

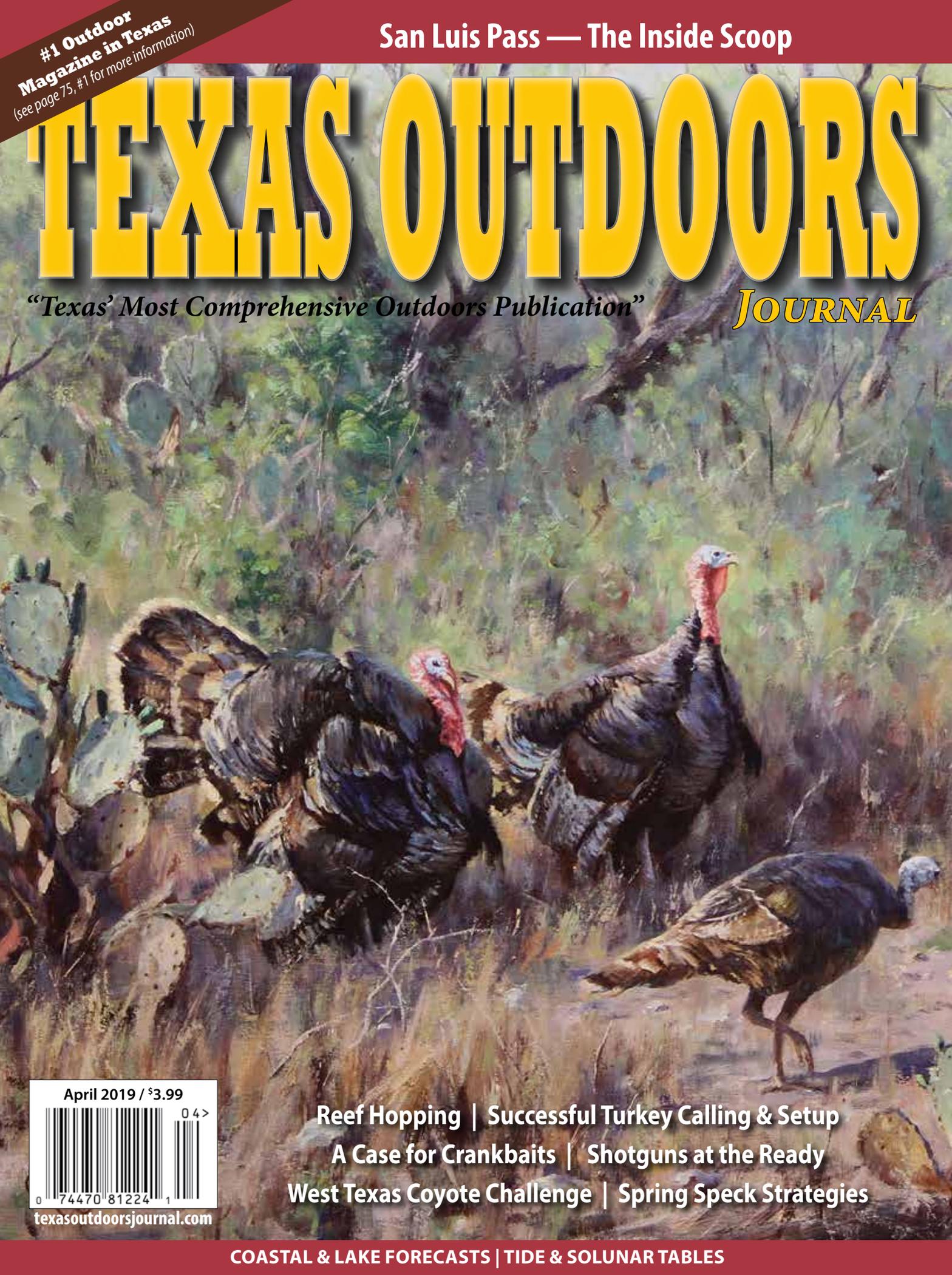
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**San Luis Pass — The Inside Scoop**

# TEXAS OUTDOORS

*“Texas’ Most Comprehensive Outdoors Publication”*

**JOURNAL**



April 2019 / \$3.99



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# Editor's Insight | Bill L. Olson



## Combined Experience Awarded

A few months ago, after a deadline, I sent my monthly note to the entire TOJ Team. I teasingly commented that based on the recently completed issue I thought their "age" was showing. I explained their age resulted in a plethora of experience, successes and knowledge both afield and afloat that was absolutely superb.

I complimented on how each continued to raise their individual bars and how collectively each of us "pushed" each other to maintain the highest level of professionalism, insight, and credibility as we provide a wealth of reliable information for outdoor enthusiasts each month.

On March 2, 2019, at the 61st Annual Texas Outdoor Writers Association Conference and Excellence In Craft Awards Banquet held in Corpus Christ a gathering of the best writers, photographers, broadcasters, publishers and other outdoor professionals were recognized. Based on this year's results my comment to our Team was further substantiated.

For the 21st time in the highly competitive Major Outdoor Publication, Over 25,000, TEXAS OUTDOORS JOURNAL was again recognized and awarded two of the top three places. The October 2018 issue took the top spot with the May 2018 issue also being honored.

TOJ's Founder, Publisher and Editor Bill L. Olson said, "These awards are truly remarkable and reflect a true Team effort. These awards validate the high quality of outdoor professionals our readers have come to rely upon. It is satisfying to not only achieve this level of recognition, but also to sustain at this high level. No other outdoor publication can equal this level of sustained excellence and recognition."

This year's T.O.W.A. judges' comments on the October 2018 issue stated, "This contest is always hard to judge. Texas Outdoors Journal gained the first prize because of its consistent and complete reporting. There is something for everyone here, including pretty pictures for the kids. An interesting story of renowned bass angler Jimmy Houston meeting with President Donald Trump on the White House lawn showing off Ranger Boats. Not every day does that happen."

The judges' comments on the May 2018 issue were equally gratifying. "The May issue of TOJ is just as strong. Totally enjoyed "Lone Star Fishing Vacations" by Danno Wise."

Further validation and recognition of TOJ's excellence came to several team members on an individual basis. Bob Zaiglin, John Jefferson, and Danno Wise were recognized for their photography skills with awards. Bill L. Olson had two editorial pieces recognized including his insightful "Potential Unknown Consequences of CWD" that appeared in the August 2018 issue.

TEXAS OUTDOORS JOURNAL's website was also honored as one of the best in Texas. The judges said, "All websites in this category serve their purpose – inform, entertain and promote the beauty and excitement of Texas' outdoors."

Adding to the collection of awards won came in the Outdoor Radio category. For over 26 years Bill L. Olson and Harold Gunn have been recognized as the longest running outdoor broadcast team in the country and hosts of the most honored outdoor radio show in Texas. That streak continues as TEXAS OUTDOOR NEWS radio was awarded First Place.

The judges said, "Bill Olson and Harold Gunn's episode (August 11, 2018) with Dr. Debra Chernosky is informative and entertainment." This interview with the Houston dermatologist provided an overview of the harmful effects of the sun's rays along with the latest medical prevention methods. This and all past programs are archived at [www.texasoutdoornews.com](http://www.texasoutdoornews.com).

Team TOJ is honored with the recognition once again bestowed upon us. We also proudly accept the challenge to continue to bring the very best, most informative and accurate outdoors information available. We recommit ourselves to our of "Covering the Texas Outdoors and Outdoor interests of Texans."

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

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Volume 28, Number 4

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## TOJ Notebook

### Texas Hunters Should See an Abundance of Boss Gobblers

With lots of mature toms across the Rio Grande turkey range, persistent Texas hunters should have a good shot at a long beard this spring. Wildlife biologists with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department say conditions are shaping up for a productive nesting season, which could also make for challenging hunting.

The spring season for Rio Grande turkey got under way March 9-10 with a youth-only weekend in the South Zone, followed by a general season that opened March 16 and runs through April 28. It then culminates with a youth-only weekend May 4-5.

In the North Zone, the youth-only weekend first season was March 23-24 with a late season opportunity May 18-19. The North Zone general season opened March 30 and runs through May 12.

A special one-gobbler limit season runs April 1-30 in Bastrop, Caldwell, Colorado, Fayette, Jackson, Lavaca,

Lee, Matagorda, Milam, and Wharton counties.

“Much of Texas is looking really green due to winter rains and a mild winter,” said Jason Hardin, TPWD turkey program leader in early March. “Toms are already strutting and calling, and although hens are nowhere near ready yet, you can expect to see some early nesting behavior in the next few weeks.”

Early in the season, Hardin predicts toms will be “henned up” first thing in the morning, and hunters will have better luck later in the day. “Don’t be surprised when the gobblers hang up,” he said. “They are going to be spoiled to hens coming to them like nature intended. The best hunting will be during the middle to latter part of the season.”

Hardin recommends hunters rely on their decoys to do most of the work and minimize calling as late season gobblers will be wary of calls, especially in areas

that receive moderate to high hunting pressure. He stressed that those hunters willing to put in the time and patience this spring should have an opportunity to harvest a boss tom.

“Texas has a much lower harvest rate compared to many southeastern states and our toms live to a ripe old age,” said Hardin. “There are not many jakes out there this year due to low recruitment associated with dry conditions these past two years so the odds are in your favor that what comes in should be a mature bird.”

New this season, hunters have the option of using pre-charged pneumatics (air guns) as legal means for harvesting Rio Grande turkeys in Texas. Details on required specifications can be found online.

Eastern spring turkey hunting in the counties having an open season starts a week later this year on April 22 and runs

## Cover Art

One look at native Texas artist Brian Grimm paintings reveals his God-given talent and lifetime passion for his craft. His painting process is a bit “old-school” but is a time-honored approach. Rough thumbnail sketches are developed. Once the final design and sketch are in place, a grid is hand drawn to enlarge to the canvas or board. A charcoal sketch is refined, then a wash of oil paint is used to develop values before the final painting. Study of Impressionist works and forming a foundation en plein air, furthered Grimm’s unique vision that resonates in his paintings.

His “Rio Grande Casanovas” is the perfect cover art for this issue of TOJ. South Texas and across the Lone Star State wild turkey will be at the peak of their breeding season. Gobblers will be displaying, drumming and strutting to gain the attention and opportunity to breed with receptive hens.

Turkey hunters will also be afield for their annual adrenaline rush as they call in close one of the beautiful gamebirds. It is an exciting time for both hunter and the game pursued.

For more information on “Rio Grande Casanovas” and other fine works of art or commissions by Brian Grimm, visit [www.briangrimmart.com](http://www.briangrimmart.com), email [BrianGrimmArt@gmail.com](mailto:BrianGrimmArt@gmail.com) or call (830) 456-6809. 



*“Rio Grande Casanovas”*

through May 14. Hunters are required to report harvest of eastern turkeys electronically to TPWD within 24 hours of harvest. Reports can be made through the TPWD My Texas Hunt Harvest App or online from the TPWD turkey page at [www.tpwd.texas.gov/turkey](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/turkey). The app is available for free download from Google Play or the App Store. Hunters will be issued a confirmation number upon completion of the reporting process. Hunters still have to tag harvested birds.

The harvest reporting app can also be used as a tool for voluntarily reporting and tracking harvests of other resident game species, including Rio Grande turkey. With My Texas Hunt Harvest, hunters can log harvested game animals and view harvest history, including dates and locations of every hunt. 🦋🌟

### Top Hunting, Shooting & Sportfishing Equipment Brands for 2018

Sportsmen are spending millions of dollars on hunting and recreational shooting equipment, but which brands are they buying? Southwick Associates surveyed more than 20,000 hunters and recreational shooters in 2018 through their online HunterSurvey.com and ShooterSurvey.com consumer panels to identify the top brands in the market.

In 2018, some of the most purchased hunting and shooting brands include:

- Top rimfire rifle brand: Ruger/ Sturm Ruger
- Top handgun brand: Smith & Wesson
- Top handgun ammunition brand: Federal (including Fusion)
- Top reflex/red dot sight brand: Vortex
- Top laser rangefinder brand: Nikon
- Top laser sight brand: Crimson Trace
- Top scope mount brand: Leupold
- Top propellant/powder brand: Triple Seven
- Top crossbow brand: Barnett
- Top arrow brand: Easton
- Top broadhead brand: Rage
- Top archery sight brand: Trophy Ridge
- Top reloading dies brand: Lee Precision
- Top reloading powder brand: Hodgdon
- Top reloading bullets brand: Hornady
- Top decoy brand: Zink/Avian-X

- Top game call brand: Primos
- Top lure scent brand: Tink's
- Top hunting knife brand: Gerber
- Top gun cleaning brand: Hoppes
- Top holster/ammo belt brand: Uncle Mikes
- Top choke tube brand: Carlson

Sportsmen are also spending millions of dollars on fishing equipment, but which brands are they buying? Southwick Associates surveyed more than 11,000 anglers in 2018 through their online AnglerSurvey.com consumer panel to

identify the top brands in the market.

In 2018, some of sportfishing's most frequently purchased brands include:

- Top combo brand: Shakespeare
- Top fluorocarbon fishing line brand: Seaguar
- Top monofilament fishing line brand: Berkley Trilene
- Top soft bait brand: Zoom
- Top spinner bait brand: Strike King
- Top leader brand: Ande
- Top fly line brand: Scientific Angler (3M)

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- Top fly brand: Umpqua
- Top fish finder/sonar brand: Humminbird
- Top fishing clothing brand: Columbia
- Top waders/wade boots/chest wader brand: Frogg Toggs
- Top tackle box brand: Plano
- Top bait bucket/aerator brand: Frabill
- Top scale, grip, measuring device brand: Rapala
- Top trolling motor brand: Minn Kota
- Top cooler brand: Coleman

More than one hundred products are examined in the Southwick Associates 2018 Hunting & Shooting Participation and Equipment Purchases Report while a variety of key fishing products are examined in the Southwick Associates 2018 Fishing Participation and Equipment Purchases Report. **T★J**

### **Texas Dove Hunters Association BB Challenge Results & Update**

The first of many Texas BB Challenges conceived by Texas Dove Hunters Association came to a close on January 31, 2019. The event is a two part program to research and study Eurasian Collared Dove as well to promote the young hunters association.

The concept behind the BB Challenge is very straightforward. In August, 2018 TDHA trapped 463 Eurasian Collared Doves in Texas, banded them, and released them back to the wild in various locations across the Lone Star State. As these birds are harvested or found the location of where the bands were retrieved is compared to the data of where they were trapped and released.

In order to increase the odds of having these bands reported TDHA placed a prize on the bands. This idea became a successful promotional campaign for TDHA as they utilized this program to help promote and market the mission and goals of the organization.

The top prize for reporting a band in the 2018-2019 season was a Polaris Ranger donated by Hoffpauir Polaris of Golthwaite. The next prizes were a Supreme Field shotgun donated by CZ-USA, a \$500 gift card to Bass Pro Shops donated by Bass Pro Shops, San Antonio, a pair of Chippewa snake boots donated by Chippewa and a Frio 24 Vault cooler

for each of the winners donated by Frio Ice Chests.

There was also an outfitter division. If the outfitter was entered and one of their paid hunters harvested a band then they were entered to win a trophy trout fishing trip to Baffin Bay.

In all 463 birds were banded and released of which 16 were reported and of those 16, 4 were qualified entries in the BB Challenge. Mike Baum of Houston won the Polaris, Mike Camacho of Beeville won the CZ-USA shotgun, Denver Eichler of Sandia won the Bass Pro Shops \$500 gift card and John Carpenter of Missouri City won the Chippewa snake boots. The outfitter division was won by Mark Katzfey of Katzfey Ranches in George West.

Preliminary results from the first year study revealed most birds were harvested from 10 to 50 miles of where they were released. One particular bird returned over 100 miles from where it was released to within 5 miles of where it was trapped.

Over time these cumulative results will reveal more about these invasive birds now found all over Texas and beyond.

The 2019 BB Challenge registration begins June 1, 2019. Entries are \$20 each and the contest runs from September 1, 2019 to the last day of the South Zone in January 2020 as established by TPWD.

Bobby Thornton of Texas Dove Hunters Association said, "The exciting thing for hunters in Texas is that the bands don't expire from year to year. This increases the chances of winning every year as even more bands are released."

In 2019 TDHA plans to release 800 birds adding to the 463 released in 2018. The chances to win just keep getting better and better so don't go to the field without entering the 2019 BB Challenge. For more information and to enter visit [www.texasdovehunters.com](http://www.texasdovehunters.com). **T★J**

### **TPWD Continues Fight Against Aquatic Invasive Species**

In 2017, the 85th Texas Legislature provided \$6.3 million to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for aquatic invasive species management in 2018-2019. With this and previous investments, the department has continued to expand prevention and control efforts against

aquatic invasive species like giant salvinia, zebra mussels, giant cane and many others that cause environmental and economic harm to Texas.

In cooperation with universities, river authorities, municipal water districts, non-profits, local, state and federal agencies, and other partners, during this time TPWD has delivered more than 60 aquatic invasive species management projects statewide, including:

- 64 high-risk lakes were monitored to aid in early detection of invasive zebra mussels
- 60 rivers and lakes were managed to control infestations of aquatic invasive plants
- 2,001 acres of invasive water hyacinth were treated on Texas lakes
- 18,390 acres of invasive giant salvinia were treated on Texas lakes
- 394,616 giant salvinia weevils were produced and stocked in Texas lakes to control invasive giant salvinia
- 9,452 acres of aquatic invasive plants were treated at Caddo Lake
- 3,472 acres of aquatic invasive plants were treated at Toledo Bend Reservoir
- Arundo and other invasive plants were treated along 180 river miles across six Hill Country river basins in partnership with more than 400 landowners as well as cities, river authorities, the Texas Department of Transportation, and other individuals and organizations
- 10,400 acres of invasive salt cedar were treated along 178 miles of the upper Brazos River in partnership with 60 landowners, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, and others
- 564,000 registered boaters received "Clean, Drain and Dry" invasive species prevention information
- 179 million impressions were made through radio, online, print, and outdoor advertising as part of the 2018 "Protect the Lakes You Love" campaign

Given that boats are the primary way these invasive species are spread, boaters need to "Clean, Drain and Dry" their boats, trailers, and gear every time they travel from one waterbody to another. **T★J**

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# REEF HOPPING

***Fishing the shell for more trout and reds.***

*Story and Photography by Robert Sloan*

**T**he combination of shell, sand and mud is tough to beat when it's in the form of a reef. Reefs attract baitfish, and baitfish attracts game fish like redfish and speckled trout. You can thank your lucky stars that we have a seemingly endless supply of reefs along the Texas Gulf coast. Some are big, others are no larger than the average center console boat. However, size really doesn't make a big difference when you're talking reefs. Sometimes even the smallest humps of shell can produce big time fishing results.

A number of years back I was fishing

with Capt. Jerry Norris on Sabine Lake. We left the boat ramp at about daylight and headed up the lake to Blue Buck Point. He eased the big Parker center console into a shallow gut and slipped the anchored into the dark green water.

"Right out there is a small reef," he said. "It's about 10 yards long, but the trout have been all over that shell for the past couple of days. Right now we've got an outgoing tide, which is perfect. Let's start out with topwaters and see what happens."

What happened was a blow up on just about every cast. The water on top of the

reef was about two feet deep. On the down current side it was about four to five feet deep. When the shad and mullet washed down off the shell and into the drop on the lower end it was game on.

Out of about 55 years of fishing along the Texas coast that's the single best day I've ever had while fishing shell. Hell, it's the best day of trout fishing I can remember.

At that time the big reef on the lower end of Sabine Lake was a notorious winter and spring fishing hotspot. It was one gigantic oyster reef, covering several hundred yards that attracted huge numbers of



and Fishing Lodge on Bolivar Peninsula, just across the road from boat ramps on East Bay.

“Back then fishing the shell reefs on East Bay was the way to catch consistent numbers of fish,” he says. “That’s still the case today. Hanna’s Reef is one of the most popular spots to fish in the entire Galveston Bay complex. There is no telling how many fish have been caught on Hanna’s. It’s big enough to drift fish, anchor on or wade. Other reefs on this bay that attract good numbers of trout are Frenchy’s and Pepper Grove.”

The key to successfully fishing and catching fish on a reef is to figure it out.

“On the larger reefs you never know where the fish are going to be holding,” says West. “The down current side is usually the best. That’s where trout will hold and feed on shrimp and mullet moving with the tide. But there are days when the fish will be on the up current side of the shell. You can catch fish from an anchored boat at a reef. But if you’ve got wadeable

conditions I strongly recommend that option.”

And he ain’t lying either. Three years ago West and I waded Hanna’s and caught a couple of small trout. He waved me back to the boat, and we headed to the east end of the bay, where he anchored the boat and we waded over a shell reef to the deeper side where the waves and current had moved in lots of mullet. We fished Fat Boys for about an hour and caught trout to nearly seven pounds. It was an excellent morning of reef fishing.

Mention East Matagorda Bay to just about anybody with half a lick of fishing smarts and they will think shell, as in shell reefs that hold numbers of trout, many of which are in the double-digit class. Truly, this is one of the best bays to target, if you like to wade big and small reefs.

Some of the best are Bird Island, Half Moon, Long, the Oyster Farm reefs and 3-Beacon reef. It’s true that this bay isn’t pumping out the numbers of trophy-class trout that it has in years past, but believe

reds and trout.

It was simple fishing. We tied on a jig, lowered it to bottom and drifted with the wind and tide. The jigs would bounce along bottom and get thumped by reds and trout.

“There were little humps and ridges of shell on that reef,” says Norris. “Whenever I got a bite I dropped a marker and would hold near those fish. Usually when we caught one, there were more to be caught.”

East Galveston Bay is where guide Jim West has been fishing for decades. His family owned the Los Patos Hunting



*Some reefs produce better when an angler gets out and feels the shell structure with his feet. Many times understanding where fish may relate to the shell reef will provide the clue to catching more fish.*



*Besides croaker and shrimp, finger mullet are a good bait-of-choice for speckled trout and redfish when fish coastal shell reefs. Reefs attract bait and bait attracts gamefish.*



*Some shell reefs sit in deeper water and may be pads from now abandoned well pads. Fish deeper reefs with a live or artificial bait suspended under a rattling float is an excellent way to catch specks and reds.*

me from recent experience this bay is still clicking on all cylinders.

The unique thing about East Matagorda Bay is that there are reefs for wading, and some that are best for drift fishing. Never underestimate the viable option of drift fishing. You can do it with live bait under a popping cork, or with lures.

One of the absolute best ways to put fish in the box on this bay is to drift fish

over scattered shell and mud. And the best lure for this angle of fishing is a soft plastic.

Guide Charlie Paradoski has been drift fishing on this bay for years. One of his go to lures is a six inch plum/chartreuse turbo Assassin. Two more of his top color combos include opening night and chartreuse pepper/fire tail.

West Matagorda Bay is sort of a sleep-

er reef fishing hot spot. There used to be a lot of wells here, but most have been removed. However, the GPS numbers that can lead you to the shell well pads are listed on charts of the bay. Also, there is excellent shell reefs located along the shallow edges of the Matagorda ship channel. Most of the good ones that you never hear about, are located in Lavaca Bay near the confluence of that bay and West Matagorda. Lavaca Bay has plenty of reefs. Two of the good ones are Chicken Foot and Galliniper.

Out of Port O'Connor and Seadrift there are more reefs to fish than you can imagine. And they are very popular among the many fishermen that head to these two mid-coast destinations.

Out of Port O'Connor Bill Day's reef is among the most popular to fish. This is a reef that's scattered out in a wide swath of water. It's located in Espiritu Santo Bay and can be fished at anchor or by wading.

Lots of fishermen here prefer to fish live baits while anchored or by wading. Croakers are very popular, so are shrimp. Also, live finger mullet are a favorite target of reds and trout.

