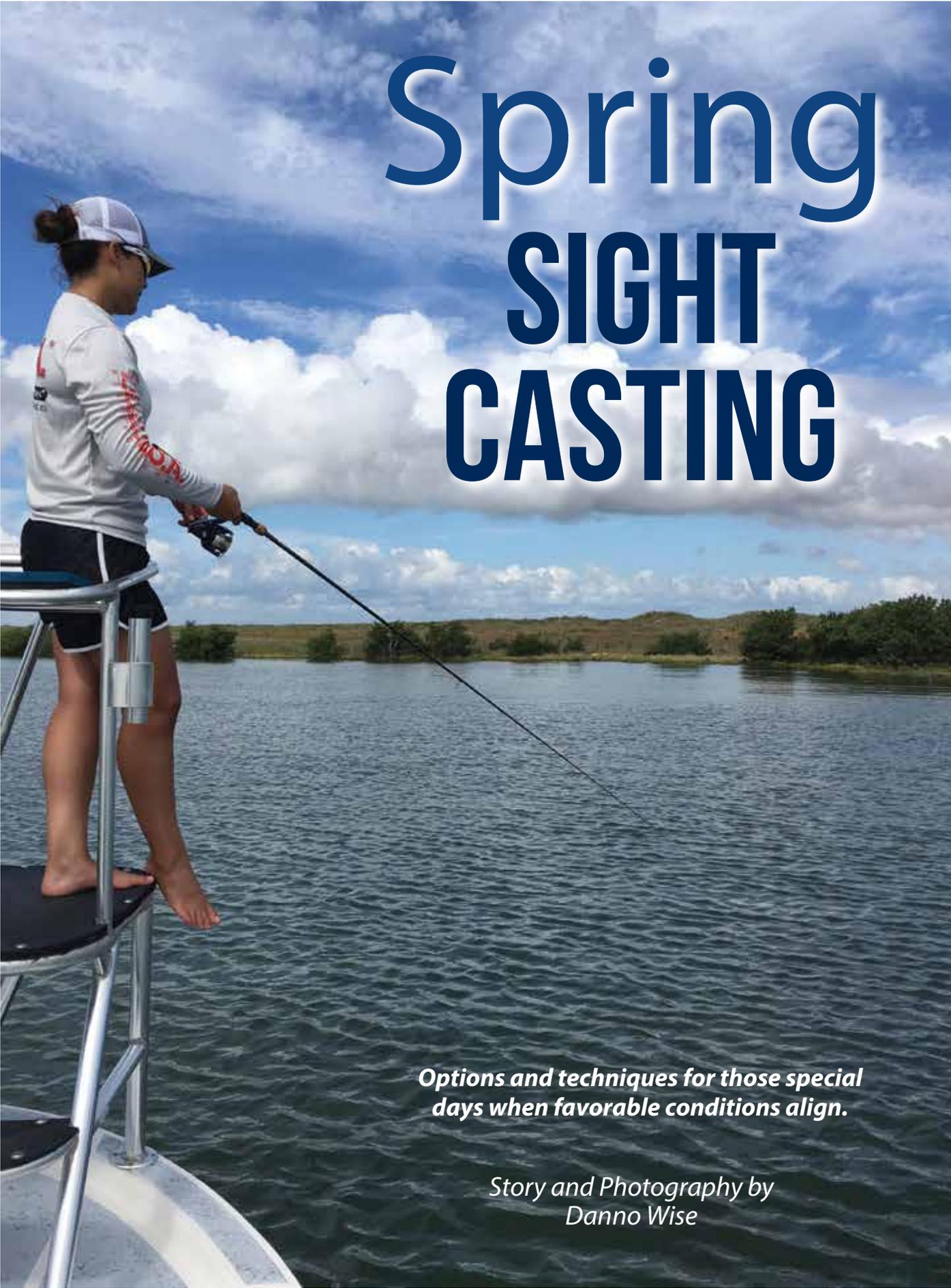


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A woman in a white long-sleeved shirt and black shorts is fishing from a boat on a lake. She is wearing a white cap and sunglasses. The background shows a blue sky with white clouds and a distant shoreline with greenery.

Spring SIGHT CASTING

Options and techniques for those special days when favorable conditions align.

*Story and Photography by
Danno Wise*

Spring generally brings several visions of successful fishing forays. One may be wading for trophy trout with big topwater lures. Another is catching numbers of solid keepers with popping corks or plastics around reefs or while drifting flats. However, there is also a surprising amount of sight casting opportunities during the spring season along the Texas Coast.

So, what should sight-fishermen expect during spring? Some things are different, while others are the same. Like most things that have to do with spring coastal fishing, it all depends on the weather.

There are some general rules of thumb to consider.

Obviously, sight-casters prefer relatively calm days. Unfortunately there are relatively few of those during spring. However, on those rare spring days with mild winds, anglers can have fall-like sight-casting opportunities.

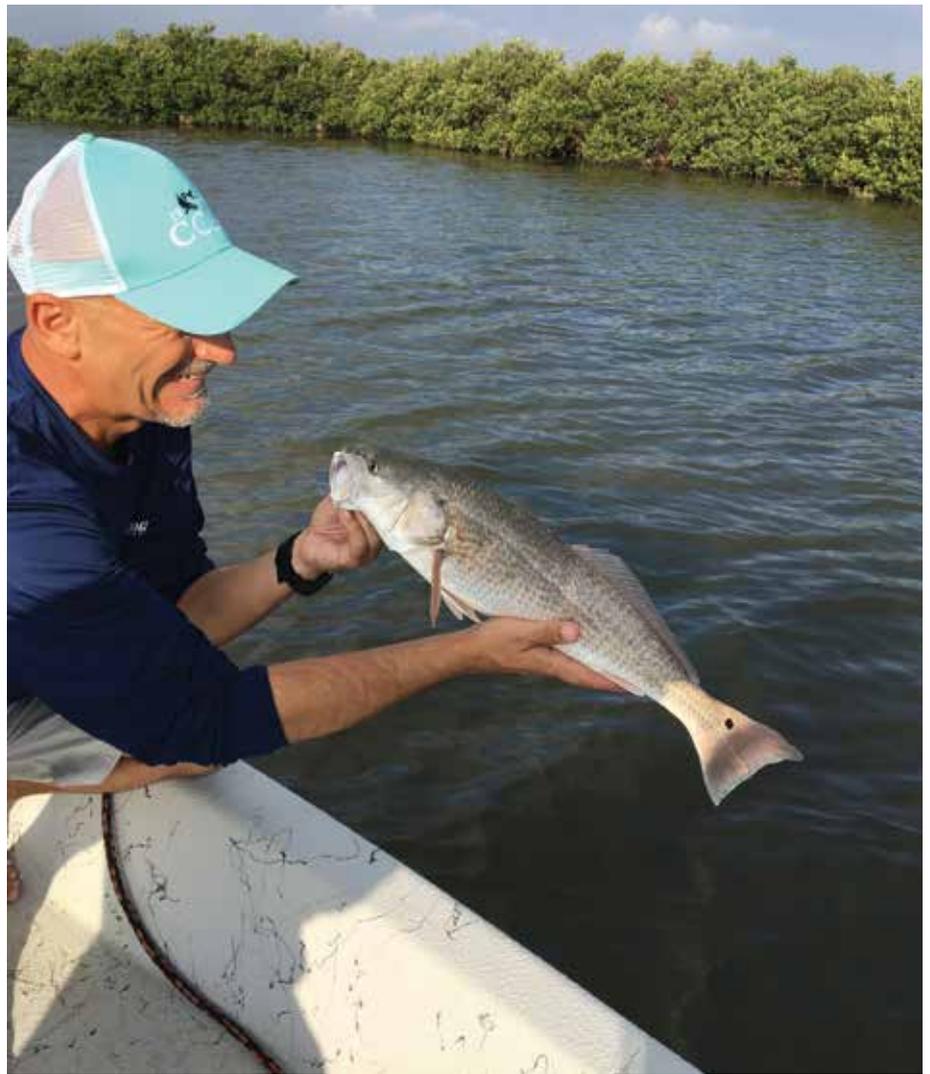
Inasmuch, anglers should expect to fish the same way they would in fall on those days. The water temperatures are very similar between the two seasons and the fish will react in much the same manner.

Much more often, it is windy than calm in spring. But, by April the water is warm enough for fish to be moving up onto flats and into back lakes and bays. So, anglers need only to find protected, clean water in order to be able to sight-cast. Even then they should expect to have a small chop on the surface. However, this isn't such a bad thing. Most experienced sight-casters have learned to use the wavelets like "windows" to see beneath the water's surface.

One other thing that is often necessary on windy days is sight-fishermen will need to modify the lures that they cast. Smaller profile baits, and even spoons work well to cut into wind. Because the bays are full of newly hatched prey items during spring, these diminutive offerings can still be plenty effective, even on larger fish.

Fly fisherman can still get in the game on windy spring days, but may need to use a little heavier rods or over weight their rods with heavier line, in addition to using smaller, more streamlined flies and shorter leaders.

Which shorelines offer protection from the relentless spring wind can vary because of late fronts and other seasonal



Most experienced sight-casters have learned to use wind formed wavelets like "windows" to see beneath the water's surface.

weather changes. The safest bet for fishermen is to pick the shoreline that has the same directional name as the wind. Then, they should fish the flats on the downwind side of the shoreline.

Shallow, grassy flats are harder to stir up anyhow, but even more so with some wind protection. More often than not, if anglers can find shallow, grassy flats in the lee of a shoreline, they will be able to find water with good clarity.

Additionally, in some of the more commercially developed areas of the coast – such as South Padre Island – the high rising condos and other buildings can also afford some protection from the wind.

The combination of high spring tides and warmer water push plenty of fish into the back lakes and marshes during spring. These areas also generally offer some wind protection and hold relatively clear water, making them some of the most consistent

sight-casting areas to be found during the spring season.

However, many of these areas are relatively small and can fill up with boats in a hurry. So, anglers hoping to fish the more popular back lakes should make their way to their destination early in the morning to ensure they have room to fish their chosen area.

When winds allow, fishing the flats alongside of the spoil islands can be good. These areas almost always hold fish during spring because of the relatively close proximity of both shallow and deep water. However, they aren't always clear enough for sight casting.

If the wind has been sustained from a single direction for a few days, the lee side of a spoil island will usually hold decently clear water. In those rare instances of mild wind, anglers can often find some clean water in these areas.



A spot tail is a visible target whether it is under the water or above when a redfish is tailing.

The biggest mistake beginners make is to assume they only have to watch out for excessive sound once a fish is spotted. In truth, if you're not quiet throughout, you won't see many fish - or at least not as many as you would have had you had the foresight to remain silent prior to spotting fish.

As a rule, the noise should stop before shutting down the big engine and picking up a push pole, deploying a drift sock or bailing out for a skinny water wade.

For the most part, an occasional outburst won't ruin a trip, but the less noise, the better.

Radios are an absolute no-no, as the sound vibrates through the hull and across the flats. Furthermore, when opening or shutting tackle boxes or hatches, do so as quietly

as possible.

Being able to see fish on the flats is a learned skill - akin to learning to pick out whitetail deer in heavy cover. Far too often, anglers are expected an entire fish to magically appear before their eyes. And, sometimes they do.

Far more often, anglers will see only a portion of the fish first. For that reason, fishermen should train themselves to spot distinctive characteristics of fish - such as tails - rather than looking for the entire profile.

Anglers should also become accustomed to looking "beneath the surface." Simple as this sounds, fishermen often forget how much depth there is to even a foot of water. If you're simply scanning the surface, many fish can lie undetected.

When sight-casting, anglers should avoid approaching fish or an area likely to be holding fish under power. Always shut down the big motor at least 150 yards prior to entering a skinny water flat you intend to fish.

From that point, it's no mechanized power, leaving anglers with three options - poling, drifting or wading.

Poling is the ideal option for sight-casting, as it allows the angler to be precisely placed for an ideal cast. An accomplished poler can also control the speed of the boat - regardless of wind speed - and even hold the caster in place if necessary.

Drifting is generally the preferable method when covering a large flat with scattered fish.

Assuming there is enough wind to propel the boat at a reasonable clip, an angler can cover good distances in decent time. If the wind begins to get too hard - or if an angler enters an area where fish are more concentrated - a drift sock can be used to slow the boat.

Whether drifting or poling, anglers on a boat are able to keep everything they could possibly need - multiple rods, excessive amounts of lures, etc - within easy reach to be able to adjust or change as necessary.

Additionally, a casting platform or boat deck provides an elevated vantage point, which can be helpful when attempting to spot fish and for making longer casts.

When wading anglers are at eye level with fish and limited as to how much tackle they are able to carry on their person. Stealth and infinite speed control



Anglers will usually see only a portion of the fish first. For that reason, fishermen should train themselves to spot distinctive characteristics of fish rather than looking for the entire profile.

are the obvious advantages to wading. Anglers wanting to get the “full experience” of sight-casting can do no better than wading up on a flat full of fish.

One other option worth mentioning is paddling. Kayaks and paddleboards are a nice compromise between wading and boating, somewhat combining the advantages of each.

Individual fish are pretty straight forward – determine the direction a fish is headed, assess where it’s line of sight falls in the water column (i.e.: surface, bottom, etc.) and how fast it is traveling. In general, you want your bait to fall a few feet in front of a moving fish.

When picking a casting target, keep in mind the fish is moving during your cast, so it is imperative to accurately judge how fast it is traveling.

Groups of fish provide an additional challenge. As a rule, when casting to a group of fish cast to fish on the perimeter of the school. And, cast to the fish closest to you. Never allow the line to go over any fish. A “lined” fish is likely to spook the entire school.

Once you’ve picked a fish from a school, it is the same as casting to an indi-

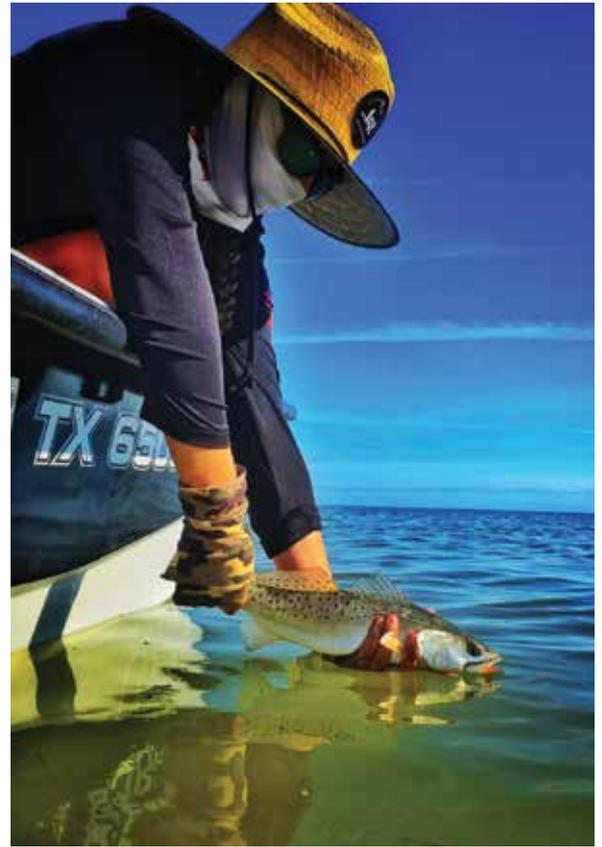
vidual fish. The most crucial thing to determine is the direction the fish is moving.

Obviously, you never want to cast behind a fish. Of equal importance, you do not want to retrieve your lure in a manner in which it goes directly toward a fish.

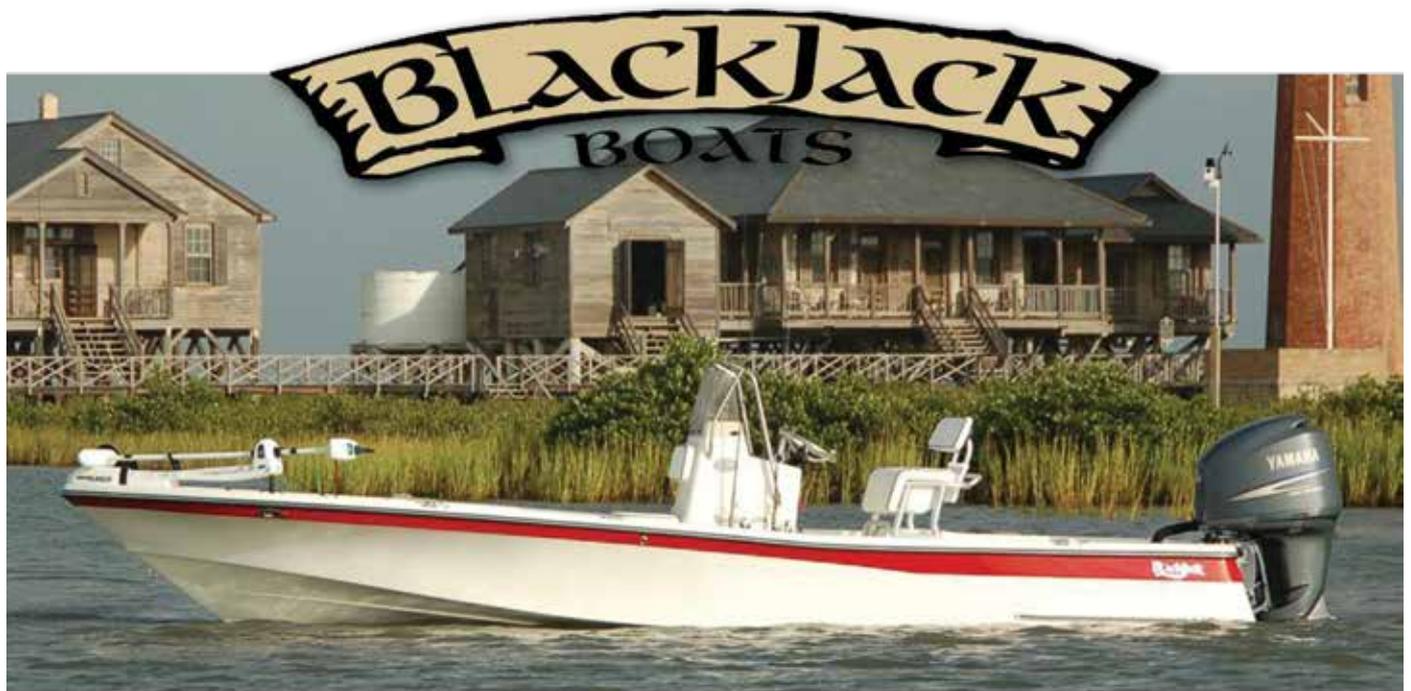
If fish are “milling” in one area and not making significant forward progress, start with a cast a few feet in front. If that does not draw a strike, make casts at six-inch increments closer to the fish.

At some point, you will either draw a strike or spook the fish - hopefully the former.

While sight-casting may not be the first thing that comes to mind when considering spring fishing along the coast, there are certainly plenty of adequate opportunities to cast to sighted targets on the Texas flats this month. **T★J**



When winds allow, fishing the flats alongside of mangrove lined spoil islands can be good.



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Times Are Changing for ShareLunker



Just in time for another big bass season, Texas Parks and Wildlife's Toyota ShareLunker program underwent a big time facelift that officials hope will boost participation while allowing anglers to become more involved in helping scientists learn more about the genetic diversity of big bass fisheries around the state.

ShareLunker is a conservation program with a history of soliciting anglers who



How To Submit a Genetic Sample

* Remove or obtain three scales from the fish using a clean tool or fingernail or from a clean surface like a net, measuring board, etc... Use lake water to rinse the surface between fish to prevent cross contamination. Avoid any visible mucus or tissue from previous fish. * Once removed, press the scales between sections of clean paper towel to thoroughly dry.

* Place the dried scales between a new/clean section of paper towel and drop into a small envelope. Write your name and your app submission number on the envelope.

* Store the envelope in dry conditions to prevent degradation and/or fungal growth. Place in a separate business/mail-in envelope and mail to:

Attn: Genetics Lab
505 Staples Rd.
San Marcos, TX 78666
Source: TPWD ★

catch big Texas bass weighing 13 pounds or more to loan those fish to the state for spawning and genetics research. Lake Fork guide Mark Stevenson donated the first ShareLunker in November 1986. Hundreds of others followed suit over the next three decades. While biologists have turned over several leaves and unraveled a few mysteries in big bass science during that time frame, ShareLunker has been especially effective at putting Texas in the spotlight as a premier destination for hooking up with career largemouths.

The all-new Toyota ShareLunker format that launched January 1 is aimed at keeping both balls rolling while creating more ways and categories for anglers to enter fish. TPWD is putting plenty of bait on the table to lure more anglers in, too.

There's a whole lot to talk about here and not a lot of space to do it in. Let's get to it:

The biggest change is anglers no longer have to catch a bass that cracks the 13 pound threshold to play the game.

There are now four different categories in which fish may be entered, three of which may be entered on a year-round note — January 1 to December 31 — using a Smartphone or computer. Electronic entries must be accompanied by digital photos or other documentation specified by program rules.

The program's lowest level category is called "Lunker Class." It is open for bass as small as eight pounds or 24 inches in length. The next category up the ladder is for fish weighing between 10 and 12.99 pounds. It's called the "Lunker Elite."

There are two categories for fish weighing upwards of 13 pounds. "Lunker Legend" is for fish caught outside the January 1 to December 31 spawning window, or fish caught inside the spawning window by an angler who for some reason declines to loan the fish to the state for spawning.

The "Lunker Legacy" category is for bass that carry on the heart and soul of the program. These big girls weighing 13 pounds or more must be caught during

the spawning window and loaned to the state for spawning.

Anglers who enter fish in either of the four categories are automatically registered in year-end drawings for cool prizes including fishing licenses and \$5,000 shopping sprees to a national outdoor retailer. Also, each angler who plays the game earns a Toyota ShareLunker Catch Kit including fishing tackle, commemorative decals and ShareLunker branded merchandise. Enter a 13 pounder and you get a free replica of the fish. Lunker Legacy donors also get VIP access at the Toyota Bassmaster Texas Fest.

More prizes may be added to the list as the program continues to grow. Who knows? If the ShareLunker's new format takes off the way "Trophy Catch" has, there could be bass boat or pick-up on the table in the future.

Trophy Catch is angler recognition program run by the Florida Fish and



PHOTO COURTESY TPWD

Texas is reaping the benefits of the ShareLunker program. Ryder Wicker of Fort Worth caught ShareLunker 566 from Marine Creek Reservoir on Feb. 10, 2017.

It is an offspring of a pure Florida bass, ShareLunker 410, caught March 22, 2006 from Lake Conroe by Edward Reid of Crosby TX. ShareLunker 410 is currently living and spawning at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens TX.

Wildlife Conservation Commission since 2012. Through five seasons that program awarded prizes for the catch and release of more than 6,800 big bass. Trophy Catch now gives away a fully rigged Phoenix bass boat in a drawing that is held at the end of each season.

As earlier mentioned, entering a fish in ShareLunker program outside the spawning window is as simple using the program's new phone app, which is available for free download on the program website, texassharelunker.com. Read the rules, take the appropriate photos, click send and you're done. Entries also may be submitted on a home computer. As always, big bass that are donated during the spawning window must be documented and transported to the program headquarters by ShareLunker staff. These fish will returned to the angler regardless if spawning is successful or not, ideally for release back into the lake from which it was caught.

Most offspring resulting from successful spawns will be returned to source lakes. TPWD reserves the right to use a portion of the pure Florida bass

prodigy to rebuild the state's Florida bass hatchery program within the next few years.

Another neat twist of the new format is it encourages participating anglers to become citizen scientists by getting them involved in the genetics research aspect of the program. Anglers can do this by plucking a few scales from the side of their fish before they release it. The scale can be sent to the department's genetics lab in San Marcos for DNA testing.