On the south end of Espiritu Santo are east and west Josephine reefs. There is also Dewberry and Midway reefs.

Out of Seadrift, in San Antonio Bay, there are lots of small reefs about the size of a basketball court. One that is not too small is Panther Reef. Other reefs you need to check out are Middle Ground, Wreck, Big and Forked Oyster. Just about all of these reefs are fished at anchor with live baits.

Another option is to use something like a D.O.A. rattle float rig. You can fish these while anchored or on the trolling motor. The D.O.A. original three and four inch shrimp can be fished about two to three feet below a rattle or popping cork. Some of the best colors are pearl/red head, glow and clear with a chartreuse tail.

Keep in mind that some reefs are perfect for wading, others are best for anchoring or drifting. Some of the reefs you'll find will be surrounded with boot sucking mud and shell. That's a good combination for attracting reds and trout, but can be quite difficult to wade.

The first thing you want to do when approaching a reef you haven't fish before is to check it out. That's when a seven-foot stick comes in handy. That way you can figure out the various depths and type of

bottom it has. Definitely don't pull up to a reef and just jump out of the boat. That's a good way to get stuck in some seriously deep mud.

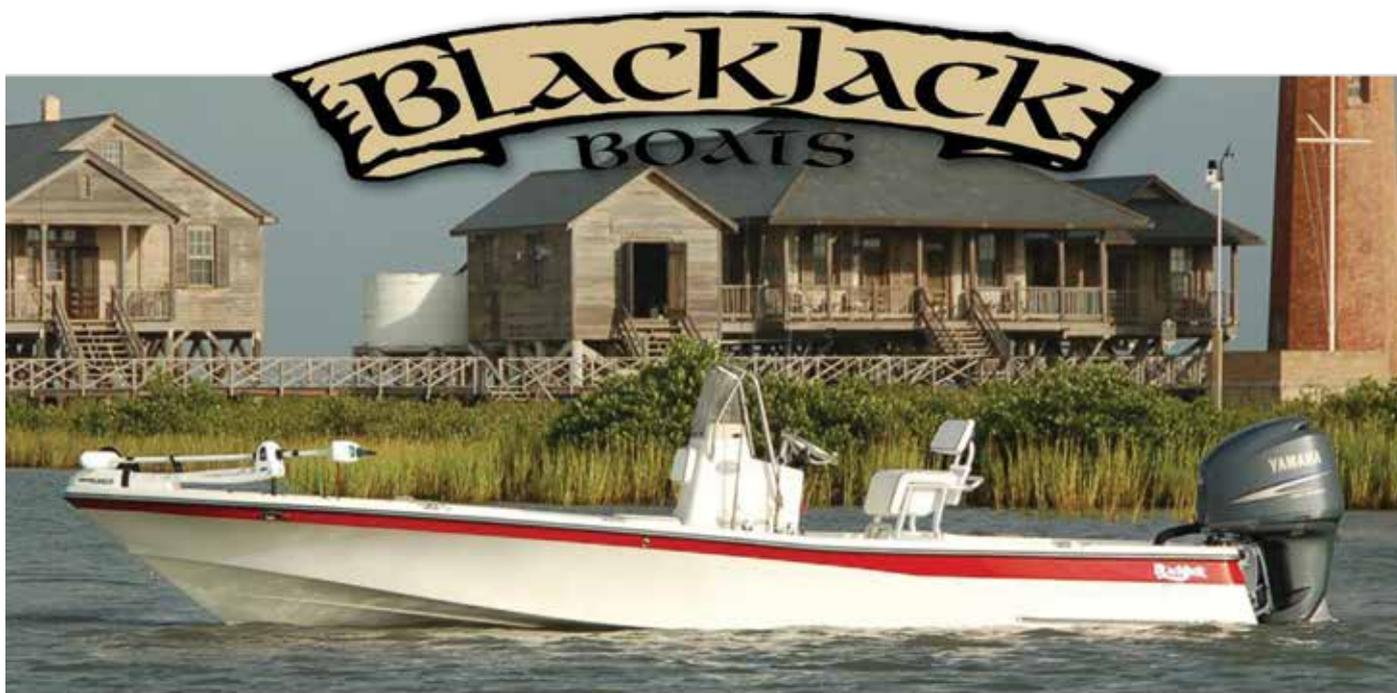
What I like to do is pull up to a reef and observe what other anglers are doing. A lot of the time I'll actually draw a sketch of the reef and make notes as to how it's being fished by other anglers. Over time you'll get to know some reefs like the back of your hand. The great thing about reefs is that we have plenty of them.

Becoming a reef hopper and knowing where and when to fish them is almost guaranteed to put more fish in your cooler on just about every trip out. One other thing to keep in mind is to be courteous. Definitely do not run up on a reef that is being fished by other anglers. Or if it's big enough, ease in at a reasonable distance so as not to mess up the fishing for everybody.

One more thing, don't forget that there are many man-made reefs on our bays. Most are highlighted on bay charts and at the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department web site. Some of them can provide some excellent fishing that most anglers tend to keep very quiet about. **T★J**



*There are other reefs that are more productive when the boat and anglers are set up away from the shell. Casting toward the reef and working the way back to the boat allows the bait to run from shallow to deep.*



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## Tops in My Book



April signals a beginning for fishermen in Texas. It marks the start of the topwater bite. Although you can occasionally catch fish earlier in the year on a topwater bait, April will be the time when the bite becomes dependable day in and day out.

When it comes to a specific type of topwater offering there is one that not only is it a great fish catcher, but a buzzbait will catch big bass! Over the years I've developed a few theories and tactics for these noisy, commotion making baits that seem to be as dependable as well.

I always start my day with a buzzbait. As soon as the sky begins to pink up a little in the morning, I'll start chunking a buzzbait in the shallows. While the spawn has been in progress for quite some time in most of the state, April will also see bass still on beds and spawning. Not only will a buzzbait catch those post-spawn fish that are roaming the shallows in feeding mode, it will catch a bass on a bed. The sound of a buzzbait chattering overhead drives bedded bass crazy! They'll crash the bait to protect the nest, or any fry that are present.

I'm pretty particular about my bait choice. I use a ¼ ounce bait with a white head and a shad scale pattern skirt. While I will use a chartreuse colored bait in muddy water, I'll only make the change after I've tried the shad color.

In addition, I like to sharpen my hooks, even on a brand new bait. While many manufacturers use good, sharp hooks, some do not. I want every advantage I can get and a couple of minutes sharpening a hook pays off when a big fish hits.

Another little tweak is to hang the bait on a fan and let the blade spin in the breeze for a few hours. This will wear the contact points on the bait and create a "squeak" that really gets the attention of the fish. I highly suggest you do this when the wife is out of the house. You can accomplish the same thing by hanging the bait out the window of your truck, but you risk burning through the components and



*This time of year the authors says he always starts his day with a buzz bait. Not only will a buzzbait catch those post-spawn fish that are roaming the shallows in feeding mode, it will catch a bass on a bed. The sound of a buzz bait chattering overhead drives bedded bass crazy.*

ruining the bait.

Once the bait has been "tuned" you'll want to be sure you throw it into every crevice you can get it into. A buzzbait can be fished in some pretty tight places if you learn to cast with an underhand motion, and any shallow cover should be targeted. Rocks, points, timber, grass lines, and retaining walls all deserve a run with a buzzbait. Your first casts should parallel the cover on each side if possible. Subsequent casts can be directly over the submerged portions. Sometimes it will take multiple casts to a target to trigger the bite.

I've mentioned it before, but it bears repeating here. When you cast a buzzbait to a target, lift the rod tip as soon as the bait touches down on the surface. Do this gently, but quickly, in order to get the bait running on top as soon as possible. A buzzbait works on top and any time spent below the surface is essentially wasted.

Too many times I see people throw a buzzbait into a great spot, only to waste the cast by taking too long to get the bait up and working.

Another reminder, don't set the hook on the blow-up. I know, it's really hard to resist, and I do it myself on occasion, but you must wait a couple of beats before leaning into the fish. Otherwise you're going to be taking the bait away from a lot of fish.

If the bite seems a little slow I might add a little action to the bait by twitching the rod tip as I reel in the bait. This makes it jump and changes the cadence of your presentation, sometimes that's just enough to trigger the strike. As a general rule, I reel the bait just fast enough to keep it at the surface and keep the blade moving.

Speaking of keeping it moving— be sure you throw it with the right gear. A 6 ½ to 7 ½ foot medium or medium heavy

rod, with a five or six power reel, spooled with 20 pound monofilament line is my first choice. I want a rod that will flex enough to throw the bait comfortably but not flex so much that it is overwhelmed by the bait. You can usually feel it when a rod is struggling with a bait that is too big, and a rod that is too stiff will make it difficult to get a good cast.

Reels are rated by the number of times the spool rotates with one turn of the handle. A 5 to 1 reel turns the spool five times to each full handle turn. One of the rules I use in selecting the proper reels for any bait is “slow bait — fast reel; fast bait — slow reel.”

In other words, if I’m throwing a moving bait like a buzzbait (or lipless crankbaits, spinnerbaits and so forth) I want to use a slower reel. This prevents moving the bait too fast in the water. It is easy to get carried away with the excitement of catching fish, or distracted by conversation and begin reeling too fast without noticing.

If you have a reel with an eight to one ratio, your lure is going be haulin’ the mail. So a reel with a five-to-one or six-to-one ratio is a good choice for the buzzbait.

As for the line, I use mono because fluorocarbon sinks and I want my bait to stay on top. Monofilament will help keep the bait on top. Braid is pretty neutral, and I’ve thrown buzzbaits on braid in the past, but I just don’t think it’s needed. Chances are, if the cover is thick enough to really need braid, you’re probably not going to be able to work a buzzbait through it anyway.

I use 20 pound test for a few reasons. First it is plenty strong. You can use 25, but anything any bigger can be tough to work with considering the bait being used. Smaller line will certainly work, but I feel more confident that 20 pound will land a giant, out of thick cover, should I be lucky enough to catch one. In addition, 20 pound seems to have just the right buoyancy for this application.

You’ll also want to have a second rod rigged and ready to go. A Senko, grub, Texas-rigged lizard or some other type of soft plastic, slow-moving bottom bait is a good idea. Sometimes a bass will smash a buzzbait and never take it fully in its mouth. Sometimes they miss, and I’m convinced sometimes they smash it



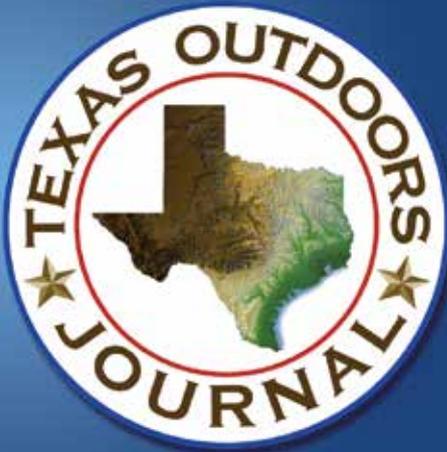
*Be sure you throw a buzz bait with the right gear. A 6 ½ to 7 ½ foot medium or medium heavy rod, with a five or six power reel, spooled with 20 pound monofilament line is the author's first choice.*

out of anger, never intending to eat the bait. In any case, a bass has just revealed its presence to you and you still have a good chance of catching it if you have a follow-up bait ready to go.

I like a weightless Senko or Mogambo

Grub, also weightless. I keep it on the deck, hanging about three inches from the rod tip, ready to throw in a flash should it be needed. I can’t tell you how many times this has paid off with a good fish brought to hand. **T★J**

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## Only Hunt Coyotes With A Rifle?

If you're reading this article, then I'll bet you live in Texas. And if you live in Texas, everyone knows that Texas has big wide-open spaces and you need a flat shooting, long range bolt action rifle to varmint hunt. At least that was the common sentiment until about 15 years ago when the modern sporting rifle, aka ARs became wildly popular for varmint hunting.

AR's are a great choice for varmint hunting for a couple of reasons. They're great for fast follow up shots. There's no racking a bolt which creates the noise and movement that helps a predator pinpoint your location.

Also don't get hung-up on the notion that ARs are the ultimate for varmint hunting and totally miss out on another good choice — the reliable shotgun. When my brother-in-law first told me to carry a shotgun while we were calling on my mom's place in North Texas, I thought he was nuts. However, that morning we saw six coyotes and two of them were within shotgun range.

The next year I kept track and 40 percent of the coyotes we called were



*Sam Shoemaker used a Caldwell Lead Sled while we tested out some HEVI-Shot Dead Coyote loads. A lead sled will help keep you from flinching while sighting in your shotgun.*

within shotgun range. I became a convert and true believer, and now if there are two of us, I make someone ride shotgun — literally.

Now I want to prick your memory.

This past varmint hunting season how many coyotes came within shotgun range of you? I bet a high percentage and this bet includes even those of you that actually do live and/or hunt in the wide-open spaces of the Lone Star State.

So here's my advice and suggestion. If there are two or more of you calling at a set-up, have one carry a shotgun and have him facing the nearby brushy areas. Even if you're calling with no brush nearby, I've had coyotes zip in across 150 yard clearings in a hot second and then reverse course like a barrel racer when they got within mere feet of a decoy — never affording a shot with a rifle.

Like I say, I was probably one of the biggest naysayers of using a shotgun for varmint hunting. It almost seemed sacrilegious to do so but after being successful on a number of hunts I'm a believer. Yes, I still favor using a rifle but if you want to kill bigger numbers or predators every year, test it out on a few hunts.

Another big factor in getting me to make the switch was the marketing rep. for HEVI-Shot Kelly Sorensen. I was



*This is a good pattern. 31 BB's in the body at 40 yards with a 3 1/2-inch HEVI-Shot T shot with a full choke.*

already a big believer in the HEVI-Shot turkey loads so I'd circle by her booth every year at S.H.O.T. Show and talk to her for few minutes.

One year while visiting she told me I had to test out her Dead Coyote loads. She claimed she had recently rolled one DOA at 70 yards. I couldn't believe it but had no reason to doubt her so I told her I'd reluctantly test some out.

So let's say I've convinced you to give a shotgun a try while calling varmints. There is one disclaimer. If you don't pattern your shotgun (and this holds true for turkey hunters too since we're right in the middle of that season in Texas) then you might as well take a bag of rocks and throw at them.

To be successful there are a few things that you are going to have to do.

#### USE A TIGHT CHOKE

You are going to be stretching the limits when using a shotgun on varmints or turkeys plus they are both tough to kill. You'll want a tight choke so you have a tight pattern out at 50 to 65 yards and so you don't wound an animal. I don't care if it is a varmint, you still want to make a clean kill.



*This would have been a dead coyote. 40 yards with a 3 1/2 inch HEVI-Shot with T shot and a full choke.*

Tru-lock and several other companies offer some excellent chokes for varmints and turkeys. It is imperative to have a tight pattern when shooting these distances.

So at the least, you're going to want to use a full choke and preferably an even tighter turkey choke. This will keep your

BBs in the kill zone.

#### SIGHTING IN YOUR SHOTGUN

I started to say patterning your shotgun, but actually you don't just want to pattern it, you want to sight it in. I don't use a sight, red dot or scope but you could sure justify using one.

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EXOTIC GAME HUNTS IN TEXAS

I noticed recently that on most of my patterns the bulk of the BBs were in about an 18 inch circle at 40 yards and that was with a full choke. Think if I had been using one of my .62 chokes.

So here's what I advise. Get a Birchwood Casey splattering coyote target (and you turkey hunters get the splattering turkey targets). Take a shot and then go mark out the bulk of the pattern. Is it centered in the kill zone? If not, you need to adjust accordingly just like you do when sighting in your deer rifle.

On a side note — it's not really fair to the manufacturer to shoot at a target and then count the BBs in the kill zone and say "Well, they don't really make a good load".

In reality you need to shoot at a blank sheet of cardboard and then lay a cut-out of the target over the thickest part of the pattern and count the BBs. Otherwise you're penalizing them because you are shooting to one side and that is not their fault. It just means



*Even in wide-open areas you'll be surprised how well a shotgun works. Here the author is with a nice coyote he called in close and took with his shotgun.*



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you don't know where your gun is shooting. Make sense?

Another thought may cross your mind. These specialty loads are expensive. I think I'll just purchase Dead Coyote loads and use them for varmints and turkeys both. Not so fast turbo. Some states regulate the size of shot that is allowed for turkey hunting and since they use larger shot on varmints then it won't be legal. In Texas the regulations for turkey does not specify a minimum or maximum shot size, but if you decide to hunt in another state be sure to check out their regulations.

It goes without saying but the 3 1/2 inch loads have more shot than the 3 inch loads. Plus they kick like a mule. I remember years ago I was doing a turkey load comparison for Bass Pro Shop and tested shells from all of the popular turkey shell manufacturers. When I got to the 3 1/2 inch HEVI-Shot loads I about cried Uncle. You talk about kicking. So be ready. Some of the 3 1/2 inch 12 gauge shells have 2 1/4 ounce of shot. I don't want to sound like a little weak man but those loads about flipped my shotgun back over my shoulder.

Now you may be hesitant to use the

3 ½ inch shells due to their kick and the cost, which may be close to \$40 for a box of five. But remember, you're not dove hunting so you're not going to be getting many shots.

Due to the recoil, I recommend you use a Caldwell Lead Sled while sighting in your shotgun or you may develop a bad case of flinching. Plus don't forget to squeeze the trigger like when shooting a rifle. You may be shooting a shotgun, but you are aiming at a target and holding on target like when shooting a rifle.

Here is one last word of advice, use some of the modern varmint loads and don't just dig out a few of your leftover #2 shot shells out of your vest. I know there are some of you out there that are still skeptical so go do your own comparison with your regular old lead #2 shot shells compared to a good varmint load. After one little shooting comparison and I think you'll agree.

Hopefully I've convinced you to pull your shotgun out of the gun safe next time you go varmint hunting. You may even have a few more varmints you put on the ground. Have fun. **T&J**



*In certain situations, a shotgun may be the best choice for varmint hunting. The author rolled this one at 20 yards when it came hauling down the brushy draw that the author was calling in.*

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## Water Levels

Pull the plug in your bathtub and the rush of water down the drain instantly signals that you are going to be left high and dry. Crank the faucet fully open with the plug securely in place and the rapidly rising water level telegraphs the message that it will soon overflow and spread across the bathroom floor.

Along with oxygen and temperature requirements, water level ranks as one of the top three factors that determines where fish will be, yet it is often ignored. A sudden drawdown, for example, acts like a magnet to pull fish off the near shore waters and into deeper areas. In fact, the tendency is for fish to overcompensate and go even deeper until the water level stabilizes and returns to normal so they can continue their daily task of looking for food.

Rapidly rising water has a tendency to scatter the fish and you'll often find them in or near the newly flooded areas. One reason is that smaller fish look for their food supply where that happens and the larger predators are there to feed on the little guys. Predators are never very far from their prey. Slow rises or falls of the water level are much better for fishing than rapid changes. Even so, fish do compensate and adjust as water levels fluctuate and the more successful anglers are those who are alert to what is taking place.

On the marine scene, tides account for a constant change in water levels. Both the time of the tide and the depth of the water or tidal range can be predicted with amazing accuracy and fish sense this. In most places, there are two high tides and two low tides during each 24 hour period. There is a brief period between tides known as slack water when the current usually drops off as the tide changes direction.

Many species work the tides effectively. Experienced guides have figured this out and have a good idea where fish will be on any stage of the tide. A tarpon guide who works bridges in the Gulf of Mexico fishes a different span as the tide floods



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

*Spring tides bring significant more water into the shallows or back lake areas and push further back into areas that barely have any water on neap tides. This causes the fish to move into areas that are not accessible at other times, but it also forces them to leave these areas quickly as the tide falls.*

or ebbs and the fish are always there. I have fished with guides in the Gulf and in the northeast who keep changing the area they work every couple of minutes even if you just caught a fish in one spot. They also know that positioning the boat can be critical. Fish tend to hold in very specific locations.

I have learned over the years that a fish's position in moving water can be critical and they will maintain these positions year after year. If you could take a picture today and a year from today, the fish will be only an inch or two from last year's photo. Almost every fishing guide counts on this. If you've ever wondered how they always seem to find fish, it's simply that experience has taught them that the fish they seek will be in the same spots depending on the tidal movement of water and on any significant changes.

During periods of the new and full moon, the highest and lowest tides occur and the gravitational pull is much stronger. These are called spring tides. Between the new and full moon, the tidal range is not as great and the water doesn't

move with the same force. These are neap tides. When you fish for species on the flats or in the estuaries, the amount of water and the force at which it moves can be critical in finding fish. Spring tides bring a much more significant amount of water into the shallows pushing back into areas that barely have any water on neap tides. This causes the fish to move into areas that are not accessible at other times, but it also forces them to leave these areas quickly as the tide falls.

Many of us who fish the inshore waters tend to forget where the quantity of water comes from on a flood tide and where it goes when it leaves the estuaries on a falling tide. The source, of course, is the open sea. That means that inlets where water can flow freely and open estuaries guide the water in and out. Fish often wait there for the moving water to carry food to them. Consider, too, that all this water on a falling tide moves well into the open sea and it starts moving shoreward again as the tide floods.

If you are trolling or drifting baits within a reasonable distance offshore

from the beach, you need to be aware that this moving water has an effect on the species you seek. It's not always easy to follow moving water on the offshore grounds, but when you do, you gain an important edge. That's one reason why trolling at an angle toward the beach and away from it can pay dividends.

Remember that every species of fish swims or holds facing the moving water. That means that successful presentations have to approach your quarry with the flow and not against it. If there is an area that you know holds fish, bait or lure should move down toward that spot with the flow of water and not against it. Keep in mind, too, that an area can be completely devoid of fish during most of the tidal cycle, yet, at a particular stage of the tide, it looks like a cafeteria at noontime with fish everywhere.

Fish are creatures of habit. When they discover something that works for them, they will repeat it over and over. Take a tip from leading professional guides. Once you discover where fish will be on a particular stage of the tide, your success ratio will improve dramatically and that deserves a smile. **T★J**



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

*Rapidly rising water has a tendency to scatter the fish and you'll often find them in or near the newly flooded areas.*

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# A Case for Crankbaits

*Extremely versatile and covering every depth range from one foot to 25 feet.*

*Story and Photography  
by Matt Williams*

There is a passel of lures that will fool a bass, but few allow anglers to cover all the bases and at times catch fish as consistently as crank baits do. To hear Longview bass pro Jim Tutt tell it, heading to the lake without a good mix of hard bodies in his tackle bin would be akin to setting out on a cross country trek without a spare for the boat trailer.

You might make the trip just fine. Then again, you could have blowout that leaves you stranded.

"I never go bass fishing without my crankbaits," Tutt said. "They are extremely versatile in that they allow for covering every depth range from one foot to 25 feet. And as far as imitating what

bass eat — in my opinion a crankbait imitates bass prey better than any other type of bait you can throw. I always have one tied on."

Not surprisingly, Tutt has experienced plenty of success with crankbaits of varied styles tethered to his line. Two of his five wins on FLW tournament trails are owed strictly to cranking plugs.

The first came on Lake O' of the Ozarks in Missouri, where he used a medium-diving Storm Wiggle Wart to pluck nearly 51 pounds of bass off chunk rock and boulders in three to eight feet of water to grab the first place prize worth nearly \$67,000.

The second came on Sam Rayburn Reservoir, when Tutt relied on a Bill Lewis Rat-L-Trap to win an EverStart event held there in February 2002. Tutt used the lipless crankbait to pluck the winning fish off submerged hydrilla beds in water ranging two to four feet deep.

The 58-year-old pro got another dose of crankbait magic earlier this year when he racked

up a fifth-place finish in the FLW Tour opener on a rain-swollen Sam Rayburn. Using a new medium-diving lure from Berkley called the Bad Shad in a red craw pattern, Tutt targeted the seam between underwater hay grass and hydrilla beds in six to eight feet of water to catch as many as 70 bass per day over the course of the four-day event.

It's worth noting that the tournament winner on 'Rayburn, Terry Bolton of Paducah, KY, also relied heavily on cranking plugs to grab the \$125,000 pay day. His arsenal included a series of deep diving lures from Rapala — a DT10, DT14 and DT16. He used the baits to exploit more than 91 pounds of bass that were positioned around underwater drains and grass lines in water ranging 12-18 feet deep.

While crankbaits may not be a remedy for every fishing situation, they are great tools for cracking the code in a bunch of them. They are ideal for covering water of varied depths quickly and effectively, simulating all sorts of tasty forage like shad, bluegills and crawfish, and they have a knack for triggering "reaction" strikes when other lure styles aren't getting it done.

Here's crash course in crankbait fishing:

## Lipped Or Lipless

Some crankbaits have a bill that



*A lipless crank bait will catch fish year round. All an angler has to do is "chunk and wind."*





*Kneel and reel is a technique that requires getting on your knees and poking the rod beneath the surface to get more diving depth out of a lure.*

extends at a downward angle off the nose, which causes the lure to dive. Others don't have a bill. The latter are described as lipless baits.

**Going Lipless:** The lipless family includes popular models like the Rat-L-Trap, Rattlin' Vibe or Red Eyed Shad. They are elementary to fish with, thus the nickname "idiot bait." Just chunk it. Wind it. Hold on tight.

The lipless crankbait is flat sided and does not float. Its elongated body is usually filled with small BBs to create a distinctive rattling noise as it speeds through the water column with a tight wiggle. It is available in sizes ranging 1/4 to 1 ounce; 1/2 and 3/4 ounce are the most popular sizes.

Lipless cranks will catch bass year-round but are especially effective when worked over submerged grass during winter and early spring. The key when

throwing it around grass is to work the bait fast enough to keep it ticking the top of the grass; most strikes occur as it tears free.

It's also a great choice when targeting school bass in summer or fall. It does a good job of simulating shad. Plus, it casts like a bullet so you can reach school fish without getting too close.

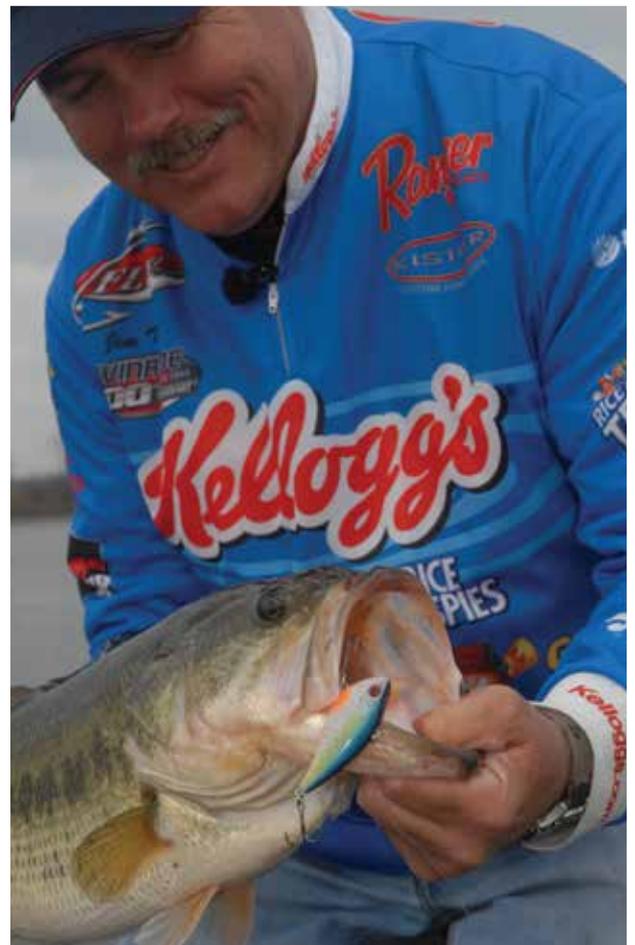
**Give 'em Some Lip:** Lipped crankbaits are broken down into three groups based on how deep they dive in the water column. The baits come in assorted sizes and are generally classified in

three diving ranges — shallow divers, medium divers and deep divers.

The bill creates resistance as the bait moves through the water, thus causing it to dive. The longer and wider the bill, the deeper the bait will go; the shorter the bill, the shallower a bait will dive.

The lip on a crankbait also influences its wobbling action while helping it to deflect off of stumps, brush, rocks and other underwater obstructions. Most lipped crankbaits float when idle. Pausing the retrieve when the bait contacts brush or grass will often times allow the bait to float free before it snags.

The shape of the body also can impact a bait's action. Crankbaits with rounder, fatter bodies will usually have a wider, more pronounced wobble than one with flat sides. Most crankbait junkies prefer baits with a wider wobble when water temperatures are warm and the fish are more aggressive; baits with tighter wiggle usually work best in cold water when the



*Longview pro Jim Tutt says, "I never go bass fishing without my crank baits And as far as imitating what bass eat — in my opinion a crankbait imitates bass prey better than any other type of bait you can throw."*

fish aren't as willing to chase.

### Understanding Diving Depths

As earlier mentioned, not all lipped crankbaits are created equal when it comes to diving depth. Shallow divers are designed to cover water depths in the one to five foot range; medium divers, 6-12 feet; and deep divers, 12-20 feet and beyond. Most manufacturers will list diving ranges on packages for quick reference.

It is always best to use a crankbait that is best suited for the water depth while taking into account the type and amount of cover or structure that might be below surface. To wit:

Lets say the water depth is eight feet, but hydrilla is growing four to five feet off of the bottom. A shallow diver is probably going to be the better choice. That's to say a medium diver wouldn't work, but some adjustments might be in order to compensate for the cover you can't see.

### Altering Diving Depths

There are several ways to alter the diving depth of a crankbait:

\* Rod angle and retrieve speed: Raising or lowering the rod angle can make a noticeable difference either way. Positioning the rod at two o'clock and slowing down the speed of retrieve will make the lure run shallower, whereas positioning the rod at five o'clock and really grinding on the retrieve will take the bait deeper.

\* Kneel and reel: Offshore cranking specialist Paul Elias of Laurel, MS, popularized this tactic when he used it to win the 1982 Bassmaster Classic on the Alabama River. It means getting on your knees and poking the rod beneath the surface to get more diving depth out of a lure.

\* Line Changes: Maximum diving depth is achieved using small diameter lines like 8-10 pound test. Conversely, swapping to a larger line size will cause a bait to run shallower.

Line type also makes difference. Fluorocarbon sinks, which helps maximize diving depth. Monofilament floats which makes the lure run closer to the surface.

### The Color Code

Crankbaits are like cars and trucks. There are lots of pretty paint jobs out there. Just don't be suckered by flashy colors.



*Crank baits can cover water from one foot deep to 25 feet deep. The larger the bill the deeper the bait will dive.*

The best crankbait colors are those that simulate the predominant forage species available in a given reservoir system. It's called "matching the hatch."

Shad, sunfish and crawfish are the primary sources of food for bass on Texas lakes. Stick with standard color combinations including chrome, pearl,

silver, chartreuse, green, yellow, brown, orange or red and you can't go wrong around here.

Productive colors can vary from one day to the next, even on the same lake. Sometimes just changing to a slightly different color can mean the difference in getting bit or not. **T★J**

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## What is the Flattest Shooting Caliber?

Long Range shooting is the rage these days. Being able to hit a target at 1,000 yards seems easy. It seems like every Hunting TV show has hunters shooting deer and elk at 800 to 1,000 yards. The truth is that shooting at a target 1,000 yards is not easy. It takes serious practice and work to be able to shoot that far. Very few hunters have ever shot a game animal at much over 200 yards.

The new thing is not shooting a 1,000 yards but shooting a mile (1760 yards) or 3,000 meters. I have shot in 1,000 yard matches with a Freshour 50 caliber rifle, and I have shot out to 1,700 yards playing around at FTW Ranch with a 338 Lapua. It is not easy to shoot that far but with a good spotter who knows the wind and knows the ballistics of the caliber and is telling you how to adjust your scope can make it almost easy.

Shooting long distance has become easier in the last 10 years. Scopes are much better and easier to use. Bullets have become better and have a much higher ballistic coefficient, so they shoot flatter and more accurate. Guns have improved during the last decade with great



*The Swarovski X5 has custom turrets which are a must for ultra long range shooting.*



*A true long range rifle. 338 Cheytac was made for shooting 3,000 meters.*

triggers, better barrels and ergonomically designed stocks.

Last, there are some great new calibers and some old calibers that shoot accurate and very flat. I'll give you some ideas on what it will take to shoot 1,500 yards and what type of scope and caliber you will need to make that happen.

Scopes have come a long way. Some 50 years ago the best target scope was the Leupold 12X or the Shepard 20X. They were great scopes and still are but you had a lot of guesswork with them and the 12 power at long range just isn't enough.

It was in 2000 when TD Smith came out with the new TDS reticle for scopes and Swarovski started installing it in their new PH line of scopes. Huskemaw came out with a simple turret scope which made adjusting for long range shooting easy, but the best scopes and the ones winning all the long range matches were the Leupold 24X target scope and the Nightforce 5-25 target scope with custom long range turrets.

Today there are some amazing scopes on the market. Two of my favorites are the Nightforce NXS 5.5-22 and the Swarovski X5 5-25. These scopes have turrets which will adjust as much as 200 MOA and also have internal crosshairs that will give you another 50 MOA (minutes of angles) adjustment. In other words you can adjust these scopes for making shots well beyond 1,000 yards.

Bullets have changed so much in the last 10 years, I have had to re-educate myself on how to load ammo. One ma-

JOR change is that the bullets have gotten longer, heavier, slicker, and made from different metals. The best hunting bullets 50 years ago were Nosler Partitions or Grand Slams. They were great hunting bullets but never grouped consistently if you made three shots in 1" you had a great gun and load.

Sierra was building the best target bullets; the ballistic coefficient on a 30 caliber 200 grain Match King was just over .400. Now you can get a Berger VLD Match bullet in 30 caliber 220 grain bullet with a ballistic coefficient over .650. Wow, that is a big difference! There are some 22 caliber and 6.5 caliber bullets with a BC over .700 – that is extremely flat shooting!

The quality of our firearms has drastically improved over the past few decades with better machining techniques and stock designs are superior to how they were made 50 years ago. Aluminum pillars and bedding blocks are commonplace now. Cutting much faster rates of twist in barrels means we can stabilize heavier and longer bullets. Lapping and polishing of barrels has improved to the point that you get almost no copper build up inside the barrel. Stress relieving and cryogenic freezing have helped to make barrels shoot much more consistently.

Trigger designs have improved to the point that a two pound trigger is heavy. Many target rifles will have a four or eight ounce trigger in them.

New calibers have come out that burn powder more efficiently which leads to

## Long Range Graph

Caliber	Bullet Weight	Muzzle Velocity	500 yd.	1000 yd.	1500 yd.
6.5-300 wby.	143 ELDX.	3300fps.	-28.4 in.	-194.5 in.	-613 in.
28 Nosler.	162 ELDX.	3300 fps.	-28.3 in.	-193.4 in.	-607 in.
30-378 wby.	200 hpbtmk.	3150 fps.	-32.4 in.	-228.5 in.	-751 in.
338 Lapua.	300 hpbtmk.	2750 fps.	-40.3 in.	-264.5 in.	-797 in.
50 BMG.	750 Amax.	2850 fps.	-35.0 in.	-218.0 in.	-612 in.

better groups. Velocity has increased to the point that bullets will stay super sonic well beyond 1,000 or even 2,000 yards.

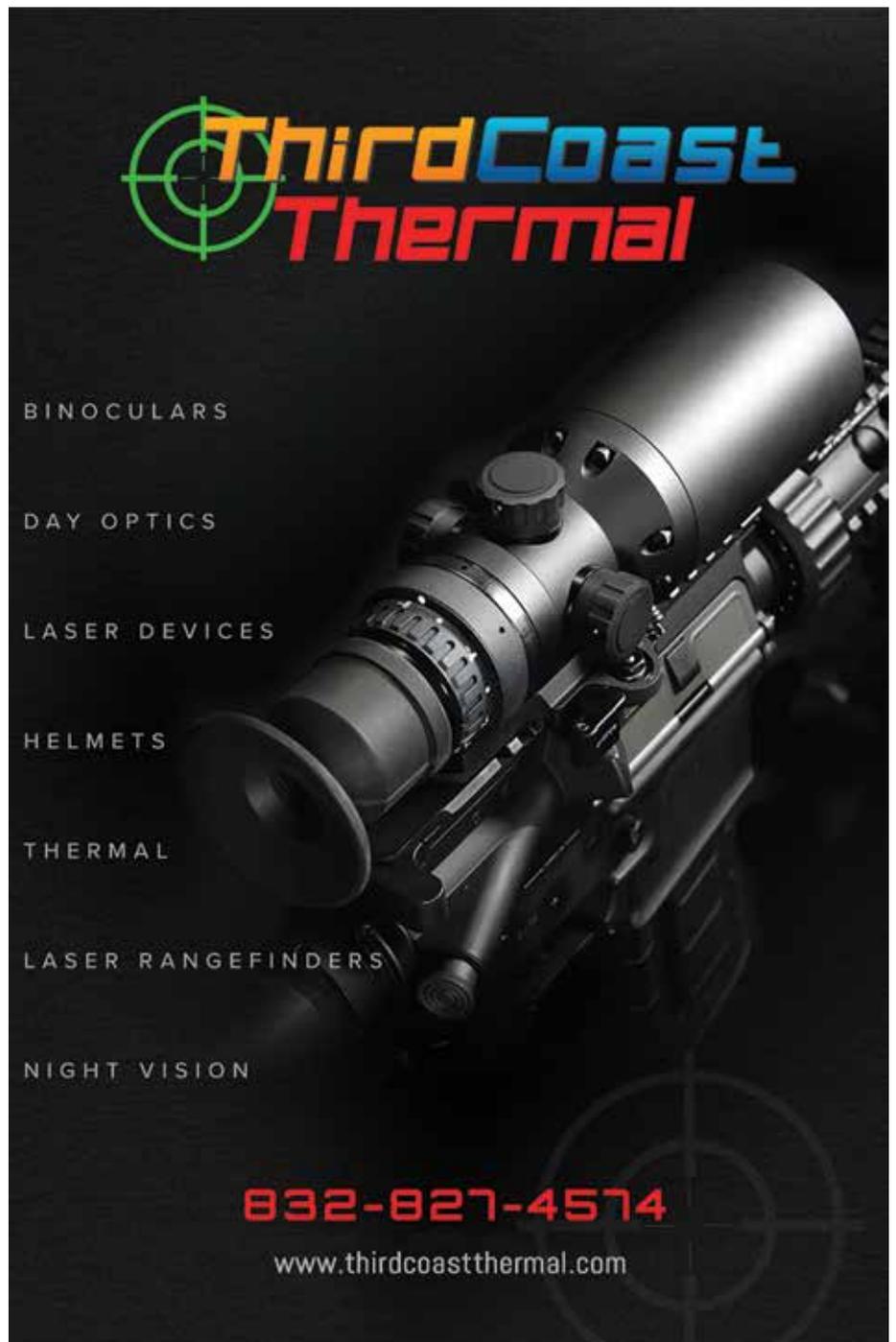
The new 28 Nosler or 6.5-300 Weatherby are just two new long range calibers. The old 257 Weatherby and 338 Lapua still work for long range shooting and of course nothing beats a 50 BMG for ultra long range shooting.

The military uses a 308 Winchester for sniping to 600 yards. From 600 to 1,000 yards they use a 300 Winchester. Beyond 1,000 yards they use either the 338 Lapua or the 50 BMG. A Canadian sniper had a record kill at over 3,500 yards last year in Afghanistan.

Shooters have no real idea how much drop a bullet has at long ranges like 1,500 yards. I have people tell me about shooting targets at 1,000 plus yards with a 6.5 Creedmoor while holding a few feet above the target and all I can do is smile when I know better.

I ran some drop numbers on some of the flattest shooting calibers in the world and how much drop they have at 1,500 yards will amaze you. A 338 Lapua will have 40 inches of drop at 500 yards, 265 inches of drop at 1,000 yards and 780 inches of drop at 1,500 yards. That is 65 feet of drop and we are not shooting a mile yet.

Go out to American Shooting Center on Houston's west side and shoot on their 300 yard range then try your luck at their 600 yard range. It is fun and very hard to do. Better yet take one of the long range shooting schools like the SAAM course that FTW Ranch puts on in the Hill Country of Texas. You will learn more about long range shooting by doing this than you ever will from watching how it is done on television. 



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## CoastWatch | Danno Wise

For anglers, April seems to be a mixed blessing. April's incredibly strong winds are often cursed. However on the flip side, coastal anglers benefit from the fact that the wind is usually accompanied by warming weather, warming water, and friskier fish.

April is very much a transition month - a time when fish begin moving from deep water to shallow and from muddy bottoms to sand. This year that transition will be much more distinct. 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 2019 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 OF TOMMY COUNTZ

*This angler followed Capt. Tommy Countz advice, "If the top water action slows in April, then switch gears and go to soft-plastic rigged with a light lead head."*

Matagorda guide Capt. Tommy Countz says April offers anglers an opportunity to target trout in a variety of ways.

"In April, you can often find me wading the south shore of West Matagorda Bay throwing top waters in front of shell lined drains coming out of the peninsula," said Countz. "If the top water action is slow, then I'll switch gears and go to soft-plastic rigged with a light lead head. The keys to finding fish are to look for bait activity and slicks.

"If your preference is fishing from a boat then taking a trip to East Matagorda Bay might be your ticket. Long drifts on the west end over scattered shell or over the big mud flats on the east end can produce good boxes of fish.

"If you're tossing artificials, I'd use heavier lead heads dragging dark colored paddle tails. If you chose to chunk live bait, then live shrimp under a popping cork can be very effective.

"Whatever your choice, I think that you will find that April fishing in Matagorda can be worth a shot."

Freeport guide Capt. Mike Segall of



PHOTO COURTESY OF REEL THREEEL CHARTERS

*When offshore weather is too rough, Capt. Mike Segall of Reel Threeel Charters will keep his clients "inside" to catch some nice fish. That tactic certainly paid off for this angler.*

Reel Three Charters says April's warmer weather should kick off some great fishing action both inshore and offshore.

"Hopefully the weather will get warmer and the rains will slow down," said Segall. "Overall, fishing will be improving in April and we'll be doing a variety of things.

"We will be fishing the points and channels off the Intracoastal Waterway and bay inland areas in Freeport area. We'll also be hitting the jetties. At the jetties, we will be mostly using live shrimp for speckled trout, redfish and sheepshead.

"Big bull reds and small sharks will be showing up on the beachfront in 25 to 35 feet of water and there will be some good rod bending action with those big fish. Those big bull reds average 18 to 25 pounds and are around 40 inches in length on average.

"We will also be fishing state waters for red snapper and sharks and mackerel. As the water warms, this fishing will only get better. And, we'll be running deep offshore trips for kingfish and cobia, sharks and vermillion snapper. Keep in mind, federal waters red snapper is not

open at this time, so any red snapper fishing must be done in state waters."

Galveston guide Capt. Greg Verm of FishingGalvestonTX.com says he'll be hitting a variety of spots in the Galveston Bay Complex and beyond during April.

"In April, we will still have plenty of fish around the Galveston jetties," said Verm. "We will be on the later phase of the sheepshead spawn and speckled trout will begin filling in, too. Live shrimp freelined along the jetty rocks will be the best technique.

"Also, the drum run will still be happening. We'll find some bull reds mixed while we are fishing for the black drum. The best way to target these fish will be fresh blue crab fished along the bottom in 16 to 25 foot of water, keying on currents.

"In West Galveston Bay redfish,

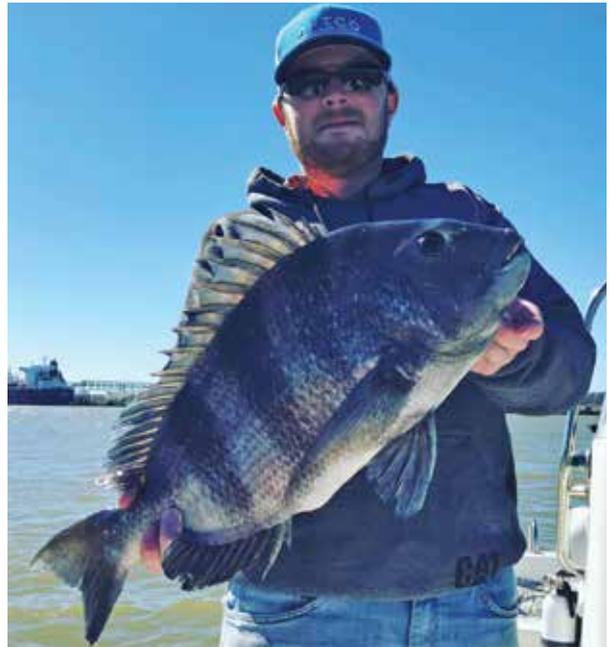


PHOTO COURTESY OF REEL THREE CHARTERS

*In April there should still be sheepshead holding around Texas upper coast jetties. This angler caught this nice "convict fish" while fishing with Capt. Mike Segall.*

speckled trout, flounder, sheepshead and puppy drum will be filling the back lakes and bayous. Live shrimp under a



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popping cork will be our go-to bait rig in West Bay. But, we will also be wading West Galveston Bay with topwaters, soft plastics and Mirrodines. San Luis Pass will also be heating up from April through May with some big specks being caught in the pass.

“There will also be plenty of good fishing in the Freeport area. Bastrop Bay, Christmas Bay, the old ICW, and the Brazos River could all be good for speckled trout, flounder, and redfish. The Brazos needs a break from the rain, but if it cleans up – it too will be on.”

Sabine Lake guide Capt. Randy Foreman says April usually offers excellent fishing on the Texas/Louisiana border thanks largely to the exploding shrimp population in the lake.

“April will be a lot like March, but by late April we’ll have a lot more bird activity,” said Foreman. “We’ll have that bird activity because of the white shrimp entering the lake.

“At the beginning of April, I’ll still be fishing the Louisiana shoreline, still fishing mud and mussel flats and still fishing in two to four feet of water. But,

once those white shrimp move in, I’ll follow them throughout the lake.

“I’ll be throwing a variety of soft-plastics in April, but will be using mostly smaller size baits. All of the mullet will be small and we’ll have a lot of shrimp in the lake. So, I’ll be trying to match the size of that smaller bait. I’ll be using glow/chartreuse for the most part, but will also use Red Shad and Morning Glory. And, all my plastics will be rigged on 1/4 ounce heads.

“You can pretty much forget about the north end of the lake in April. All of the action will be from the middle of the lake south. Especially after the white shrimp start moving in. Then, stay on the south end. I may move a little east or a little north as the shrimp continue to migrate up the lake, but basically I’m following the shrimp.

“I’ll also be fishing the Sabine Ship



PHOTO COURTESY OF BIG LAKE GUIDE SERVICE

*Anglers should frequently find themselves bowed up with redfish and speckled trout on Big Lake located in southwest Louisiana. Here Nick Poe battles another Lake Calcasieu fish.*

Channel quite a bit in April. And, when the weather’s right, I’ll fish the Sabine jetties. We have some good redfish on the jetties in April - no trout yet, but some big bull reds will be around the jetties.

“April should be a good flounder month. I’ll be fishing the points, drops and eddies. I’ll be using the same baits, but they’ll be tipped with Fish Bites when I’m fishing for flounder.” 🌟🌟



According to Capt Mary Poe of Big Lake Guide Service, April should be outstanding on Lake Calcasieu.