Over time, the DNA testing results will provide biologists with a wealth of valuable genetic data about the wild populations of big bass in public reservoirs around the state, according to Craig Bonds, TPWD's chief of inland fisheries.

"It's a citizen science partnership we hope to establish with anglers that will allow them to contribute to the management of largemouth bass in Texas and make it bigger and better," Bonds said.

Obviously the all-new format has been accepted by anglers pretty well thus far. As of February 20, the program had taken in 47 entries that cracked the 8-pound threshold, including a 12.79 pounder

caught by Jerrod Miller of Springtown that fell just shy of becoming the first Lunker Legacy entry of season. **★★**



PHOTO COURTESY TPWD

Larry Mosby of Garrison TX caught ShareLunker 567 from Lake Naconiche on February 28, 2017. It is a Florida/northern cross offspring of ShareLunker 446 caught by Kenneth Shane of Burleson TX on March 14, 2009 from Lake Fork. ShareLunker 466 was released back into Lake Fork on April 7, 2009. The ShareLunker program is only spawning pure Florida bass but will recognize northern bass and northern bass crosses.



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A New World of Bullets

In the past 10 years or so we have seen major improvements in firearms manufacturing, as well as in the ammunition and bullet manufacturing. There have been many new calibers invented and several new design changes in the way rifles and pistols work.

There are many new types of gunpowder with different burning rates for hand loaders. We have even noticed a difference in the way brass cases are being manufactured — some are good and others are not so good.

In order to keep up with technology, barrel manufacturers have made major changes in how a rifle barrel is built. Nearly all barrels have gotten longer from 24 inches to 26 inches especially in magnum calibers, the number of lands and grooves being used is less and the rate

of twist have gotten faster from a rate of 9 to a rate of 8 in 7mm or from a 12 to a 10 rate in 30 calibers.

We also have different types of rifling now like the R5 or new progressive rate of twist which some companies are playing with. All of these things help to make guns more accurate and allow the shooter to shoot a longer distance. Having better accuracy and flatter shooting bullets means you will have a better chance of hitting and killing the game at a longer range.

Now the biggest thing to change in the hunting and shooting market is the building of better or custom bullets and ammunition. For over a hundred years bullets were made from lead. Lead is heavy, soft and expands well which makes better wound channels for cleaner kills.

When velocity became faster, bullet makers started putting brass cups or jackets around the lead. Bullets became more accurate and shooters could shoot at a longer range. A modern day bullet is made to fly over a mile and still have enough accuracy to hit your target, as well as, being able to expand and kill what you are shooting at.

Looking at the Nosler Reloading books I looked up the best 30 caliber long range bullets and their ballistic coefficient. In 1996, the highest BC in a 30 cal. bullet was the Nosler 180 grain Ballistic-Tip with a BC of .507. Just 11 years later in 2007, a 200 grain Nosler Accubond bullet wins with a BC of .588. Now in 2018, again just 11 years difference, the Nosler 210 Accubond has a BC of .730 and the new 230 grain Berger bullet has a BC of .743.

What this means is that I can shoot longer distance with much less drop. When the ballistic coefficient is higher, the bullet will cut the wind better, shoot flatter, and be more accurate.

A good example is the Hornady Subsonic ammunition which is a new 300 Blackout ammunition load that shoots a high BC 190 grain bullet at 1050

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The largest BC bullet in 1996 was the Nosler B-Tip. In 2006, the Nosler Accu-Bond now has two bullets with over a 7 BC.

feet per second. At 300 yards the bullet is still traveling over 900 feet per second making this perfect for shooting hogs with a suppressor. This turns a 300 Blackout caliber gun in to a 300 yard hunting gun when in the past it used to be limited to a 150 yard gun at best.

In the dangerous game area of bullets, the newest and bullet that makes the most sense is the Swift Break-Away solid bullet. Round nose solid bullets have always had the problem of hitting hard bone or horn and deflecting around the skull, not breaking the bone and penetrating into the brain. A flat nose solid bullet does not do this, but in bolt action rifles they have a problem of feeding well.

Swift has made a bullet which feeds like a round nose and breaks bone like a flat nose solid. The flat nose solid bullet has a round ceramic tip on it that breaks away on impact with any hard bone it hits. This is the best of both worlds a solid bullet that feeds and kills at the same time.

Swift is making this Dangerous Game bullet in all the standard calibers like 375 H&H, 416, and 485. Swift is also making Dangerous Game ammunition with this new bullet, along with their great A-Frame bullet.

In the Self Defense handgun world everyone is building different and better stopping bullets. Soon I hope to try several of the new bullets available on the market. Lehigh still has some of the best shooting self-defense bullets I have ever shot.

Several new ammunition companies are getting away from the standard jacketed lead bullet. Some are using copper or aluminum bullets and others are using new ceramic polymer alloy to make very light weight and interesting looking bullets. They can cast different types of hollow points or angled grooves that are said to help the bullet break up on impact.

I'm about to test some new extreme velocity 9mm ammunition called Novx. They use a 65 grain ceramic polymer bullet which is very light and loaded to a velocity over 1600 feet per second. A normal 9MM shoots a 115 grain bullet at 1100 feet per second. Then Novx cuts angled grooves on the tip of the bullet that make it spin better and break up when the bullet hits and penetrates a body. I will be trying some of these bullets in my carry gun, as well as trying some from a carbine

I will be shooting for pigs.

There are two new AR-15 caliber rounds. The first that came out last year is the 22 Nosler. This caliber doesn't make much sense to me, it just seems to be an expensive slightly faster 223. I have a hard time justifying Nosler ammunition prices for a caliber that is only 50 to 100 feet per second faster than the good old 223/.556.

Federal has come out with a great AR-15 caliber round called the 224 Valkyrie. This caliber makes use of the heavy high ballistic coefficient bullets that are being made. Federal took a 6.8 SPC case and necked it down to shoot a 90 grain high BC bullet.

The Valkyrie will shoot the 90 grain bullet to a velocity of 2,800 feet per second and it will stay supersonic beyond 1,300 yards. Now you have a true long range varmint hunting caliber designed to work in an AR-15.

For those of us who love 22 long rifle rounds, CCI is making a new 40 grain fragment bullet which will break apart into three separate pieces when it hits something. This will cause much greater damage to an animal, four-legged or two-legged and guarantees better stopping power.

It's good to see our industry is evolving and improving. The technology is fascinating to watch. A lot has changed during the last 20 years. It will be great to see what happens in the next 20 years. **T★J**



The new Swift break Away solid bullet is superior to the old round nose solid bullet.



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Leader Logic

It doesn't make sense. Other than deciding whether or not to use one, a surprising number of anglers seldom give leaders a second thought. As long as there is a buffer against the deadly dentures or abrasive bodies of underwater denizens, fishermen are satisfied and concentrate their attention on other aspects of the sport.

Choosing the right material and constructing an effective leader is one of the most overlooked, yet important aspects of fishing. The ultimate, of course, is to fish a relatively light line without a leader. This is seldom possible, because the instant you hook a fish, either its teeth, body, or the rugged bottom will end the battle before it starts. The solution demands a compromise and that is precisely the way that experienced enthusiasts approach the problem of leader selection and length.

The general rule is that the heavier, more visible, and longer the leader material, the fewer strikes you will get. Monofilament leader invariably produces more strikes than single strand wire or nylon coated wire, while fluorocarbon outperforms mono or wire. Sometimes, however, wire becomes essential or every fish you hook will cut you off. For offshore trolling, wire makes it easier to rig a natural bait and there are some who claim that a skipping offering astern will work better if there is a short length of wire in front of it.

There are significant variations in leader length based on the species you seek and the conditions under which you are fishing. From a protective standpoint, if your target species boasts an abrasive body, the leader should be longer than you would use in other situations. When the fish is moving away from you and the

line streams over its back, you have the protective advantage of a leader instead of the lighter line. This leader does not have to be as heavy as the leader around its mouth and gills, but it should be stronger than the line.

On other species, abrasion may not be the problem. In that case, the shorter the leader, the better as far as the battle is concerned. Leaders, however, serve other purposes. Bottom fishermen who use sinkers attach a leader between the three-way swivel and the hook. The length of this leader helps to determine how far the bait will be from the sinker and how high in the water column it will be. The sinker is attached to the three-way swivel with a lighter and much shorter leader.

If you prowl the offshore grounds for billfish, tuna, or other large species using conventional tackle, a longer leader makes sense. Most anglers prefer a leader close to 15 feet when fishing with lines up to about 50 pound test. Some use an even longer leader with heavier lines. When the fish has been brought relatively close to the boat, someone can grab the leader and try to drag your quarry to boatside. Of course, you have to be ready in case the leader man has to let go and you are back to doing battle off the reel.

If you plan on fishing tournaments or hope to catch a record fish someday, specific leader requirements are dictated and must be followed. Nothing disqualifies an angler faster than an improper leader. World records are maintained by the International Game Fish Association (IGFA) and leader lengths are clearly explained.

Fly fishermen become aware of a leader's importance since it is really an extension of the flyline. In that type of fishing, the leader helps to turn over the fly properly and present it to the fish. The standard fly leader is about nine feet long. The butt section, which is about two-thirds the length of the leader or about six feet, attaches to the fly line and is the heaviest part of the leader. Within the next three feet, the leader drops down to the tippet in one or two steps. For

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record keeping or tournament fishing, the tippet's length is specified. For toothy critters or where abrasion is a problem, a shock leader (or abrasion leader) is attached to the tippet and is usually about a foot long.

In very clear water, a leader longer than nine feet enables the caster to make a more delicate presentation. The much heavier fly line will land some distance from the fish and the lighter leader will move the fly closer to the target. The effectiveness of this can be seen with bonefish in very shallow water, but it works with other species as well. If the flyline lands too close, a single fish or a school of fish will bolt in open rebellion and rejection.

Fly leaders can be constructed in a number of ways, but one easy rule to remember is that each succeeding section should be shorter than the one before it. The only exception is that the tippet section can be a bit longer if necessary and so can the butt section.

Whether you opt for monofilament or braid with conventional tackle, the place to start is tying a Bimini Twist in the main line before you attach the leader. This will

improve the knot strength. The knots attaching the leader to the line on one end and to the hook or artificial on the other should be tied very carefully and tightened as much as possible. A knot begins to slip before it fails. Always rely on knots that you can tie well even if they are not as strong as other knots.

After each fish, check the leader carefully. Run your hand over it and if you feel any nicks or abrasions, take the time to cut it back or attach a new leader. You can almost bet that when you fail to do this, you will hook the fish you dreamed about. The more concerned you are about the construction of the leader and changing it when it is not in perfect condition, the more fish you are going to land and the fewer stories you will tell about the one that got away. **T★J**



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Sometimes, wire leader becomes essential or every fish, like a kingfish, that is hooked will cut you off.

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Turkey Hunter's KnowLedge



Not only abundant, Rio Grande turkey represent an excellent opportunity to test one's outdoor skills in one of the most spectacular times of the year—spring.

Experience, gained from time afield, provides the proven tactics to bag a spring gobbler.

Story and Photography by Bob Zaiglin

As my close friend Johnny Syrek and I negotiated our way up a steep slope high on the timbered mountainside outside of Emporium, Pennsylvania, our goal was to locate one of the region's most glamorous inhabitants—an Eastern turkey.

It was a sunny, crystal clear spring morning with a slight chill accompanying a light breeze. A cacophony of bird songs filled the air, but none were as attractive to us as the loud double gobble that shattered the placid morning. Rapidly searching for a place of concealment, the rush of adrenalin was overwhelming. Negotiating the mountain was no longer an effort as the surge of excitement eclipsed the force of gravity I had experienced moments earlier.

Once set up, Johnny took out his box call and began to gently slide the well-chalked wooden handle over the edge of the caller, emitting several soft yelps that were interrupted by a thunderous gobble below and just out of sight—but close, real close! A novice turkey hunter hoping to get a shot at a long beard, my heart raced as the gobbles intensified, as I realized that I may actually get the opportunity to collect my first turkey.

Seconds later, the large, dark-colored bird appeared walking in our direction. With my .101 Winchester over and under resting on my knees, the excitement reached a feverish pitch. Before I knew it, the blast of my shotgun shattered the quiescent morning and the tom rolled over backwards, regained its footing, and exploded skyward only to glide down the mountainside before disappearing in the ocean of hardwoods, leaving me bewildered and disheartened as to what just happened. Needless to say, my return home from that trip was one void of jubilation.

Little did I know that a short 13 years later I would be the wildlife manager of 200,000 Texas acres with one of the ranches entailing 44,000 acres in Sutton and Edwards Counties. This area, often considered ground zero when it came to turkey, representing the ultimate opportunity to hone my skills as a turkey hunter.

With an impressive list of commercial clients each spring, including my good friend Allen Jenkins, owner of Lynch Turkey Calls, along with some of the premier turkey callers in the nation, I

was privy to the latest and most advanced strategies in outwitting long beards of the Rio Grande subspecies.

Since that time I have entertained spring turkey hunts across the state with many of them on the Nueces Strip southeast of Cotulla along the game-rich Nueces River. The live oak, willow, and mesquite-lined banks of the Nueces is home to the Rio Grande turkey. If there is one attribute all turkey hunters possess, it's a thorough knowledge of turkey habitat and how they use it.

Three subspecies of turkey occur in Texas. The Eastern species is found in a 57-county region primarily in East Texas, the Merriams occurs in a few isolated mountain regions of West Texas, but the Rio Grande, which is the most abundant, can be found from deep South Texas to the far reaches of the Panhandle.

Characteristic of all gallinaceous

birds, the turkey has strong legs and very powerful toes with well-developed nails that facilitate their habitual scratching of the ground surface for food.

The turkey, unlike quail that spend their nights on the ground, prefer to spend their evenings in trees which sportsmen can take advantage of during the early morning hours as the birds exit the roost.

Since some roost sites are consistently used. Long beard hunters knowledgeable of their whereabouts can intercept birds as they travel to their commonly used feeding grounds during the early morning hours. This tactic augments the chance of success because it's always easier to call in a tom that is working its way towards a hunter than one that is walking in an opposing direction.

Turkeys are also slightly forgiving when it comes to poor calling technique right after they exit their roost. However, they



Mid to late afternoon is a great time to call in a long beard around those isolated water sources they relish.

will eventually locate a hen, sometimes several, and follow them, rendering even an experienced caller ineffective regardless

the authenticity of their calls.

Effective calling is all about position. A hunter situated within 100 yards or so of a roost in the predawn hours can intercept birds heading to their feeding grounds. A low volume series of three yelps is all it takes to lure in a bird.



Outwitting a loquacious tom turkey in the spring is an event enjoyed by all the Zaiglin family.

Turkeys have strong legs for more than scratching for food. Armed with long spurs, they are a deadly weapon, and if you have ever witnessed two long beards settling an issue in the spring, it becomes obvious just how effective those pointed structures are.

But when it comes to hunting long beards in the

spring, it's the vast amount of ground that those legs carry them that becomes most important to the hunter.

The Rio Grande turkey is an opportunistic forager, feeding on everything from verdant foliage and seeds to insects, thus they remain mobile for most of the day, covering several miles while on an annual basis they may cover between six and 26 miles. Thus a sportsman must focus his time later in the day where the birds spend most of their time, and that is around water. This is particularly true in the desert-like environments of Sutton and Edwards Counties where the birds relish free-standing water whether it be a well-fed trough or a stock pond.

Although the birds can obtain preformed water from the succulent vegetation consumed, they often gravitate to those various water sites during the later morning and early afternoon periods, not only to quench their thirst, but to cool off under the shade of the live oak trees that often line the banks of those waterholes. A hunter staged around an isolated stock pond during the hotter part of the day can often bring in a tom by simply calling every once in a while while they themselves relax in the shade.

The evening hunt strategy is similar to the morning as one should attempt to intercept the birds as they travel back to the roost. The hunter at this time must learn the travel route or routes most often used by the birds to return to those traditional roosts. I personally like hunting along cleared fence lines, particularly those leading to the roost, as the birds will often feed their way right back to the roost over the open travel lanes.

The one thing a hunter should avoid is hunting too close to the roost because the birds could be disturbed enough to avoid the area for a few days, eliminating the advantage of knowing where the birds will be in the mornings when calling is most effective.

Once a sportsman becomes familiar with turkey behavior, particularly their movement patterns, their success will ultimately depend on their ability to call. There are a variety of calls on the market, but my old reliable is the Lynch foolproof turkey call.

More important is the fact that a hunter should not depend on only one, as





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they all sound a little different. I own over 10 Lynch foolproof box calls, and each one sounds different. The more one hunts turkeys, the more aware they become of the fact that turkeys, like people, sound different. Thus by having several different calls, one can determine which one is most effective at the time.

Tone is often more important or attractive to turkey than cadence. I want to be able to vary the sound of my call whenever I choose, particularly when my preferred callers are ineffective, and believe me, there are times when a turkey is extremely discretionary and will refuse to show any interest in a high pitched call, yet rush in on a raspy sounding vocalization.

In other words, it's extremely advantageous for a sportsman to have the ability to change the sound of his or her calling from time to time in order to find out what sound is most attractive to the birds.

Turkeys also have extremely good hearing, thus it is seldom necessary "unless one is attempting to locate a bird" to emit loud vocalizations. The two biggest mistakes turkey hunters make is to call too loudly and too often.

A turkey that is interested needs nothing more than a low volume series of three yelps, and even though the bird may not rush in, it will in its own good time come in to check out the sound with



Like rattling in an old buck, calling in a long beard during the spring is one way to put hunting back into the hunt.

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Now there are few things as stimulating as a fanned-out gobbler double gobbling at you only paces away, but sometimes a tom may slowly come in, but without ever gobbling. Not all toms will gobble upon their approach, thus it's important to remain vigilant after calling to make sure a tom is actually not coming to your call.

Like rattling up a mature whitetail, calling in a long beard in the spring is an endorphin-stimulating event that forces one to keep coming back for more. It also puts hunting back in the hunt, which is the most attractive aspect to the sport. 🦃🌟



Vocally deceiving turkey to approach within only feet of a caller is an endorphin-stimulating event.



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held up over a weighing issue. Do I expect more entries before Mar. 31? Well, YEAH!

The weather is warming and many more fishermen – no, wait, make that ANGLERS, since women will be on the lakes looking for lunkers, too – will be all over the water. Duke Kinley will be one of them. He's already caught three between 8 and 12.99 pounds since Jan. 1, and is intent. He caught a 13-pounder a few years ago in Lake Austin, and knows what it takes. I'm not sure he's entered any, yet, but feel certain he will.

And Duke, even though being a good friend, is playing keep away with the facts of his success. He won't tell me what he caught them on, and that includes the one pictured, which weighed "over 10 pounds". But to tease me more, he told me something exciting that I can't share just yet. He made me promise before he told me, and since he's a retired cop, I'm aware that he might still carry a gun. All he would tell me was that he caught it on **Lake LBJ**, which I've been telling you for several months is one of our two really hot bass-producing lakes in Central Texas, along with **Lake Travis**.

Inks Lake has refilled after having been lowered for dock repairs, and the lowering came during our cold weather, so some of the vegetation may have been knocked back. The lowering may have created some new habitat on the lowered part of the lake, and fishing may be stimulated. It's one of my favorite lakes, and I'll be on it for sure this month. Remember that last year a 12 pounder was caught and released on Inks.

Two other local lakes may be looking at improved fishing, too. Lakes **Georgetown** and **Granger** received artificial structure and transplanting of native aquatic vegetation.

"All of the reservoirs in Texas are aging, and their habitat is degrading," said Brian Van Zee, TPWD Inland Fisheries Regional Director. "These habitat projects not only provide habitat for fish, but they also improve fishing opportunities in these reservoirs."

On Georgetown, TPWD fisheries staff and volunteers from the Sun City Hunting and Fishing Club restored 30 existing brush pile habitat sites by sinking 120 long-lasting "Mossback" artificial structures consisting of 60 "Trophy Tree Units" and 60 "Root Wad" units.

"By supplementing these sites with a

network of artificial structures, we can provide more long-term habitat suitable for largemouth bass and ultimately provide better fishing experiences for anglers," said Marcos De Jesus, TPWD District Inland Fisheries Supervisor in San Marcos.

At Granger, TPWD staff, a local fishing guide, and local Boy Scouts of America sunk 168 Fishhiding Stakeout Structures at 10 sites ideally suited for crappie.

By the time you read this, TPWD will have adopted new fishing regulations for the 2018-2019 season. A couple of changes are proposed for area lakes. On Lake Georgetown, the 14-18-inch slot limit will revert back to the statewide minimum length limit of 14 inches. Great! At **Fayette County Reservoir**, the 14-18-inch slot limit is proposed to be replaced by a 16-24-inch slot length limit. The five

fish per day bag limit will remain in effect on both lakes, but on Fayette County, an exception for one bass 24 inches or larger for weighing for possible submission to the Toyota ShareLunker will be allowed.

Anglers on the **South Llano River** are reminded that for the rest of the year, any angler catching a tagged Guadalupe Bass, the Official Texas State Fish, will receive their choice of prizes from and assortment of fly fishing gear donated by Bass Pro Shops. This is in celebration of eight years of restoration work of Guadalupe on the South Llano.

I don't know whether Guads are present in the upper **Nueces River**, between Camp Wood and Uvalde, but I will find out and report next month, since I'll be spending several days kayaking that stretch in March, near where I caught my first decent size bass years ago. 🌟🌟



PHOTO COURTESY TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

On February 8 Texas Parks and Wildlife Department fisheries biologists and local partners took advantage of the temporary drawdown of Inks Lake to restore fish habitat and enhance fishing opportunities at the Inks Lake State Park fishing piers.

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Reversal of FALL



Long-time friends reunite with a youthful vigor for some exciting sightcasting to monster gamefish.

Story and Photography by Bill L. Olson

One of the great things about the outdoors is the special times spent with friends, as well as shared experiences. Such was the case in mid-December 2017. Longtime friends Buck Payne of The Woodlands, Mike McGregor of Waco and I joined veteran guide Capt. Nathan Beabout of N&MSportsman'sAdventures to sightcast

to skinny water redfish.

The entire trip was a good excuse for three friends to reunite and see if we could "duplicate" some of our former antics with the same youthful vigor. Payne, McGregor and I all went to Baylor University. Payne and I were pledge and fraternity brothers. McGregor was a year ahead of me at Memorial High School in

Houston. All three of us share a passion for a variety of outdoor activities. This much anticipated adventure would allow old friendships to be rekindled on the waters of San Antonio Bay out of Seadrift Texas.

I had forwarded Beabout of the reunion with my older friends and of their past exploits in trying to lead me astray



When fishing with old and new buddies you can expect a great time: (left to right) Buck Payne, Capt. Nathan Beabout, Mike McGregor.

during my formative, impressionable younger years. My guide friend belly-laughed and said, "So I should be ready for anything."

"Absolutely," was my simple response.

This foray would also allow Beabout to showcase his homewater that had been an overlooked destination for me as well as many other anglers. TOJ's Nate Skinner had told of sightcasting to redfish in skinny back lake areas with our guide buddy. I had introduced FOX Sports Outdoors — Southwest host Barry Stokes to Beabout that resulted in an excellent, action packed television show. I wanted my friends and me to partake in some of the same action.

Beabout cautioned, "You know those trips were taken earlier in the year and we have already seen some cold fronts move through that have dropped the water temperature as well as the tides. We may have to fish some different areas but that will allow me to show you the diversity of this part of the coast."

I've known Beabout long enough to follow his expert and reliable lead. There was no doubt he would bust his tail to put

us on fish. Little did I know how many fish, and the diversity of fishing options we experienced.

This trip also served as a preview for what could come in the spring. "You know there are a lot of similarities between fall and spring," Beabout said. "There are variables that need to be considered in each season.

"In the fall, the air temperature is still mild but cold fronts have chilled the water enough to increase the visibility and

improve your ability to spot fish," he stated. "Something similar occurs in the spring with warming air temperatures but while the water is still clear since it has not warmed to the point that algae has started to grow to cloud things up."

Knowing the fishing options were covered, my greatest concern was the behavior of my friends once our trio got together. This concern was heightened when we all met at the Coastal Bend Motel in Seadrift and then over dinner that night. Tales of high school antics and college behavior seemed to create a good-natured story telling frenzy directed at yours truly.

The next morning over breakfast, a different persona was displayed. The old camaraderie had been reestablished and renewed, but now it was game time. It could have been the anticipation of friendly competition or just the fact my two friends and guide take their outdoor pursuits seriously. That was to be a fun day to see how each responds.

Idling away from the docks Beabout commented that the tides were too low for us to get into the back lakes to fish. He said we'd concentrate on shorelines, canal cuts and mouths of drains to find



The action started early on the second day of fishing for Buck Payne along a reed and structure strewn shoreline.



Capt. Nathan Beabout scans the waters searching for the next targets of Mike McGregor and Buck Payne to cast.

trout, just shy of the 15 inch minimum to keep. "We have had a good trout hatch with the river flooding and flushing of our bay system," Beabout explained. "Each fall we see big numbers of just-undersized specks like this. However this fall it seems we have a higher than normal number of juvenile fish."

As our quartet continued to catch and release these schoolie specks the fishing bond solidified. Collectively we each wondered aloud that if there were this many trout in the fall, what it would be like to return in the spring once they had grown beyond minimum length. And then there are the trophy-sized trout Beabout wades for and has built a reputation on catching.

Consumed with individual thoughts of the moment — as so often happens the unexpected occurred. Beabout set the hook on what seemed to be an almost unmovable object — until it started to strip line from his reel as it moved off.

His first thought was "it's a big ray." It was hugging the bottom and its apparent size left him little option other than to

hang on.

I cranked up the big Yamaha to pursue whatever had our guide bowed up on the forward casting deck. Once some line had been picked up, Beabout started to put pressure on the beast and gain the upper hand. As he continued to work the big fish to the surface he proved that trout tackle in the hands of a skilled angler can best what turned out to be a 36 1/2 inch black drum. Based on the Length/Weight Conversions for Marine Fishes of Texas website (txmarspecies.tamug.edu/length-weight.cfm) that black drum Beabout released weighed 24 pounds 10 ounces.

The rest of the day we picked up a few fish and continued to be introduced to where the mouth of the Guadalupe River empties into Hynes and Guadalupe Bays, fished along scattered islands and reefs of San Antonio Bay to where it connects with Espiritu Santos Bay. Plus perused the lengthy bayside shoreline of Matagorda Island with its back lake drains and mouths of drains.

Beabout smugly informed us the best was yet to come — tomorrow. I saw the youthful anticipation I had seen in past years in my friends' faces and felt sure they saw the same in mine.

The next morning it was obvious each of us were ready to step our game up another notch. Beabout ran to a shore lined with reeds and grass that got McGregor and Payne excited. In addition to coastal fishing these two anglers love to fish for a variety of freshwater species on inland lakes, and they are particularly fond of being able to cast to shoreline structure.

Precise casts were placed close to the vegetation and woody structure. That

fish — and find fish he did.

On our way to one portion of San Antonio Bay he shut the big Majek down and said, "I want y'all to see just how many trout we have in the bays during the fall." Over the next 30 to 45 minutes we drifted a gut between two spoil islands and were bit on every cast.

The area was teeming with 14 3/4"



Buck Payne loads up and fires another paddle tail soft plastic to feeding redfish in San Antonio Bay.



Mike McGregors hooks up with another redfish while sight casting along a shallow shoreline.



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Capt. Nathan Beabout shows off his surprise catch, a 36 1/2" long black drum that weighed 24 pounds and 10 ounces.

creating moving targets. "Mike, cast just to the right of where Buck just hooked up," our captain ordered. It seemed as soon as McGregor's bait hit the water he was hooked up and we had a double on.

Finally it was too much for me to continue to photograph. I had to get in on the action and quickly stuck a solid slot redfish. I put constant reverse pressure on the fish to promptly bring it to net and then teased my friends that they were "messing around with landing their fish."

As the afternoon wore on it became obvious of the subtle shoreline features that provided the best opportunity of holding fish. Beabout commented on points,

drains, or submerged structure where more times than not fish were spotted, cast too and caught.

Beabout, who also fishes a number of redfish tournaments throughout the

year stated that some of the just legal, heavy-weight fish caught by our group would have been money fish if caught during a tournament. There were also the oversized redfish that provided an even bigger tug and were released. Plus there was no shortage of slot-sized redfish to leave on the half shell and enjoy later while remembering this reunion.

In my mind this was just a sampler of a much more extensive menu for this area. Not far off is Cedar Bayou and either Mother Nature or a re-dredging will increase its flow once again.

There are the back lakes that beckon a return during the warm summer months. Plus an enticement to maybe even dust of my retired wading boots to test the shoreline marsh drains.

This is a small town destination with big fishing rewards in pristine waters. It's an area that many overlook, but once discovered will become a favorite for future reunions with friends, redfish and trout.

For information on booking a guided trip with Capt. Nathan Beabout visit www.nmsportsmansadventures.com or call (210) 452-9680. To make reservations at Coastal Bend Motel & RV Park visit www.coastalbendmotel-seadrift.com or call (361) 785-3322. 🌟🌟

accuracy resulted in Payne hooking up with a big red. Beabout followed suit with McGregor getting in on the action.

The great soft early morning lighting plus plenty of non-stop action from my three compadres provided photo ops that kept me and my Pentax busy recording the action. I knew in time I too would soon get in on the fishing fray.

On this morning everyone was on top of their game, especially Beabout. He deftly maneuvered from one shallow area to another. School after pod, to even individual redfish were spotted and cast too. It was as controlled and calculated a redfish rodeo as I have ever witnessed.

Beabout was up on top scanning the surface and peering into the shallow shoreline waters looking for the next target. All the while my buddies were at the ready to fire the next cast.

As one would hook up and the water would boil other fish nearby would swirl



A good rod, Lew's Speed Spool reel and a paddle tail soft plastic were a lethal combination for the author and his friends as they sightcasted to schools of redfish.

Small Lakes with Big Options

Lake Fork, Toledo Bend, Sam Rayburn, Texoma, and Falcon Reservoir are names that all evoke one image in the angles mind — great fishing. Images of days fighting tight lines while fighting big bass, crappie, catfish or stripers course through the brain. Some are considered a “bucket list” destination while others have been nationally ranked as the best in the country. And that is just the short list of super lakes anglers are blessed with in the great state of Texas.

Unfortunately, the Lone Star State is such a large expanse that visiting one of these may be a once in a lifetime experience for many anglers. At the very least, it will take a lot of planning, travel and time fishing.

There are other options for anglers and one may be a lot closer to home. There are countless smaller lakes in Texas, scattered across the entire state, and can offer exceptional fishing. Lakes that cover 1,500 acres in size or less offer a plethora of fishing opportunities, often with less pressure than the big lakes. While they will generally produce smaller fish when compared to the bigger waters that is by no means always the case.

The eastern portion of our state is truly a fisherman’s paradise. Not only are many of the big impounds located in the east but countless smaller lakes are there as well. Wood County alone lists over 200 named lakes within its boundaries.

Included are:

Lake Holbrook — Located just three miles northwest of Mineola, Holbrook has a surface area of 653 acres, is popular with bass fisherman, plus has plenty of boat docks for the angler to fish. Both bass and crappie will be holding on these docks, many of which have been enhanced by the dock owner with brush and other habitat-producing structures.

Topwater baits early, spinnerbaits and crankbaits later in the day, and the jig-and-pig or Texas rigged worm are standards for bass. Crappie fishermen will want to use minnows or crappie jigs around the brush.

Since smaller lakes tend to have smaller fish, lures like the Roadrunner, Rooster Tail, Panther Martin, and others will probably produce more fish on a given day. Fish these on spinning rigs with six to 10 pound line for better results.

Lake Quitman — Another Wood County lake, comes in at 814 acres and is another bass and crappie fishery. Docks, brush and flooded timber rule for bass. Catfish have been stocked in recent years and should see a rise in their population. Crappie anglers should look to the brushed docks.

Lake Hawkins — Also located in Wood County, covers 776 acres and is a bass and sunfish lake with the added bonus of chain pickerel or southern pike. If you’ve never caught one of these fish, just keep

fishing those small spinners mentioned above and you’ll probably connect with one along with the bass. Sunfish can be caught on Red Wigglers, earthworms, and crickets floated under a cork.

Lake Naconiche — Located just northeast of the town of Nacogdoches, is a relatively new impoundment, covering 690 acres of beautiful east Texas piney woods. With deep ravines and lots of standing timber remaining. I expect Lake Nac to put out some really big bass over the next few years. The lake record is already at 14.12 pounds and in 2017 a bass weighing 13.06 was entered into the ShareLunker program. For a reservoir only eight years old that’s pretty impressive.

Just as impressive are the crappie record of 1.84, also set in 2017, and the channel cat record of 6.15 (25.50 inches long). These will surely not stand for long as the lake becomes more popular.

With the abundant cover and structure available bass anglers can fish just about any technique they prefer, following seasonal guidelines of course. Those that fish a jig-and-pig or Texas rigged plastic will have endless targets to which they can present an offering.

Spinnerbait fishermen can throw all day and never cover all of the edges along laydown timber and vegetation. On the right days, topwater aficionados will be rewarded with all the bites one could ask, and frog fanatics will be astounded at the possibilities.

If a deeper approach is preferred, try a drop-shot, Carolina rig or deep divers to the road beds and bridge pilings. Crappie anglers will want to work the edges of the timber and bridge pilings as well. Sunfish can be caught on the standard worm or cricket under a float and there is a fair amount of bank fishing available near the ramp and the fishing pier.

Purtis Creek — is the final east Texas small lake with big bass potential. Purtis Creek is approaching the 30th anniversary of the opening of this great bass lake. At 365 acres it is small, but powerful.

Located just outside Eustace Texas, I’ve spent an awful lot of time on that little



Smaller baits work well for both crappie and bass on smaller lakes.



Diminutive sized diving baits and 'Traps are good options for bass or crappie on smaller impounds.

lake and I can tell you positively that it is one heck of a bass fishery. Purty has changed over the years, in part due to the introduction of grass carp. Taking the vegetation away from the lake certainly made it more difficult for the average angler to catch fish, but they are still there. On a recent night fishing trip we were able to catch several fish in the four to six pound range in multiple locations around the lake.

The key to fishing Purty is to look for structure during the daylight hours. Gone are the days of cruising the bank and getting dozens of quality bites without even trying. During the spawn you'll still find plenty of shallow fish, but most of the year will see them out deeper, on channels or around the timber.

The exception is at night. Bass will cruise the shallows in search of food when the darkness offers the cover they need. Deep diving cranks, drop-shots, jigs, or Carolina rigs are the ticket for daylight fishing. Spinnerbaits, Texas rigged 10" worms in blue fleck or red shad, and the buzzbait will work at night. Remember, bass at Purty are catch-and-release only, check park regulations for entering qualifying fish into the ShareLunker program.

Crappie at Purty has always been good, look to the timber out in front of the campsite fishing pier, where the timberline ends in the main lake.

Minnows and double drop crappie jigs are the ticket.

In addition, Purty developed a good sand bass population, and these fish should be around the main lake area below the dam, in roaming schools. Clear Tiny Torpedos, small slabs, and spoons will snatch up a limit of these fish.

Marine Creek — Moving a couple of hours west and a little north, Martin Creek Reservoir is our smallest featured lake at 250 surface acres but it has big bass potential. This is borne out by the 13.07 entered into the ShareLunker program in 2017. Several other double-digit fish have been caught that were just shy of the requirement for entry under the old ShareLunker guidelines through 2017. Under the new rules, that began January 1, Jarrod Miller's 12.79 bass caught from Marine Creek was entered in the Lunker Elite Class.

Located next to the campus of Tarrant County College Northwest, just north of Ft. Worth, Marine Creek is a lightly pressured urban reservoir. Considering the population living within just a few minutes driving time, this lake is practically ignored by the majority of anglers. Of course, at just 250 acres it doesn't take a lot of boats to make it seem as though there are a lot of people on the lake. Primary cover consists of shoreline reeds and vegetation, and some timber, with bottom structure comprising the remainder of the fish holding areas. Typical shallow water baits like the 'Trap, spinnerbait, and Senko will work on the vegetation edges, while a deeper approach is called for around the bottom structure.

One word of caution, while I stated earlier that smaller baits and line will catch more fish on these smaller lakes (and indeed they will), using light line on these last three lakes is asking to get your heart broken by a truly big bass.

Sadly lakes in west Texas are still suffering from effects of the latest drought. And the smaller lakes suffer the most and the soonest.

Oak Creek — Although a little bigger than the standard, Oak Creek Reservoir in Coke County

and covering 2,375 acres, it is one of the few lakes in this region that looks to still be a viable choice.

Located just off Texas Highway 70, 8 miles north of Bronte, Oak Creek is just 48 percent full and now falls into the category of our "small lake" designation. Good fishing for bass, catfish, crappie, and sand bass exist and should remain as long as the lake retains some amount of water.

It seems I have run out of space just when getting started. However there are a few other options that were not profiled but are still good small fishing lakes.

Mineral Wells — located in Mineral Wells State Park is just 440 acres but offers good bass and catfish action.

Inks Lake — 831 acre surface acres located on the Colorado River just west of Burnet. The lake record bass caught in 2017 weighed 12.50 pounds. It provides good crappie fishing destination.

Wichita Reservoir — located on the south side of Wichita Falls, this lake covers 1,224 acres and offers good crappie fishing.

Bellwood Lake — is located about 5 miles west of Tyler off Highway 64. Bellwood covers 1,391 acres and comes highly recommended.

Clark — located just west of Ennis off Hwy. 287 has great fishing for bass up to three pounds. While these are mostly smaller fish there are lots of them.

We couldn't possibly feature all of the great small lakes in Texas as there are so many. Hopefully this capsule look at a few will provide the inspiration to fish one or explore and find others like them near you.

Good fishing. **T★J**



Mepps and Roostertail spinnerbaits will cover water and catch a variety of fish when fished in smaller reservoirs.



Double Duty Gear for Turkey & Varmints

The spring turkey season has hit us like both barrels of shot from a side-by-side smoothbore. Instead of talking about how to lure in a love-sick gobbler I want to do something a little different. I'm going to list some of the gear that might just help you close the deal.

And before I'm finished don't be surprised — I may just twist off on another angle to fill in the middle of the day "dead time" when all the turkeys are AWOL.

Here are my top items and tips.

SHELLS — If you're a tightwad, loosen up a little on this one. There is a huge difference in shells that are available on the market. I once did a pattern comparison between some of the leading turkey loads for Bass Pro Shop and the results blew me away.

The test was conducted using a Birchwood Casey turkey target. I shot at varying distances, different chokes and loads. After a shot was taken I counted how many BB's landed in the head and chest area. One brand had 17 BB's and the best one tested put 119 in the kill zone. That's a huge difference. Be sure to pattern you shotgun before going afield.

SHOTGUN CHOKES — Not just any choke will suffice. It is important to use a tight choke if you want to have a good pattern. I've been using chokes from Trulock the last few years.

Also when turkey hunting turkeys

you don't just point and pull the trigger like when hunting dove, duck or pheasant. Nope, you have to aim at a body part and squeeze the trigger like when shooting a rifle.

You would like every pellet to hit him in the head, so since you have a pattern of shot aim at a gobbler's neck. If the point of aim is at his head then half the shot pattern will fly harmlessly over him.

SIGHTS/SCOPES — When turkey hunting you won't just be pointing your shotgun. You'll be aiming at a body region so you'll want some good beads on your shotgun. Due to the demands of passionate turkey hunters, scopes, good beads and lasers are semi-common accessories available nowadays.

Shoot at the neck and the bulk of the pattern and shot will hit the head, neck and craw area.

MONTANA DECOYS — Decoys enhance hunting anytime when you're calling so you should use them this spring. If you're just hunting in one spot there are some super realistic decoys on the market but I'm usually hunting on big ranches or National Forest land so I'm running gunning and covering a lot of ground. With that type of hunting style I use the light-weight Montana Decoys. If you can only afford one decoy, make it a jake.

BLINDS — If you're only hunting in one spot use your regular pop-up blind. When running and gunning to cover lots of ground, then check out the Ameristep Throw Down blind. It only weighs 1.2 pounds and collapses as small as an umbrella. A



The spring turkey season provides an exciting time to be afield across the Lone Star State.

piece of camo burlap and lay it over two small bushes will also work to hide behind.

CHAIRS/STOOLS/PADS — When on stand hunting, if you're not comfortable then you probably won't be setting too still. A comfortable chair will be the ticket. If hunting in a pop-up blind you need to be slightly elevated so you can see out the window so pick the chair or stool height that best fits your hunting style.

If you're moving a lot then at least carry a pad which will also protect you from ground moisture as well as things that stick. There are also a number of good turkey vests with lots of pockets that have a built in pad to sit upon.

BIPOD — Turkeys are notorious for having superb eyesight so you need to minimize movement. When a gobbler comes in you don't want to have to raise your shotgun, aim etc. They'll scatter.

A lot of hunters use a bi-pod. You can have your shotgun propped up in the ready position plus it helps stabilize your shot.

CALLS — I'm old school and still like a box call. I use the Quaker Boy Hurricane. If it gets wet, it still works.

The downside of using box calls is that they tie up your hands. So, learn to use a diaphragm. They shouldn't take long to master a few yelps or putts.

The push boxes are simple to use and can be taped to the forestock. Soft yelps and purrs can be made to lure a bird within range.

Another option a lot of people like are



Decoys work as evident by this boss gobbler strutting for this fake hen.

the friction calls or "slate plates." They are made of a variety of materials from the original slate, glass and acrylic. Each material provides a different sound so try several out, or carry several different ones to sound like different turkey.

KNIFE — To process a turkey I like to use a smaller knife like the Pinnacle II from Diamond Blade knives. It has a thin pointed blade and works great. You can smoke the whole bird or breast it out.

The legs of a turkey are tough so smoke them a few hours and then put them in the oven on a low temperature. The meat will fall off the bone.

SNAKE BOOTS — If you're reading this article, then it stands to reason that you just might turkey hunt in Texas. And if you hunt in Texas there's also a good chance that you're in snake country.

At a set-up a couple of years ago my brother was calling and a rattler slithered in on the party and sent his son-in-law scattering. You'll be crouched on the ground and hidden in the brush or moving through the brush from one stand to another — so be careful.

CAMO — That means full camo so wear a face net & gloves. Your face is shiny and your hands are a big source of your movement when working a call.

Make sure your legs above your boot are covered too. And don't wear white socks. Black, green or gray work well to cover the leg up to mid-calf should your pant leg ride up while seated.

Since the grass is green and the brush may still be gray Editor Bill Olson recommends wearing a greener patterned pants and a lighter top. As the brush continues to leaf out over the course of the season switch the gray top to one with more green.

Also set with your back against a tree or bush when possible. When in full camo it will help break your silhouette

SPRING HUNT BONUS — Now, let's vary off the predominant and favorite springtime hunt for a second. What if a nonromantic coyote or bobcat gets thrown into the mix? They are not showing up on the scene for love, they are showing up for a drumstick dinner.

So why not keep a reed call in your pocket so you can do a wounded rabbit call and lure them on in? Or maybe just keep on with your turkey call, that's what they're interested in anyway isn't it?

There has been more than one turkey

hunter surprised when a coyote charges in to crash the party. And there are those that are really surprised when a bobcat has slowly put the sneak on the calling location and jumps in their lap.

Don't worry about needing to pack around an extra gun or shells. What you have for turkey is fine.

In fact, you're pretty much set-up with what you take to the field to hunt turkey. Your camo, decoys, gun, shells and blind are just as effective for calling in a coyote, bobcat, fox or other varmint. The only addition I'd recommend is to throw in a reed call.

Remember, smoke a coyote, bobcat or other varmint and you'll end up having more turkey.



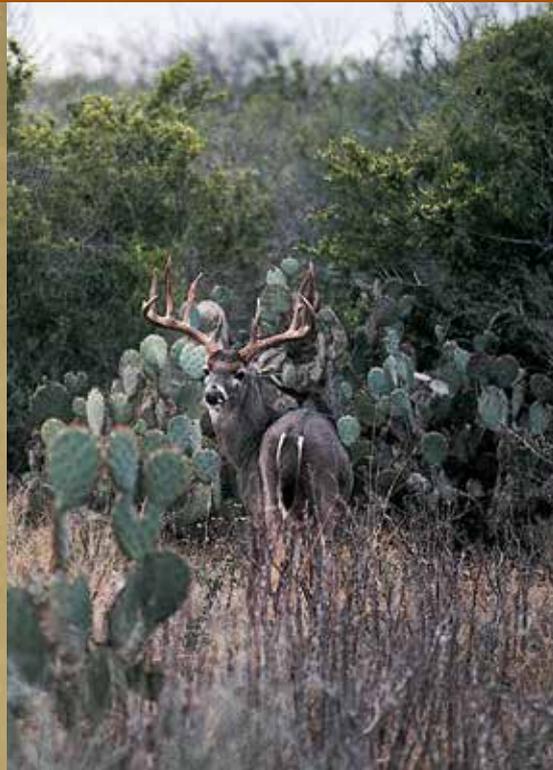
An Ameristep Throwdown Blind provides lightweight concealment whether hunting turkeys or predators.

AND FINALLY — Speaking of smoking, I guess everyone in the English-speaking world knows the joy of eating a smoked turkey. But what about branching out and making some turkey jerky? It is great stuff and easy to make.

If it's your first time at making turkey jerky, or even just jerky in general I'd recommend Hi-Mountain Seasoning. I love their Hickory blend or Cracked Pepper mix. 🌿🌿

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From March Into the Marsh

Story and Photography by Nate Skinner



Flooding tides are inundating backwater areas that hold great promise for trout, redfish, and flounder.

Southerly winds and the fourth month of the year go hand in hand. This means that strong influxes of salty tides are continually flooding coastal bays and estuaries, including back lake areas and marshes during the month of April.

Satellite bays and lakes not only provide anglers with protection from gusty breezes, they also hold great promise for speckled trout, redfish, and flounder. Luckily, there is an abundance of these areas spanning Texas' upper coast from Matagorda Bay to Sabine Lake, and even on eastward to Lake Calcasieu in southwest Louisiana. These areas are chock full of fish and can become an untapped gold mine when approached effectively.

The reason marshes and back bays hold fish during periods of flooding tides is pretty simple. Baitfish follow the rising water to protected areas and predators are hot on their trail.

According to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Galveston Bay Ecosystem Leader, Glen Sutton, small baitfish and crustaceans move into marshes in search of structure to hide in order to avoid predation.

"Shallow oyster reefs and marsh grasses provide baitfish, pogies, small crabs, and shrimp protection from the predatory fish that chase them," he stated. "They

are less vulnerable in marshes during peak high tides when water levels allow them to hide amongst flooded grasses and other structures."

Sutton claims this is why speckled trout, redfish, and flounder are often found feeding against the banks of back lakes, as well as up in flooded marsh grasses in certain scenarios.

"These fish are after the shrimp, crabs, pogies, and other baitfish that are swarming the grasses of back bays and marshes," he elaborated. "This can make targeting them difficult for anglers as extreme high tides enable them to travel hard to reach areas."

The scenario Sutton describes is a hurdle that anglers will need to overcome in order to be successful in the marsh during April's flooding tides. There are a number of strategies that will afford great catches when fish are holding tight to grass banks or within flooded marsh grasses.