“April is shaping up nicely,” said Poe. “Thankfully, the heaviest spring rainfalls have hit to our east and west, which has virtually no effect on salinities. In April, trout traditionally move southward in the estuary seeking higher salinity water for spawning purposes. They will still be



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPT. GREG VERM

*Capt. Greg Verm offers words of encouragement as this angler battles a big fish.*

caught in basically the same manner as March. Big trout as well as quantities of trout will still be located on oyster reefs in less than five feet of water.

“However, if water temperatures are higher than normal, they will begin their transition toward mid-lake reefs earlier than usual. We start focusing our attention mid-lake when water temperatures are approaching the 75 degree mark. This isn’t to say they aren’t on mid-lake reefs when water temperatures are in the upper 60s, but chances are they’ll seek the warmer shallower oyster flats at that time.

“Most of the fish found on the flats in April are on the verge of inhaling your favorite topwater, but often suspending baits or soft plastics are much more efficient. The hottest suspending bait on Calcasieu the past few seasons has been a MirrOlure MirrOline. This twitch bait is deadly on trout and redfish.”

While most coastal anglers are concerned primarily with wind during April, in Venice, fishermen will also be watching the Mississippi River. By April, the snow melt from the northern states that border the Mississippi 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 turn on and 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. **T★J**



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPT. RANDY FOREMAN

*The very best spring time gift a child can be given is to take 'em fishing. Capt. Randy Foreman shows off a nice redfish caught by this young angler.*

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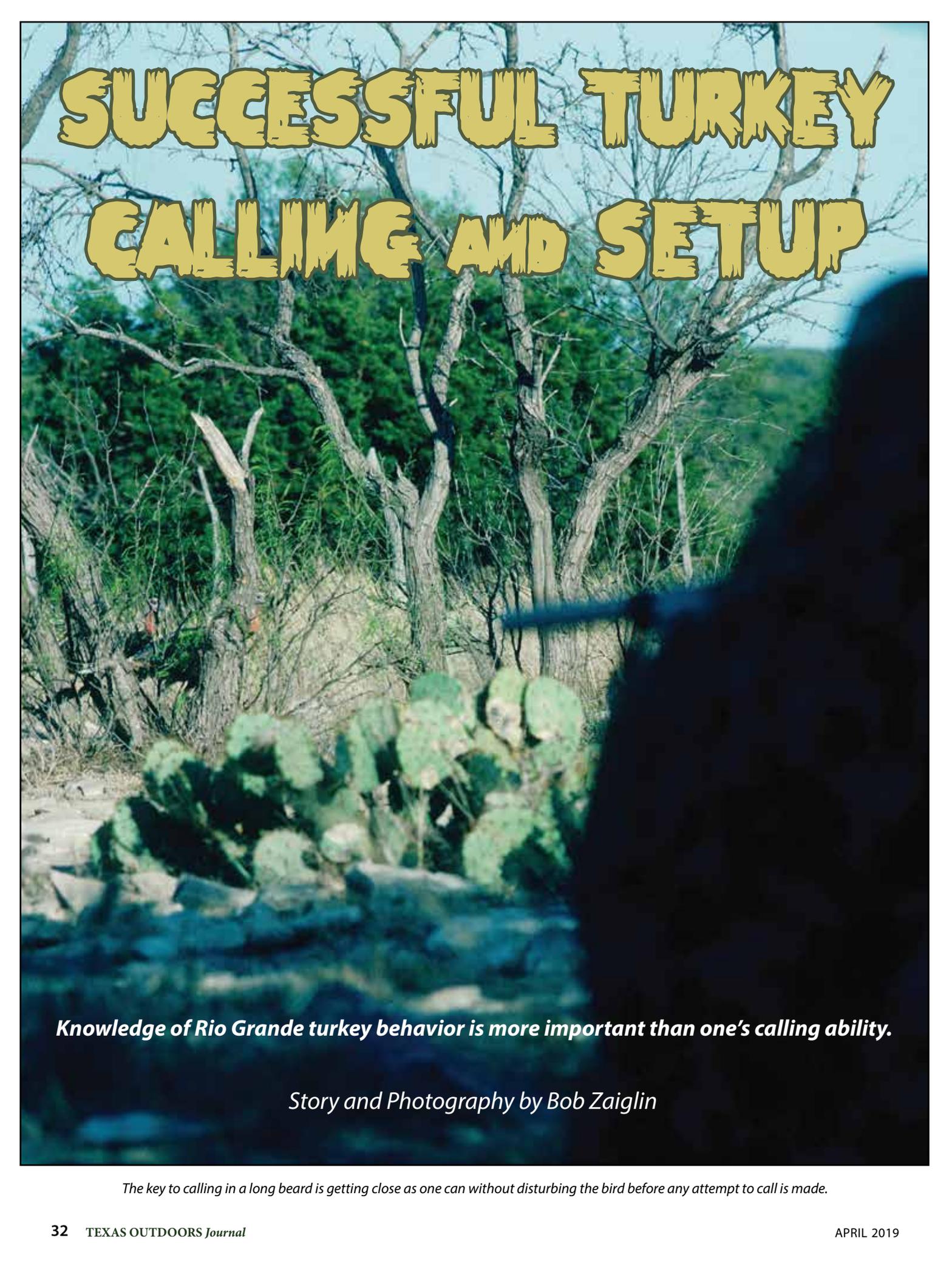
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# SUCCESSFUL TURKEY CALLING AND SETUP

A photograph of a wooded area with a large green cactus in the foreground and a person's silhouette on the right side. The background shows several trees with sparse green leaves and bare branches. The sky is a clear, pale blue. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

*Knowledge of Rio Grande turkey behavior is more important than one's calling ability.*

*Story and Photography by Bob Zaiglin*

*The key to calling in a long beard is getting close as one can without disturbing the bird before any attempt to call is made.*

Working my way through the thorn scrub paralleling a small artesian-fed creek in the ink-black predawn hours, I paused occasionally to listen for the sound of turkeys that often roosted in the live oak trees on both sides of the shallow stream. Suddenly a characteristically loud, almost abrasive (*'who cooks for you'*) hoot of a barred owl interrupted the silence, firing up several gobblers in the nearby trees as they erupted into a series of thunderous gobbles shattering the quiescent morning. Rapidly maneuvering as stealthily as possible towards the birds, I came upon a sandy clearing surrounded by sacahuista and got situated in the knee-high grass within view of the opening where the toms would gravitate and drum displaying their attributes to hopefully a willing hen.

Once situated, I removed several aged yet proven Lynch foolproof box calls from my vest, placing each at my side. As ambiguous predawn configurations began to take shape as a cacophony of bird songs filled the refreshingly cool spring air.

A white-eyed vireo the size of a silver dollar dangled precariously from a low-lying limb of a nearby oak while a brilliant, blood-red vermilion flycatcher perched on the branch above awaiting its prey. From the very top of a nearby mesquite, Texas' state bird, a mockingbird, blurred out its characteristic four-noted call.

As the sun peered over the horizon, I picked up a box and gingerly slid the chalk-coated arm over the side of the hollow portion of the box, generating several raspy yelps. Immediately the trees exploded with gobbles from several toms.

Assured that I was in the right spot, I remained silent, listening for the sound of birds exiting the trees. It was late April, and I was hunting the most exciting game bird in Texas—a Rio Grande gobbler and I couldn't wait to match wits with the long beards in the oaks not 75 yards from me.

Another series of low-volume yelps moments later enticed the toms to once again responded with loud gobbles. Confident they knew right where I was I laid the call down. It was the turkeys' move next.

As the sun cleared the horizon, a number of hens began to chatter. It sounded like I was in a chicken coop, but suddenly the distinct sound of wings smashing against branches confirmed



*Turkeys are not only affordable to hunt, they also occur throughout much of the state from the thorn scrub of South Texas to the cottonwood bottoms in the Panhandle.*

their descent. Once on the ground, several hens' emitted loud, raspy yelps, none of which sounded like a real turkey, but loud reverberating gobbles eclipsed the yelps of the hens.

Grasping my call that sounded the raspiest, I generated several loud, raspy sounding yelps as the thunderous roar of gobbles sent waves of excitement up my backbone. Within minutes a magnificent tom appeared not 40 steps from me drumming, purring loudly while dragging its primary wing tips over the sandy soil.

The early morning sunlight accented

the white band along the top of its fanned-out tail and bright sky-blue head surrounded by bright red, blood-charged wattles. My heart raced as there was nothing I could do until the plump 22 pound bird looked away, and when it



*Calling in a tom gobbling its head off is an endorphin-yielding event shared equally by young and old.*



*Turkeys have an affinity for open spaces and will gather there not only to feed on insects but to locate mates.*

did, my over and under was up and my morning hunt was over.

Success came easy on this particular morning, but it doesn't always work out this way. Like rattling up a mature buck or bugling in a big bull elk, when it all comes together one begins to feel accomplished and oftentimes overconfident — that is until the next encounter when that long beard demonstrates zero interest in your ability to sound like its lost love. But that's hunting, which can be summed up

as an endorphin-yielding, heart-pounding event that draws sportsman back time and time again to experience this addictive event.

Spring is the time when nature exhibits resilience following a long, dormant winter as the landscape clothes those desiccated branches of the various brush species with vibrant green leaves with some like Brasil, turning a lime transparent green that stands out like no other in the sea of brush while the ground

layer erupts into a rainbow of colorful wildflowers.

Spring is a wonderful time to be outdoors. If the vegetative spectacle doesn't satisfy you, the songs of newly arriving migrant song birds establishing their breeding turf will. Each male emits his own unique melodious call in an attempt to defend their breeding turf and attract a mate, none of which impact the nerves of sportsmen more than the Rio Grande turkey.

The Rio Grande turkey is one of five different subspecies of turkey, two of which inhabit Texas. The eastern subspecies can be found in East Texas, but the prolific Rio Grande can be found from the southern fringes of the state all the way up to the Panhandle. They are not only abundant but accessible to sportsmen, and unlike deer hunting, one doesn't have to obtain a loan to hunt them, they are affordable.

Since the first Texas spring gobbler hunting season conducted in 1971, the number of sportsmen pursuing these long beards in the spring has increased. Avid turkey hunters often told me that the Rio Grande birds were not as cunning as their Eastern counterparts, and in some cases I have found this to be true, but only because of the intense hunting pressure Eastern birds' experience.

But I have also witnessed a change in behavior in the Rio Grandes after they have been harassed and pursued over the years and I find them every bit as challenging to call in as an Eastern bird. But like hunting their Eastern cousins, there are several things hunters must be aware of in order to enjoy success.

Knowledge as to where birds roost

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is advantageous because it enables sportsmen to breach the distance to the birds before they descend, which is when they are often more than willing to respond to a caller. With hens often dispersing not long after leaving a roost, toms will sometimes follow in search of receptive hens, making it difficult to call them in. But gobblers will spend time around the roost pursuing remaining hens, but since most of these have nests to attend, they pretty much avoid the toms, making it extremely effective for a hunter to draw a bird in by emitting a series of yelps and purrs.

Once the birds move off, the challenge to calling one in increases exponentially. Thus, knowing where they are going is critical to heading them off. It's much easier to call in a tom that is walking in your direction than it is when the bird is walking away.

Two things that turkeys require every day are food and water. Their food source can change from grass seeds to insects and is obtained while birds are mobile and generally heading to water. Knowledge of the location of the various water sources represents a significant advantage as one can get situated around these desirable sites and actually have the opportunity to work a tom during the sluggish mid-day period when temperatures are relatively warm and the birds are less than fired up.

In reality, knowledge of turkey behavior is more important than one's calling ability. I often hear the sounds of hens chattering particularly around the

roost sites and found them to be quite different than what I am trying to mimic. They obviously sound like turkey, but some are high-pitched while others are low, even raspy. Seldom if ever do they sound like the turkeys on an instructional tape. The next time you are positioned near a roost in the predawn hours, pay particular attention to the call notes of the hens on the ground and you will discover that the calls you make often sound better than the real thing.

The fact is, the sound of one's call is not as important as when it is made. A long beard has extremely good hearing and exhibits gps-like accuracy when it comes to the alluring sound of a potential mate. One's goal is to catch that tom's attention and the rest is up to the bird.

Calling too often is always a temptation, particularly when that long beard goes into stealth mode and turns silent, but that doesn't mean it is not heading in your direction. Calling too often can dampen a long beard's interest where an occasional low-volume purr or yelp is all that is needed to bring him in.

Calling in a long beard is very similar to rattling in an old mature buck. When the time is right, it is easy, but that's not always the case. In order to be successful, one must know how turkey behave at various times of the day and more importantly why, so you can capitalize on its oftentimes predictable behavior because it's irrelevant how good one can call if they cannot get close enough to get that particular bird's attention. **T&J**



*With several toms emitting thunderous gobbles in response to one's calls, it's time to set the call down and let the birds make the next move.*

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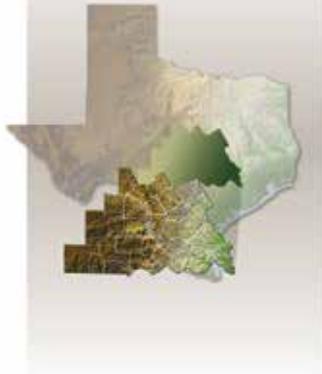
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# Lake Roundup

## CENTRAL TEXAS



By John Jefferson

If you didn't remember from history or civics class that Thomas Paine wrote "These are the times that try men's souls" in 1776, you might think he was recently writing about the waters on my Central Texas Lakes and Streams beat.

Hurricane Harvey tore along the Texas Coast, inundating most communities in its path in 2017. Central Texas was spared the devastation, but our brothers and sisters were suffering. Homes and businesses were destroyed. We had to help. Many did.

Then, in 2018, after the rain, the drought dropped the level of **Lake Travis** to the point that some were afraid we might run out of drinking water. Media outlets painted drab pictures and despite efforts by outdoor writers and publications like *TOJ*, many thought that with the lakes being so low, fishing had gone sour. That was totally wrong!

On the second day of dove season, September 2, it started raining. Most of dove season was sloshy and unproductive. But Travis began rising. Too much of a good thing peaked on October 8 in the Hill Country. Most of Central Texas was already wet – *saturated* is more accurate – and then 10 inches of rain struck in the Junction, Texas area along the **Llano River**. An entire trailer park washed away – along with four residents. All that water *and* more from streams throughout



PHOTO BY VICKY JEFFERSON, PRIOR TO RESCUING HIM AS HE WAS STILL SINKING DEEPER.

*The Central Texas columnist seems to be posing in front of his boat at Inks Lake. Actually, as he was walking the inflatable boat through some sharp stick-ups, he began sinking in **quick-mud** – soft silt in which he quickly sank to his hips.*

the hills came crashing down the Llano destroying homes and tearing out the FM 2900 Bridge at Kingsland.

The **San Saba River** drained the upper part of the Hill Country and flooded into the **Colorado River** and **Lake Buchanan**. All that water tore into **Lake LBJ** causing its record flood, destroying more homes, cars, boat docks, boats, goats, trees and everything else in its path.

All downstream lakes and the Colorado River flooded. A man moving his boat to safety on **Lake Marble Falls** was caught in the current, swept over Starcke Dam and miles down Lake Travis before finally being rescued. The LCRA closed all the lakes and the river below Austin to boating. The water in Austin became undrinkable. Fishing halted; many fish died.

When the boating ban was lifted, boaters were warned of obstructions like trees, boats and boat docks in the lakes. One man asked to borrow my boat to search for his, which he never found.

The latest restriction was a Feb. 14 indefinite nighttime "No Wake" order by LCRA for LBJ. No date has been discussed for lifting it. It applies from 30 minutes after sundown until 30 minutes before sunrise. A "No Wake" area has also been established on the Llano near the new 2900 Bridge site. Divers and debris could be in the water. The old bridge debris is being removed.

The good news is the fishing is excellent. Before LBJ and Marble Falls were lowered to allow property clean-up and repairs, many reports came in of fine catches of bass on most of the lakes. Although knowing it might put him on the spot, I asked TPWD's Inland Fisheries District Biologist, Marcos de Jesus where he would fish in Central Texas this spring for a 13 pound bass.

The first line of his report that appeared on my e-mail log like looked like he was dodging the question. It read, "I believe most any lake that has Florida largemouth bass stocked in it has the potential to

produce 13 pound fish.” I was wrong. He continued, writing that most Central Texas lakes had been so stocked, but that some produce more trophies than others.

“Lady Bird would be a good choice,” he said. “It produced one 13 pound ShareLunker in 2014 and I have confirmed several 12+ pound fish over the past five to six years from this small body of water. Historic aquatic vegetation has produced some good year classes and it has a good forage base to sustain growth. Most giant fish have been caught in the upper third of the lake.”

But he didn’t stop there. He pointed to LBJ’s 2014 ShareLunker and recent catches of “giant fish” caught there recently. See Phillip Walker’s 10.6-pound largemouth image. The flooding may have impacted fishing, keeping LBJ from being Marcos’ top choice.

Walker himself said LBJ was the best lake on this beat to catch a big bass. In addition to the 10.6 pictured, he also caught a 9.3 a week earlier. Both were caught around mid-lake rock piles on square-billed crankbaits. The clearest water, he said, was in mid-lake. He referred to LBJ as “filling the gap caused by what the grass carp did to fishing on Lake Austin.”

Walker added that in April, he would spend more time on Canyon Lake fishing the post-spawn pattern for smallmouths in mid-lake or below with four-inch paddle-tail swimbaits on jig heads around wind-blown points. He expects good numbers of smallies.

Speaking of Lake Austin, de Jesus acknowledged that it wasn’t atop his list for obvious reasons, but that it still had some very large bass. “Several up to 12 pounds have been reported caught since last year,” he said. Maybe there’s hope. De Jesus gave *me* some hope for my favorite lake, too.

“Inks Lake is a sleeper for giant fish,” he told me. “We have collected large fish during surveys over the past few years and several 12+ pound fish have been certified on the state park official weigh station in the past couple years. I predict this will be the next new ShareLunker lake in my district. It’s a challenging lake to fish, but it will reward the persistent angler.” Shhh! Don’t tell anybody until I can get back there!

Inks became an unexpected challenge

for me in 2017. See photo of guy in water beside inflatable boat.

Another lake de Jesus praised that was a surprise was **Lake Pflugerville**, although State Game Warden Jonathon Gray has been telling me that for several years. His son, Jon, now a Texas State student, has been guiding it and boating really nice fish for some time. It’s a small 180-acre lake in Pflugerville with a heavy cover of hydrilla and pondweed according to Marcos.

I said Inks was my favorite lake, and it is despite my scary experience, but don’t let Lake Travis hear that. Inks is the most scenic to me; Travis is second. I’ve fished it more and caught more fish in it.

Allen Christenson, Jr. guides it out of Lakeway Marina and has reported several large bass in the seven to eight pound range recently. Two ripped the hooks out in late February and a third broke 10

pound test line right at the boat.

Allen says Travis’ water didn’t suffer much debris from the flood and is very clear – down to 12 feet visibility near the dam. He also said it was still quite cold in late February – 54-55 degrees. His records show it is usually 60-61 degrees on that date. It should warm up to the charmed 60 degree temp well before you read this, but even if we don’t get another cold front, it will possibly stay comparatively cold later into the year.

At deadline in late February, Travis was still hanging a little over 681 feet mean sea level. It’s considered at full pool at 681. I can’t remember it ever being that high this time of year. Floods late in the spring have raised it a time or two, but it’s been around 681 for weeks. Allen says LCRA decided to hold it there since LBJ and MF would have to re-fill after being lowered. The fish and I like it there. 🌟🌟



PHOTO COURTESY OF PHILLIP WALKER

*Phillip Walker caught this 10.8-pound largemouth bass on Lake LBJ in February in mid-lake using a flat-billed crankbait. He had caught a 9.3-pound bass several days earlier in the same area on the same lure.*

# San Luis Pass —

## THE INSIDE SCOOP

***The waters located inside this gateway to the Gulf are teeming with gamefish and phenomenal angling opportunities.***

*Story and Photography by Nate Skinner*

The current swept swiftly across the shin deep sand bar I was wading as rafts of finger mullet began to pile up on its down current edge in slightly deeper water. These nervous schools of baitfish created fine ripples along the surface as their bodies trembled in fear of the hungry predators that lurked nearby.

This steady disturbance on the glasslike water was sporadically interrupted by the slurping of trout and reds which periodically ambushed the area for an easy meal. The swirls they left behind became targets for the floating plug I was chunking.

I fired a cast in the direction of the action. After just three twitches from my rod tip, a solid speck pounced on the topwater offering. As I pulled the fish into the shallow water I was standing, she made a long run away from me. The drag peeled, my rod bowed, and I couldn't help but smile. It was a typical morning at the San Luis Pass and the pattern was just beginning to heat up.

The exchange of water between an estuary and the Gulf of Mexico is essential to both the state of the bay system and the health of the species that inhabit it. In Galveston Bay, the San Luis Pass is no different. This gateway to saltier waters is teeming with gamefish and will provide anglers with phenomenal opportunities for the next several months.

Many immediately think of the surf or beachfront when the San Luis Pass is referenced; however,

the inside portion of this inlet that forms the southernmost end of lower west Galveston Bay is an area that all anglers should take note of. The shallow flats located here are surrounded by guts and channels that are ever-changing, as they are constantly being carved by strong incoming and outgoing tides. These fluctuations in water levels combined with a vast amount of diverse depth changes make scenes like the one described above a regular occurrence.



*When it comes to lure choice, fishing San Luis Pass is a topwater game. Capt. Kurt Pless shows off a hefty trout caught along the flats inside the pass on an orange Rapala Skitter Walk.*

According to TPWD biologist and Galveston Bay Ecosystem Leader, Glen Sutton, the San Luis Pass is an extremely important feature for the Galveston Bay Complex.

“The pass plays a vital role in maintaining the health and productivity of the estuary,” he explained. “It is an essential gateway to the Gulf of Mexico that is crucial for the transport of larvae and nekton recruitment, which make up the foundation of aquatic life within the Galveston Bay Ecosystem.”

Sutton claims that the San Luis Pass is also a key feature during periods of extreme heat, as well as during significant flood events.

“During the heat of summer, fish will congregate near the pass to escape warm bay waters and find relief from incoming Gulf tides,” he elaborated. “These same currents from the Gulf also provide a variety of species with salty water when salinities within the estuary drop below their preferred salinity range due to runoff from large amounts of precipitation.”

The ability of the waters surrounding the San Luis Pass to maintain their salinity is often times a large contributing factor as to why the hotspot holds hoards of gamefish. Over the past several years the Galveston Bay complex has been plagued by the affects of freshwater runoff. However, the pass has continued to offer anglers clean, salty water far removed from any major sources of freshwater inflows.

In addition to west Galveston



**Chocolate Bay**

**West Galveston Bay**

**Bastrop Bay**

**Mud Cut**

**Bird Island**

**Christmas Bay**

**San Luis Pass**

**Cold Pass**

**Galveston Island**

**Gulf of Mexico**



*Making long drifts out deeper in four to five feet of water during the heat of summer is an excellent way to find quality fish.*

Bay, San Luis Pass is also a gateway to the Gulf of Mexico for surrounding satellite bays. The pass provides salty water to Chocolate Bay, Bastrop Bay, and Christmas Bay.

Galveston Bay fishing guide, Captain Ryan Battistoni, has been fishing San Luis Pass for most of his life. He states that in order for anglers to successfully find fish in the area, they must first learn the lay of the land.

“If there’s one thing that folks can count on when it comes to the pass, is it’s change,” he confessed. “The guts and sandbars are constantly changing. Understanding how these underwater features are laid out can be the difference in a memorable trip and a very unpleasant one.”