For starters, using weedless baits will significantly increase success rates. Redfish, trout and flounder will regularly feed aggressively amongst flooded marsh grasses. The only thing standing in between an angler's bait and these hungry fish is the vegetation surrounding them. A lure hung up on marsh grass out of the water won't produce a strike. Baits that are rigged weedless eliminate this problem and allow anglers to retrieve them through heavy vegetation and other



Capt. Nick Poe with a springtime speck caught out of Black Lake Bayou in southwest Louisiana.

structures that would hinder the action of the lure.

One of the most innovative weedless baits on the market is the PT-7 manufactured by D.O.A. lures. It is a soft bodied topwater bait that is rigged with an offset, worm hook and has an enticing rattle. The PT-7 encompasses the same idea as a scum frog lure used by freshwater anglers targeting bass in heavy surface vegetation. It can be retrieved, twitched, and walked across just about anything without getting hung up or fouling.

Another way for anglers to employ a weedless presentation is to rig a soft plastic with an offset worm hook rather than a traditional jighead. The point of the hook should be buried into the body of the bait, allowing it to be pulled through vegetation and other present structure.

Veteran marsh angler, Captain Greg Verm of Fishing Galveston TX charters, says he prefers to use bass fishing tactics to successfully catch fish in and along marsh grasses during extreme high tides.

"Spinnerbaits have been popular among bass anglers for years, and they have always been an excellent go-to bait for me in the marsh, especially for redfish,"



D.O.A.'s PT-7 is an excellent weedless bait to use while targeting fish during flood tides in the back lakes and marshes.



Anglers should be on the look out for birds working over bait near grass shorelines.

he explained.

Verm says that a spinnerbait will typically bust right through marsh grasses while it is retrieved and that it sparks a reaction strike from hungry fish.

"Using a spinnerbait also allows anglers to cover plenty of water," he added. "One good way to find and locate fish in a large back lake is to cast a spinnerbait along a shoreline and then retrieve it parallel to the grass."

Another bass fishing tactic Verm uses in the marsh is to drag a weedless rigged Slug-Go worm through flooded grass banks and shorelines.

"I grew up catching bass on weedless rigged Slug-Go worms," he confessed. "There's no telling how many large mouths I've caught on them over the years. Now I use these same baits to catch redfish and flounder. I'll work them slowly through the grass just like I would if I was bass fishing."

Captain Ryan Battistoni of Battistoni's Guide Service states that topwater plugs are his go-to presentation when he's targeting fish along the banks of back lakes and in flooded marsh grasses.

"I try to find a small pocket or opening along the edge of a flooded grass bank and chunk my topwater into it," he explained.

"Then I'll allow the bait to sit for several seconds. Sometimes fish will explode on it immediately. Other times it's better to give it some action, by quickly shaking or twitching the rod tip without turning the reel handle. This gives the bait some side-to-side movement without pulling it forward out of the strike zone within the small pocket of water it's floating in."

Battistoni claims that another way to keep a bait close to the grass and in the strike zone is by using a popping cork.

"Soft plastics rigged with a short leader under a popping cork work extremely well when the fish are holding tight to the bank within flooded grass," he confessed. "The popping cork allows the bait to float near the edge of the grass where the majority of the fish are concentrated. Give it a few aggressive

twitches, and hold on!"

In West Matagorda Bay, some of the best marsh areas lie along the backside of Matagorda Peninsula in the form of bayous and marsh drains. Some popular hot spots include Cotton's Bayou, Green's Bayou, Long Fence Bayou, and Phillip's bayou. The best way to approach these areas is to wade into the mouths of these cuts into the marsh and concentrate on stretches of water holding plenty of baitfish.

The far east end of East Matagorda Bay is littered with marshy areas from Brown Cedar flats to Brown Cedar Cut. North of this bay and the Intracoastal Waterway (IWC) lies Lake Austin, a satellite lake known for holding schools of redfish and some decent flounder.

Out of Freeport, anglers have hoards of options for fishing the marsh. Just west of the San Bernard River, Cowtrap Lake and the Cedar Lakes offer protection from the wind, as well as plenty of small, secondary and uncharted oyster reefs. East of the Brazos River, Drum Bay and Christmas Bay give anglers plenty of opportunities to find fish during flooding tides.

In the Galveston Bay Complex, West Galveston Bay contains several back lakes and marshes, including Bastrop Bay, Oyster Lake, Chocolate Bay, Hall's Lake, Green's Lake and Jones Bay. Further to



The author found this upper slot red cruising along the bank in the back of Green's Lake in west Galveston Bay.

the east, Moses Lake near Texas City is another excellent satellite bay for anglers to find fish during April in Galveston Bay.

The Bessie Heights gas and oil field located off the Neches River north of Sabine Lake offer anglers a vast amount of marsh to explore. Veteran Sabine Lake area guide, Captain Randy Foreman, states that Bessie Heights is one of his favorite areas to find fish when flooding tides fill the back lakes. Foreman also fishes Keith Lake quite a bit during the month of April.

On the west side of Calcasieu Lake, Black Lake Bayou and Black Lake provide anglers with some back bay options. These areas are spring hot spot favorites for Captain Nick Poe of Big Lake Guide Service when south winds fill them with high tides. While fishing Black Lake Bayou, Poe prefers to work soft plastics down the bank and into the drop off of the bayou channel. In Black Lake Poe claims the best approach is to focus on oyster reefs out in front of the marsh's south bank.

One of the best ways to learn the lay of the land when approaching unfamiliar back lake and marsh areas for the first time is to use a trolling motor and ease down the banks, meticulously working the edge of the grass. Anglers should pay particular attention to the details of each bank, taking note of where ditches, small drains, creeks, and other fish attracting features occur.

Getting out of the boat and wading these areas is another good way to learn specific details about them. Walking through the shallow waters and feeling the bottom on foot will reveal small, uncharted reefs, as well as where slight changes in depths may be located.

Studying satellite images on Google Earth prior to visiting a new marsh is also good practice. This type of homework will show anglers where guts and depth changes occur, as well as where reefs, sand bars, and other structures are located.

While fishing the marsh anglers should be on the look out for birds working over baitfish along banks and over flooded grass. Swirls, wakes, and mud boils are also signs of fish feeding in an area that should not be ignored.

Satellite bays and marshes are filling up with flooding tides. It's time to get off the grid and chase fish into new, unexplored waters. Just follow the baitfish, and the rest will take care of itself. 🌟🌟



Getting out of the boat and wading the marsh will reveal underwater secrets about the lay of the land.

 The advertisement features a fisherman in a light blue shirt holding a large, dark-colored fish. The fish has a yellow lure in its mouth. The background is a bright blue sky. Text elements include:

- A yellow banner at the top with an American flag icon, "Made in USA", and "PT-7 freshwater and saltwater".
- The word "New" in large, yellow, stylized letters.
- The slogan "Walk where no other topwater has walked before!" in white text with a black outline.

Compact, durable and rattles, the PT-7's aerodynamic body casts like a bullet, rattles like crazy and skips into tight places where others can't. 3 inches in length and 5/8 oz., this soft plastic minesweeper detonates explosive strikes like no other topwater on the market today. Seatrout, snook, and redfish to lunker largemouth bass find its "walk-the-dog" action simply irresistible. Pre-rigged with a single premium 7/0 EWG hook, it keeps the big fish on where standard trebles fail. Available in 12 realistic colors.

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FISHING LURES

What Was Hot at S.H.O.T 2018: Part 2

The 40th Annual Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor Trade Show held January in Las Vegas was, as always, miles of aisles of “the stuff that dreams are made of” for the shooter and hunter. Here are a few more products that caught my eye.

Wading through a sea of black “tactical” stuff I headed to the Savage display knowing full well there would be something for the hunter. Hunting often means making fast, accurate shots from a variety of angles. You need a gun that fits and comes to the shoulder naturally. The Savage 110 Scout with their AccuFit system fills that bill. This system lets a shooter easily customize the length of pull and comb size. This is doubly important to a person like me with short arms and no neck. AccuFit gives the fit and function of a custom rifle out of the box.

Other user friendly features include the self-adjustable AccuTrigger, adjustable iron sights, 16½-inch matte-black button-rifled barrel with muzzle brake, AccuStock rail system, 10-round Magpul AICS-style detachable box magazine, and a synthetic stock with soft grip fore-end and pistol grip surfaces.

This fast handling rifle comes in .223 Rem., .308 Win. and the powerful .338 Federal and .450 Bushmaster chambering. M.S.R.P. is \$819.00, but there will be deals at dealers.

I’m still trying to get my head around AR style pistols when the rifles work so

well. That being said, the new SD Pistols offered by Bushmaster look cool and handle well. The short version of the legal application is an AR type firearm made as a pistol and never having a rifle stock is o.k. Google if you want more information.

The SD name comes from the Advanced Armament Corp. Square Drop modular free float system for accuracy and ease of mounting accessories. The Bushmaster XM-15 XD model comes with an SB Tactical Arm Brace designed by veterans for stability and improved accuracy.

Other features are a Mil. Standard upper and lower, AAC Square Drop handguard, AAC Blackout flash hider, Hogue overmolded grip and the ALG Defense fire control group for improved trigger control.

The pistol comes with a 30 round magazine in 5.56 NATO and 300 AAC Blackout. The 4150 chrome-moly steel barrels come in 10, 9 or 7-inch lengths. This makes for fast handling in tight conditions and awesome muzzle flash and noise. If you don’t hit them you will scare them to death.

MSRP is around \$1,300.00 at present.

If you have ever felt “I should have bought it when I had the chance” Brownells is going to give you that chance. It’s been 79 years in the making and now, Brownells has joined the ranks of America’s gun manufacturers

and the company’s first firearms are legitimately old school retro AR-15 rifles.

Brownells newly-created Retro Rifles line features four 5.56mm

Top: The shooter adjustable Savage 110 Scout with AccuFit stock.

Middle: Brownells Retro BRN-601. A blast from the past.

Bottom: Handy in tight spots, the Bushmaster XM-15XD.

variants and two .308/7.62 variants. The 5.56mm models feature the correct styling for rifles issued to GIs in the 1960s. The .308/7.62 models reflect the lightweight styling of Eugene Stoner’s original AR-10 design.

The 5.56mm models include the BRN-16A1 that is a copy of the M16-A1 first fielded in the 1960’s with a matte gray anodized receiver, black furniture, original profile lower receiver, 20” chrome lined barrel with M16A1 flash hider and standard charging handle.

The BRN-601 mirrors the USAF contract rifle with green furniture, matte gray anodized receiver, “Slabside” lower receiver, “Slickside” upper receiver, “Duckbill” early 3-prong flash hider, 20” lightweight barrel and triangle charging handle.

The XBRN16E1 is a copy of the transitional rifle with features of both the 601 and M16A1. The receivers are matte gray, black furniture with period correct contours, partial fence lower receiver, 20” lightweight barrel, 3-prong flash hider, forward assist and modern charging handle.

The XBRN-177E2 is an authentic copy of an early Special Forces carbine with matte gray receiver, period correct flash hider, period correct furniture with collapsible stock, M16A1 lower, standard charging handle and a 12.7” lightweight 5.56 chrome lined barrel.

This rifle and all of the above come with excellent Brownell magazines. Retail for these rifles is \$1,299.99.

Brownells also announced the BRN-10, the first .308 rifle in its Retro Rifles line. The BRN-10 will have the “trigger-style” charging handle in the top of the receiver, under the carry handle, and the same lines and contours as the first production AR-10’s from the 1950s.

With upper and lower receivers designed in conjunction with FM-Products, the BRN-10 is compatible with standard DPMS/SR25 components including triggers, magazines, barrels, bolt carrier groups, muzzle devices, buttstocks, pistol grips, handguards, and buffer assemblies.



It also features a newly designed rear sight assembly with a peep sight adjustable for windage and elevation, with elevation setting viewable through the rear of the receiver.

The BRN-10A is a copy of the early rifles as those issued by the Netherlands. These rifles feature 20" fluted barrels, brown furniture with an original style handguard, open 3-prong flash hider, receiver machined from 7075 billet aluminum and retro style bolt catch, fire selector and magazine release. Retail is \$1,699.99.

The BRN-10B is a close copy of later models adopted by other nations. These feature 20" lightweight 308 barrels, black furniture with appropriate styled handguard, Portuguese-style closed prong flash hiders and more for \$1,599.99. One of these should hit the hot button of an old soldier, history student, or someone who just wants to shoot some really cool rifles.

In addition to complete Retro Rifles, Brownells offers a full line of Retro Parts, including 5.56 receivers, furniture, barrels and other parts.

Retro parts in .308 will be available late in the year. To see all, visit the www.brownells.com/retro.

For shotgun practice and competition Kent Cartridge introduced a new line of Elite Target loads that give shooters a choice. The Elite Pro Target and Elite Target load offerings are loaded with premium components for competition level consistency.

The proprietary Diamond Shot technology, for uniformity with specific loads, are available for trap, skeet and sporting clays.

When steel is called for there is the Elite Steel Target load. The Elite Low Recoil/Training loads are ideal for new or recoil sensitive shooters featuring lighter payloads and custom powders to soften recoil. With velocities that match standard target loads, they provide great on-target performance.

Federal Premium Hydra-Shok has proven itself for self-defense since 1989. The new Hydra-Shok Deep builds off the time-tested platform with design improvements that better meet modern performance measurements.

The bullet features a more robust centerpost and a core design that provides as much as 50 percent deeper penetration

than original Hydra-Shok and competitor loads. This round Penetrates 15 inches in bare ballistics gel which is the optimal depth according to FBI standards with a 70 percent improvement in FBI protocol score.

New in 9mm Luger with a 135-grain Hydra-Shok Deep bullet and retailing for \$27.95 a box.

I cannot resist a cool knife and the well respected W.R. Case & Sons Cutlery Co., unveiled the Case Winkler Recurve Utility No. 6, the latest knife project between Case and Winkler Knives as a member of their American Heroes Knife Series. This impressive blade was designed by Master Bladesmith Daniel Winkler and retired Navy Seal Harold Bologna. This knife's purpose is to perform across a wide spectrum of needs.

It is manufactured by Case using blade and handle materials provided by Winkler Knives in Boone, NC. Each is built by an elite team of Case knife makers whose work is held to strict quality and performance standards equaling the reputation of Winkler Knives' custom manufactured blades.

The recurve blade offers 4 3/4 inches of high performance cutting power with aggressive spine gimping for added control. The blade thickness blew me away at 5/16" for pelvis cracking and heavy duty prying.

The skeletonized full tang of heavy gauge carbon steel gives excellent balance to this workhorse. The hand filling canvas laminate handles are available in black or tan and there are dual lanyard holes for attachment options.

The fitted reinforced leather sheath has a reversible belt loop, optional attachment points for personalized carry, and a custom Kydex piece that holds an

included black matte Zippo lighter. This follows Bologna's belief that "one should never go out into the woods without a hard working knife and a way to start a fire."

Not inexpensive at dealers for a suggested \$395.00, but this is a knife built for a lifetime. What's your life worth?

Zippo introduced their new rechargeable hand warmers that warm you up with the touch of a button in combination with a USB compatible power bank.

The USB port is how you charge this pocket size device just like your smart phone from a wall socket or the port on your computer.

These units recharge quickly and the dual sided heat provides welcome warmth.

The two available sizes are a slender 2-hour version with a lithium polymer battery that heats up to 113°F with two heat settings and a rounded 6-hour unit using a lithium ion battery for 120°F of comfort and five heat settings. Suggested retail is \$24.95 for the 2-hour version and \$44.95 for the 6-hour model. Both are available at retailers and at www.zippo.com. 



The Zippo rechargeable 6-hour hand warmer.

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Lake Roundup

NORTH TEXAS



By Brian Hughes

And so it goes. January brings the hope of a New Year. February dawns with winter's growl. March shows us the promise to come. And April, glorious April, brings that promise to the forefront.

April begins with many fish still on beds in the North Texas region. But, many fish have also spawned and returned to structure to rest, and many have yet to spawn.

Pre-spawn, spawning, and post-spawn fish will be readily available, and catchable. Throw what you like the most and stay with it throughout the day.

As for what is actually happening with spawning and post spawn fish, well, that's quite the story. Once the female lays her eggs and they're fertilized by the male, she will soon leave the nest. The male will take over the duties of guarding the nest while the female moves off deeper to rest and feed. Usually the first break in the depth contour with some cover is a suitable location. She'll be on the lookout for easy meals to restore the energy used during the spawn.

The male will stay with the nest until the fry reach a point in their development where they can watch out for themselves. Then the male will also move to a resting/feeding location and follow the same process as the female. Most of this will occur in 12 feet of water or less.

For the angler the important thing to note is that much of the bass population in a given lake will be in that zone between 15

feet and the bank, whether they are pre-, post-, or spawning fish. Shallow fish are catchable fish so let's get after them!

FORK — Little Caney creek is a great place to start on Fork. Like most of the bigger creeks, it has all of the elements you're looking for this time of year. Creek channels, submerged ponds, shallow cover, timber and even some boat docks. Look for the creek channel to swing in close to the bank. Work the shallows first with poppers and buzzbaits, then spinnerbaits or 'traps, and finally the channels with a jig and/or Carolina rig. If you do it right this will keep you occupied for most of a half day.

If you must change locations here are a few suggestions, try the west side of the lake. You'll find lots of submerged roads and bridges to Carolina rig around the 515 Bridge and the 2496 Bridge. These are marked on the better quality maps.

There is also good deep water fishing around Sunny point and Chicken Ridge which are also on the maps. Over on the east side, stay between the 515 and 154 bridges around the Bell Branch and Taylor Branch areas. Work the many points and roadbeds.

Watch your electronics over the bridges, humps, and roadbeds, especially where they are near channels. When you see a pile of baitfish throw the "A" rig for the bass that are surely nearby. Showing a profile of five to seven baits at a time, the "A" rig looks like an easy and filling meal as it passes the suspended bass.

Of course you can also throw spinnerbaits, Senkos, hard jerkbaits, crankbaits (both shallow and deep diving), tail spinners, 'Traps, spoons, poppers, slush baits, Texas rigged craws, lizards, worms and Kreatures, a jig-and-pig, slabs, spoons, flutter spoons, and, let's see..... what have I forgotten? Oh yeah! Frogs. Both hollow and solid plastic, tubes, swimbaits, chatterbaits, well, you get the idea. It's April on Fork, you can throw just about anything and get at least one bite.

Crappie anglers will see fish moving into the creeks to spawn. You'll find them from two to 15 feet, depending on the moon phase. With a new or full moon go

shallow, on dark moons go deep, around the eight to 16 foot mark.

Moving back in the creeks, look for secondary points and thicker timber. Start west of the 2946 Bridge in Boardtree Creek, Penson, Birch, Glade, and Running creeks. If the fish seem finicky, try a slip-bobber with a minnow. If they want to feed, the LFT Live Baby Shad in blue-pearl or electric chicken will work, as will the tube jigs in white or blue pearl.

TEXOMA — April on Texoma is traditionally the end of the big fish striper season. That is the "trophy" striper everyone wants to catch. Of course, with a delayed winter you can see an extension of this period, but for the most part you'll want to start your day at or before sunrise in shallow (about three feet or less) water with a big eight to 10 inch topwater bait. This is your best shot at a good sized striper.

Once that bite is over you'll be relegated to live shad for the rest of the day. Look for schools of bait fish and follow, dropping live shad down about a foot or two above the level where the striper are holding. Toward the end of the month the striper will begin to school together and the fishing will improve.

Largemouth bass will be in the final days of their spawning period. Look in the creeks around Little Mineral or the railroad bridge. Texas rigged craws and lizards in junebug and crawfish colors work well there. Frogs will work around any emergent vegetation. Otherwise use the Chug Bug in chrome/blue or chartreuse colors. A spinnerbait along rocky edges and riprap will catch them early in the morning, but they get a little finicky once the sun gets up. If there is substantial spring rain and the attendant runoff to discolor the water, the fish will be much more forgiving in your choice of colors. Smallmouth bass will be in fine shape, having just come off the spawn. You'll find them along the bluffs and bigger boulders, hiding in the shadows and crevices waiting to ambush prey. Try a Bomber 4a or 6a crankbait, or Profound crankbait in craw colors or citrus shad. A ¼ oz. spinnerbait in white or white/

chartreuse with nickel #2 and #3 willow leaf blades, peeled along the rocks as fast as you can (while keeping it under the surface) will often trigger vicious strikes.

Two other options include the 4" Zoom lizard, rigged Texas style with a 1/8 oz. weight, in junebug, and a rogue in gold/orange/black. Work the lizard slower than you think you should and the rogue faster than you think you should.

By mid-April the shad spawn will begin and shad-type baits will be very effective. Try a Yamamoto D Shad in watermelon/red, white, or bubblegum. Everything will be chasing these shad and you never know what you might catch from stripers, to large and smallmouth bass, to catfish.

Good news for the fish, there is more bait fish in the lake than in recent memory. That's not necessarily great news for fishermen. It is much harder to get fish of any species to chase and eat an artificial bait when there is more than abundant natural forage. That said, keep your baits natural looking in very natural colors and you can still have some success. Again, off color water will make color and bait choice easier as it will be harder for the fish to see as much detail.

RAY ROBERTS — Ray Bob has a problem. And it is not the only lake with this particular problem. Past spring flooding allowed small hatchling fry to survive at a rate far beyond the norm.

For a couple of years it has been difficult to catch any fish of size on Ray Bob without going through many, many, undersized fish. Well I would imagine that this year will be different. Oh sure, the small fish are still there, but all those little ones from the past few years will have grown up. So now you're going to see a LOT of catchable fish of good size.

Start the day with topwaters like the Whopper Plopper or a buzzbait. Then use a spinnerbait or 'Trap. Try a white or shad color for the spinnerbait, and chrome/blue or chrome/black with the 'Trap.

A good starting point is either Walnut or Indian Creeks, or the state park area. Try to get as far back in the creeks as you can, about ¾ of the way back. As the month progresses, so should you.

Out toward the main lake move out to the mouth of Indian and Wolf creeks (or the ballcamp flats) with a Carolina-rig, drop-shot or "A" rig. Green pumpkin with a dash of chartreuse color is great for the

Carolina-rig. A football head jig in bluegill or chameleon colors will also get the nod from Ray Bob bass.

If you prefer you can use crankbaits to dredge up post spawn Ray-Bob largemouths. If you're fishing in 17-18 feet, one of the XD baits that runs to 20 feet will work fine. As long as the bait hits the bottom you'll get bit.

As mentioned in my Just Fishin' column in this issue there are some great smaller lakes in Texas and I wanted to include a few more here.

AQUILLA — Aquilla doesn't get nearly the attention it should. Spring white bass will be around Triplett point. Throw a tailspinner or 1/4 oz. 'trap all around the point and at the dam. Look for the birds to clue you in on where the baitfish are.

Crappie will be in the brush along the dam, and around Snake Island and the adjacent hump. Look for brushpiles and fish a yellow/black jig or live minnows. Snake Island and the roadbeds around Falcon Point and Falcon Cove will be holding post-spawn largemouth. That's heavily timbered and there is a hump off Falcon Point making this area perfect for Carolina rigs and drop-shots.

Coffee Mill has prime crappie fishing with jigs or minnows. Jig colors include chartreuse, white with a red head and black/yellow. Throw to the grasses and buckbrush shallow, and the brushpiles along the dam. Bass will be in the creeks and Kreatures and lizards are the best bet. Throw watermelon or green pumpkin around any cover you can find.

FANNIN — Although Fannin is a small lake, and the ramp is not suitable for larger boats, it's a great lake for a two-man boat, tube, or kayak angler. Plus, there are plenty of fish in the lake. Poppers, buzzbaits, and other topwaters will catch fish early in the day. Small spinnerbaits, and weightless worms should work throughout the month. Catfishermen will want to work the edges with cutbait, stinkbait, and chicken livers.

BONHAM — Water level is the key at Bonham. If the water is in the cattails the bass will be there too. If not, look to the rocks and breaklines in the creeks. In high water, pitch and flip Kreatures. If there are no cattails fish crankbaits and Carolina rigs. Use colors that mimic shad on the crankbait. On the Carolina rig use Kreatures and D Shad in black/blue, black/red, and other darker colors. **★**

EAST TEXAS



By Matt Williams

NACOGDOCHES - Just in case you haven't heard, Lake Nacogdoches recently joined the list of East Texas lakes battling Giant Salvinia. The exotic plant was first discovered in Yellow Bank Creek in February by a local angler, but a follow-up survey conducted by Texas Parks and Wildlife's aquatic invasives team found that it was much more widespread than experts had originally hoped.

TPWD used airboats to access the lake's upper reaches, where they found the exotic plant intermingled with stands cut grass and torpedo grass. The total coverage area on the 2,200 acre lake is estimated at 30 acres.

According to John Findeisen, TPWD's aquatic invasives team leader, the decision was made to let plants be rather than treating it with herbicide because of its close proximity more desirable types of aquatic vegetation that are currently acting as barrier to contain the floating plant from drifting to other areas of the lake.

"The situation at Lake Nacogdoches is similar to what we ran into at Lake Murvaul two years ago," Findeisen said. "We thought we could eradicate the salvinia on Murvaul without hurting the cut grass too bad. But what we ended up doing is taking the cut grass out. That gave the salvinia that didn't get hit with herbicide free rein to float all over the lake.

"The torpedo grass and cut grass are great habitat," Findeisen added. "If we could eradicate the salvinia with herbicide it might be an option, but knowing we can't eradicate it there is no reason to destroy that habitat."

I'll have more on this in next month's Bassology report. Now, for the April

fishing prospects.

Bass anglers should think shallow. The spawn will likely be done, but there will still be a lot of post spawn fish two to six feet of water feeding on bluegills and bass fry. Buzz baits, topwaters, swim jigs, spinnerbaits, prop baits, frogs and topwater should get it done around hydrilla beds and hay grass.

Additionally, there should be some groups of fish setting up on hard bottom structure away from the bank that can be caught on Carolina rigs, shaky heads and deep cranks.

PALESTINE - Lake Palestine fishing guide Ricky Vandergriff says April brings a mixed bag of opportunity with plenty of hungry mouths to feed. For those who want to target bass, he suggests fishing south.

"The spawn will pretty much be over up north by the time April rolls around but there will still be quite a few fish on beds down south because the water tends to warm up a little bit slower," Vandergriff said. "I'll be spending most of my time in the backs of major creeks like Cobb and Stone Chimney, but some of the secondary creeks and isolated pockets off the main lake could be holding some fish as well."

Vandergriff's go-to baits will be a Mister Twister Comeda, spinnerbait or a Big Eye jig. He'll fish the soft jerk bait and spinnerbait over flats in the backs of pocket. The jig is his choice around docks.

The main thing to remember now is to fish slow," Vandergriff said. "There will be quite a few fish on beds so you'll need to put the moving baits down for a while."

Vandergriff says crappie will be in post spawn this month as well. He looks the fish to be setting up at mid-range depths en route to their summer haunts. He'll look for them around brush piles in about 10 feet of water.

The guide says the fish can be caught a numbers of ways but he prefers going after them with a small jig fished beneath a slip cork. He generally takes a vertical approach.

Palestine channel cat also rate high on the guide's hit list this month, but he won't be looking for the cats around baited holes away from the bank. Instead, he'll be playing the game in water that in some cases may be shallow enough to wade in.

"They'll be spawning," Vandergriff said. "I'll be doing most of my fishing in

water that's three to four feet deep, mainly around rocks, sea walls and boat docks. I'm may throw out some grain to attract them, but that's not always necessary."

TOLEDO BEND - If this April is like most, bass anglers are going to need to think shallow - five feet deep or less - using slow moving plastics and maybe even a buzz bait.

"Some of the big females can be caught doing other things, but there are still going to be quite a few fish up shallow spawning in one to three feet of water," says fishing guide Tommy Martin. "The south end of the lake should be really hot during the first couple of weeks of the month."

Martin likes to target major creeks and main lake pockets during April, but he's particular about where he looks for fish.

"It's not like March," he said. "In March you can go just about anywhere in a creek from the mouth to the back and find fish, but in April it seems like the back of the creeks aren't near as productive as the little secondary creeks and pockets located closer to the mouth. That's where most of the better fish will be."

As earlier mentioned, Martin says there will be a variety of ways to catch fish this month. If you forget everything else you read here, remember these two words: Fish slow.

"There are going to be a lot of fish on beds his month and bedding fish don't like to chase very much," Martin said. "I'll Power Pole down and fan cast lots of spawning flats. A lot of times you might catch 5-10 fish out of a small area, then move a little ways repeat it."

One of Martin's favorite baits in April is a Texas rigged Zoom Baby Brush Hog green pumpkin in color with the tail dyed chartreuse. He also likes a weightless Yamamoto Senko.

In a normal year, April crappie fishing prospects are built largely around strolling jigs along grass lines, but with limited hydrilla in the lake nowadays fishing guide Stephen Johnston advises targeting the backs of major and secondary creeks. He says fish can be caught casting a Roadrunner or fishing a small hair jig beneath a cork over flats adjacent to channel breaks. Johnston advises anglers to be aggressive in the search for fish, which means staying on the move and covering lots of water until you locate a productive area.

SAM RAYBURN - Sam Rayburn has been lukewarm to red hot all spring long with some massive bags brought in by several tournament winners. Phil Marks and Tim Reneau reeled the heaviest limit of all last February when they won the Texas Team Trail event with 37.04 pounds on five fish. The anglers said they targeted hard bottom sweet spots in 10-18 feet water in the mid-lake area using Strike King 8XD crankbaits and jigs to reel in their catch.

They were followed in the standings by another giant sack weighing 30.07 pounds caught by Danny Iles and Brian Shook. Iles/Shook also used crankbaits and jigs, mainly around drop-offs with brush in water ranging 20-28 feet deep.

Productive as the offshore bite was in February, veteran fishing guide Tommy Martin says skinny water will be the place to be in April.

"The spawn will be going strong in April," Martin said. "There are going to be lot of fish shallow, especially during the first two weeks of the month."

Martin looks for most of the spawning activity to be taking place from mid-lake south towards the dam. He says the best action will be in secondary feeder creeks and drains found in the mouths of major feeder creeks.

"You probably won't find a lot of fish on beds way at the backs of the major creeks," Martin said. "They were there in March, but they won't be there in April. It seems like the pockets that are farther out towards the mouths of creeks are always the most productive late in the spawn."

Martin's game plan on 'Rayburn this month is similar to the one he'll follow on T-Bend. Texas rigged Brush Hogs and weightless Senkos rule. Various colors like watermelon candy, watermelon/red and green pumpkin will get you bit.

As crappie fishing fishing goes, the primary patterns to follow will depend on which area of the lake you intend to fish. Up north, the spawn will be complete and the fish will be setting around brush piles and stumps at mid-range depths. Any outside grass lines should be holding fish as well.

Farther south, the spawn will still be in progress in the backs of major and secondary creeks. Finding fish means covering water and fan casting with jigs or shiners under a slip cork in water ranging one to three feet deep.

CONROE - When April rolls around on Lake Conroe, multi-species fishing guide Butch Terpe likes to look to whiskered fish to fill out limits for his clients.

"The shad are going to be spawning around the bulkheads and retaining walls in April and the catfish are going to be up there after them," Terpe said. "It's a really fun way to fish, but you have to be able to cast to catch them."

You also need to be able to handle a cast net pretty well. Terpe uses the cast net to catch threadfin shad at first light. He likes to soak the bait fish beneath a cork right along the edges of concrete structures where the shad are dimpling the surface and actively spawning.

"They will really hammer it when they grab the bait," Terpe said. "Channel cat aren't the only thing you'll catch up there, either. You might catch hybrids and largemouths, too."

The guide says anglers who want to target largemouths exclusively around the shad spawn can throw moving baits like a spinnerbait or soft plastics like a Senko or Fluke. "Anything that imitates a shad will work," he said. "I like to fish a lot along natural banks, especially those with little willows or other small bushes that grew back when the lake was low."

Terpe added that largemouths will still be spawning during April, but you'll need to look to creeks at the south end of the lake to find active beds in one to four feet of water. Lewis, Walden and Seven Coves are among his favorites. Texas rigged lizards, Senkos and Brush Hogs are the best bets.

Crappie? Terpe ranks April among the best months of the year to go for papermouths, mainly because the fish will typically go on a strong feeding binge after the spawn.

"They'll be done spawning and they'll be aggressive and hungry," he said. "If there is a better month it would have to be May. The fish are going to be loading up around brush piles and 10-20 feet of water. Catching a limit is usually pretty easy once you find them."

LIVINGSTON - Late February brought heavy rains to much of east and north Texas and the Trinity River was rolling as a result. The influx of new water poured into Lake Livingston and pushed the water level well above full pool and subsequently turned things into muddy, sloppy mess just as the white bass spawning run

was beginning to get cranked and the largemouths were nudging the shallows at the lake's upper reaches.

With fickle spring weather it's impossible to say what kind of shape the lake will be in when April rolls around. Ideally, the water will have cleared and things will be back to normal.

If that's the case bass fishing could be pretty decent with post spawn patterns in play. If not, you might look elsewhere for a place to play the game. Livingston doesn't fish very well when the water is the color of chocolate.

That's the word from fishing guide Randy Dearman. "Livingston always fishes the best when the water is fairly clear," Dearman said. "Muddy water can make it tough."

Dearman's says the best bass fishing is

generally spot oriented in the mouths of pockets dissected by major or secondary feeder creeks. He recommends keying on shallow flats in about three of water in close proximity to channel breaks. Moving baits will be the ticket.

"It's pretty hard to beat a square bill crank bait or a spinnerbait right now," Dearman said. "A buzz bait is another bait you should also keep handy. They won't hit it all the time, but can be dynamite when they are on it. It works really good if you get into an area where there are some fish guarding fry."

If the fish are reluctant to hit a moving bait Dearman will make the switch to a Texas rigged craw or jig and slow things down. Fishing tight as possible to stumps, brush and other cover is the main key to getting bit. **★**



PHOTO COURTESY RICHARD JUE

April ranks as one of the best months of the year to go for paper mouths mainly because the fish will typically go on a strong feeding binge after the spawn.



CoastWatch | Danno Wise

April certainly does bring warmer weather, warmer water and, overall, a little better fishing. However, these idyllic conditions also bring more fishermen to our bays and beachfronts. Hardcore salts that have grown accustomed to having the water all to themselves during the winter now have to contend with more boat traffic.

Although there will be more boats on the water, there will be a lot more productive water to fish this month. That means there will be plenty of room for everyone to spread out.

Much of the early spring focus will remain on trout. Some areas of the coast will still be holding egg-laden sow specks, while other areas will be producing good numbers of trout.

Redfish action will also be going strong, although most of the serious redfish hunts will take place on the middle and lower coasts. Middle coast anglers will should also have a good run of the redfish's cousin, black drum, during April.

Tarpon hunters, anxious to see their first rolling fish of the year, should look

south. Schools of large tarpon should be moving up the coastline from Mexico, making visits to South Padre Island, Port Isabel and Port Mansfield during the month of April. Snook activity will also be perking up along the southernmost stretch of Texas sand.

Finally, the beachfront and passes up and down the coast will once again be a viable option in April. Some speckled trout will be making their way through the passes and into the surf. Additionally, black drum and sheepshead should be mainstays at passes and cuts up and down the coast. **T★J**



According to Capt. Austin Camacho of Austin's Fishing & Hunting Guide Service, April is one of the best months of the year to fish on the Lower Laguna Madre.

"April is a great month for us," Camacho said. "We have a lot of fat, spawning trout close by, so, at least early in the month, we will be focusing on trout more than anything. I like fishing on the west side – Laguna Vista Cove, the spoil islands – and will usually be throwing shrimp and popping cork. We can usually rely on having plenty of shrimp during April.

"It is usually pretty windy in April. But, if we get a good, calm morning, I will be throwing big topwater plugs. I usually like to use a Super Spook in bone or red/white. That is how we will usually catch the biggest trout.

"There are also plenty of redfish hanging around during April. When we are looking for reds, I will run up north and hit the banks. When we have a good I tide, South Bay can also produce a lot of reds during April. Usually, if I'm fishing for reds I'll be throwing Super Spooks or



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Black drum and sheepshead should be mainstays at the jetties this month.

a ½ ounce silver spoons.”

Port Mansfield guide Capt. Steve “JR” Ellis of Get-A-Way Adventures Lodge will also be focusing on trout during much of April.

“We’ll still have some big fish yet to spawn in April,” said Ellis. “The Land Cut can be absolutely stupid this time of year. I have some of the best days of my life up there in April. We’ll also be seeing quite a few good fish around the East Cut and around the spoils both north and south of town.

“I’ll usually be throwing small topwater plugs like the Super Spook JR. But, a lot of guys like slow sinking plugs.

“We’ll also be catching some solid school size trout in April. Those fish are easy to catch on all kinds of plastics or GULP! or live shrimp under popping corks.

“We’ll mostly be fishing for trout but there will also be plenty of redfish around. The best numbers of redfish will be up on the sand flats on the east side, but we’ll also still catch a few on the grass flats on the west side and some down in the Saucer. For reds, I’ll throw topwaters or spoons most of the time in April.” **T★J**



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Snook activity will also be perking up in April along the southernmost stretch of Texas sand.



Aransas area anglers have a wide range of options during April. There will be

plenty of trout on the deeper grass flats and along the channel edges. A good number of speckled trout will be taken on soft-plastics.

Most fishermen looking for trout will be throwing natural baits. Early on in April, live shrimp, fished either free-lined or under a popping cork, will be the top choice. As the month wears on, shad will enter the bays. Once the shad arrive, many fishermen will switch from shrimp to cut shad fished on a Carolina rig.

Also in April, croaker will be reaching “bait size,” giving anglers an additional



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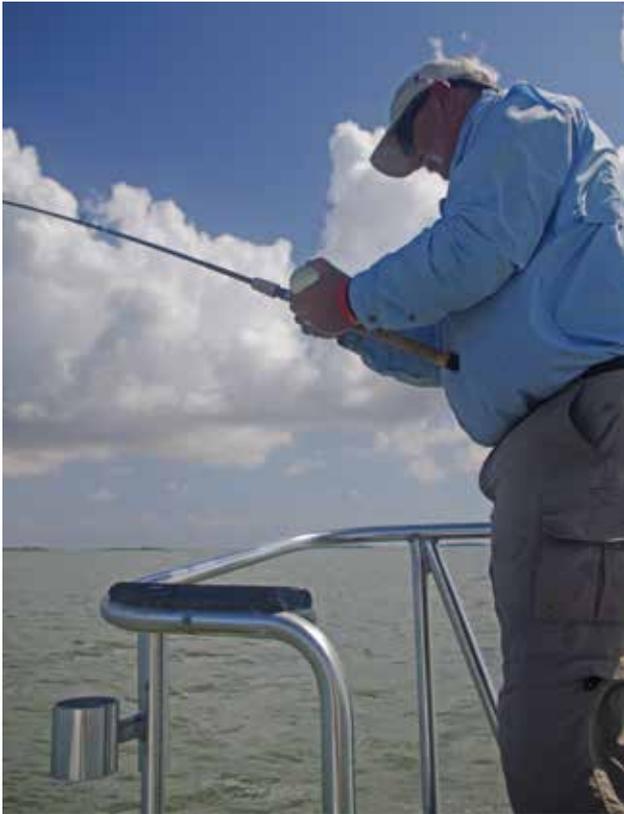


PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

There are also plenty of redfish hanging around during April providing sight casting opportunities.

natural bait option. Once croaker are big enough to use for bait, most fishermen will switch to using live croaker on Carolina rigs for trout.

Redfish will be found in good numbers on the flats this month and will readily eat shad, mullet and shrimp, as well as a variety of soft-plastics. Red drum won't be the only drum on the flats. Black drum will also be found in the shallows this month, where they can easily be targeted with live or dead shrimp.

Not surprisingly, Rockport fishermen can expect a similar pattern to that experience by the Aransas area anglers. Because of the unusually warm winter and spring, April should

seesomewhat of an early summer pattern. This means there should be a decent topwater bite during the early morning hours. Once the sun gets high on the horizon, soft-plastics and natural baits will produce the most consistent action. The first few weeks of April will see live shrimp being the bait of choice. By the end of the month croaker will reach bait size and the majority of Rockport trout fishermen will be switching to live croaker for bait.

There will also be plenty of redfish on the flats. And, if the April winds really get to blowing, Rockport area anglers can always move into the back lakes to find protected water. There, they will also find plenty of redfish and black drum. Finger mullet and soft-plastics will be the best bets for redfish, while shrimp — dead shrimp — will be the ticket for black drum.

Seadrift guide Capt. Nathan Beabout of N & M Sportsman's Adventures says he expects things to get back to a more normal pattern in April.

"It has been a strange past six to eight months here on the Middle Coast," said Beabout. "From Hurricane Harvey to a snow storm in December, and an ice storm in January, we have had some weird weather. But, oddly enough, fishing continues to be strong.

"We did witness a fish kill during

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PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Redfish will be found in good numbers on the flats this month and will readily eat a variety of soft plastics as well as live bait.

the snow, but fortunately enough it was confined to one lake from what I saw. This event left me with an empty feeling about fishing in the back marsh. This led me to spend a few off days on the water searching for new areas to fish for clients. I was able to find plenty of areas to fish, and just had to deal with the boat ride it took to get there. Wind was our biggest factor, and it dictated if I ran north or south.

"From gin clear knee deep water to waist deep shell beds we spent the early spring with successful trips. Even managed several 26 to 28 inch trout in the gin clear water. Now our approach was much more cautious and slow, knowing that we stuck out like a sore thumb in that water. On a couple of occasions we witnessed 40 to 50 trout grouped up in small wads ranging from five to seven pounds. These fish were very hard to catch, but every now and then one would slip up.

"Now, saying that, I believe this is going to build up to an epic month of April. With so many big trout located already, I will try to stay on their pattern once they start spawning. If successful, we will catch some of the best trout I have ever witnessed on the Middle Coast. With water levels that will remain more constant, water and air temperatures climbing, the micro-organisms and planktons will return causing our water to green up. Becoming that trout green we all know, rather than gin clear.

"The one thing that will change is the location of these fish during different times of the day. Early in the morning I suspect they will be over the grass beds patrolling the sand pockets, and if it gets too warm for their liking, they will drop to the edge of the sandbars.

"Whatever word you use to describe the last several months here in Texas, it was a real eye opener to me. The simple fact that we never once stepped into the mud through one of the toughest winters we have seen in a few years, and caught quality trout through it all. I will always continue to search for new areas through our seasons and will continue to log it in the back of my mind for years to come. Fishing to me is more than going out there and catching a bunch of fish. It is reading the water and trying to comprehend what it's telling me. I still believe there are secret spots out there that nobody knows about, it's just getting out there and doing your homework."

Port O'Connor fishermen can expect a similar pattern to that experience by the Rockport area anglers. There should be a decent topwater bite during the early morning hours. Later in the day, fishermen should be able to find plenty of willing specks on soft-plastics. Live shrimp will also account for plenty of fish in April, but by the end of the month, once croaker reach bait size, a good number of POC-area trout fishermen will be switching to live croaker for bait.

There will also be plenty of redfish on the flats over the next few weeks. The key will be finding protected water. However, when the April winds really get to blowing, fishermen can always move into the back lakes to find protected water. There, they will also find plenty of redfish and black drum, as well as a decent number of speckled trout. Finger mullet, shad and soft-plastics will be the best bets for redfish, while shrimp will be the ticket for black drum and trout. **T★J**



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Gin clear knee deep water grass flats to waist deep shell beds the early spring provides a variety of wade fishing options.

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BRUISER BLUES

Tangling with any blue catfish over 20 pounds on a rod and reel is akin to grabbing a tiger by the tail.

Story by Matt Williams



Left: Illinois angler Tim Pruitt boated his former IGFA record near the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers in May 2005. It weighed 124 pounds.

COURTESY PHOTO



COURTESY PHOTO

Dallas' Dylan Sorrells holds IGFA Small Fry world record for blue cat with his 54 pound, 9 ounce bruiser while caught while drift fishing at Lake Tawakoni last March.



COURTESY PHOTO

Greg Bernal was Asian Carp for bait when he caught this huge blue on the Missouri River. The former world record weighed a whopping 130 pounds.

My old friend Jason Barber is one of those guys you can take one look at and get the notion: "I bet that dude likes to fish." Ask and he'll tell you what is only natural to suspect. He loves to go after the big ones.

Barber is a big, burly-looking guy who has had ice in his beard and mud on his boots more than once. Those sorts of things come with territory in his line of work.

Barber is a multi-species fishing/duck hunting guide who grew up in Gun Barrel City near Mabank. He does the majority of business on Cedar Creek Reservoir near Dallas but occasionally tests the water on neighboring East Texas lakes whenever the opportunity comes knocking.

The "multi-species" part of Barber's job title means he specializes in fishing for whatever happens to be biting best at the time. Black bass, hybrids and crappie all play important roles in his business model, but he probably spends as much time going after big blue cat as anything else.

"Cedar Creek is full of them," Barber said. "It doesn't have the reputation for producing a lot of the great big 70 and 80 pounders like Tawakoni does but it's got some good ones. It's sort of a sleeper." Barber's biggest blue to date stands at around 50 pounds and the lake record 65.01 pounder caught in March 2016.

That's a far cry off the Texas state record and significantly less than the

standing records for a host of other watery haunts around the region. But it's still a huge fish to land on a pole and line.

To hear Barber tell it, tangling with any blue catfish on a rod and reel that has managed to grow beyond 20 pounds is akin to grabbing a tiger by the tale, just not near as dangerous.

"Anytime you get a hold of a big blue cat you've definitely got a handful," Barber said. "They pull like a train and they can be pretty rough customers to deal with, especially if you hook one up shallow. Those fish are almost always going be around stumps and things can get really dicey really quick. It is certainly easier to land a fish in deep, open water than it is up shallow, but even then it can be touch and go. He could wrap on snag or the hook could pull out. There's a lot that go wrong down there, and it often happens when you least expect it."

Like most anglers who share his passion, Barber likes to go after the big bite anytime he thinks he can find it. During



COURTESY PHOTO

Richard Anderson's current world record blue cat weighed a whopping 143 pounds. The fish was caught in 2011 while drifting over open water on Kerr Lake in Virginia.

the winter and early spring he spends a high percentage of his time with images of fat cats dancing in his mind as he performs controlled drifts over deep, main lake flats using fist-size slabs of carp or drum for bait, or lobbing hand-size chunks of gizzard shad around wind-blown points, shorelines, levees and stump rows. The latter attack usually plays out in water that's skinny enough to wade in with hip waders and not get wet.

"It's sort of crazy that you can catch them in both places, but you can," Barber said. "Personally, I like going after them in shallow water the best. There's not anywhere for a big catfish to go except sideways or up once you get one hooked. It's pretty exciting to see a 30 to 40 pound blue cat come porpoising out of the water and then give you a big tail flop on the surface."

Cody Mullenix of Howe knows the bull-in-a-china-cabinet nature of the shallow water catfish game all too well.

Mullenix owns the Texas state record blue cat title with a monster 121 1/2 pounder that he caught near the Big Mineral arm of Lake Texoma in January 2004. Measuring just under five feet in length, the enormous catfish ranked as the International Game Fish Association world record blue for more than a year before Illinois angler Tim Pruitt crushed it in May 2005 with a 124 pounder caught near the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers.

If you've never heard it, the tale behind Pruitt's now former world record is even bigger than the fish itself. I interviewed the then 33-year-old factory worker from



PHOTO BY MATT WILLIAMS

Fishing guide Jason Barber with a good quality blue cat taken in skinny water during the dead of winter.

Fosterberg, III. shortly after he caught the huge fish. The story he told sounds like something straight from the pages of a Mark Twain novel.