Battistoni admits that the area can be tricky to navigate. That’s why he takes time to scout the region prior to fishing it for the first time each spring.

“By the time April first arrives, it’s time to get down to the San Luis Pass,” he

admitted. “However, I definitely make a point to navigate the region well before I plan to fish it thoroughly. That way I can see what’s changed, where some new bars or other shallow areas may be located, and where deep guts I can run my boat in lie.”

Battistoni suggests for anglers that are new to navigating the area to exercise caution and to take it easy rather than running their boat at high speeds while up on plane.

“Every spring and summer I see people run aground near San Luis Pass,” he explained. “They end up ruining their day on the water by making a poor decision. The best approach is to idle around the bars and guts while observing a depth finder. This is a great way to get an idea of where fish may stage along depth changes, as well as a good strategy for discovering a safe path of navigation to create a track on a GPS.”

As far as finding plenty of action at the San Luis Pass is concerned, water movement is the ticket. The most aggressive bite will take place during incoming and outgoing tides, as well as when these tides begin to turn.



*Devin Leissner caught this nice speckled trout while drifting some of the deeper channels at San Luis Pass.*

On incoming tides or when tides are higher than normal, the flats and bars that stretch out from Bird Island can be dynamite. The best way to approach these shallow areas is to get out of the boat and wade them. Look for concentrations of mullet or shrimp and cover plenty of water. Sometimes this strategy may mean walking a longer than normal distance from the boat, but the rewards can be worth each and every step.

During periods of strong outgoing tides or when tides are low, the main, deeper guts tend to hold the most fish.

Last April, I wade fished the pass during a strong outgoing tide with Battistoni, along with our friend and Galveston guide, Captain Kurt Pless. We started off the morning walking along shallow flats northeast of Bird Island in about knee to thigh deep water. We covered plenty of ground without a single bite before we noticed some mullet rafted up about 100 yards in front of us.

The baitfish were holding at the edge of a deep gut along the perimeter of the flat we had been working. As we began to walk off the edge of the bar into waste deep water, we immediately started hooking up with chunky two to four pound speckled trout. We stood in the same spot for the next hour without moving and caught fish on nearly every cast.

A light southeast breeze is the best scenario for fishing the pass and these conditions will render the best water clarity. Winds with a westerly influence tend to turn the waters surrounding San Luis Pass off color. There is one good option for fishing the area when the wind has a strong westerly factor to it and that's to focus on the west shoreline just north of Mud Cut. The water along this bank gradually gets deeper the further away you get from the shoreline. It can be waded or drifted effectively.

As spring wears into summer and water temperatures continue to warm, fish will begin to stack up in deeper areas along the inside of San Luis Pass. Battistoni claims that some of his best success in the region during the heat of summer has come from making long drifts in four to five feet of water.

"The deeper stretches of water out in front of the flats to the north of Bird Island tend to hold swarms of trout during the

mid and late summer months," Battistoni confessed. "I like to target stretches of water that have plenty of mullet milling around at the surface. If the mullet are there in full force, there's going to be some aggressive fish nearby."

When it comes to lure choice, fishing the pass is without a doubt, a topwater game. The floating fakes draw bone-crushing strikes when they are walked along the surface through swarms of baitfish.

Soft plastics and suspending plugs

will get the job done as well, especially when deeper guts are being targeted.

More than anything, the key to staying hooked up is fishing during periods of tidal movement in areas that have plenty of active baitfish or shrimp present.

Some of the most exciting action of the year is occurring right now in one magical place where Gulf waters and estuarine waters meet. It's time to learn the bars and guts, play the tides, and get down to San Luis Pass. **T&J**



*When tides are low, waste deep water near deeper main guts will hold more fish.*

## Warriors of a Different Age

There is no doubting the legendary status of Rick Clunn in pro bass fishing circles. He's a four-time Bassmaster Classic champion who has won 12 other major events and made 32 'Classic appearances during a storied career dating back to 1974.

In March 2016, Clunn became the oldest angler on record to win a Bassmaster Elite Series event. He was 69 when he pulled off his 15th career victory on the St. Johns River in Florida.

Clunn, a serious fisherman known largely for his philosophical approach, followed up the win with a quote that has since become as legendary as the man himself.

"Never accept that all of your best moments are in your past," Clunn said.

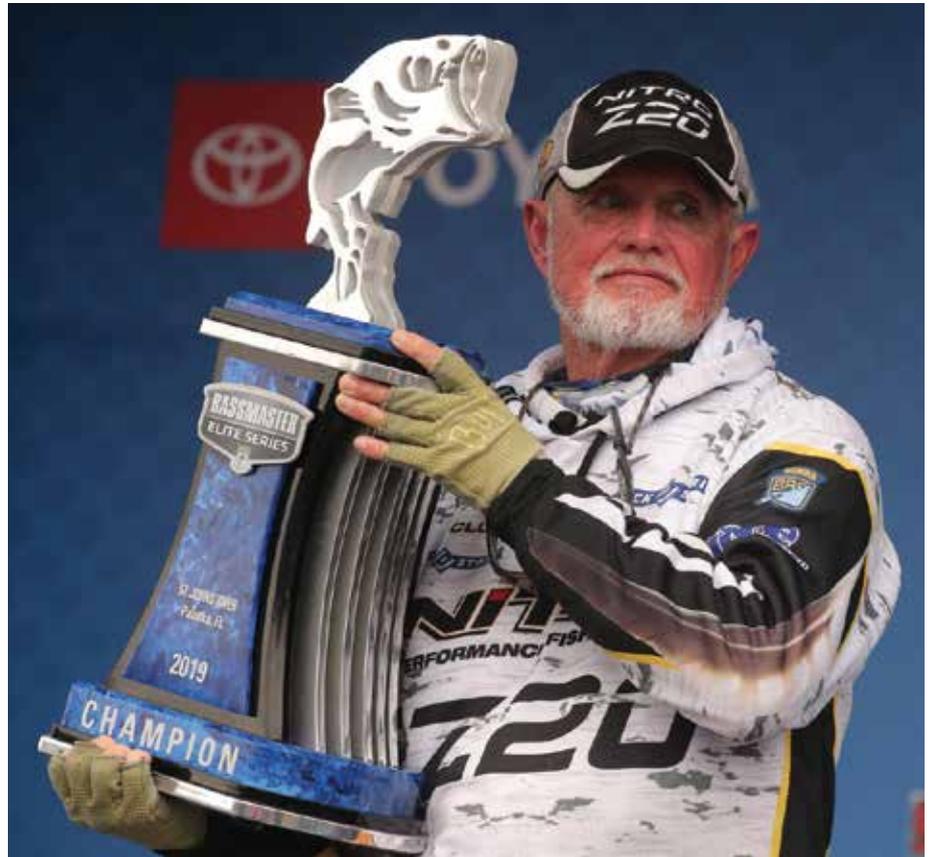
Clunn lived by those words when the Elites Series opened its 2019 campaign last February on the same fishery where he last won nearly three years ago. Amazingly, he made a little more history and cracked his own record in the process as he racked up his 16th BASS win.

Now 72, Clunn bested a 75 angler field comprised largely of hungry young guns, most of them not yet born when he began casting for cash with pistol grip rods and round reels 45 years ago.

He did it in style, too, rallying from eighth place to first in the final round with a tournament-best limit of five bass weighing 34-14. The \$100,000 payday pushed him over over \$2.5 million in earnings.

"I think this just reinforces what I said after I won here in 2016," Clunn said. "A long time ago, I stopped paying attention to timelines. The terrible twos, the ugly teens, the midlife crisis, retirement time — I don't pay any attention to any of that. If you listen to everybody else, you'll get premature notions about who you really are."

Indeed, Clunn has accomplished a lot in stellar career spanning nearly half a century and he's become a fixture in national halls of fame all across the country because of it. Fishing is like a



*Rick Clunn*

timeless medicine to the veteran Nitro pro and, even at 72, he continues to look forward to the next derby to get another dose.

When asked if there is room for retirement in his livewell Clunn told Bassmaster.com it was "a dirty question.

"A lot of stuff off the water is old to me," Clunn said. "But when I go on the water, it's brand new, just like it was when I started. I love it just as much as I ever have. It's an incredible thing to go out every single day and know that you've gotta figure them out. This amazing study of natural rhythms and how all things are connected — I can't see myself ever getting tired of that."

It will be interesting to see if Jordon Lee is still scratching the itch to catch bass and visit weigh-ins with the same intensity 45 years down the road.

Lee is young enough to be Clunn's grandson. But he hasn't allowed age, nor inexperience, stand in the way of achieving a mountain of success in a very short time.

Lee, 27, joined the Elite Series in 2015 with one-year of pro level experience under his belt after graduating in 2013 from the University of Auburn, where he and his brother, Matt, competed on the Tigers bass fishing team.

He's been on fire ever since, qualifying for four Bassmaster Classics and winning two of them in back-to-back years in 2017 and 2018. The 2017 win came on Lake Conroe. In 2018, the crafty pro from Grant, Alabama, took his A-game to Lake Hartwell in South Carolina.

Winning a single 'Classic is a lifetime achievement that just about every pro angler guns for, but only a select few are

able to accomplish. Doing it twice — in consecutive years — is a remarkable feat that has been pulled off by only two other anglers in the history of the sport.

Not surprisingly, Clunn is one them. The Ava, Missouri pro did it in 1976-77. Another great one — Kevin VanDam — pulled it off in 2010-11.

Those two anglers are currently tied for the most 'Classic wins with four, while VanDam has more BASS wins (25) than anyone, seven Angler of the Year titles and more BASS winnings than any angler on record with \$6.43 million.

Lee's fast track to the top saw him rack up more than \$1.1 in BASS earnings before he and dozens of other Elite Series big sticks jumped ship to newly formed Bass Pro Tour run by Major League Fishing last fall. It meant the end of era for some and marks a new beginning for many.

Making the change from a five-fish daily limit to the BPT's every-legal-fish-counts format has been a challenge for some of the big stick transfers, but it seems to suit Lee's style just fine. In fact, the young pro has already established



Jordan Lee

himself as a multi-time winner and an angler to beat on the Tulsa, Oklahoma based circuit. In late-February, he was ranked as the No. 1 pro angler in the world by bassfan.com.

Only time will tell what the future

holds for the young angler as he continues chasing the same dream that Clunn did when he launched his career nearly a half century ago. He has already established himself as a warrior from a different age.

T★J



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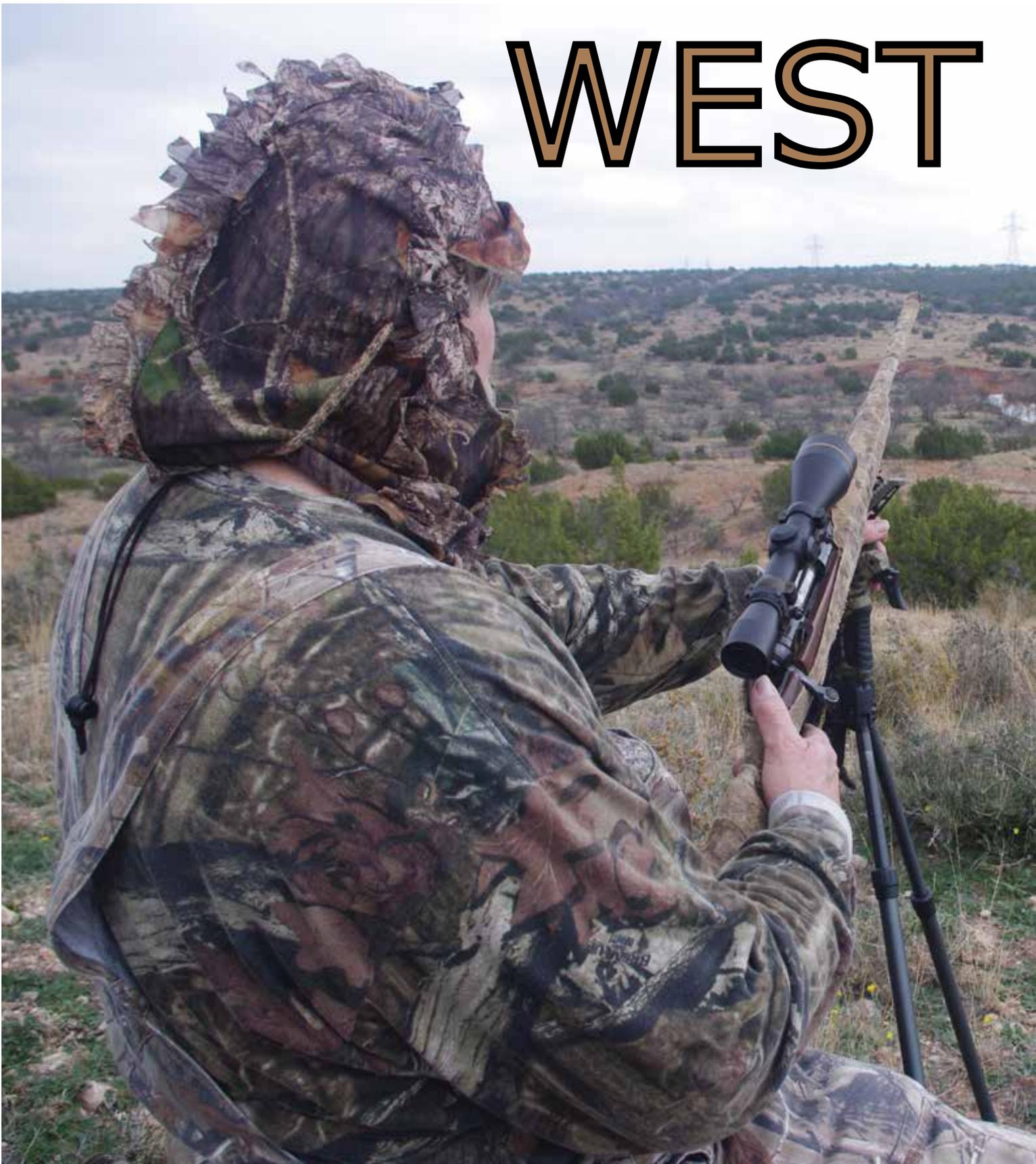


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# WEST



***Pro's pointers for when predators don't respond according to "the book."***

*Story and Photography by Bill L. Olson*

# TEXAS

## Coyote Challenge

**K**rooked River Ranch/Texas Best Outfitter's predator guide William "Junior" Walker and I had been looking forward to and talking about reconnecting since our memorable hunt in west Texas back in January 2018. On that frosty morning with a real temperature of eight degrees, and a Real Feel of minus six, resulted in a slow start to a predator hunt but ended up finishing with a flurry. Teaming up with TOJ's contributing hunting editor Tom Claycomb III, coyotes and bobcats were eager to quickly respond to distressful sounds played from my FoxPro Shockwave and Walker's FoxPro CS 24 caller.

Once temperatures had warmed by mid-morning, each of our calling stands resulted in coyotes sprinting to the distressful sounds plus visual stimulus offered by the dancing decoy. Bobcats were equally willing to cast caution to the wind with one even venturing out into wide-open spaces looking for the source of what it thought would be an easy meal.

Fast-forward to the third weekend in February 2019 and things were different. Claycomb had prior commitments of seminars at a big outdoor show out west. He was replaced by two of Walker's long time running buddies and avid predator hunters — Mark Kelley and Gary Don Rich.

It was on Rich's ranch we would hunt in Mitchell County near Colorado City. This beautiful red sandy loam land and mesquite covered break county had been a part of his family for over 80 years. We discussed the changes this part of west Texas had gone through over those years and beyond. What was once rolling and rugged grass plains where herds of buffalo roamed began to change as Mexican cattle were driven north. Those south of the border bovine feasted on mesquite beans before heading north and along the way the cattle droppings deposited the seeds from which the mesquite infestation occurred.

Another difference about this hunt was it occurred a month later plus the

temperature was at least 30 degrees warmer at sunrise. The TOJ Fishing & Hunting Times said the first of what was to be three days of predator hunting was only going to be FAIR. The solunar table also revealed the major feeding period of the day would occur from mid-afternoon until the evening hours after sunset.

The weather forecast predicted additional changes on the second day with a cold front arriving with strong winds (35-40 mph) that may offset the BEST day rating for day two and three. Expectations were high that critters would be feeding in advance of the approaching front that would probably shut things down and have all wildlife brushed-up for a few days.

As the first rays of day lit up the colorful breaks, our quartet set up for our first stand. Everything seemed to be in place and we anticipated a memorable day unfolding. And that is exactly what occurred even though what transpired was not from the script I had expected.

Stand after stand we set up and tried proven tactics Walker, his friends and I had successfully used on personal predator hunts, guided hunts or in predator tournaments. By mid-morning we were pooling our combined experience for new ideas but our optimism remained high. Everyone remained convinced it was just a matter of time before some coyote would be coaxed into loping down a hillside or along the bottom of gorge, draw or valley we would overlook. We always had the wind in our favor, called areas near water and the setups were solid.

After a lunch-time break on our drive back to the ranch, Rich shared how this property was loaded with turkey. I mentioned I had a passion for calling in springtime gobblers and he said turkey were a bit of a nemesis for him as they sometimes messed up his deer hunting. He explained this property had a healthy whitetail population too.

By mid-afternoon with Kelley having spotted one coyote that came over a hilltop and disappeared into a gully only to never be seen again — we were struggling. Late in the afternoon a second coyote quickly appeared over a hill but buggered for some reason. Rich encourage that 'yote's' immediate about-face and hasty retreat with a quick round from his .22-250.

As the light dimmed on what would be our only day of hunting, four competitive hunters began to review setups as well as any options not played. The consensus was there were few tricks we had not tried with broad range of sounds played from the FoxPro callers. Since we were in the midst of breeding season for coyotes we wondered if they had their mind on something other than an easy meal.

Interestingly the predators we pursued were not the only missing-in-action game. Kelley spotted two whitetail doe heading toward a thicker mesquite flat some 500 yards off in the distance. None of the turkey the ranch has were ever seen – not even a single one. From a wildlife standpoint it was strangely quiet.

Experience told us it could just be one of those days. It is called hunting for a reason and there are times when things just don't work out, no matter what is tried.

Walker and I even talked after the hunt to determine what could have been done differently. I knew my competitive nature would use this as a learning opportunity and figured the other three members of our group would do the same.

One thing I offered was with four hunters strung out down off the top of a hillside not everyone was looking at the same vistas. It might be worth investing in some VOX activated two-way radios so when something was spotted coming in, like the coyote Kelley saw disappear into the gully, to let the rest know what had been seen — particularly the one running the caller.

Upon my return to Houston it was research time — to start sharing what had happened and discussing options that may be utilized on the next foray afield. This is the part of hunting few really appreciate — turning less than anticipated results into a



*Junior Walker pulled out all of his tricks as he scrolled through the FoxPro remote that listed a variety of sounds.*

learning experience that further heightens the anticipation of the next opportunity to match wits with coyotes, bobcats, other varmints and critters. I thrive on it.

My first call was to review the science and biology of coyotes and bobcats. I contacted Scott Henke, Regents Professor and Research Professor at Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute at Texas A&M - Kingsville.

He confirmed the breeding period of coyotes were underway and that the gestation period was 62 days. However, he dispelled the suggestion that during the breeding season a coyote male would be as aggressively focused on breeding as say a whitetail buck. “Unlike a whitetail buck that may go several days without

eating, a coyote is still going to feed on a regular basis,” he explained. “These animals will find a mate and are at least seasonably monogamous. He will stay with that female for at least that season and sometimes for several seasons.”

He also explained the seasonal food preferences for coyotes. “In the winter they will feed more on birds and mammals plus they will also readily eat mesquite beans. In the spring it is a lot more fruits like prickly pear fruit, persimmons and berries. In the fall it is insects, particularly grasshoppers. Basically a coyote is a true omnivore.”

Henke said bobcats have a similar breeding period but are more of a true predator. Its diet consists of birds,



*Mark Kelley set up and camo has him almost disappearing into surrounding vegetation. Kelley prefers a monopod shooting stick to help steady his shots from his .22-250 when hunting predators.*

mammals and reptiles. “They don’t take on the vegetation like coyotes and stay with meat.”

So the professor reconfirmed my rudimentary understanding of the predators we pursue. The next call was to the team that makes the calls, records the sounds and spends countless days afield hunting predators — FoxPro.

Pro Staffer Big Al Morris sent me an email asking what was up. I explained how we had been almost skunked on a day that seemed like it should have provided a perfect predator hunt scenario.

My call caught him as he had just left Midland after hunting predators and was going to Sanderson to hunt mountain lions. On his drive across a portion of the Lone Star State I could almost hear a jovial chuckle as I quarried him about any tricks we did not try.

“Sometimes there are days when the coyotes will just not respond,” Morris quipped. “It could be the moon phase, barometric pressure or something else. I’ve been calling for over 25 years and still don’t have it figured out. I have threatened to someday write a book on all of the things that did and didn’t work, plus those yet tested. However, the bottom line is on those tough days you just have to keep grinding, eventually you will see coyotes.

“Seasonal changes can also have an impact,” he reminded. “Winter could hang on a little later or an early spring green-up can change things as well making a difference when the breeding actually occurs. This may result in more of a change when the pups are born and an impact to the norm later in the season.

“If y’all were running a rabbit distress call you might want to change and go with more of the birds sounds like Woody Woodpecker Distress. What you keep trying to do is find a sound that will trigger a response. Hunters all across the country are running similar distressed sounds so try something out of the ordinary.

“At that time of year, with the breeding going on you might play single lone howls. Play it and just sit to see what response occurs. And continue to play something that the coyotes may not have heard before.”

Then Big Al offered a piece of advice that reinforced the benefit of an experienced hunter seeking the advice from an even more experienced hunter.



PHOTO BY JOHN FRANKSON

*Breeding season in Texas occurs from mid-January to early March. The gestation period is 62 days. In April female coyotes will be carrying a litter of pups and will continue to eat.*

## SATELLITE PHONES FOR HUNTERS...AND FOR ANGLERS

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*One feature unique to the FoxPro Shockwave is its ability to adjust the pitch from sounds in its library. Changing the pitch may well be the difference to provoke a response.*



*The FoxPro CS-24 caller is preferred by Texas Best Outfitter's predator guide William "Junior" Walker.*



*Using a FoxPro decoy will provide visual stimulation to further entice predators to come in when calling. It also keeps the predator's attention focused on the decoy's erratic movement rather than the location of the hunter.*

“On the Shockwave, if you are running Lighting Jack, try pitching it up. Most hunters don’t use that feature. It is unique to the Shockwave and is what makes that call so special. The handheld Fusion will also run the FoxPitch. Just changing the pitch and making a sound different many times will get a response when others won’t.” That suggestion alone was like a thump on the head and a feature I had forgotten was available on my FoxPro.

“When readers read this in the April issue of TOJ and head to the field, try pitching up the Baby Cottontail,” Morris continued. “Females will be carrying pups and she still has to eat to sustain herself and the liter she is carrying.”

Another great calling suggestion the Pro Staffer made plays to the territorial

nature of coyotes. “At that time of year the single lone howl or a Female Coyote Submissive sends a distinct message to the male in the area. He is with a female pregnant with pups. When he hears another pair of coyotes in the area that really lights him up. He won’t stand for them intruding in his area. He is going to respond.”

Morris final suggestion is that if the male coyote is killed, be sure to go back and take out the female. “A lone female can become a nuisance,” he said.

Most hunters hunt predator help control their numbers with the idea of protecting depredation of livestock as well as game animals and gamebirds. Texas Parks & Wildlife’s position statement on predator hunting encourages it to be done



*There's some big country in West Texas. Gary Don Rich sets up over an area that provides plenty of country to watch for coyotes responding to calls.*

within the context of a goal-oriented management plan.

Henke said predator control is more complex than most think and agreed it should be a part of a plan. He said, "At this time the recreational impact of predator hunting is a non-factor because of high predator populations that are a result of natural recruitment as well as immigration.