The way the story goes, Pruitt was sharing the boat with his wife, Karla and a friend, Tony Pfeifer. It was approaching midnight and Pruitt had been soaking a dead herring on the bottom of the Mississippi River for more than three hours with not so much as a tap.

Most anglers would have called it quits long before then. But not Pruitt.

"When you go after big catfish like I do, patience is a must," he said. "I've gone home plenty of times without catching any fish, but I don't let it bother me because I know how quickly things can change out there. One minute you may not be catching anything. But the next minute you might be fighting the biggest fish of your life."

Pruitt said the bite that lauched his name into the record books came about 11:40 p.m. on that fateful Saturday night in May 2005.

"I really didn't think a whole lot about it at first, other than it was just a bite," Pruitt said. "The line jumped, then started moving off slowly to one side. A big fish will normally grab the bait and take off."

Pruitt let the fish pull several feet of line off the reel before setting the hook. He knew instantly that he was tangling with a giant.

He said the big fish ripped about 80 yards of line of his reel spool in short order.

"I have always been able to turn big cats and get them coming back to me pretty quick, but this one was leaving," Pruitt said. "I felt like it was going to spool me if I didn't make a move."

Pruitt's friend quickly pulled the

anchor and raced the boat downstream to catch with the fish. Pruitt eventually worked the fish up beside the boat and hauled it aboard after a 35 minute battle.

"You only get one shot when you go to land one," Pruitt said. "I have lost a bunch of 70 to 80 pounders right at the boat. If you don't play them down or they come in on you too quick, they will break you off the second you touch them. Big blues will go into a death roll. They will twist and turn until they tear the hook loose or break the line."

It's hard to imagine somebody landing a blue catfish larger than Pruitts. But it has happened twice.

Pruitt's record held for for more than five years before Greg Bernal of Florissant, Mo., landed an even bigger bruiser from the Missouri River.

The giant cat was caught shortly after midnight on July 20, 2010. It measured 57 inches long and measured 45 inches around the girth and weighed a staggering 130 pounds.

An avid trophy cat hunter, Bernal claimed he caught big blue cat using Asian carp for bait on a 7/0 Kahle hook and Penn medium/heavy saltwater rig. He battled the fish for about 45 minutes and nearly destroyed two nets before finally putting it in the boat.

The most recent world record was caught a 11 months later by Richard Nicolas Anderson. The 143 pounder was caught in June 2011 from Kerr Lake in Virginia.

Interestingly, the whoppers caught by Mullenix and Anderson illustrate the point Barber made early on about the chances of finding big blues in shallow and deep water simultaneously.

Mullinix caught his giant while fishing from shore in about seven feet of water using a three inch gizzard shad soaked on bottom.

Anderson, meanwhile, was drifting over open water the 143 pounder came calling. He was reportedly using chicken liver for bait.

"Don't ever be afraid to fish shallow," says Mullenix. "Even during the winter those big blues will move into two to three feet of water and not think twice about it, especially when there is a warming trend in the weather or a high wind that pushes the bait fish against the bank. If the blues move up there and start gorging, you can wear them out." 🌟🌟



PHOTO BY MATT WILLIAMS

One of Barber's favorite baits for targeting wintertime blue cats is a 4-6 inch gizzard shad. Removing the tail allows the scent of the bait to carry freely through the water column.

Tricks of the Trade

Drifting over open water and bottom fishing up shallow are entirely different games that call for somewhat different rigging techniques. Drifting is performed by allowing the wind to blow the boat, which in turn causes the bait to bump bottom behind the vessel as it moves slowly along.

The boat is usually anchored when fishing shallow so the bait can be kept stationary on bottom.

*** Drift Fishing:** When Barber rigs for drift fishing in deep water, he builds a Santee-style outfit. It's similar to the Carolina-rig bass fishermen use for dragging plastics in open water. Difference is, he uses extra heavy egg sinker weighing one or two ounces to maintain contact with bottom in 20-30 feet of water.

Barber likes to use an extra long leader about four feet in length. He adds a foam Comal cork above the leader a few inches above an 8/0 or 9/0 circle hook that he baits with a piece of carp, drum or bream. The cork helps float the bait off bottom as the boat moves the bait along.

The guide says wind speed is a key component to consider when drift fishing.

"If the wind is blowing harder than five miles-per-hour I'll always use a drift sock behind the boat to slow the drift," he said. "I like the boat to move about 0.3 to 0.7 m.p.h. on the GPS. Anything above that is just too fast."

Barber says he likes to perform his drifts in areas where there is an abundance of bait fish.

"Bait balls are a big key," he said. "Those big blues like to hang out in areas where there is a lot of bait fish (shad) activity because there is always an abundance of food available."

The best water depth can vary. Barber said he might fish as deep as 40 feet during the dead of winter and move progressively shallower as the weather warms in spring. That could mean using a balloon or large cork to target fish that will likely be suspended in the water column.

Big catfish typically have equally large appetites. It's usually best to use an outsize bait when targeting big bites exclusively. As earlier mentioned, big chunks of fresh carp, drum or buffalo are like gold. The meat is bloody. Plus, it's oily and disperses scent longer than a bream or shad.

"The meat is also really tough," said Barber. "You occasionally have some smaller fish mess with the bait, but they won't tear it up near as bad as a shad or bream."

*** Skinny Water Rigging:** When Barber fishes shallow he always does it with a Carolina-style rig. He builds the rig using a 3/4 ounce egg sinker, a heavy barrel swivel (for the leader) and a 4/0-8/0 Kahle style hook. His line of choice is 20-25 pound test Trilene Big Game.

At the heart of the set-up is fresh, bloody cut bait. Gizzard shad five to six inches long are ideal. He will sometimes dice the shad into three pieces, leaving a head and two sizable chunks of meat for baiting hooks.

When targeting big blues exclusively, he may use a whole shad, or a large chunk of carp or buffalo. The bigger the bait, the larger hook you should use. He generally likes to nose hook shad leaving as much of the hook exposed as possible.

"I've caught some blues on punch bait, but you tend to catch a bunch of small channel cat at times," Barber said. "If you are wanting to target just big blues, fresh cut bait is definitely the way to go in my opinion. I'll replace my bait pretty often, too. The fresher, the better."

*** Fishing the Birds:** Barber sometimes uses the same set-up when the targeting blue around double-crested cormorant roosts. Cormorants are fish-eating migratory birds that gather on a number of East Texas lakes during winter and early spring months.

The birds disperse to open water areas to feed at first light, then return to the roosts intermittently to rest and relieve themselves during the day and throughout the night.

Catfish have learned to home in on the undigested fragments of fish hitting the water like a dinner buffet. It took some time to figure it out, but observant anglers eventually figured out way to capitalize on the poop pattern. I've seen it work wonders on Richland Chambers, Fork Tawakoni and Ray Hubbard. Barber says it works equally well at Cedar Creek.

"I like to anchor upwind from roost sites and cast to the outer edge," Barber said. "Even if the birds aren't there the blues will still hang around waiting for them to come back. By soaking the bait upwind they'll pick up the scent and come to you."

Another good way to capitalize around cormorant roosts is cast to the base of roost trees using a weightless 4/0 or 5/0 hook using a chicken gizzard for bait. The gizzard is flat in shape and makes a "splat" noise when it

hits the surface. Strikes typically come within seconds and they are almost always violent. Lake Fork fishing guide Gary Paris introduced me to the tactic several years ago.

"Being quiet is a big key when your fishing like this," Paris said. "I always shut down the big motor well away from the tree and I use the trolling motor to move within casting distance. I use the troll motor sparingly after that."

The farther away from the tree you can stay, the better off you will be. Paris generally likes to be about 35-40 feet away from a tree when he makes the first cast.

Paris likes chicken gizzards for several reasons.

They don't cost much. They are tough as boot leather. They are clean. And, most importantly, they do a great job of simulating the sounds of cormorant droppings hitting the water.

"I also like gizzards because they fall very slow and are about the same color as the cormorant droppings," Paris said. "I think the catfish hit them more out of reaction than anything else. They are sitting down there just waiting for something else to land in the water. There is a bunch of competition and they grab it before they realize what they have done." ★



Observant anglers eventually figured out way to capitalize on the cormorant poop pattern.



CoastWatch | Danno Wise

April means wind, warming weather, warming water, and friskier fish. This year, more than any year in recent memory, anglers up and down the coast are anxiously awaiting the warming trend.

Following a fairly harsh winter - one that came oh so close to delivering a massive fish-killing freeze - a little warm air and warm water will be a welcome change - even if it is accompanied by excessive wind.

April is always seen as a transition month - a time when fish begin moving from deep water to shallow, from muddy bottoms to sand. This year that transition will be much more distinct. Again, because we had a 'real' winter for the first time in a long time, fish have stayed in their deep water, muddy bottom haunts a little longer than usual.

The other transition that will take place is the amount and type of forage available to bay species. Shrimp will be moving back into the bays, mullet will have spawned, glass minnows will be hatching, shad will be moving into the bays and this year's hatch of croaker will

be growing. This, too, will trigger a more noticeable change than usual, as many Texas bays saw their forage supplies severely damaged by red tide and/or cold weather this year. As fish find abundant food sources, they should become much more active.

All in all, it looks like April will be a breakthrough month for anglers who've suffered through a disappointing winter. So, don't pass up an opportunity to hit your local bay this month. It's amazing how good fishing can be after a few warm, sunny days - and that's something everyone's looking forward to. **T★J**



PHOTO COURTESY CAPT. TOMMY COUNTZ

Speckled trout will be the targeted specie for many Upper Texas coast anglers. Whether you wade or drift fish, speckled trout will be in the later stages of their spawn with many looking to feed on a variety of offerings.

Matagorda guide Capt. Tommy Countz says spring fishing can be outstanding in the Matagorda Bay system during April.

"April is absolutely one of my favorite months on West Matagorda Bay," said Countz.

"It looks like we might be in for an early spring, which is good. Of course, when that water hits the 70 degree mark - which is kind of like a magic number for bay fishing - the fish and baitfish become more active and there is a lot more action in the bay.

"One of the things we look forward to in April is the glass minnow hatch. It varies from year to year.

"Sometimes we have a good hatch, other times we don't. But, if we do get a good hatch, we'll have some outstanding fishing.

"Those fish really key on those glass minnows and when we find them, it's unbelievable how good the fishing is. However, that's usually an afternoon bite, so we'll adjust our charter times to the afternoon.

"I'll spend most of April in West Matagorda Bay. I'll be wading the grass beds over there and working out to the bars. I like throwing little topwaters during April - little Skitterwalks and little Spooks. But, I'll also be throwing some plastics.

"West Bay is also good for redfish in April. If we get one of those freaky late northerners 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 April regardless.

"I will spend a little time in East Bay, particularly if I have a group that wants to stay in the boat and drift. You can pick up a lot of good fish drifting East Bay in the spring. You can also wade those mid-bay reefs.

"Usually we'll throw Corkys and topwaters when wading those reefs. If we're drifting, we'll throw Bass Assassins. You can usually pick up good numbers of solid fish from the reefs, but I've also seen some really big fish come off those reefs in April."

Freeport guide Capt. Mike Segall of Reel Threel Charters says April is the turning point for the year's fishing activity.

"In April, the weather and water start warming up," said Segall. "And, fishing will just be getting better and better as water warms up."

"We will be catching a lot of bull reds on beachfront and around jetty rocks this month. Inshore bay waters and the old harbor will be holding variety of fish, all of which can be caught on live shrimp. Fishing the rocks and points off the channel areas will also be good, as will be fishing in Chocolate Bay and Bastrop Bay. For the most part, we'll be drifting reefs with plastics or GULPIs.

"We will also be headed out state waters to fish the reefs. April fishing in state waters will be good for sharks and red snapper, as well as king mackerel."

Galveston guide Capt. Greg Verm of FishingGalvestonTX.com says the entire Galveston Bay Complex will be in play during April.

"During the month of April we will be spread out throughout the Galveston Bay, jetties, Freeport Bays, and San Luis Pass," said Verm.

"As far as fishing the Galveston Jetties – sheepshead will be finishing up their spawning activities, and we will begin seeing more speckled trout, redfish, and drum moving in. Live shrimp freelined



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Out of Freeport Capt. Mike Segall will be splitting time in April for trout and reds as well as hitting state waters for red snapper.

along the tips of the jetties and areas of thorough currents.

"The drum run will also be in the later stages of spawn, but we will still be targeting them and bull reds as well. Fresh cracked crab will be the bait of choice fished along the bottom.

"If we are fishing in West Galveston Bay and Trinity, we will be fishing main bay reefs with live shrimp under popping corks. Dollar Bay, Flood Gates, Confederate Reef and Greens Lake will all be heating up. Speckled trout, flounder

and redfish will be our main targets in these areas.

"In Christmas Bay and Drum Bay, we will be spending a lot of time wading and drifting different reefs and passes. Down South plastics and Skitterwalks are my favorites in these areas. My absolute favorite area during late April and throughout May is San Luis Pass and Cold Pass. Absolute, best time, hands down is to jump out of the boat and wade fish. This is a great time to catch trophy speckled trout in these areas.



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PHOTO COURTESY VASTIN HUGHES

Tracy Hughes shows off a redfish from a two angler limit she and her husband Vastin caught while fishing out of Matagorda. Back lake areas as well as shoreline grass beds are good targets for this part of the coast.

"This month, we will be running a lot of our trips out of Bay's Landing Fishing Lodge in Freeport. And, something else we will be doing is flounder gigging. We will be seeing a good spring run for flounder. We will be gigging West Galveston Bay, San Luis Pass, Cold Pass and Christmas Bay."

Sabine Lake guide Capt. Randy Foreman says April is a time of change and shrimp are the key to that genesis.

"The first part of April, I'll still be doing the same thing as I was in March — fishing the drops and the muddy bottoms

and the mussel beds," said Foreman.

"But, once the shrimp start coming back into the bay, everything changes. Those shrimp will be coming in from the Gulf.

"Once they get into the south end of the lake, you can just follow them up as they move north toward the marshes.

"The fish will be moving right along with them. So, over the last few weeks of April, all of our activity will be concentrated on the south and middle portions of the lake.

"Once we get our shrimp back in the birds will start working a lot more as well. By the middle of April, we should have some really good bird activity. Of course, this makes it easy to find the fish. When the birds are working, we can catch a lot of fish real quick.

"I'll be fishing mostly glow-colored soft-plastics once the shrimp move back in during April. But, I'll also be slow-rolling big spoons along the bottom. Usually, if we're catching smaller fish up higher, I can pull out some bigger ones by working that spoon across the bottom.

"April is also a pretty good flounder month. When I'm fishing for flounder, I'll be fishing the points, drops and eddies. I'll be using the same lures, just working them real slow.

"And, if the fish are real finicky, I'll tip the baits with dead shrimp." ★★

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PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPT. GREG VERM

Passes and jetties are always spring hot spots. This angler caught this nice redfish at the Galveston Jetties while fishing with Capt. Greg Verm.

LOUISIANA COAST



Lake Calcasieu guide Capt. Mary Poe of Big Lake Guide Service says she is anxiously anticipating April.

"We are really looking forward to April," said Poe.

"Redfish have been thick all winter and the trout are really starting to show up. Baitfish are making a strong appearance already which is a little early according to the calendar.

"As things sit now, April may be some serious action. More so than the last few years.

"It's mid February now and large quantities of nice trout, are being taken almost daily which hadn't started happening until mid- to late March. In spite of the bitter winter, Calcasieu seems to be running somewhat ahead of schedule.

"This train could derail at any point though. Large amounts of rain or a late cold snap could put a damper on things. But as I see it now, things are a few weeks ahead of schedule and April could be like it is supposed to be for the first time in a



PHOTO COURTESY CAPT. RANDY FOREMAN

Time to double up on Sabine Lake. With the return of shrimp to the marsh look for both flounder and redfish action to heat up.

long time."

Venice fishing will be predicated not only on the wind, but also the condition of the Mississippi River.

By April, the snow melt from the northern states that border the Mississippi River will be making its way to the open Gulf.

The effect of this water is two-fold - it serves to reduce the water temperature and the salinity levels. The amount of runoff will dictate where inshore species such as redfish and speckled trout will be found.

If there is a good deal of runoff and the river is running cool and fresh, the fish will be on the outside edges and cane breaks. If the river is warmer and the salinity is strong, the fish will be moving into the marshes, as well as holding in the river itself.

Offshore, Venice's famous Lumps will start to get hot during April. The timing of this action is also somewhat dictated by the river runoff. When the water temperature around the Lumps is holding in the high 60s or low 70s, the fishing is usually at its best. ★★

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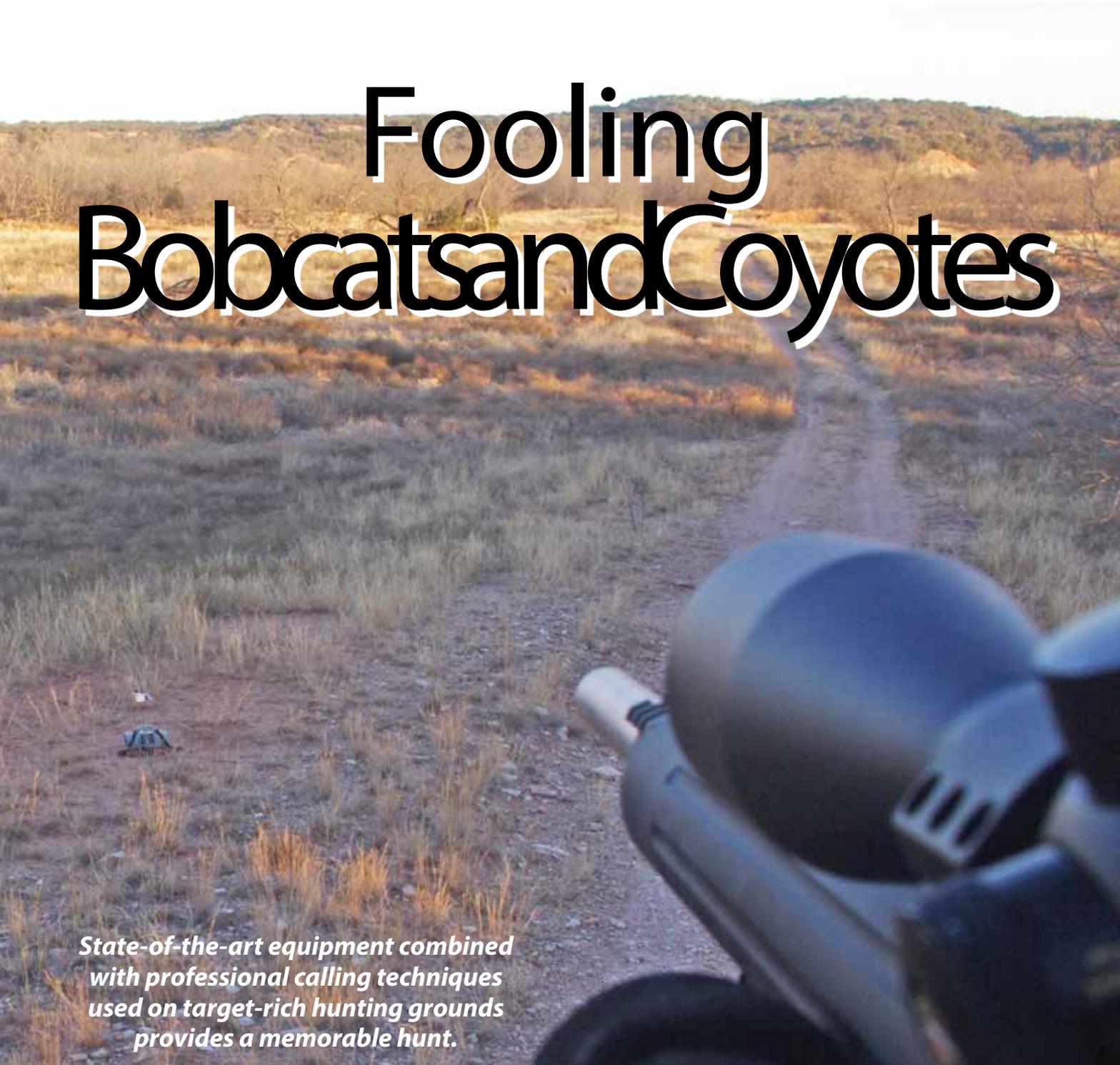
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Fooling Bobcats and Coyotes

State-of-the-art equipment combined with professional calling techniques used on target-rich hunting grounds provides a memorable hunt.

Story and Photography by Bill L. Olson

There is not a more exciting type of hunting than calling to a game animal and having it vocally respond as well as seek out your location. Elk hunters in the fall, and turkey hunters in the spring experience this type of hunting adrenaline rush.

Take that experience to another level by removing the vocal response from the animal, while becoming the hunted and the excitement increases exponentially.

No longer is the progress of the called critter known — instead coyote, bobcat, fox and other predators' silently move toward what they assume is their next meal.

In mid-January, Texas Outdoors Journal's contributing hunting editor Tom Claycomb III and I experience this hunting sensation as many times our calling location was literally rushed by cagey coyotes and sneaky bobcats. This

occurred while hunting with long time outfitter and friend Roy Wilson who along with his wife Becky own Krooked River Ranch — Texas Best Outfitters.

I have hunted with Roy and Becky for the better part of 24 years while their operation was located on the Hendricks Ranch. This 40,000+ acre rolling North Texas beauty has over 32 miles of the Clear Fork of the Brazos River. It was sold in 2013 to a private group that no

longer wanted commercial hunting on the property.

At the time of the sale to say I was concerned for my friends and their ability to replace such pristine hunting grounds is an understatement. Little did I know that while conducting their outfitting operation on the Hendricks Ranch, Roy was also managing a 6,000 acre jewel further west, and a few miles north of Hamlin. The T-Diamond Ranch, complete with a spacious new lodge sits atop a mesa overlooking some of the most picturesque, game-rich break-country this part of the Lone Star State is known.

"The T-Diamond is not the Hendricks Ranch and the Hendricks is not the T-Diamond," Roy explained. "They each have unique qualities. However, with some additional ranches we have secured hunting rights to over 27,000 huntable acres that offer a lot of diversity."

Because of the relocation the name of this outfit was expanded to include Texas Best Outfitters, while still retaining the Krooked River Ranch portion so many know. "It's just a slight modification in our identity but we still offer the same great hunting opportunities and pricing structure our clients have come to appreciate," he said.

I loved the old ranch and have many fond memories of hunting a variety of game animals, but upon arriving at the new lodge, seeing the break country that sprawled out below the headquarters, a sense of new excitement coursed through my veins. This is special country with its own personality and challenges. I excitedly told Tom, "This is going to be amazing."

Little did I know how accurate was that statement. Over the next three days we teamed with Texas Best Outfitters predator guide William "Junior" Walker. Junior is one of those folksy, jolly people you instantly know you are going to have fun with. He is a passionate and avid predator hunter that participates in a

number of predator tournaments held throughout west Texas and the panhandle.

The fortuitous thing is Junior is a big fan of FoxPro game calls just like me. He uses several of their CS24C callers along with FoxPro's Fox Daddy decoy when hunting tournaments or while guiding. The CS24C has a single horn speaker, is capable of holding 1,000 sounds, comes preloaded with 100 FoxPro sounds and has the latest FoxPro technology including FoxData, FoxMotion, FoxCast, FoxBang plus much more.

As Junior shared his hunting experiences and tools I countered with my FoxPro Shockwave. It is an adjustable dual speaker system that has the same latest FoxPro technology and capacity as the CS24C. However, instead of using an independent decoy the Shockwave has the ability to attach the Foxjack decoy to the caller by replacing the battery door cover with the decoy attachment. The entire system of either model call is operated by the user-friendly FoxPro's TX-1000 remote control.

When we gathered for a pre-dawn breakfast that first morning it was Arctic-cold following a front that dropped the temperature to 8 degrees above zero with a RealFeel of minus 6 degrees. Layered clothing was the order of the day.

The Solunar Tables in the back of TOJ said we would hunt during the influence

of a New Moon on either GOOD or BEST days. The major feeding period of the day was from mid-morning until mid-afternoon.

The tables and forecast proved on target as the first three early morning stands resulted in no responses. "These critters are brushed up with all of this cold weather," I chucked. Junior said, "I don't think they are going to move until things warm a little." Tom chimed in with, "Let's see what happens once we get into the major activity time of day." The optimism of this trio of veteran hunters was high.

About 9:30 we set up and started a low volume calling sequence using the Cagey Cottontail sound while the decoy did an enticing hoochie coochie wiggle above the ShockWave. In a matter of moments it became obvious things were about to change and animals begin moving.

Off in the distance, through the leaf-barren oak trees a barred owl had its wings set with eyes and ears fixed on the sound and action while it made its silent gliding approach on our offering. As the bird approached with legs and talons extended my thought switched to "Oh No"—that bird is going to snatch my caller and fly away with it. However, at the last moment it diverted to a nearby dead snag and started raising what-for at whatever had fooled his senses. A few snort-chuckles came from my hunting buddies and me



TOJ's Hunting Editor Tom Claycomb III with a coyote he took with his shotgun loaded with Kent Cartridge shells.



PHOTO BY JOHN FRANKSON

Normally bobcats are slow to respond to calls but on this hunt they responded as quickly as the hungry coyotes.

as we absorbed the comical interlude. We all agreed it was about to happen.

On our next stand Tom was in the middle hidden behind an Ameristep Throwdown blind and seated in a low-profile turkey hunting chair. His Winchester shotgun was filled with Kent Cartridge loads suitable for turkeys or predators and supported with a Bog-Pod bipod shooting stick.

I was on the left with my MG Arms 6.5 Grendel Trans and a 10 round magazine filled with Hornady Custom's 123 grain SST bullet. A Primos Trigger Tall Tripod

would provide a stable platform for any shot I would take.

Junior once again started a low volume sequence with the Cagey Cottontail. About 15 to 20 seconds after the calling began I slowly scanned to my right where the call and decoy were positioned, and then started a return scan to my left.

The bark of Tom's Winchester had me snapping my head back to the right just in time to see a big coyote react as he absorbed the full load of shot. It ran just a few yards before collapsing.

"Wow that happened fast," I said.

Junior commented, "This may be the way they respond. They are hungry and they are looking to eat."

On the next set up it was big bobcat that surprised us by doing what bobcats typically don't do — coming in quickly. Usually a cat will take a little longer and are more cautious but on this cold morning it seemed an empty belly overruled traditional caution.

In fact the surprisingly quick arrival of the bobcat didn't provide a shot opportunity as it flashed across a narrow lane. It resulted in one of those encounters Tom still talks about and proclaims it was the biggest bobcat he had ever seen.

As the temperature slowly climbed above the frigid mark we surveyed more of the T-Diamond in a Can Am Lone Star Edition provided by Family Powersports from its location in Lubbock. Sales Manager Curtis Miller had just finished tricking it out for hunting with green lights around the roof, winch and a few other dealer options. The superb suspension provided one of the best-in-class rides, handling and power I have experienced.

In our travels between stands Junior shared some of his hunting set ups that have proven successful. "It all depends on the terrain being hunted," he began. "Whenever possible try to get some elevation like up on the side of a hill. That way you have a chance to see them coming



Sitting atop a mesa overlooking gorgeous break country in northwest Texas Texas Best Outfitters' new lodge provides comfortable accommodations for groups of hunters as well as corporate/private events. On the T-Diamond Ranch a new 1,000 range and situational long range shooting school will debut later in 2018.



Texas Best Outfitters predator guide "Junior" Walker (right) and TOJ's contributing hunting editor Tom Claycomb III glass some of the game rich break country from a roomy Can Am Lone Star Edition.

in as opposed to being right on top of you when the terrain is flat like when that bobcat showed.

"Setting up around game feeders or stock tanks are good bets too. Cats especially will wait around water because turkey, deer, and even quail will eventually come to get a drink.

"Plus you've got to play the wind and have it in your face or at least some sort of cross wind, particularly when hunting coyotes. If they ever catch your wind a coyote is out of there.

"Use full camo including a facemask. Plus a decoy will help draw the attention away from where you are set up. It also helps to use some sort of scent spray like Fresh Earth. You just need to be concealed."

While this hunt occurred at the start of the year, by the time this clip is read the coyote and bobcat breeding season will be winding down. Junior suggests using coyote howls and calls through the spring months.

However, when they are hungry, he says for that part of Texas his go-to sound is the Cagey Cottontail.

"When I am just focusing on calling in a bobcat I'll use the Platinum Gray Fox call," he confessed. "I once had a 25.70 pound bobcat come to that sound. Those larger cats don't seem to be afraid of anything."

The type of terrain he sets up around helps determine what he is hunting. "If it

is really thick cover like heavy brush and cactus flats I am thinking more about cats," he said. "When hunting more open areas with scattered low brush, that's more coyote country and it's easier to see them coming in. Rocky areas are a good place for gray fox."

One of the most profound statements our guide offered was to expect the unexpected. Over the course of our hunts we saw coyotes and bobcats do the unexpected.

We were impressed with how quickly and readily they came to a variety of call sounds and sequences. Plus we had ample

opportunities to remove some predators to assist with the game management plan on the ranch.

Roy said, "Predator hunting is not only a key component to our outfitting business, it is also an important part of our game management plan for the ranch. When predator numbers are controlled we have more quail and turkey, but especially deer. When coyote numbers are controlled we see increased fawn survival.

"When bobcat numbers are controlled that helps us achieve our quail management plan. The real challenge and necessity for predator control occurs when drought conditions like we've seen recently occur. Then there is less cover for the game animals and the predators have an easier time finding their next meal."

Predator hunting is a fun "off-season" hunting addiction that also benefits primary game animals. Try it once and you'll be hooked.

For more information about hunting with Krooked River Ranch — Texas Best Outfitters visit their website at www.texasbestoutfitters.com or call (325) 773-2457.

For information on some of the products used on this hunt including FoxPro Game Calls visit gofoxpro.com; Ameristep Blinds at www.ameristep.com; Kent Cartridge at kentgamebore.com; Hornady Ammunition at www.hornady.com; MG Arms at www.mgarmsinc.com, and Can Am Lone Star Edition from Family Powersports at www.familypowersports.com. T★J



FoxPro's Shockwave call and attached Fox Jack decoy enticed coyotes and bobcats in close.



Lake Roundup

SOUTH TEXAS



By Danno Wise

Spring is in full swing come April. Because of the consistently warmer weather found during the first full month of spring, it is the first time many casual anglers and water sport enthusiasts will be heading to their local lake. As a result, fishermen who have been used to having their favorite lake all to themselves will find themselves with more company over the next few weeks.

However, fishermen can expect to have plenty of action during the fourth month of the year. Spring's warmer weather does more than encourage more people to hit the water, it also encourages the fish inhabiting those waters to become more frisky.

April is a month when virtually every species found in South Texas lakes will be active and most of these fish can be caught in a variety of manners.

In April, fishermen can also expect to see a sharp increase in shallow water activity. From now until fish settle into a deep water summer pattern, bass, catfish, and a variety of panfish can be found feeding in the shallows along the shorelines of every South Texas lake, making them much more accessible to casual fishermen and much more exciting to catch for everyone.

Thanks to such a high level of fish activity, there will be plenty of action for everyone on South Texas lakes this month, even though 'everyone' will probably be a lot more than it has been in recent

months.

COLETO CREEK – Victoria based bass pro Dennis Lala says the black bass spawn on Coletto Creek will be done by the time April begins, but there will still be plenty of post-spawn fish patrolling the shallows this month.

"Our fish will already be spawned out by April," said Lala. "But, we'll still have a lot of those post-spawn fish holding shallow and feeding along the shorelines over the next few weeks. Most of those fish will be right up against the bank.

"We usually have a real good topwater bite early in the day during April. Noisy topwaters like the Rattlin' Buzz or Frenzy Popper usually work best. I like to throw 'em right up on the shoreline. We really don't have any grass in the lake any more, but those fish will be holding right up against the bank and around any stickups or stumps or other visible structure along the shoreline.

"Spinnerbaits also work really good early in the day. Again, the fish will be shallow early. So, just throw them right up on the bank or run it down alongside the bank.

"Around mid-morning, I'll switch to a Power Jerkshad. I fish it weightless when the fish are shallow. When I move out to the points and drops, I'll rig it Carolina-style.

"The crappie bite also gets going good in April as well. They are also done spawning, so they head back to deep water structure. When they are concentrated on that deep structure, they're pretty easy to find.

"Without a doubt, the best bait for catching crappie is live minnows, but you can also catch plenty on small jigs.

"We'll also have plenty of catfish around the hot water discharge in April. Like always, you can catch them on things like Canadian nightcrawlers, shrimp or shad.

"In April, they'll be pretty active because it's warm, but not too hot. Later in the spring and summer, they'll be gone because the water around the discharge will be too hot.

"The hybrids will also leave the

discharge area once the water gets warm. They'll be scattered around the lake, so they'll be a little tougher to find, unless you can find them up on top. The black bass will also be gone from the discharge and scattered around the lake, mostly on the shorelines.

"So, during April, about the only thing around the discharge will be catfish. If you run across some active schools of hybrids around the lake, you can usually catch quite a few of them on jigs or small crankbaits."

MEDINA – Medina is still in good shape as far as water level. And, according to Jim Gallagher of Jim's ReBait Tackle, April is generally one of the better months to fish this lake.

"April is usually a pretty good month for us," said Gallagher. "At the beginning of the month, things are pretty much the same as they were in March, except the spawning fish will be a little lower on the lake. On the upper end, they should be in a post-spawn pattern by April. Mid-lake fish will just be finishing up with their spawn.

"If you are fishing spawning bass, do the same thing you did in March. If you can see the beds, you can cast lizards or creature baits. If you can't see the beds, just keep casting in the areas you think the fish are bedding until you get one to hit.

"We may have a few fish spawning a little later this year because of the colder winter, but by the second or third week of April, the entire lake should be in a post-spawn pattern. That's when things get a little tougher. The spawn is really hard on those fish. After they are done, they go deep and kind of lay low for awhile. You can get them to hit, but they won't chase a bait very far, so you really have to be persistent.

"By the middle of the month, the whites should be running up the river," said Gallagher. "When you find them up there, small jigs like Roadrunners are good, as well as small inline spinners like Shysters. A lot of folks also like using a Tiny Torpedo with a Flea Fly trailer.

"April is usually one of the best months for crappie on this lake. The trick is finding a brush pile.

“People who know where the brush piles are usually do really well but, they also keep those spots secret. So, you’ve got to know where to go. If you do, you can have some really good crappie fishing in April.

“By the end of April, our water will be warming up quite a bit, so the bass will start getting a little bit shallow and feeding a little more aggressively. Around the last week of April, we’ll start getting some pretty decent topwater and spinnerbait action that will carry over into May.”

CHOKO CANYON – Choke Canyon’s black bass population will be in a post-spawn pattern as April gets going. This means the fish will be out of the river and back on the main lake. And, although they will be holding deep, they will also be concentrated. So, once anglers located fish, they will find a pile of them.

The best areas to locate this fish will be offshore structure like old dams and tanks in the main lake. As the water warms and hydrilla beds start reaching for the lake’s surface, bass will begin congregating there as well.

“The downside is, like post-spawn fish everywhere, post-spawn fish on Choke can be finicky. But, more often than not, they can be tempted to strike a Texas-rigged lizard or creature bait.

Later in the month, as fish begin to emerge from their post-spawn funk, there will also be a decent topwater bite around the hydrilla pads with frogs and Pop Rs.

FALCON – Beginning in April, fish on Falcon will be found a little deeper than they were during the spawn earlier in the spring.

As with fish on other South Texas lakes, Falcon’s resident black bass population will have completed their spawning activity by April and will be entering the post-spawn mode.

While a number of smaller fish will still be found in the shallows, most of the top-end fish will be found along the deeper ledges and other deep structure, such as submerged treelines, as well. Deep-diving crankbaits will be the best bet for big fish, but plenty of fish will also be caught on Texas-rigged soft-plastics and slow-rolled spinnerbaits as well.

Up the Rio Grande River above the lake catfish action should be steady. There will be number of good catfish taken from the river channel in the upper portion of the lake as well. **T★J**

WEST TEXAS



By TOJ Staff

AMISTAD — “Big Friendly” seems to have found some consistency when it comes to its lake level. For the past several years, during the month of April it has been about 24 feet below conservation pool. Look for a similar level again this year. It also looks like the historical mid-60s water temperature range will hold true. It takes a lot of cold weather to drop temperatures on this huge impound.

In April anglers can expect some good black bass fishing. Most of the spawning activity will be moving out of the rivers and into the main lake.

Notes reflect that the best bite will be in water 20-40 feet deep on green tubes, Senkos and spinnerbaits. Anglers should also try a Carolina rig with a big 10” PowerWorm and do the “Ivie Drift” made popular on Lake O.H. Ivie for deep spawning black bass. Set up markers and drag the Carolina rig behind your boat.

Good crappie reports are coming from the Devils River. Look for them in the trees. Catfish will be make a slow move toward the surface in advance of their spawn. Try water 15-25 feet deep.

O.H. IVIE — Good news, bad news on this popular lake level. The good news is Ivie has six feet more water than it did in 2016. The bad news it is six feet lower than last year. It looks like the water temperature by the time April arrives will make its annual move through the 60s.

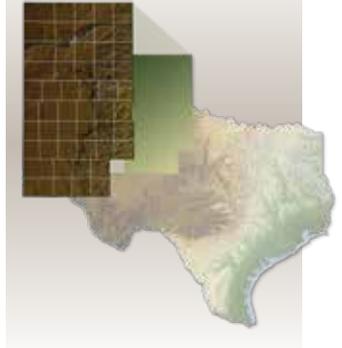
Anglers fishing structure with jigs is a good option this month. The best action should be around the mouths of the rivers and creeks. By the end of the month there may be some early spawning activity on the deeper flats.

BROWNWOOD — In early March this popular lake was just a little over three feet low. This will be the first spring in two years anglers have not seen water levels

above conservation pool.

Anglers should fish shallow for black bass in April. Redbug or green pumpkin Grande Bass soft plastics fished around the docks in three to five feet of water is a proven pattern. Anglers should also look for spawning beds in shallow water. Jigs and watermelon soft plastics are good options. Also check out the bite on craw-colored Rat-L-Traps or chartreuse/blue spinnerbaits. Both are good baits to cover water to find fish, or continue to fish as bass come off of the beds. Crappie action should be good around the brush piles. Catch them on either minnows or watermelon tube jigs. Notes reflect the best depth will be 16-25 feet of water. **T★J**

HIGH PLAINS



By TOJ Staff

ALAN HENRY — This lake could use water. As of early March it was over six feet low. However, April is typically when Alan Henry shows its big bass potential. Last year Johnny Vineyard caught a 13.34 ShareLunker on March 21 but with the colder winter this region has had, look for the better bite to slip into April.

Anglers fishing seven inch PowerWorms, swim jigs and medium diving crankbaits will cover the entire water column. Best efforts may come from back up the creeks out to their mouth.

COLEMAN — Look for bass to be in various stages of the spawn in April. Spinnerbaits and craw colored crankbaits will cover water to find the fish.

Jigs and Senkos will be good once fish are found. Also look for the crappie bite to be improved by the fourth month of the year. Papermouths should be around any vertical structure or brush piles.

OTHER OPTION — Lake Meredith is still about 47 feet low, but typically shows good fishing for bream and catfish in April. **T★J**

SHRIMP CROAKER MULLET



Understanding the bait transition will put more trout and reds in the cooler.

*Story and Photography
by Robert Sloan*

Above: There are days at the jetties or in the surf that trout prefer shrimp. Some anglers will not leave the dock without an assorted variety of live bait.



Right: Trout can be finicky feeders. Typically, during late spring, they will be on a strong live shrimp bite. As currents warm the bite will go from shrimp to croakers.



PHOTO BY JOHN FRANKSON

There is nothing better than fresh caught live bait. One thing that can really pay off is a cast net — especially in the surf and along jetties, where mullet are usually easy to catch.

Capt. Ron Arlitt got his Parker center console anchored and gave us the thumbs up for fishing the surf. The water was green to the beach and things could not have looked better. Three of us baited up with live shrimp and made the cast to the first gut. We fished, caught nothing and fished some more.

"Ok," said Arlitt. "Let's switch over to croakers and see what happens."

Dan Jenkins was the first to get a croaker in the water and immediately hooked up with a big surf run trout.

"That didn't take long," laughed Arlitt. "Some days they are on shrimp. Sometimes a mullet is best. But today it's definitely croakers."

You never know what a trout or a red is going to want on any given day. That's why it's important to take along a variety of live baits. I normally load up with two or three quarts of shrimp and several dozen croakers."

Trout can be finicky feeders. Typically, during late spring, they will be on a strong live shrimp bite. That's mainly because that is the most prevalent bait around. But as currents warm the bite will go from shrimp to croakers and mullet.

When fishing the jetties, it's always a good idea to have a variety of baits onboard. Dodd Coffee has been fishing the Port O'Connor jetties for decades. His boat is rigged up with two live wells. One is for shrimp, and another is for croakers.

"When I fish the jetties I like to catch both trout and reds," says Coffee. "Trout are usually more partial to eating a live shrimp. Reds tend to bite better on croakers. But you never know from one hour to another what either will want. I'll usually start out fishing croaker on bottom during the summer months. In April and May live shrimp are easier to get than croakers and mullet.

That's when a shrimp will catch both reds and trout. That's also a time when size of the live bait matters. With micro-sized shrimp I'll use two or three on one hook. That way I've got more scent in the water and more wiggling baits."

Another live bait option at the jetties is a finger mullet. There are days when a fresh caught mullet is a killer on both reds and trout at the jetties. They can be fished under a slip cork or straight down on bottom in some of the deeper holes.

One thing that can really pay off big time is a cast net. There is nothing better than fresh caught live bait. They are especially handy in the surf and along jetties. Mullet are usually easy to catch. Live shad can often be caught along the jetties and especially at the jetty boat cuts where there is a lot of current.

"The top three baits to fish at the jetties are shrimp, croakers and mullet," says Arlitt. "But a live shad or pogie can be the best bait at times. The fish will let you know what they prefer. If I've got three or four fishermen on my boat I'll rig them up with different baits. Whatever the first fish eats that's the bait I'll switch to immediately.

"I've also fished the jetties when one type of live bait is hot, then goes

completely cold. That's when you want to start trying different baits."

One live bait option at the jetties that very few anglers use is a pinfish. Both reds and trout love to eat these baits at the jetties or around shell reefs and in the surf. Pinfish can be caught all day long around bait camps, boat docks and piers. A number nine long shank bream hook baited with a tiny piece of fresh dead shrimp is perfect. Or you can use a cast net.

A pinfish about the size of a tennis ball will catch both trout and reds. But they are especially good for catching big trout at the jetties and in the surf. Hook them just behind the dorsal fin just like you would a croaker.

I've had days at the jetties when the only bait catching anything is a pinfish.

When fishing for reds at the jetties it's also a good idea to have a couple of boxes of Spanish sardines. These can be used for chumming when chopped into small chunks.

Or you can use half of one on a No. 5 croaker hook for catching reds. I've had many days at the jetties when the only thing catching reds was an oily sardine. These are especially good when fishing in off colored water.



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

If trout are feeding on mullet a mullet-imitation lure will be best. This nice trout hit an Unfair Lure Rip-N-Slash that was fished while drifting over a grass flat.



PHOTO BY JOHN FRANKSON

Typically, during late spring, trout will be on a strong live shrimp bite because that is the most prevalent bait around.

It's a rare day when you go out on the bay and don't see mullet jumping. And most of the time when you see mullet there are trout nearby. That's usually the case during late spring when big trout are eating nothing but mullet. But as shrimp move into the bays both trout and reds will make the transition from one food source to another.

Without a doubt, soft plastics rule in the world of lures when it comes to catching trout and reds. But it's a fact that fish will favor one type of lure over another one from one hour to the next.

"Trout can be finicky feeders on any given tide," says East Matagorda guide Charlie Paradoski. "Some days a swim bait is the best. On other days a shrimp-type soft plastic will get the job done. In most situations it's a matter of matching the hatch. If trout are

feeding on mullet a mullet-imitation lure will be best. That's usually when a topwater is a producer. Or something like a Corky Fat Boy. But if they are feeding heavily on shrimp a soft plastic like a Shad Assassin is best. Most of the time it's just a matter of matching the hatch and getting

the lure in front of a feeding fish."

People are always asking guides what color plastic is best. Paradoski says there are certain colors that are pretty dependable.

"What I do is carry along a lot of plastics in all the right colors," he says. "With an Assassin the electric chicken in chartreuse/brown is very good in trout green water. Limetreuse is good. I always have pumpkinseed colored Assassins with me. That's a color that looks a lot like a brown shrimp. When it's darting up and down trout go for it like it's the real deal."

Sabine Lake guide Jerry Norris says his go-to soft plastic is a red/shad Assassin with a rattail. But there is one other thing that he'll do to get more bites.

"If I see that trout are feeding on shrimp I'll add some sort of shrimp scent to the jig," he says. "Sometimes the trout will spit up a part of a freshly eaten shrimp. That's a sure sign of what they are keying on."

"So, I'll try to fish with a soft plastic that closely resembles a shrimp and smells like one. Here on Sabine Lake the trout will feed heavily on small pogies throughout the warm water months. The pogies are usually visible in the water in big schools. That's when I'll switch from a shrimp jig to a swim bait that looks like a shad or pogie."



Most of the time when fishing for trout is just a matter of matching the hatch and getting the lure in front of a feeding fish.

One of the best is a Yum Money Minnow. The sizes I do best with are 3 1/2 and 5 inches long. The smaller one is usually best. But if I'm in the surf or fishing the short rigs I'll go with the 5-inch one. Pogies in the surf and rigs are usually much larger than what we'll have in the lake.

"The Money Minnows are a perfect match for a shad that will often be moving up and down the jetties in big schools. Both trout and reds feed on the shad like there is no tomorrow. When I'm using the swim bait I'll switch to a squirt on pogie scent."

When the larger shrimp are in the surf and at the jetties you can catch them on big shrimp imitation jigs.

"One of my favorite tactics along the jetties is to fish something like a 6-inch D.O.A Shrimp Lure," says Mike Barnes, who grew up fishing the Galveston and Port O'Connor jetties.

"I'll fish them two ways. One is on a 1/4 ounce jig head. The other is about three feet below a popping cork. My best colors are root beer/gold glitter and chartreuse/silver glitter.

"The Z-Man EZ Shrimp is another

good jig to fish along the jetties. The popping cork is best early and late in the day.

"During the high sun hours I'll fish them deep on either a 1/4 of 3/8 ounce jig head. Also, it's very important to use some sort of liquid shrimp scent on the jigs. It's just one more way to get more bites."

The main thing to remember is that fishing along the coast is all about matching the hatch.

That's one very good way to up the numbers of bites you get on any given day of fishing. **T★J**



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Adding some sort of scent to the jig further helps when matching an artificial offering to the preferred bait.