For those that extend our hunting seasons to include this "off-season" excitement we usually learn more from less successful outings than from those days when critters come easy. This is one of those examples of how extending the time afield to include some post-hunt reflection and research can pay dividends for in the future.

For information on FoxPro Game Calls visit [www.gofoxpro.com](http://www.gofoxpro.com). For predator and other hunting opportunities visit [www.texasbestoutfitters.com](http://www.texasbestoutfitters.com). T★J



Texas Best Outfitters predator guide William "Junior" Walker (left) and his long time friend Mark Kelley make a stand along a fence line that overlooks a long draw that slopes away from their position. Every stand made held great promise for success.

## Operation Game Thief

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# Lake Roundup

## NORTH TEXAS



By Brian Hughes

It's so hard to choose lakes for the April report. I feel like no matter what reservoir I choose, I'll be leaving some great fishing off the list. And I will. That's because April in Texas features fantastic fishing all across the region.

The topwater bite will be in full swing for bass, sandies will be back out on the lakes having returned from their spawning run, stripers will be in a feeding mood, and catfish will be doing their thing as well. This holds true on pretty much every lake you could think of.

But I am tasked with choosing just a few to share with you, so here goes.

**FORK** — Big bass have been caught on Fork since February. Several big fish, including one over 13 pounds, were caught, photographed, released and shared on social media.

Many of these were not entered into the ShareLunker program. I'm ok with that. If an angler wants to be recognized and have the fishery recognized, the ShareLunker program is a great way to do so.

But many anglers don't care to participate for a variety of reasons. Some would rather release the fish immediately, in respect for the health of the fish. Can't argue with that.

Others will avoid the notoriety in order to keep their success a secret. I can also understand the reasoning behind not wanting a zillion fishermen descending

on your lake.

And some just want to be left alone to go on about catching more fish. So when you head to Fork, just know that any cast can produce your personal best.

One of the best ways to catch that fish of a lifetime is with a jig. Specifically, something in the ¼ ounce to ½ ounce range, in black/blue or a green pumpkin color. Work the edges of creeks where bass are staging in either pre-spawn or post-spawn modes. As the spawn progresses, these creeks leading onto shallow spawning flats will be full of big females that are moving to and from the bedding areas.

Of course, early in the day you can work the shallows with moving baits. This will get you numbers, and a big fish isn't out of the question. Spinnerbaits, Senkos, 'trap-style baits, and shallow diving cranks will catch a lot of fish in the four to 12 foot range.

Look to the mouths of creeks with your topwaters as well. On a calm day try a Z Dawg or Spook, with a little chop a popper can be effective, and a buzzbait works unless there is are big swells.

Crappie anglers will want to look to the brush and bridges. Crappie jigs in the standard colors of white, chartreuse, and such will work. But for a little something different try a cinnamon head with a teal blue maribou, or a red head and orange body. Any color that is both bright and different will see a higher bite ratio on pressured waters.

Many anglers are using more of the small crappie-sized swimbait bodies on a jighead. This allows for using better components, as many custom jighead makers use better hooks than the commercial varieties available. These will not only hook up more reliably, but last longer as well.

Thump Chubbies are swim bodies from Constant Pursuit Outfitters. They are available online and come in a host of amazing colors. These baits are also effective on sand bass, which will be out on the humps. After returning to the main lake from the spawning run, sandies

will be feeding on the shad that hold on structure scattered about the lake. Find structure on your electronics, you'll find sandies.

**TEXOMA** — April sees a great bite develop on Lake Texoma for many species. Catfishermen will want to start looking towards the dam, as the bigger fish move up. Fresh cut bait or live shad is the best choice for blues here.

Smallmouth bass will be in a post-spawn mode, roaming the rocks looking for shad and crawfish to feed on, while they recover from the rigors of the spawn. Early in the day, focus on rocky points with topwater baits and hard jerkbaits. A buzzbait, Z Dawg or Spook will get their attention, as will a Chug Bug. Stay with natural colors on sunny days, and darker colors on cloudy days. A shad/chartreuse/blue combo works well in the sun, while something with a little orange has done well when it is overcast.

Another good place for these baits will be around the many tire reefs at the marinas. While I would normally say that a bass won't hit a topwater bait over deep water, the reefs are an exception.

These reefs may be over water as deep as 30 or 40 feet, but because bass (both largemouth and smallmouth) will hang around under the tires, they are living high in the water column. So essentially, they are only in water four to six feet deep. This is normally considered prime depths for topwater fishing, and in this case it can be exceptional fishing.

Once you've exhausted the topwater bite, switch to a diving crankbait. I like to have two divers tied on so I can cover water out to about 15 feet. I'll use one bait that will cover the depths from the bank out to about six or eight feet, and another that works from about 10 to 15 feet. The same "Citrus Shad" colors, or crawfish patterns are the best choices.

Casting parallel to the bank, I can work massive amounts of water before having to move the boat to the next stretch. Once I catch a fish on one of these baits, I'll finish seining the area with cranks.

Once I've thoroughly covered the area, I'll go back over it with something else. If I'm in an area with some flats and small gravel, I can use a drop-shot or shaky-head with a soft plastic, like a 4" Senko in watermelon/red. If I'm in bigger rocks I'm likely to use a football head jig in ¼ ounce to drag through the gaps, and over the top, of the cover. Again, natural colors in the sun, darker colors when the clouds are out.

**ATHENS** — Lake Athens has really changed over the last few years. An abundance of grasses have led to a huge spike in both population of largemouth bass and the size of bass caught. While it makes some parts of the lake tough to fish, those that like to "punch" vegetation have a lot of places to work. Black/blue, watermelon/red and white are good choices for punch rig offerings.

Using a one-ounce tungsten weight, 4/0 or 5/0 hook, and a four inch Creature, craw, or tube bait, crash your weight through the top of the vegetation. Getting it through the canopy allows the bait to get down into the grass where the bass live. Under the canopy is a world unto itself, with plenty of room for feeding bass to roam.

Shake your rig a couple of times, or even lift it to the bottom of the canopy and drop it again. Then pick it up and do it all over again.

Personally, I'd rather find some of the very catchable fish that will be hanging around some of the main-lake structure. A soft plastic swim bait rigged either weightless, or on a jighead or weighted hook will catch these fish. Use your shad colors and rig according to the depth of the fish. You should be able to determine the depth of the fish, or baitfish, on your electronics.

Keep your offering just above that level and swim it through the water column at a brisk pace. Or drop it down and pump it back to the boat with a "pump-reel-pump" cadence. Let the fish tell you which way they want the bait presented.

**WHITNEY** — What a success story Lake Whitney has been over the last few years. A recent study by TPWD has shown Whitney to have as much, or more, in the way of fish than ever before in the history of the lake. Striper, largemouth, sandies are all showing populations that have



PHOTO COURTESY OF RICHARD JUE

*This is how you do it. Nancy Jue shows off two thick slab crappie she caught from Lake Conroe.*

never before been seen.

Even smallmouth bass, thought to be completely wiped out by an algae bloom many years ago have been caught recently. Although probably not a viable population just yet, to see the smallies rebound at all just goes to show what a healthy fishery this lake has become.

Striper fishermen will want to look to the dam area down to the island. Trolling or casting can be effective, depending on the day. Check the baitfish on your electronics. Striper Sniper Lures on jigheads can be used in any case, just keep them above the fish.

For largemouth, the creeks may be the answer, especially the smaller ones. These creeks have bass that will live there well into the summer months. A ¼ ounce spinnerbait in chartreuse/white should be tossed at every bush and log in the creek, as well as the boat docks. Shaky heads will work out on the main lake as will the umbrella rig. Work rocky banks and points anywhere from six to 15 feet deep.

Of course, I'd start every morning fishing topwaters. The buzzbait in white or shad colors can cover a lot of water searching for active fish, and you can follow that with a shallow diving crankbait in shad colors.

Don't overlook the soft and hard jerkbait like a Rogue or Senko. On a cloudy day try the black/gold Rogue, or maybe firetiger, while sunny days call

for chrome/blue. Senkos in bubblegum, watermelon/red flake and green pumpkin, fished with a weighted hook will get it in four to 10 feet of water.

**PURTIS CREEK** — Such a fun little lake, Purtil Creek anglers will be fishing a post spawn pattern by April. Run the banks with topwaters and Ribbit frogs early, then transition to white/chartreuse spinnerbaits.

The main channel running on the west side of the lake will be holding fish at 10 to 12 feet. It's full of standing and laydown timber, and sets up for a jig-and-pig, or Texas rigged lizard or worm. Jigs in greens, oranges and black/blue are proven and plastics in red shad, purple, and blue fleck will get their attention.

Another productive tactic is to fish parallel to isolated timber lines and use the Senko in watermelon/red to work each tree individually. Do this by casting just past the tree, twitching the Senko up to it, and killing it when it is next to the trunk. Let it sink to the bottom before twitching the bait again.

When fishing the trees near the bank this will be a short wait, but as you follow the treeline into deeper water, the trees can be in water as deep as twelve feet. You will want to wait on the bait to get all the way to the bottom before giving it a nudge again.

All in all April is one of the best months we get when it comes to both numbers of

fish, and size, so get out there and take advantage of the bounty. And take a youngster fishing. **T&J**



By Matt Williams

**NACOGDOCHES** - Lake Nacogdoches has been a muddy, sloppy mess since last fall with abnormally dirty water persisting throughout the entire lake. The lake remained muddy as February gave way to March, so chances are it will be far from clear come April, even if March was exceptionally dry.

Most the bass should be done spawning by now with the exception of a few stragglers that may be setting up on points and towards the backs of no name pockets on the southern reaches of the lake. Even so, some of better action will continue to be found shallow as post spawners feed to make up for lost time while others guard recently hatched little ones.

April is usually a pretty decent month for throwing topwaters and floating worms, but it probably won't be the case this year with all the dirty water. That's not to say you won't get bit on some sort of popper, frog or buzz bait, but other baits might produce better results.

Swim jigs, Chatterbaits, spinnerbaits, Senkos and wacky worms will definitely be worth try. They'll work over shallow flats and near channel breaks around any shallow hydrilla, hay grass or new growth lily pads beginning to top out on the surface. There is plenty of good stuff to check out the lake's upper reaches and in any number no-name creeks up and down the lake.

Boat docks could also be holding some fish to be caught flipping Texas rigs, jigs

or maybe winding a spinnerbait, crankbait or Chatterbait.

Anglers who had rather fish away from the bank should check out hard bottom structure and points in 14-25 feet of water. Carolina rigs, shaky heads and spoons are the orders of the day for fish are grouped or strung out close to bottom.

**LIVINGSTON** - April has a long history of being a pretty tough month for bass fishing on the 90,000-acre reservoir. Local angler Randy Dearman isn't expecting things to be much different this year. The veteran guide says the majority of spawning activity will be over with as March gives way to April and many of the fish will be in post-spawn mode.

"April can be sort of hard, to down right tough at times," Dearman said. "There are still going to be a lot of fish shallow, but they won't be in much of a chasing mood. If the lake is muddy it'll be even tougher."

Dearman says taking a finesse approach with small baits could help salvage an otherwise slow day. One of his favorite baits to throw during the post spawn is a 1/4 ounce white spinnerbait with small willowleaf blades. The small blades do a good job of simulating young-of-the year for forage. Square bill cranks in perch or shad patterns and bladed jigs should produce some strikes.

"It's also a good idea to keep a white buzz bait handy, especially if the water clears up in the backs of the creeks," Dearman said. "It'll sometimes trigger fish that are guarding fry. A buzz bait won't work every day, but when it's on they'll hammer it."

Dearman says white bass and crappie will be winding down their spawns this month as well with many of the fish already in transition towards deeper water. He said anglers should look for schools of whites in the mouths of major creeks and on main lake points in water ranging five to 15 feet deep. Spoons and crankbaits are the best bets.

For crappie, Dearman recommends checking out submerged tree tops along major creeks and deeper main lake docks 10-12 feet of water using jigs or shiners.

**CONROE** - As is the case with many mid-size East Lakes, bass spawning activity on Conroe will be rolling to a close this month as water temperatures

climb into the upper 60s and lower 70s. According to fishing guide Butch Terpe, a high percentage the fish will still be shallow, but anglers may need to take more of a finesse approach to get them to take an artificial bait.

Terpe said anglers who fish north will be targeting post spawn bass. The fish will be hanging out in the mouths of spawning pockets and creeks. Rocks and boat docks also will be holding some quality fish that be caught on wacky worms, weightless Senkos, shaky head worms and maybe small swim baits or pop baits.

The guide says there could still be some bedding activity on the south end of the lake during the early part of the month. He suggests checking out the backs of major pockets with isolated backwaters and sandy bottom shores. Large coves flanked by Walden, April Plaza and Del Lago marinas are always worth a look.

Terpe said sight fishing could come into play in these areas provided the water offers decent visibility. Otherwise, he recommends fan casting over shallow flats around any flooded shore cover using a Texas rigged lizard or weightless Senko.

Conroe also produces some fairly decent crappie and catfish prospects during April, but it'll take some legwork to find the papermouths.

Terpe said there may still be a few crappie spawning around shallow shore cover in the backs of select creeks and pockets at the lake's southern reaches. Otherwise, the best action will be found around offshore brush piles around the support pilings at the FM 1097 Bridge Crossing.

As for the catfish, Terpe suggests keying on baited holes in the mouths of major creeks or around the San Jacinto River channel in water ranging 18-22 feet. He likes to attract the fish using cattle range cubes, but you can also use soured milo or chicken scratch. Dip baits, punch bait and night crawlers work best for putting limits of channel cat and an occasional blue cat in the boat.

**PALESTINE** - If you like to fish shallow, fishing guide Ricky Vandergriff says you might think about making a trip to Lake Palestine over the next few weeks. That's because there are going to be plenty of bass, crappie and catfish up there doing the spawning thing, or getting real close it.

"The bass up north will pretty much be

done with it, but down south there are still going to be quite few on beds in 1-4 feet of water," Vandergriff said. "Just about all of the major and secondary creeks like Ledbetter/Highsaw, Cobb and Flat will all be worth checking out," Vandergriff said. "It's also a good idea to pay attention to any little pocket or inlet off the main lake."

The guide said any number of baits will produce, but it's hard to go wrong with a weightless Mister Twister Comida or a Texas rigged Zoom Brush Hog. A bladed jig or hard jerk bait twitched over shallow spawning flats also can be effective if the fish want something moving.

Vandergriff says crappie should still be spawning in some of the same areas during the early part of the month. He'll go after them with a shiner or jig under a cork, or simply blind casting over shallow flats with a small jig or Roadrunner.

Once the crappie spawn winds down Vandergriff will start following them out as they make a gradual move towards deeper water. Brush piles are the ticket.

"Some of the better brush early will be in about 10-12 feet," Vandergriff said. "As water temperatures warm, the fish gradually move deeper."

As for catfish, Vandergriff says baited holes in 12-16 feet are always a good option. However, there are also going to be quite a few fish nosing around in the shallows getting ready to spawn. This is when he likes to soak nightcrawlers, liver and punch bait along concrete retainer walls, around bridge rip raft and on sandy bottoms in three to four feet of three feet of water. He prefers using a cork to suspend the bait just above bottom.

"You'll catch more channel cat than anything else, but you'll occasionally hook into a big ol' blue."

**SAM RAYBURN** - After several months of extremely high water, Sam Rayburn was finally on a downhill slope moving towards normal as this writing. The big lake was still seven feet above full pool as February gave way to March.

It's hard to say what the water level may be by the time April rolls around, but fisheries biologist Todd Driscoll says you can bet there will still be plenty of water in the bushes. The bass will be in there, too. And many of them are going to be spawning.

When bass anglers talk bushes on Sam

Rayburn, they're referring to willows, button willows and buck brush. The brush lines the bank from one end of the lake to other. Some of the best stuff is in major and secondary creeks south of the Highway 147 Bridge.

There are several ways to catch fish around bushes. Probably the most effective is flipping a weighted creature bait or jig right in amongst the maze of limbs and branches on heavy duty braided or fluorocarbon fishing line.

The key is covering water and hitting high percentage areas located in close proximity to points, channel breaks and ditches.

In addition to the flipping bite, Driscoll says there could be some fish holding along the outside bush line. These fish can be caught on everything from Texas rigs to wacky worms and weightless Senkos.

Inside grass lines also could be holding fish, but it's tough to pinpoint the depth which the grass line will be because it will depend on the current water level. If the lake is three feet high, Driscoll says the inside grass line will be in about five to eight feet of water.

#### **TOLEDO BEND** -

Toledo Bend is a huge lake with lots of bass fishing patterns just about always in the works. During April, it's hard to go wrong targeting spawning bass in shallow water, one to three feet deep.

According to veteran fishing guide Tommy Martin, there should be fish finning around close to bank all over the lake, but the southern reaches is where the majority of the spawning activity will be taking place. That's because the water is deeper and warms slower down south than it does up north.

"We could have fish spawning all the way up until May or they could be done by the middle of April," Martin said. "It's going to depend on the weather patterns we saw in March."

Martin says he prefers to target secondary creeks

and points located close to the mouths of major creeks during April as opposed the back of the major creeks. Key water depths will be shallower than five feet.

The guide said bass can be caught a variety of ways, but he recommends sticking very close to a Texas rigged Zoom Brush Hog or lizard over the course of the day.

"Spawning fish don't like to chase a moving bait," Martin said. "You can catch them on wacky worms and Senkos, but it's really hard to beat a Texas rig. A Carolina also can be really effective, especially in situations where the fish might be spawning a little deeper."

Martin hinted that flipping in willows and buck brush also could come into play should the lake rise enough to put at least two feet of water in the bushes.

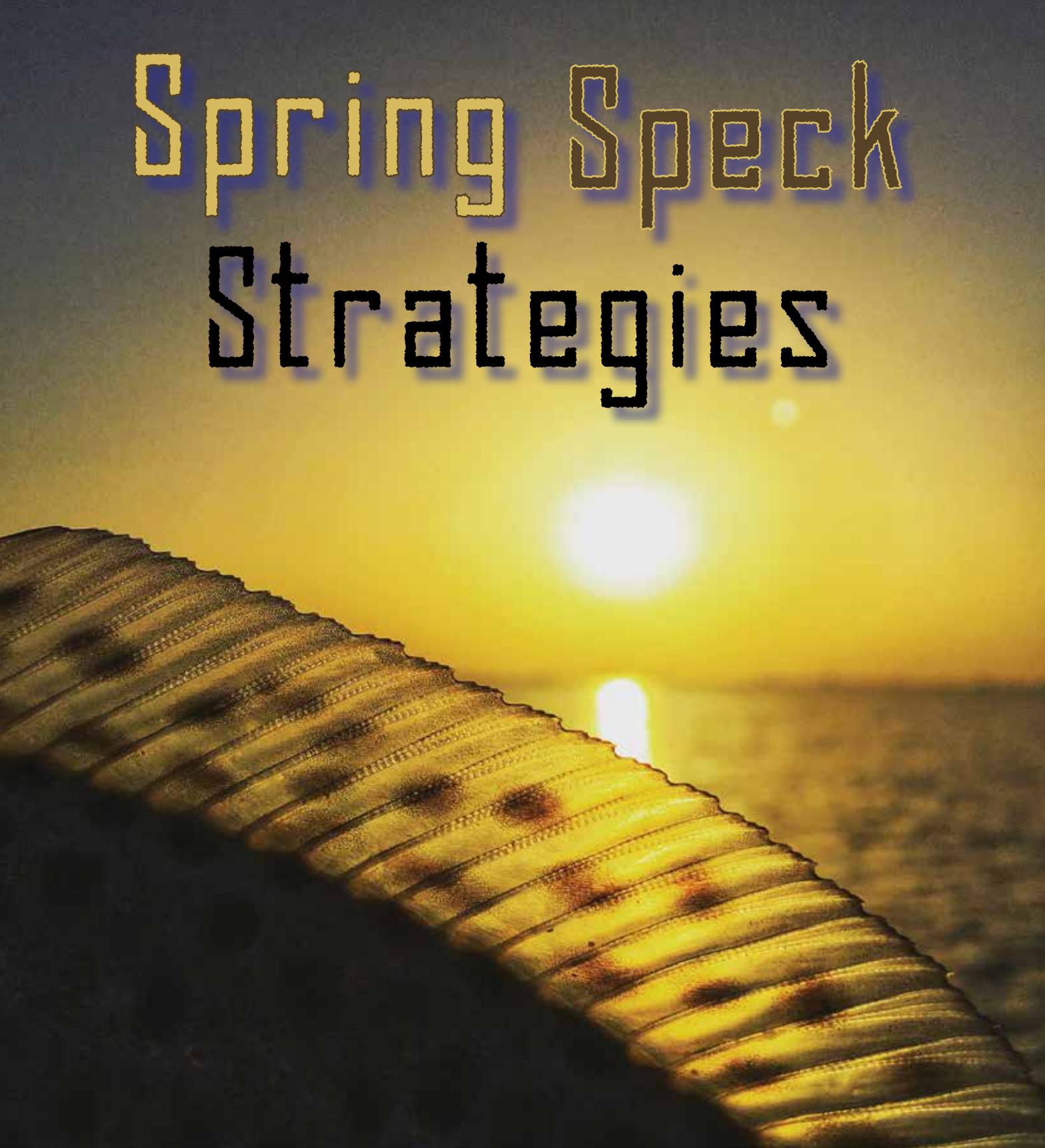
As crappie fishing prospects go, fishing guide Stephen Johnston suggests staying on the move and covering water on flats in the backs of major and secondary creeks. His go-to baits are a Roadrunner or a small hair jig fished a couple of feet beneath a cork. **★**



PHOTO COURTESY OF RICHARD JUE

*Mike Asaro shows off a solid crappie he recently caught. Crappie will still be shallow as they wrap up their spawn through the first half of April.*

# Spring Speck Strategies



***Transitions in water temperature, bait presence and fish patterns dictate anglers are versatile and adaptable.***

*Story and Photography by Danno Wise*

**D**espite the occasional late front, April typically sees consistently warming weather along the Texas Gulf Coast. Longer daylight hours and rising air temperatures result in much warmer bay waters, which in turn results in speckled trout – and other species — are much more active.

This makes April an excellent time to catch good numbers of specks. Additionally, in most areas of the coast, there are still plenty of spawning fish, making April an equally good time to target trophy fish as well.

However, April is a dynamic month with every Texas bay seeing a myriad of transitions in water temperature, bait presence and fish patterns. Therefore, being versatile and adaptable is usually the key to success in spring's first full month.

### TOPWATER PLUGS

The warming water of spring will see fish being more active. So, not only will they be more apt to attack a surface plug, they will also be aggressive enough to take on a topwater moved at a quicker clip than was feasible in winter.

As is the case with other type of artificial lures during the spring season, anglers throwing topwaters should “match the hatch” so to speak by adjusting plug size to match the most prevalent size prey items. Everything from full-size plugs to micro-offerings can work depending on what fish are feeding on.

For example, full size plugs will be more effective when fish are feeding on mature mullet, whereas Jr size baits will work best if they are targeting this year's hatch of mullet. Likewise, micro-plugs work great when fish are feeding on minnows.

Conditions will also alter plug selection in spring. If the water is roiled, dark and/or dirty – as it often is in the spring – full size, high-pitch plugs like the Bomber Badonk-A-Donk Hp and MirrOlure SheDog are the way to go. Prop baits, which are underutilized on the Texas coast, can be quite effective when noise is necessary to attract fish in rough or stained water.

When floating grass covers the bay surface, which is also a common occurrence given spring's often high winds, DOA's PT-7 weedless topwater plug is an ideal option.

### SLOW-SINKERS

Early on in April, before the water temperature has risen substantially, slow-sinking baits are still extremely effective for anglers patient enough to use them. Corkys and various MirrOlures are the traditional favorites in this category.

However, lipped suspending baits such as Smithwick's Suspending Rattling Rogue are often very effective on or around structure. Another bait that fits this category but is rarely thought of in this vain is the DOA Shrimp. Due to its internal weighting system, the DOA Shrimp has an extremely slow and natural-looking descent.

### POPPING CORKS

Nothing says Texas trout fishing quite like a popping cork rig and spring is when this rig really shines. Whether using live or artificial shrimp, popping cork rigs can effectively be used at a variety of depths.

Of course, today there are far more

popping cork options than ever before and anglers must realize that no one cork is perfect for every situation. The key is picking the right shape and noise level for each type of fishing.

The traditional conical, cupped faced popper is still in use, albeit now generally fitted with a through-wire and some bead combination. It is best used in deeper or dirty water when quite a bit of noise is necessary to “call fish up.”

Oval shaped cork rigs are next on the noise meter and are most effective in two to four feet of water ranging in clarity from green to slightly stained. Oval shaped cork rigs make the least noise and surface commotion and are ideal for shallow and/or clear water.

### MICROTACKLE

Due to the spring spawn, diminutive prey items fill Texas bays during April. As a result, predator fish such as speckled trout often lock in on these tiny shrimp and baitfish and ignore lures that don't fit the profile. Under those circumstances, it usually pays to go 'extra small.'

There aren't a lot of “micro” options for saltwater anglers, but DOA Lures offer



*Power drifts are usually the preferred method when needing to cover extreme amounts of water and is a common practice down south where fish can be spread over wide stretches of grass flats.*

a pair of tiny baits that can effectively be used to imitate newly hatched shrimp or baitfish. The DOA Tiny Terroreyz measures just two inches and is an excellent bait to throw when specks are cueing on glass minnow fry and other diminutive baitfish.

The transparent colors often work best in clear water conditions. The Tiny Terroreyz can also be rigged and thrown as a tandem.

If fish are targeting shrimp, DOA's two inch Shrimp is an excellent bait to throw. Since it comes rigged weedless, the 1/20-ounce shrimp can be worked easily over grass beds. It, too, is very effective when rigged tandem – or as a trailer bait behind a topwater plug.

The MirrOlure Lil' Jon is another good option when fish are keyed in on tiny prey. The Lil' Jon can be cut and shortened to the length at which it properly represents the prey fish are keying on.

### POWER FISHING

The warmer water and more active fish in April lend to making power fishing techniques effective. Power fishing can be done on foot or out of boat. It really depends on the conditions and the angler's preference, but there are a variety of ways to cover water quickly during spring.

Power drifts – Fishermen working



*In many Texas bays, spoil islands are prime locations for spawning trout to bed up, giving anglers an opportunity to catch trophy fish packing extra pounds.*

out of boats, kayaks or canoes can make long, quick “power drifts.” This is usually the preferred method when needing to cover extreme amounts of water and is a common practice down south where fish can be spread over wide stretches of grass flats.

There are times, especially when a decent concentration of fish is found on

a particular flat, when slowing the drift speed may be necessary. A drift sock (or two) is usually just the tool for this task. Anglers can also use a PowerPole or StakeOut Stick to periodically pause their drift to make extra casts in a specific area.

Power wades – When fish are known to be on a certain flat or piece of structure, wading may be a better option. However, during April fish are often still found in muddy bottom. When they are, power wading can be difficult, as the mucky bottom makes it especially difficult to move fast without making noise. This is not as big of an issue if water is dirty and/or rough. But, on calm days with clean water, fishing muddy bottom areas quickly is usually best done by boat.

However, when fish are found over sand it is easier to move quicker. Also, when fish are on sand it is indication they are more aggressive, which also lends to successful power wading. In any event, when quick wading during spring, it is a good idea to wear protective leggings or “sting ray boots”, as stingrays are also getting more active and anglers moving faster are less likely to be able to effectively “shuffle” across the bay bottom.

### CHANNELS

Early in spring, as water temperatures fluctuate between warming and cooling with the cycle of a string of warm days followed by late fronts, channel edges



*April is a time when quantities of quality speckled trout can be caught.*



Whether using live or artificial shrimp, popping cork rigs can effectively be used at a variety of depths.

are often THE go-to for quick catches of specks. Periods of warmer will be up high on water column against wall or even on flats immediately adjacent to channel. On the contrary when a front pushes through fish will drop back into channel for a day or so, hanging in the more insulated deep water until the temperature rises once again.

#### LAND CUT

Perhaps the most productive stretch of channel on the entire Texas coast South Texas' fabled Land Cut. Fishermen and guides from Baffin, Corpus and Port Mansfield all converge on this land locked section of the ICW during spring. Drifting along the edges of the Land Cut can result in amazing catches in both numbers and of size of trout.

Because it is situated so far from a Gulf pass, tidal effect is often negligible at the Land Cut. However, wind and passing barges can create water movement that triggers fish to feed. The run to and from the Land Cut can be punishing on windy spring days, but the results are usually worth the bumpy ride.

#### SPOIL ISLANDS

Spoil islands and the flats that ring them are almost always productive during spring. This is especially true during early spring when the water is not quite warm enough to give fish the confidence to venture far from the safety of deep water.

And, flats sandwiched between channels and spoils islands are generally of a muddy bottom nature, giving fish an extra layer of insulation. In many Texas bays, these are also prime locations for

spawning trout to bed up, giving anglers an opportunity to catch trophy fish packing extra pounds. However, as an aside, it is encouraged for fishermen to release any egg-laden fish so they can complete their spawning cycle.

#### GRASS FLATS

Bays with grass flats will see those areas get hot for trout during

spring. Good numbers of keeper fish will be found over deeper flats, grass beds and humps, while larger fish will be in shallower grass flats and potholes. By month's end, targeting potholes and grass edges will be a prime way to target trout along the southern portions of the Texas coast.

While it's almost inevitable that April will see a number of high-wind days that roughen bay waters, each spring day also holds the promise of boxes of quality size specks and, quite possibly, the fish of a lifetime. **T★J**



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## What was HOT at SHOT 2019: Chapter 2

The 41st Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor Trade Show (S.H.O.T. Show), presented by the National Shooting Sports Foundation set new records during its four-day run in January. The number of exhibiting companies exceeded 2,400, and their booths covered more than 692,000 net square feet of exhibit space.

The Supplier Showcase, which began two years ago, more than doubled in size to 540 original equipment manufacturers and more than 400 companies displayed products in the show's New Product Center. The new one-day Pop-Up Preview gave visibility to more than 230 new exhibitors displaying clothing, footwear, camping and other hunting and outdoor gear. More than 58,000 industry professionals, plus a few hundred invited press roamed over 12.5 miles of displays. Thankfully, after 10 years in the very disconnected Sands Expo Center, this growth has prompted the Shot Show to move to the MGM Grand Conference Center in 2020.

Though the latest firearms are the stars of the S.H.O.T. Show, the supporting cast is filled with the newest ammunition, accessories, gear, clothing and more. The ammunition makers went all out this year.

Federal rolled out 25 new products and here are a few. For big boomers

there is the HST 10mm auto launching a 200-grain hollow point at 1135 fps. They have added 40 S&W and 45 Auto loads to the Hydra-Shok Deep line. The popular Barnes Triple-Shock X bullet is back and available in 17 loads from 223 Rem. to 300 Win. Magnum. The Trophy Copper in 223 Rem. and 338 Lapua Magnum feature a copper-alloy construction that provides up to 99 percent weight retention with a polymer tip and boat-tail to increase the ballistic coefficient.

Heavyweight TSS shot shells have six new 12 and 20 gauge rounds that include blended loads that combine No. 7 and 9 or 8 and 10 Tungsten Super Shot for some interesting down range results. For the sporting clays crowd they have the Top Gun Sporting line Available in 12 loads, including 12, 20, 28 and .410 gauge featuring hard pellets, high velocities and less felt recoil. All the new loads are shown at [www.federalpremium.com](http://www.federalpremium.com).

For 2019 Kent is upgrading the line with the introduction of the new Fasteel



*The soft shooting Kent Elite Low Recoil Training Shells.*

2.0 Precision Plated Steel line of non-toxic shotshells. The foundation of Fasteel 2.0 begins with a high-performance base-wad to optimize functioning in semi-auto firearms, allowing for fast follow-up shots and ensuring reliability. They use zinc-plated shot and nickel-plated heads to provide added corrosion protection from the elements.

Improvements in powder technologies have allowed for increased speeds on select loads, while maintaining pattern uniformity and managed recoil. Custom blended, low-flash powders provide clean-burning performance. They offer a wide range of 12 and 20 gauge with some zipping out at 1650 fps.

For fans of old double guns or folks who just hate recoil Kent brings out the Elite Low Recoil Training shells. Custom blended powders loaded at moderate pressures soften recoil while maintaining standard target load velocities. They pack in smaller loads of the proprietary Diamond Shot that also helps soften recoil. They offer a 12 gauge 2 1/2 inch shell that send a 3/4 ounce charge of #8 shot out the barrel at 1200 fps and a 12 guage 2 3/4 inch shell that pushes a 7/8 ounce load of #8 at the same 1200 fps.



*The sweet Cimarron '62 Pocket Navy Conversion in .380ACP.*

Before you 3 ½ inch Magnum lovers poo-poo these numbers remember the great British bird hunters of the 1800's famous for downing thousands of birds did most of it with 2 ½ inch shells loaded with 7/8 ounce of shot. These are perfect shells for practice, lot of shooting, and preserving the condition of beloved old double guns. See [www.kentcartridge.com](http://www.kentcartridge.com).

Walking down the firearms isles I always have to visit our friends at Cimarron Firearms from Fredericksburg, Texas. Famous for their wide selection of high quality reproduction cowboy guns they have come up with another winner, the '62 Pocket Navy Conversion. A reproduction of the early coat-pocket size conversion revolvers produced by Colt around 1873.

The original idea was to create a three inch barrel model, but our friends in the government decided it should have a six inch barrel for reasons of their own. So we have a six inch round-barreled, ejectorless model. This jewel holds five rounds of surprisingly... .380ACP. Built by Uberti their patented firing pin safety allows us to load all five chambers.

This gorgeous pistol sports a rich, historically accurate blued finish, with a color case hardened frame, brass trigger guard and back strap, and an attractive, one-piece varnished, walnut stock. Due to the six inch barrel they kiddingly refer to this little gem as the 'Pocket Buntline.' The many choices of .380 ammunition on the market offer versatility but be warned, if you pick up this pocket popper you will by it. Visit [www.cimarron-firearms.com](http://www.cimarron-firearms.com).

In the gear area a long search of mine ended, at least for now. I have never had a large hunting pack that had the strength, size, and versatility I felt necessary. I once had a large frame pack from a famous supplier that was guaranteed to be the right stuff fall apart on day two of a hunt in the Alaskan boonies somewhere near either Russia or Sarah Palin's house. Oh sure, I got my money back weeks after I returned, but that did not make up for the inconvenience.

Now Slumberjack, long known for excellent hunting, camping, and overland gear, has introduced the 65 liter, Deadfall hunting pack featuring their proprietary Perception DST (Disruptive Shadow Technology) camouflage pattern designed

for concealment in various environments based on the experience of their head designer as a member of the U.S. Army 82nd Airborne Division who collected camo patterns from around the world and paid attention to nature. Also, DST looks good and their logo is a stylish SJK.

With 65 liters of storage space split between a sizable main compartment and three external pockets of varying sizes, this pack will haul what we need and keep it close at hand. A valuable asset is a stowable multi-weapon carry system that easily transports a bow or rifle while an adjustable back suspension system ensures a custom fit. Dual aluminum stays with an HDPE frame sheet provide excellent support for heavy loads.

Side compression straps can be routed over or under the side pockets, maximizing pocket access and compression options. An adjustable padded reinforced hip belt makes for weight bearing comfort. This whopper is top-loading and hydration compatible plus has pockets and attachment points for all you want to haul.

The Deadfall is designed for hunts lasting for days that require a bunch of



The very versatile Slumberjack Deadfall pack.

gear plus it is perfect for airline travel, will fit in the overhead, and make everyone else's packs look child like. See the Deadfall and more at [www.slumberjack.com](http://www.slumberjack.com).

I am already looking forward to reporting on SHOT Show 2020! **T★J**

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## CoastWatch | Danno Wise

As the first full month of spring, April certainly does bring warmer weather, warmer water and overall a little better fishing. Of course, these conditions also encourage more fishermen to hit the 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.

However, things more or less balance out in April because though there will be more boats on the water, there will be much more productive water to fish this month. With improved conditions there will be plenty of room for everyone to spread out.

Much of the early spring focus along the Lower and Middle Texas Coast will be on speckled trout. There will still be some egg-laden sow specks yet to spawn, giving anglers an opportunity to target trophy fish.

With the warming conditions, virtually every stretch of water will be producing good numbers of trout. Redfish action will also be good and there will be plenty of spottails cruising the flats.

Tarpon fishermen should also start dusting off their tackle, as the first rolling fish of the year could be seen at any time starting in April. Schools of large tarpon should be moving up the coastline from Mexico, making visits to South Padre Island, Port Isabel and Port Mansfield over the next several weeks. Snook activity will also be perking up along the southernmost stretch of Texas sand.

Offshore anglers will also start seeing a little action during April. Again, lower coast anglers will have an opportunity to see a few things earlier than the rest of Texas, such as kingfish, which should be moving in a little closer off South Padre during April.

Finally, the beachfront, jetties and passes will once again be a viable option in April. Some speckled trout should be making their way through the passes and into the surf. Additionally, black drum and sheepshead should be mainstays around the rocks. 🌟🌟



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPT. AUSTIN CAMACHO

*Magical days await in the pristine waters either side of the Queen Isabella Causeway and between the mainland at Port Isabel and South Padre Island.*



Port Isabel guide Capt. Austin Camacho says April sees outstanding speckled trout fishing on the southern edge of the Lower Laguna Madre.

“April is the prime month for catching good trout,” Camacho said. “There will be a lot of trout still spawning and the water will be warmer so the fish will be a lot more active. Early in the month we will be focusing on trout more than anything. I spend a lot of time fishing the west side, throwing shrimp under a popping cork. We will also have quite a few good trout on the spoils out front of Port Isabel. Again, most of the time we’ll be throwing shrimp and popping cork.”

“It’s usually windy in April, but whenever we get a calm morning, I will be throwing topwaters. My favorite is a Super Spook in either bone or red/white. We catch a lot of good trout on bait, but

we usually will catch our biggest trout on topwaters.

“Trout will definitely be our focus, but we will have plenty of redfish around in April, too. If we are looking for reds, I will run up north and hit the banks. For redfish, I’ll usually throw either topwaters or spoons.”

By the middle of April, snook will be filling the Brazos Santiago Pass and will be crowding along the jetties. Joining the linesiders on the rocks will be schools of mangrove snapper, ladyfish and spawning sheepshead. As an added bonus, the first tarpon on the season should be making their way through the pass.

Port Mansfield guide Capt. Steve “JR” Ellis of Get-A-Way Adventures Lodge says speckled trout is his primary target during April.

“We usually catch some big trout in April,” said Ellis. “And, there will still be some good ones that haven’t spawned, so they’ll be really heavy. But, I do recommend releasing all big trout – especially those that are full of eggs.”

“My favorite thing to do in April is to head up to the Land Cut. Fishing can be absolutely stupid up there this time of year. I have some of the best days of my life up there in April. We catch both trophy fish as well as just unbelievable numbers of really, really solid fish in the



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPT. AUSTIN CAMACHO

*Quality fishing and speckled trout are available for anglers fishing the Lower Laguna Madre in April.*

Land cut this time of year.

“Some days it’s a little too rough to make the run all the way up to the Land Cut, but we’ll also be seeing quite a few good fish around the East Cut and around the spoils both north and south of town. So we’ll have plenty of options regardless of the conditions.

“Personally, I’ll usually be throwing small topwater plugs like the Super Spook Jr. But, a lot of guys like slow sinking plugs and they do real well with those. If you just want to catch a lot of trout, you can usually do that pretty easily with soft-plastics and live shrimp in April.

“While I will be fishing for trout most of the time in April, there will also be plenty of redfish around. Most of redfish will be up on the sand flats on the east side, But, there will still be a few on the grass flats on the west side and some down in the Saucer. Again, I’ll mostly be throwing small topwaters, but you can always catch plenty of reds on soft-plastics and spoons.”

For many Corpus area anglers, April means it’s time to head south to the Land Cut. On days when conditions allow the run, fishermen can expect to find good catches of quality speckled trout as well as black drum in the Land Cut. Topwaters and soft-plastics worked along the edges of the channel and over the shelf between the channel and the shore will generally produce good results.

When the wind doesn’t allow for the long run to the Land Cut or when fishermen are looking for reds, they can

do well soaking cut shad on the flats of the Upper Laguna.

Baffin will also be producing plenty of big trout this month. Wading with



PHOTO BY DANNOWISE

*A good topwater bite will begin to emerge in April. Anglers drifting grass flats and throwing D.O.A.’s PT-7 will find success on fish hitting floating fakes.*

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to 20 mile per hour winds, it feels better with them on.

“On the days of partly cloudy skies, with climbing water and air temperatures, we have found so many fish up shallow you could wear shorts. I tell people fish are like us sometimes, and most days in April we would rather sit in the sun than hide under the shade of a tree. Fish will hover tight to shorelines and can be found on top of sandbars in as little as six to eight inches of water. Sand will heat up faster than anything around on these days, therefore looking closely at areas like this can be the key to success, especially for trophy trout.

“There may not be stringers full of fish in these small or tight to work areas, but the quality fish will be there. Stealth is key — turtle speed walking and long cast — most of the time these areas are going to be gin clear. Throwing small baits like four inch Down South Lures or Corky Softdines are the ticket, in my opinion. Getting close to some of these bigger fish lying on top of the sand can test one’s patience and skill, but the payoff can lead to some personal best.

“Walking areas like this can take you time and several hundred yards from the boat. Do not worry about trying to keep the boat behind you remotely with the power pole or trolling motor, as I think this will just create too much noise and keep pushing the fish further out in front of you or even out of the area.

“I believe another factor that attributes to this kind of trout activity is the spawn. Typically in late March and April, we start to see more numbers of big fish up shallow. Part of this is in preparation for the first spawns of the year. Now in saying that, we probably will not see them, at least in big numbers in areas like this daily, but if a person pays attention and takes note of days they do see more up top they could start putting the pieces of the puzzle together.

“This does not mean you need to start burning shorelines pushing these big fish off their beds. The most successful fisherman are those who can read what the water is telling them and walk into an area with confidence. Knowing that timing and location have given them all the information they need to stalk upon some of the bay’s biggest trout.”

Port O’Connor fishermen will also see speckled trout and redfish moving into

the shallows as the water warms throughout April. Topwater action should be good during the morning hours. Later in the day, soft-plastics should account for plenty of specks.

Live bait fishermen can do well with live shrimp, especially early in April. By the end of the month, however, croaker will have grown to bait size and most POC-area trout fishermen will be switching to live croaker for bait.

Redfish action will also be steady during April. The key will be finding water that is protected from the relentless spring wind. One advantage Port O’Connor anglers have during spring is that when wind really begins cranking, they can always move into the back lakes and find protected, productive water.

Throughout the spring, the back lakes will be holding plenty of redfish and black drum, as well as a decent number of speckled trout. Finger mullet, shad and soft-plastics will be the



PHOTO COURTESY OF N&MSPORTSMAN’S ADVENTURES

*Captain Nathan Beabout tells his clients that April is a month in transition. Plenty of quality speckled trout will be found in water that is fairly shallow. With the warm days, many times anglers could wade “wet” but with cool nights it’s better to have your waders along — just in case.*

best bets for redfish, while shrimp will still be the bait of choice for black drum and trout. 🌟🌟

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# Lake Roundup

## SOUTH TEXAS



By Danno Wise

Although it's not out of the question for a late season cold front to push through South Texas in early April, anglers are relatively assured of warm weather once the fourth month rolls around. In fact, this year April may feel more like summer as, despite an early start to the winter of 2018-19, late winter and early spring have been relatively warm.

Warmer weather, of course, brings many more people to the lakes across the southern half of Texas. So, anglers who have toiled in relatively isolation in recent months can expect much more company starting in April. Water skiers, jet skiers, swimmers, and recreational boaters will all head to the nearest lake as the air temperature rises and the sun continues to shine.

All is not lost, however. The fish also take note of the warming temperatures and will be much more active as April wears on. In fact, April can be a truly magical month on most lakes, as water temperatures are warm enough to encourage increased activity, yet not so hot as to make fish lethargic. As a result, anglers on lakes across South Texas can expect plenty of shallow water activity during the fourth month.

Having plenty of active fish in shallow water will entice many fishermen to toss topwaters during April. And, indeed, April can provide some explosive surface fishing activity. But, surface baits won't be the only effective offerings. April

is actually a month when virtually any shallow water technique will produce fish.

To that end, anglers should keep in mind black bass won't be the only species getting more active April. A variety of panfish, hybrid stripers, white bass and catfish will all be available this month, offering anglers additional options for spending a full day on the water in April.

**COLETO CREEK** – Victoria bass pro Dennis Lala says the black bass spawn will be all but over on Coleta Creek once April arrives. But, according to him, while some fish will be sulking deep post-spawn, the warming water will encourage fish to move shallow over the next few weeks.

"The water will be warming up quite a bit in the next few weeks," said Lala. "So the fish will be moving shallow. We'll have a lot of fish right up against the bank. We usually have a real good topwater bite early in the day during April. Noisy topwaters like the Frenzy Popper and the Rattlin' Buzz usually work best. I like to throw 'em right up on the shoreline.

"You can also catch plenty of bass on a spinnerbait early in the day. My favorite is a chartreuse/white bait with double gold willowleaf blades. Again, I like throwing them right up on the bank.

"Later in the day, I'll switch to a Power Jerkshad. I fish it weightless when the fish are shallow. When I move out to the secondary points or offshore structure, I'll rig it Carolina-style.

"You can also do pretty good on crankbaits and lipless cranks around the points or areas of flooded timber.

"Crappie fishing is real good in April. They're done spawning, too, so they head back to deepwater 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 a live minnow.

"There will still be plenty of catfish around the hot water discharge in April. Like always, you can catch them on things like Canadian nightcrawlers, shrimp or shad. Those catfish will stay in that area until summer. But, once that water starts warming, the hybrids

will leave the discharge area. 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 – again mostly on the shorelines and points. So, during April, about the only thing around the discharge will be catfish.

"Really, fishing should be pretty good in April. We'll still have plenty of bass in shallow water, which will probably change in May, when they start transitioning to deep water. But, in April they are easy to find and easy to catch – just work the shorelines and visible structure in shallow water."

**MEDINA** – According to Jim Gallagher of Jim's ReBait Tackle, April is one of the best months of the year for anglers on this deep, clear South Texas lake.

"April is almost always one of our better months," 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. That pattern will work it's way down the lake week by week, just like the spawn did. By mid-April, the entire lake should be in post-spawn.

"I always say that the spawn is tough on fish – physically. So, immediately after the spawn, when they're in a 'post-spawn' pattern, they aren't real active. They will hit – they still have to eat - but not if they have to chase it very far. So, you usually have to make a lot of casts and work the bait a little slower. This is also a time when I believe scented baits can make a difference. Berkley Power Baits and GULP! are good examples. Not only does that scent attract fish, it also masks human scent. It really does make a difference on those wary fish.

"By the end of the month, our water will be in the high 60s. The fish will be a bit more aggressive and you can start using baits like Rat-L-Traps and fast cranks. By then we should even have a

pretty good topwater bite in the mornings. It won't last real long. This lake is really clear so once the sun is up good, the topwater bite is usually over. But, first thing in the morning you can usually catch a few fish on topwaters in April.