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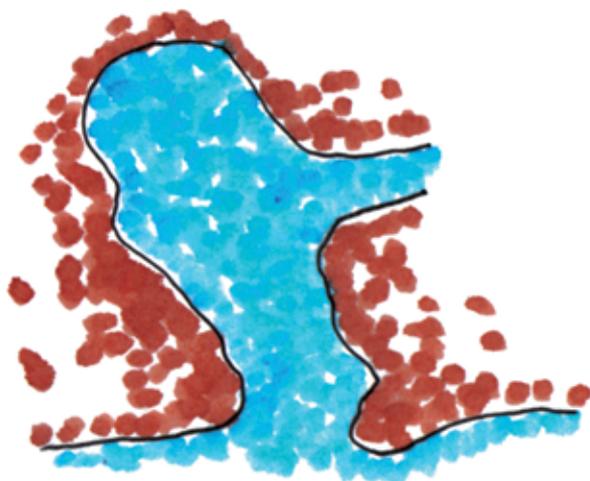
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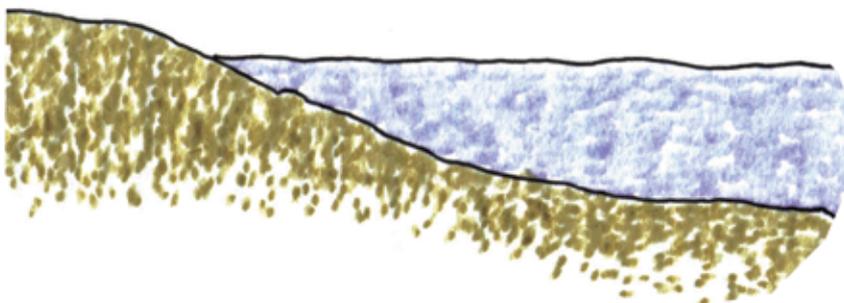


Rising Tides = Flooded Back Lakes

Spring is a time when high tides and warming water will begin to push redfish up into the back lakes and marshes, as well as along the shallow shorelines and flats in Texas bays. This opens up literally hundreds of miles of “new” water for inshore anglers to explore.



Another key factor to finding a productive stretch of shoreline is water depth. Although redfish and trout will be feeding in shallow water this time of year, they will avoid gently sloping banks that remain only a few inches deep far out into the bay. Rather, they prefer to have a shallow flat next to a shoreline that also offers fairly quick access to deeper water. So, look for shorelines that have a little more distinct drop in depth. The water doesn't need to be more than a foot or two deep, but it needs to obtain that depth within a short distance of shore.



Although every bay system is different, they all have certain common features. In general, when scouting for a place to fish along an expansive shoreline, anglers need to identify irregularities such as points, drains, dips, cuts and coves and target those areas. These features don't need to be dramatic - especially if fishing along a fairly 'regular' shoreline. Basically, any portion of a shoreline that is different from the surrounding stretch of shore is likely to hold fish.

When fishing an area for the first time, it pays to study a map before heading to the ramp. By identifying portions of the shoreline that are most likely to hold fish, anglers can avoid spending the whole day running up and down the bay, looking for places to cast. The best bet is usually to identify 3 to 5 spots and hit them in a systematic and logical order, moving from one spot to the next until fish are located.



As with any type of shallow water angling, shoreline fishing requires a degree of stealth. Anglers are best served to approach shorelines by either wading or poling. Either way, be sure to shut down the 'big' motor a good distance away from the shore. Shallow water fish are usually more skittish than those in deep water, so it pays to take a little extra time when approaching them.

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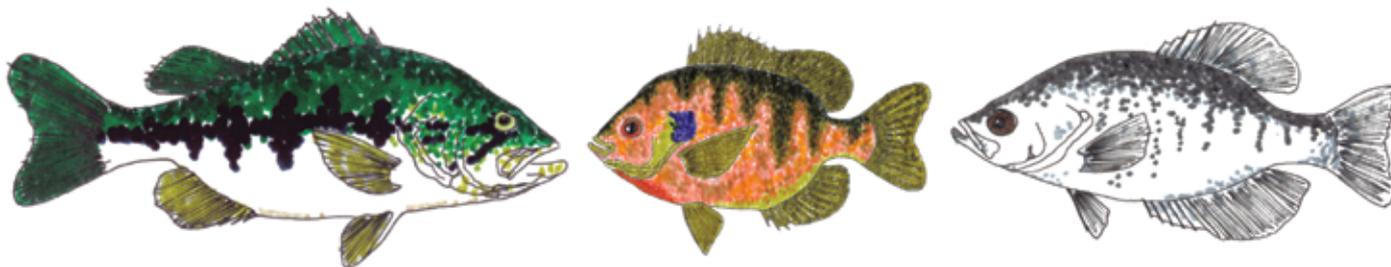
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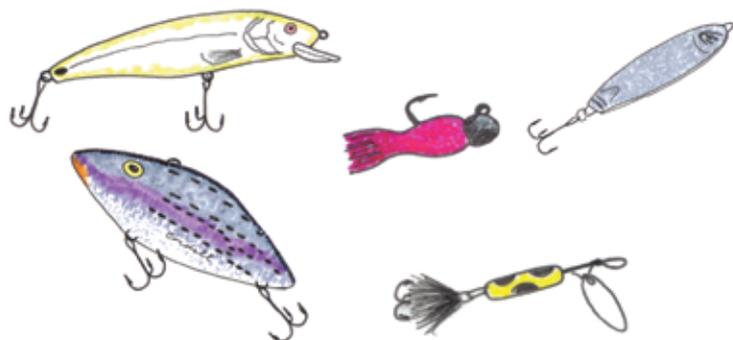
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Catching Spring's Smorgasbord of Gamefish



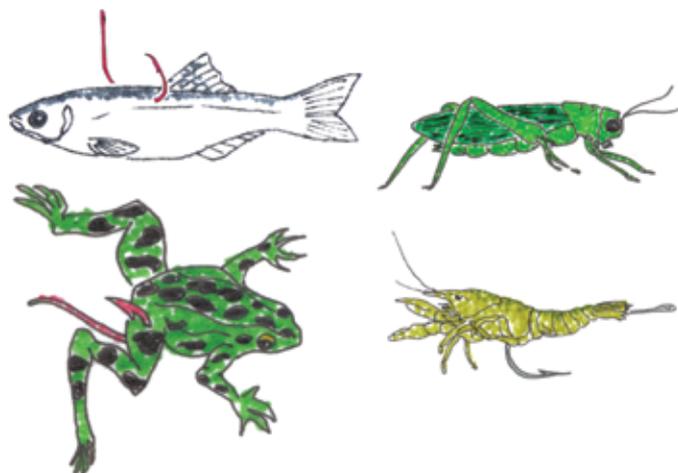
Bass, bluegill and crappie are all popular species on lakes across the Lone Star State during spring. By April, the majority of fish from these three species will have completed their spawn on most Texas lakes and resumed a "normal" pattern of existence. However, with prey species in lakes having spawned earlier in spring as well, April is a perfect time to downsize and use ultra-light tackle and lures to catch a variety of fish.

Virtually every body of fresh water in Texas is loaded with some sort of "minnow." And, just about every species of predator fish dines on these small finfish.



Jigs, spoons, inline spinners and a variety of small plugs all imitate these tiny finfish. As a result, these artificial lures can tempt a variety of predator fish. And, since most of the prey items are small this time of year, even big bass will eat tiny lures. In fact, downsized lures are often the best way to get fish to strike when they are in a post-spawn sulk.

Fishermen who prefer the real thing can score good catches with all kinds of natural baits during spring, including frogs, crawfish, grasshoppers and, of course, minnows. Again, since the majority of these baits are relatively young, they will be smaller during spring than at other times of the year. Fishermen are best served to use a light-wire hook on these small bait items so as not to impede their movement more than necessary.



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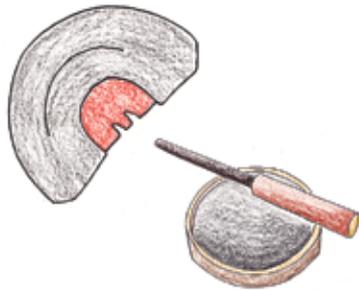
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Spring Gobblers - Make It Easy

One of Texas' most exciting hunting seasons of the year occurs in the spring. It is a time when Mother Nature explodes with splotches and blankets of colorful wild flowers across diverse landscapes and when Rio Grande and Eastern turkeys are mating.

This underutilized resource and hunting opportunity is when a camo clad hunter will illicit a few soft yelps and many times is met with a thunderous response before calling cadence is even completed. The response means a gobbler is interested in the "loving" invitation just offered. The question now is will he come in or will he get hung up.

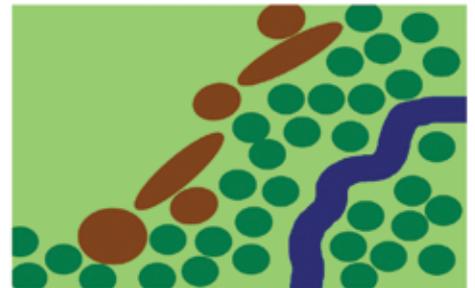


Successful turkey hunters know the lay of the land being hunted. One of the easiest ways to be in a position to harvest a spring long beard is to know where the turkeys roost, travel corridors, where creeks and fences that may become a potential obstacle. Armed with this knowledge the hunter simply gets out front of the flock as the feed.

Setting up in front of turkeys on the move, offering some reassuring purrs or putts has made many a caller look like a world champion. Friction or small box calls are perfect for this run and gun type of hunting. Diaphragm calls limits movement and keeps the hands free to take the shot.

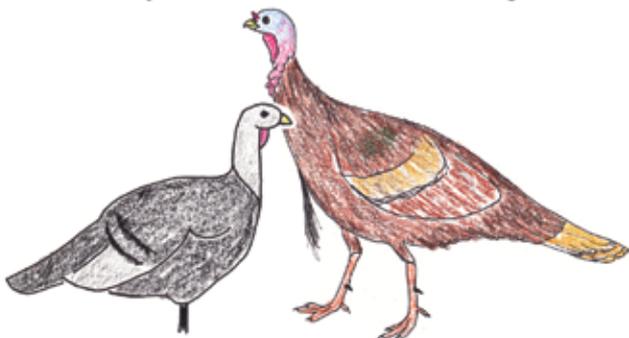
When things go wrong and a gobbler does not respond it could be that he has found his mate for the moment and will not leave. Any response is more of a "baby I'll be with you later."

Another reason a gobbler may not come in is that it has to cross a creek or a fence. Sometimes the difference between success and failure are the little things. By knowing where obstacles are located and simply setting up so the gobbler does not have to cross them can mean success.



In areas of the Lone Star State that has more hills or elevation variation it is better to set up on slightly higher ground. A gobbler is more inclined to be comfortable traveling uphill rather than downhill.

The reasoning is somewhat logical even for a prey that has a brain the size of a native pecan. By going uphill, should danger appear a gobbler could turn and fly away with the ground falling away from him. Conversely if he were traveling downhill and danger appeared he would turn to escape and find the ground still rising as he lifts off.



Besides luring gobblers in via the call, hunters can also use visual stimulus to attract their quarry. The use of hen decoys can entice a long-beard into thinking he has just found the lonely love of that day.

Using both a hen and gobbler decoy together brings out the fight in most male animals. Dominant gobblers won't stand for another gobbler to be on "his" turf without some intimidating strutting, drumming, gobbling and even spur fights.

Replace the gobbler decoy with a jake alongside a hen and a mature gobbler becomes incensed. He will rush in quickly show the

Spring turkey season is upon us so don your best camo, including facemask, gloves, and black socks. At your back utilize a tree, big rock or some brush to break your outline. It is time to make it easy to get up close with some wild turkey.



Outdoor Calendar

THROUGH APRIL 29,

Spring Turkey Season — *South Zone, 54 counties*. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, or call (800) 792-1112.

THROUGH MAY 13,

Spring Turkey Season — *North Zone, 101 counties*. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, or call (800) 792-1112.

APRIL 1 - 30,

Spring Turkey Season, 1 Turkey Bag Limit Counties, *8 counties (Bastrop, Caldwell, Colorado, Fayette, Jackson, Lavaca, Lee, Milam)*. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, or call (800) 792-1112.

APRIL 6,

Pearland/Friendswood Chapter Ducks Unlimited Fundraiser Banquet, *Pearland*. For tickets and reservations call (225) 603-1780.

APRIL 7,

Amarillo Chapter Ducks Unlimited Fundraiser Banquet, *Amarillo*. For tickets and reservations call (806) 290-0926.

APRIL 7,

Angler Education Instructor Workshop, Bass Pro Shop, *Pearland*. Become a TPWD certified Angler Education Instructor. This free workshop

is open to anyone 18 or older interested in teaching fishing skills in their communities. The program provides the curriculum, equipment, materials and support to help volunteers successfully introduce youth and their families to fishing. Ideal for teachers, youth group leaders, afterschool or camp staff and community volunteers. TEA-approved CPE available for teachers. Participants should wear comfortable clothing for outdoor activities, wear hat, sunglasses and bring a sack lunch and a water bottle. 10:00 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. Preregistration is required, please contact Greg Akins, TPWD certified Angler Education Volunteer Instructor/Trainer, (713) 201-8110 or greg.akins@tpwd.texas.gov

APRIL 14,

Texas Tech University Chapter Ducks Unlimited Fundraiser Banquet, *Lubbock*. For tickets and reservations call (281) 723-0667.

APRIL 14,

Dripping Springs Chapter Ducks Unlimited Fundraiser Banquet, *Dripping Springs*. For tickets and reservations call (512) 496-8333.

APRIL 14,

Perryton Strutters Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation Fundraiser Banquet, *Perryton*. For tickets and

reservations call (806) 435-3164.

APRIL 14,

West Bay Blackjack Tournament, Fundraiser & Crawfish Boil, West End Marina, *Galveston*. Benefitting Gary J Lynn Foundation for the Research and Cure of Cerebral Palsy. For entry and reservations visit www.fishwest-end.com or call (713) 594-4252.

APRIL 14,

Lampasas County Chapter National Mule Deer Foundation Fundraiser Banquet, *Lampasas*. For tickets and reservations call (210) 860-9559.

APRIL 19,

Brazos Valley Chapter Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Big Game Banquet, *Bryan*. For tickets and reservations call (979) 450-1402.

APRIL 19,

Austin Chapter Ducks Unlimited Fundraiser Banquet, *Austin*. For tickets and reservations call (320) 808-9453.

APRIL 19,

McKinney Chapter Ducks Unlimited Fundraiser Banquet, *McKinney*. For tickets and reservations call (214) 578-3259.

APRIL 20,

South Plains Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation Fundraiser Banquet, *Lubbock*. For tickets and reservations call (806) 789-6824.

APRIL 20,

Brush Country Chapter Ducks Unlimited Fundraiser Banquet, *Floresville*. For tickets and reservations call (830) 391-4675.

APRIL 20,

Angler Education Instructor Workshop, Mansfield Activity Center, *Mansfield*. Become a TPWD certified Angler Education Instructor. This free workshop is open to anyone 18 or older interested in teaching fishing skills in their communities. The

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APRIL 21,
Mineral Wells Chapter Ducks Unlimited Fundraiser Banquet, *Mineral Wells*. For tickets and reservations call (940) 452-6728.

APRIL 21,
San Jacinto Festival & Battle Reenactment, San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site, *LaPorte*. Join us for a day of fun, food, music and battle-reenactment to celebrate the

18-minute battle that won Texas its Independence from Mexico. Thousands of Texans and others will gather at San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site on Saturday, April 21, 2018 to celebrate the brief but decisive battle that brought Texas its independence from Mexico. Living history exhibits open at 10 a.m. The festival activities will be followed by a reenactment of the famous Texas revolution battle at 3:00 p.m. A "park & ride" concept that features bus transportation from on-site parking areas, is provided throughout the day. Admission is free. For more information call (281) 479-2431 x234.

APRIL 21,
San Jacinto Commemorative Ceremony, San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site, *LaPorte*. Celebrate with us the 182nd Anniversary of the Battle of San Jacinto at the official ceremony commemorating the battle. The ceremony will be held at 11:00am on the northeast side of the San Jacinto Monument terrace

on Saturday, April 21st. This decisive battle of the Texas Revolution won Texas its independence from Mexico. Admission is free. For more information call (281) 479-2431 x234.

APRIL 26,
Galveston Chapter Ducks Unlimited Fundraiser Banquet, *Galveston*. For tickets and reservations call (409) 762-9900.

APRIL 27,
Ellis County Chapter Ducks Unlimited Fundraiser Banquet, *Waxahachie*. For tickets and reservations call (214) 673-7264.

APRIL 28,
Permian Basin Chapter Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Big Game Banquet, *Midland*. For tickets and reservations call (432) 694-4976.

APRIL 28,
37th Annual Winnie-Stowell Chapter Ducks Unlimited Fundraiser Banquet, *Winnie*. For tickets and reservations call (409) 267-7116. 



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Tide Tables

APRIL 2018

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
H6:00A 1.4 L12:13P 0.6 H5:39P 1.2 L11:55P 0.2 1	H7:03A 1.5 L1:01P 0.8 H5:57P 1.2 2	L12:33A 0.2 H8:06A 1.4 L1:54P 1.0 H6:08P 1.1 3	L1:13A 0.1 H9:12A 1.4 L3:07P 1.1 H6:02P 1.2 4	L1:56A 0.1 H10:23A 1.4 5	L2:43A 0.2 H11:39A 1.4 6	L3:40A 0.2 H12:54P 1.4 7
L4:46A 0.3 H1:54P 1.4 8	L5:57A 0.3 H2:34P 1.4 9	L7:03A 0.3 H3:01P 1.3 L9:28P 1.0 10	L8:12A 1.1 H3:57A 0.4 L3:23P 1.3 H9:16P 1.0 11	L9:16A 1.1 H4:44A 0.4 L3:41P 1.3 H9:21P 0.9 12	L10:23A 0.1 H5:38P 1.3 L3:58P 0.7 H10:09A 1.7 13	L11:30A 0.1 H6:26P 1.3 L4:13P 1.3 H10:05P 0.5 14
L15:52A 1.5 H4:48A 0.7 H4:26P 1.2 L10:37P 0.3 15	L16:50A 1.5 H5:38P 1.3 H4:47P 1.3 L11:13P 0.2 16	L17:49A 1.6 H6:26P 1.1 L11:54P 0.0 17	L18:48A 1.7 H7:15A 1.2 L12:16P 1.1 H4:52P 1.3 18	L19:47A -0.1 H8:04A 1.7 L2:05P 1.3 H4:50P 1.4 19	L20:46A -0.1 H8:52A 1.7 L3:11A 1.7 H10:09A 1.7 20	L21:45A -0.1 H9:40A 1.6 L4:13P 1.3 H11:24A 1.6 21
L22:44A 0.0 H10:32P 1.6 22	L23:43A 1.0 H11:27P 1.6 L8:28P 1.1 23	L24:42A 0.2 H12:08P 1.5 L8:28P 1.1 24	L25:41A 1.2 H12:33A 1.2 L7:36A 0.4 H2:40P 1.4 L8:51P 0.9 25	L26:40A 1.3 H12:06A 1.3 L8:44A 0.5 H3:06P 1.4 L9:20P 0.7 26	L27:39A 1.4 H11:31A 1.4 L3:22A 1.4 H3:28P 1.3 L9:51P 0.5 27	L28:38A 1.5 H10:37A 0.8 L3:48P 1.3 L10:22P 0.3 28
L29:37A 1.6 H11:27A 1.0 H4:05P 1.3 L10:53P 0.2 29	L30:36A 1.6 H12:16P 1.1 H4:18P 1.3 L11:24P 0.1 30					

MAY 2018

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		H7:13A 1.7 L1:08P 1.2 H4:25P 1.3 L11:56P 0.0 1	H8:04A 1.6 2	L12:31A 0.0 H8:56A 1.6 3	L1:08A 0.1 H9:51A 1.6 4	L1:49A 0.1 H10:50A 1.5 5
L2:37A 0.2 H11:48A 1.5 6	L3:32A 0.3 H12:39P 1.5 7	L4:36A 0.4 H1:17P 1.4 8	L5:46A 0.5 H2:06P 1.4 L8:50P 0.9 9	L6:55A 1.1 H2:06P 1.3 L8:38P 0.8 10	L8:04A 1.2 H2:23P 1.3 L8:46P 0.6 11	L9:13A 1.3 H2:37P 1.3 L9:06P 0.4 12

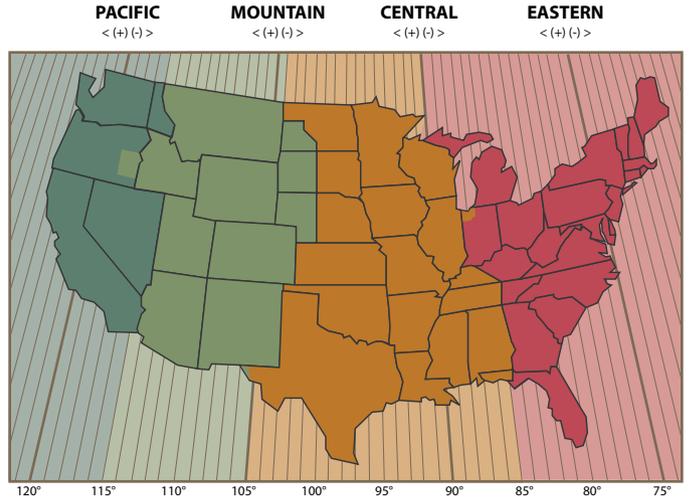
Times are for Galveston, Galveston Channel

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



APRIL 2018

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

MAY 2018

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1 ☉	2 ☉	3 ○	4 ○	5 ☉
		12:35P - 5:35P	1:30P - 6:30P	2:25P - 7:25P	3:20P - 8:20P	4:15P - 9:15P
6 ☉	7 ☉	8 ☉	9 ●	10 ●	11 ☉	12 ○
LQ	4:40A - 9:40A	5:30A - 10:30A	6:15A - 11:15A	6:55A - 11:55A	7:35A - 12:35P	8:15A - 1:15P

● 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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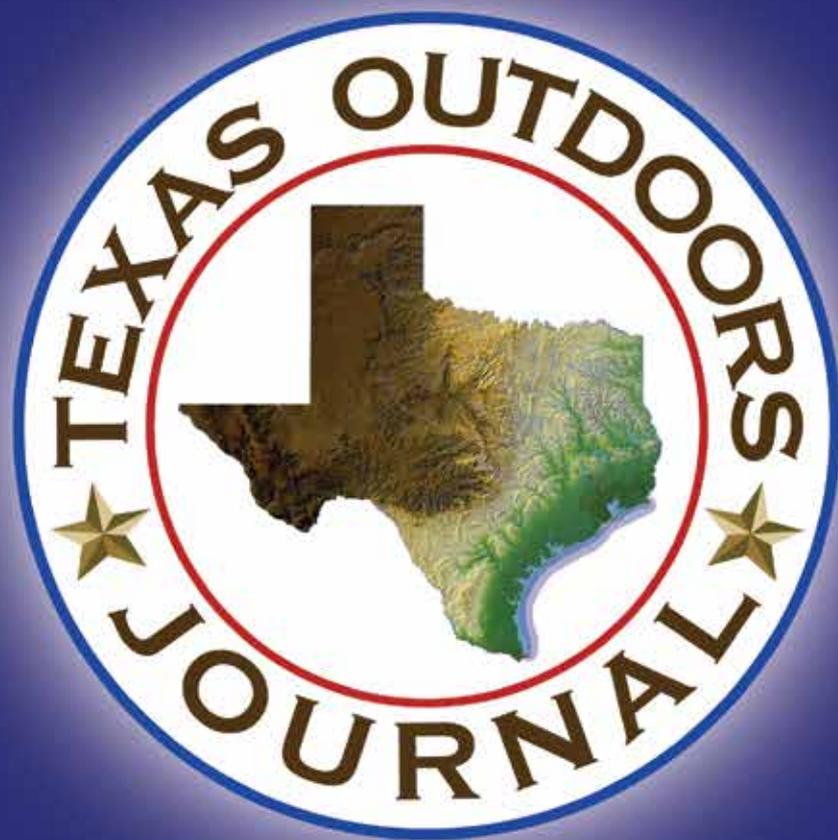
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