"The white bass run will still be going on as well. They should be running in the river through mid-month. Up the river, Roadrunners, Flea Flies, and Schysters are good baits. A Tiny Torpedo with a Flea Fly trailer has also been a favorite on this lake. But, usually, you through anything small and you'll get plenty of white bass."

**CHOKO CANYON** – Once April gets underway, the black bass spawn on Choke Canyon will be in the waning stages. Given the unusually warm winter and early spring this year, Choke's black bass population will almost assuredly be in full post-spawn mode come April.

Post-spawn fishing on Choke is a mixed blessing. On the plus side, locating post-spawn fish isn't all that difficult - most will be hanging around deeper structure. Most often, good numbers of fish can be found up the river in 10 to 12 feet of water. Concentrations of post-spawn bass will also be hanging around the main lake structure, like old dams and tanks. 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, once anglers establish a pattern, they are able to boat plenty of bass from a relatively small area. So, it pays to blanket any likely area with a variety of baits and retrieve techniques before moving on.

Another plus for Choke Canyon fishermen – the lake has been more than half full for the past several months, which is twice as full as it was at the end of summer. Plus as of the first of March this lake was less than 14 feet below conservation pool. That means this popular lake has over 13 feet more water covering lots of brush, flats and other structure. Anglers will have to reorient themselves to old portions of a "new lake."

**FALCON** – The fish will also be holding a little bit deeper on Falcon during April. As with fish on other South Texas lakes, Falcon's resident black bass population will have completed their

spawning activity by April and will enter the post-spawn mode. Most of the quality fish will move out of the shallows and onto the deeper ledges.

There will be plenty of fish hanging on other deep structure, such as submerged treelines, as well. By and large, crankbaits will be the best bet, although plenty of fish will also be caught on soft-plastics and slow-rolled spinnerbaits as well.

Up the river catfish action will also be heating up. There will be number of good cats taken from the river channel in the lake as well. **T★J**



By TOJ Staff

**AMISTAD** — At the beginning of March "Big Friendly" was about 24 feet low with the spring draw down for agricultural needs still ahead. Also water temperatures were running a little behind the last two years. If cool conditions persist through March, April could still see bass just coming up on beds even up in some of the rivers and in the main lake.

In the clear water anglers sightcasting to bedded fish should pitch Texas rigged creature baits, jigs or Senkos. Spinnerbaits and lipless crankbaits are another option to slowly work along shallow shorelines to irritate females into a reaction strike.

Striped bass anglers should follow a pattern of looking for surface commotion in water in front of the dam. When fish go subsurface use electronics to find the bait balls and awaiting fish.

Catfish will begin to make a slow ascent toward the surface. Look for them in water 30 feet and less.

**O.H. IVIE** — As of early March this popular bass fishery was about 16 feet low. Compare that to being 38-39 feet low in 2018, so that means over 22 feet of additional water will have flooded historic

spawning flats as well as vegetation.

Anglers looking to fish the traditional shallow spawn for black bass should fish inside and out the mouths of rivers and creeks. Look for the deeper spawn in the main lake to occur later this month, and the really deep spawn to occur in May.

Until then finding fish will be a challenge with all of the new water and cover. Spinnerbaits are a good option to target buck bass. Once they are located thoroughly fish and area for the staging or bedded females.

**BROWNWOOD** — In early March this lake was just a few inches above conservation pool. Look for all shorelines to be in play as the spawn should peak in April. Cooler temperatures have water temps running a little behind normal.

Anglers throwing spinnerbaits and lipless crankbaits should locate bass activity. Expect spawning or post-spawn females to be nearby. Texas or short Carolina rigged baits are good options. So are jigs and weightless creature baits.

Crappie will also be starting to spawn in shallow water. Mini-framed spinnerbaits are good choices to cast in and around grassy areas. **T★J**

## HIGH PLAINS



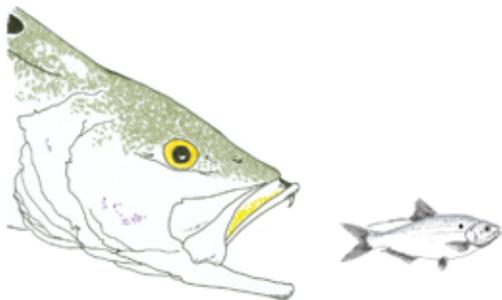
By TOJ Staff

Up on the High Plains look for **Coleman** to be a good springtime option. The lake was just inches over-full at the start of March. Look for bass to be in both spawn and post-spawn modes.

**Meredith** continues to be about 49 feet low, but there are scattered reports of anglers catching walleye on both live and artificial baits. Walleye stocking efforts by TPWD started in the spring of 2017.

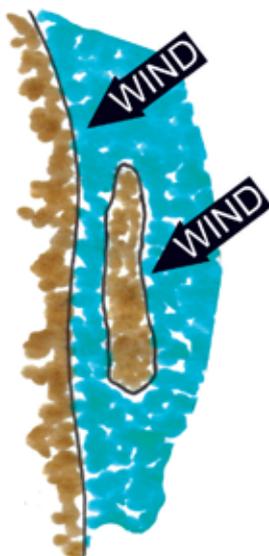
**Stamford** had a big rise earlier this year and was still a little above pool level in early March. All fish should benefit from a full lake this spring. **T★J**

## Windy Days Success

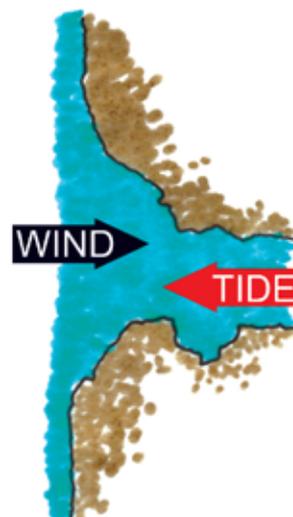


April almost always sees some of the year's windiest days. It is a natural inclination to find calm water along protected shorelines, back lakes, coves, etc. However, quite often the most productive water will be in some fairly rough water. Although fishing in these conditions can be physically demanding, the catches found on windward shores are often worth the effort.

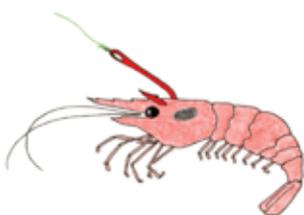
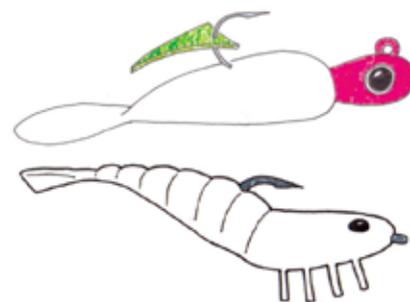
There are several ways in which wind can aid fishermen during spring. Just getting the water moving during times of slack tide is often enough to trigger a bite. However, strong wind also serves to concentrate bait which, in turn, attracts numbers of predator fish such as speckled trout and redfish.



There are several ways in which wind can aid fishermen during spring. Just getting the water moving during times of slack tide is often enough to trigger a bite. However, strong wind also serves to concentrate bait which, in turn, attracts numbers of predator fish such as speckled trout and redfish. When strong spring winds pound up against shorelines and spoil islands (left), they can pin shrimp and small baitfish in the shallows. The same occurs when the tide is flowing out of back lakes and marshes into an opposing wind (right). Anglers can anchor, stake out or use a trolling motor to fish from a boat in these conditions, but it is usually preferable to wade in order to work the area more thoroughly.



The key is finding areas where the prey items have been effectively trapped by the wind-blown current. This most often happens in areas that have irregularities in the shoreline. This scenario will become more and more common as spring wears on and a variety of newly hatched mullet, shrimp, mud minnows, crab and other prey items fill Texas bays. With that in mind, consider that most of the prey items fish are feeding on will be relatively small. So, anglers should throw downsize baits that closely resemble the size of prey in the area. If the water is murky making it hard for fish to locate lures, switching to glow colors and/or tipping lures with scent strips or chunks of shrimp can be effective.



Anglers can also have good results with live shrimp. Depending on the water depth, clarity and current speed, live shrimp can be freelined or fished beneath a popping cork. Popping corks have the advantage in dirty water when it is often necessary to use sound to help attract fish. If visibility is moderate to good, freelining can be very effective. In stronger wind or current conditions, it may be necessary to add a split shot or two to help get the shrimp down in the water column.

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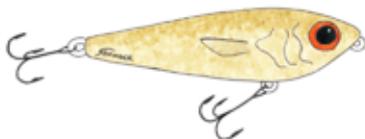
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## Shallow Water Selection

Early in April, bass on many Texas lakes will be in a deep water, post-spawn pattern. However, as the water warms over the course of the fourth month, fish will begin making their way into the shallows. When found in shallow water, bass are susceptible to a wide variety of lures.



**Topwater plugs** - Various topwater plugs, including dog-walkers, poppers and prop baits, will produce good catches of bass during spring. These baits are usually best used in “clean” water without a lot of vegetation to foul hooks.



**Artificial frogs** - Artificial frogs can be rigged weedless and effectively fished in the densest of cover. These baits are good surface options over hydrilla or other aquatic grass, as well as around stands of lilly pads.



**Jigs** - Jigs are very versatile in shallow water and can be very effective flipping or pitching in and around grass beds, lilly pads, docks, standing timber, and other bass holding structure in the shallows.



**Crankbaits** - Shallow running crankbaits can be working along shorelines and docks, through standing timber and over humps and points. Deeper running crankbaits can also be used to “dig” into the bottom in shallow water.



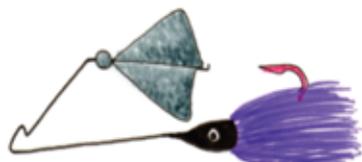
**Lipped divers** - These baits can be retrieved slowly to wake along the surface, more rapidly to act as a shallow running crankbait or used with a twitch-and- pause retrieve to cause the bait to dive then float back to the surface.



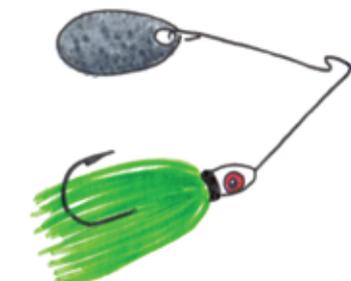
**Soft-plastic jerkbaits** - These lures can be twitched just beneath the surface, causing them to juke erratically. When rigged weedless, soft-plastic jerkbaits can be used around any type of vegetation or structure.



**Swimbait** - Hollow bodied swimbait can be rigged weedless on a wide-gap worm hook. Then, these baits can be retrieved slowly to sputter and wake on the surface or twitched like a soft-plastic jerkbait.



**Buzzbaits** - Buzzbaits have long been a favorite on lakes where bass prefer a noisy surface offering. Using a simple cast-and-reel retrieve, anglers can cover vast stretches of shoreline with buzzbaits.



**Spinnerbaits** - Very popular and versatile, spinnerbaits can be retrieved quickly to sputter near the surface, reeled at various speeds to work different depths, slow-rolled along the bottom or jigged. However they are used, spinnerbaits are one of the most effective shallow water lures.

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## 10 Tips For A Safe Spring Turkey Hunt



With 97 percent of the Lone Star State being privately owned many may assume hunting safety is not of primary concern. Nothing can be further from the truth.

Never assume you are the only person on a particular piece of property. Someone may unknowingly venture into the area already being hunted. It may be a fellow hunter, a trespasser/poacher or even a ranch hand.

The spring wild turkey hunting season is an exciting time that more than 2.7 million hunters nationwide looked forward each year. However hunters need to make sure their excitement does not blind them to the precautions they should take to ensure a safe and successful day in the field.

With that in mind, the National Wild Turkey Federation offers the following 10 tips for hunters to consider this season when they're in the woods:

1. Leave the area if you suspect there's another hunter already working the same bird.
2. Resist the urge to stalk turkey sounds. It is nearly impossible to sneak up on a turkey – they see and hear the slightest movements. Stalking is one of the most common causes of incidents.
3. Pick your spot in open timber rather than thick brush. Eliminating movement and excess noise is more critical to success than hiding in heavy cover. Camouflage clothing also helps.

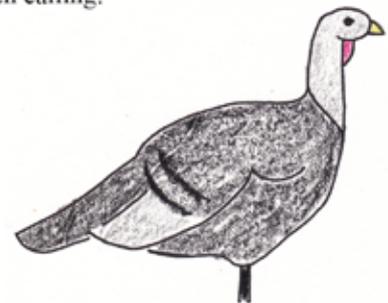


4. When calling turkeys, place your back against a large stump, tree trunk, rock, etc., that is wider than your shoulders and higher than your head to avoid potential confusion from other hunters.
5. Never wear red, white, blue or black – those are colors of a wild turkey gobbler's head and body – even on socks or buttons. Do not wear any bright colors. Wear dark undershirts and socks and pants long enough to tuck into boots.
6. Remain still and speak in a loud, clear voice to announce yourself to other hunters if necessary. Never move, wave or make turkey sounds to alert another hunter of your presence.
7. Keep your hands and head camouflaged when calling.

8. Maintain a clear field of view when using a camouflage blind or netting. Set a perimeter of no more than 40 yards.

9. Make sure your decoy is not visible when you are transporting it. Stash the decoy in your vest and check that the head is not sticking out. If you harvest a wild turkey during your hunting trip, you should cover the bird's head and body when carrying it to your vehicle.

10. Put your gun safety on and approach the downed bird with your firearm pointed in a safe direction after firing. Never run with a firearm.



April is the month to hunt turkeys, as all seasons across the Lone Star State are open. Get out and call a gobbler in close, but be forewarned, spring turkey hunting provides an exciting adrenaline rush and can become addictive.

Be Safe and Good Luck!

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# Outdoor Calendar

**THROUGH APRIL 28,**

Spring Turkey Season — **South Zone, 54 counties.** For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, or call (800) 792-1112.

**THROUGH MAY 12,**

Spring Turkey Season — **North Zone, 101 counties.** For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, or call (800) 792-1112.

**THROUGH AUGUST 31,**

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

**THROUGH AUGUST 31,**

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

**APRIL 1 - 30,**

Spring Turkey Season, 1 Turkey Bag Limit Counties, **10 counties** (Bastrop, Caldwell, Colorado, Fayette, Jackson, Lavaca, Lee, Matagorda, Milam, Wharton). For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, or call (800) 792-1112.

**APRIL 4,**

Metro-Crest Chapter Ducks Unlimited Fundraiser Banquet, **Addison.**

For tickets and reservations call (214) 543 – 2127 or (214) 616 – 6472 or visit [www.ducks.org](http://www.ducks.org).

**APRIL 5,**

Rockwall County Chapter Ducks Unlimited Fundraiser Banquet, **Rockwall.** For tickets and reservations call (972) 757 – 5357 or (214) 354 – 3848 or visit [www.ducks.org](http://www.ducks.org).

**APRIL 5,**

Georgetown Chapter Ducks Unlimited Fundraiser Banquet, **Georgetown.** For tickets and reservations call (512) 567 – 6606 or (512) 738 – 7049 or visit [www.ducks.org](http://www.ducks.org).

**APRIL 6,**

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](http://www.fishwest-end.com) or call (713) 594-4252.

**APRIL 6,**

Dripping Springs Chapter Ducks Unlimited Fundraiser Banquet, **Dripping Springs.** For tickets and reservations call (512) 496-8333 or (512) 785 – 7850 or visit [www.ducks.org](http://www.ducks.org).

**APRIL 6,**

Texas Tech University Chapter Ducks Unlimited Fundraiser Banquet, **Lubbock.** For tickets and reservations call (281) 723-0667 or (817) 771 – 1698 or visit [www.ducks.org](http://www.ducks.org).

**APRIL 9,**

Grimes County Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation Fundraiser Banquet, **Perryton.** For tickets and reservations call (931) 644-2763 or visit [www.nwtf.org](http://www.nwtf.org).

**APRIL 11,**

Corpus Christi Chapter Ducks Unlimited Sportsman’s Night Out, **Corpus**

**Christi.** For tickets and reservations call (361) 816 – 7338 or (505) 238 – 2507 or visit [www.ducks.org](http://www.ducks.org).

**APRIL 12,**

Austin Chapter Ducks Unlimited Fundraiser Banquet, **Austin.** For tickets and reservations call (512) 217 – 8483 or (320) 808 – 9453 or visit [www.ducks.org](http://www.ducks.org).

**APRIL 13,**

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 13,**

Amarillo Chapter Ducks Unlimited Fundraiser Banquet, **Amarillo.** For tickets and reservations call (806) 290-0916 or (806) 670 – 6039 or visit [www.ducks.org](http://www.ducks.org).

**APRIL 13,**

Bois D’arch Creek Chapter Ducks Unlimited Fundraiser Banquet, **Whitewright.** For tickets and reservations call (469) 662 – 6045 or (903) 361 – 3272 or visit [www.ducks.org](http://www.ducks.org).

**APRIL 13,**

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# Tide Tables

## APRIL 2019

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	H1:36A 1.2 L9:06A 0.2 H4:18P 1.2 L9:48P 0.9	H2:37A 1.2 L9:42A 0.3 H4:31P 1.2 L9:57P 0.8	H3:33A 1.3 L10:14A 0.4 H4:44P 1.2 L10:16P 0.7	H4:27A 1.3 L10:45A 0.5 H4:57P 1.2 L10:42P 0.6	H5:20A 1.3 L11:16A 0.7 H5:10P 1.2 L11:11P 0.4	H6:15A 1.4 L11:51A 0.8 H5:18P 1.2 L11:43P 0.3
H7:11A 1.4 L12:30P 1.0 H5:20P 1.2 7	L12:18A 0.2 H8:13A 1.5 L1:13P 1.1 H5:08P 1.2 8	L12:58A 0.1 H9:20A 1.5 L2:02P 1.2 H4:45P 1.3 9	L1:44A 0.0 H10:34A 1.5 L2:02P 1.2 H4:45P 1.3 10	L2:39A 0.0 H11:53A 1.5 L2:39A 0.0 H11:53A 1.5 11	L3:44A 0.0 H1:05P 1.6 L3:44A 0.0 H1:05P 1.6 12	L4:59A 0.0 H1:59P 1.5 L4:59A 0.0 H1:59P 1.5 13
L6:18A 0.1 H2:37P 1.5 L8:28P 1.2 H11:56P 1.3 14	L7:33A 0.2 H3:07P 1.4 L8:38P 1.0 H5:08P 1.2 15	H1:42A 1.4 L8:41A 0.3 H3:32P 1.4 L9:10P 0.8 16	H3:06A 1.5 L9:42A 0.4 H3:55P 1.3 L9:48P 0.5 17	H4:19A 1.6 L10:39A 0.6 H4:16P 1.3 L10:28P 0.3 18	H5:28A 1.7 L11:36A 0.8 H4:36P 1.3 L11:09P 0.1 19	H6:34A 1.7 L12:34P 1.0 H4:54P 1.3 L11:51P 0.0 20
H7:39A 1.7 L1:40P 1.2 H5:06P 1.3 21	L12:34A -0.1 H8:44A 1.7 L1:18A -0.1 H9:51A 1.7	L1:18A -0.1 H9:51A 1.7 L2:06A 0.0 H11:03A 1.6	L2:06A 0.0 H11:03A 1.6 L2:59A 0.1 H12:17P 1.6	L4:02A 0.3 H1:20P 1.5 L4:02A 0.3 H1:20P 1.5 25	L5:16A 0.4 H2:03P 1.5 L5:16A 0.4 H2:03P 1.5 26	L6:30A 0.5 H2:28A 1.1 L7:34A 0.5 H2:59P 1.3 L9:21P 1.0 H2:45P 1.3 L9:15P 0.9 28
	H2:28A 1.1 L7:34A 0.5 H2:59P 1.3 L9:15P 0.9 29	L1:28A 1.2 H2:6A 0.6 L2:59P 1.3 H2:59P 1.3 L9:18P 0.8 30				

## MAY 2019

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			H2:59A 1.3 L9:10A 0.7 H3:12P 1.3 L9:30P 0.6	H3:57A 1.4 L9:50A 0.8 H3:24P 1.3 L9:49P 0.4	H4:50A 1.5 L10:29A 1.0 H3:34P 1.3 L10:13P 0.3	H5:41A 1.5 L11:10A 1.1 H3:40P 1.3 L10:41P 0.1
H6:31A 1.6 L11:53A 1.2 H3:39P 1.3 L11:14P 0.0 5	H7:23A 1.7 L12:39P 1.2 H3:30P 1.3 L11:51P -0.1 6	H8:18A 1.7 L12:33A -0.2 H9:18A 1.7	L12:33A -0.2 H9:18A 1.7	L1:22A -0.2 H10:23A 1.7	L2:17A -0.1 H11:27A 1.6	L3:22A 0.0 H12:23P 1.6
		7	8	9	10	11

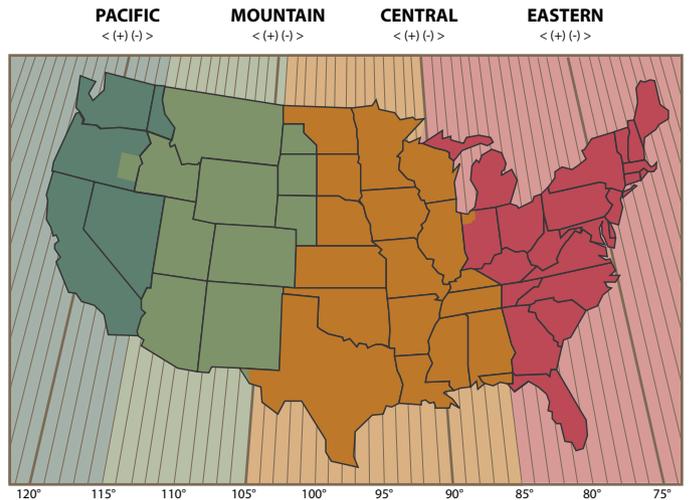
### Times are for Galveston, Galveston Channel

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 2019

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1 ●	2 ●	3 ☾	4 ☾	5 ☾ NEW	6 ☾
	10:55A - 3:55P	11:30A - 4:30P	12:05P - 5:05P	12:50P - 5:50P	1:35P - 6:35P	2:25P - 7:25P
7 ☾	8 ○	9 ○	10 ☾	11 ☾	12 ● FQ	13 ☾
3:15P - 8:15P	4:05P - 9:05P	4:40A - 9:40A	5:40A - 10:40A	6:40A - 11:40A	7:40A - 12:40P	8:35A - 1:35P
14 ☾	15 ☾	16 ●	17 ☾	18 ☾	19 ● FULL	20 ●
9:25A - 2:25P	10:10A - 3:10P	10:50A - 3:50P	11:30A - 4:30P	12:30P - 5:30P	1:25P - 6:25P	2:15P - 7:15P
21 ☾	22 ☾	23 ○	24 ☾	25 ☾	26 ☾ LQ	27 ☾
3:10P - 8:10P	4:10P - 9:10P	4:40A - 9:40A	5:40A - 10:40A	6:40A - 11:40A	7:40A - 12:40P	8:30A - 1:30P
28 ☾	29 ●	30 ☾				
9:10A - 2:10P	9:45A - 2:45P	10:20A - 3:20P				

## MAY 2019

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1 ☾	2 ☾	3 ☾	4 ● NEW
			10:55A - 3:55P	11:30A - 4:30P	12:10P - 5:10P	12:55P - 5:55P
5 ●	6 ☾	7 ☾	8 ●	9 ●	10 ☾	11 ☾ FQ
1:55P - 6:55P	2:55P - 7:55P	3:55P - 8:55P	4:30A - 9:30A	5:30A - 10:30A	6:30A - 11:30A	7:30A - 12:30P

● 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.

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