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MY KIND OF PATRIOTISM

Maybe it is a change in attitude that comes from simply getting older. The expression of frustration with changes that occur and how the "younger generation" is letting this country go to hell.

I heard it from my grandfather. My Dad and Mother both have expressed their concern and as members of the "Greatest Generation" what will become of the country so much was given to preserve and defend.

Now in middle age I too have wondered if the next generation, and those that follow, will toe the line when things are most difficult. This is not questioning the resolve of those that volunteer to serve in the military. The question concerns changes over time of a more dismissive attitude by a large portion of the populous. It seems too many never knew or have forgotten.

As a young boy I remember the patriotic songs from previous times. Some were from World War I like George M. Cohan's "Over There." It reflects a period when this country rallied to the aid of the rest of the free world. It was when tyranny threatened American allies and the lyrics let the world know "The Yanks Are Coming."

There was a bit of a shift in music culture by the time Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Much of the music themes seemed to focus more on romance and the separation from loved ones during war. However, Irving Berlin's "God Bless America" rallied patriotic feelings and asked God's blessings on "land that I love...from the mountains to the prairies..."

The Korean War occurred within a few years of the end of the most recent war to end all wars. Music of that time was a bit of a carry over from World War II.

During the Viet-Nam War this country started down a path of significant change. Some was needed while a lot created its own divisiveness we continue to struggle with today. In an effort to support those that fought in an unpopular war, Staff Sergeant Barry Sadler's "Ballad of the Green Beret" proclaimed "America's Best."

Moving through the end of the Cold War we embraced Lee Greenwood's "God Bless The USA." It was a much-needed anthem at a time when many tried to rekindle the patriotic pride this country was founded and had prospered. It pointed to our flag as a rallying point when it proclaimed, "Cause the flag still stands for freedom, and they can't take that away." It also honored "the men who died who gave that right to me."

The various wars in the Middle East and the attack on the World Trade Towers on September 11, 2001 brought military responses as well as several songs including Toby Keith's "Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue." Keith forewarned those responsible that "Uncle Sam put their name at the top of the list," and how "the Statue of Liberty started shaking her fist." Ultimately the lyrics acknowledged how "this big dog will fight when you rattle his cage and you'll be sorry you messed with the U.S. of A — cause we'll put a boot in your ass, it's the American way."

Beyond the songs that rally patriotic support — we live, breath and play in the lands and on the waters of the free. The diversity of the landscape of this country is emblematic of those that live here and embrace all that make America great.

America turns 242 years old this July 4. Remember and share our songs of the past, and experience what God created across our lands. Then consider what kind of positive impact you can have. It may well start at home or with those you are closest.

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

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TOJ Notebook

Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission Approves 2018-19 Hunting Regulation Changes

Hunters will see several hunting regulation changes this fall, including an early opener for dove season in the South Zone, a mule deer season in Lynn County, experimental mule deer antler restrictions, an increase to the northern pintail bag limit, and a one week reduction to the spring Eastern turkey season in 13 counties for 2019.

The following modifications and clarifications have been made to the 2018-19 Statewide Hunting Proclamation, details will be incorporated into this year's Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Outdoor Annual, have been approved by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission:

- Open the general dove season in the South Zone on Sept. 14; earliest starting date for the region since 1950.
- Shorten the Eastern spring turkey hunting season in Bowie, Cass, Fannin, Grayson, Jasper, Lamar, Marion, Nacogdoches, Newton, Panola, Polk, Red River, and Sabine by one week while retaining the current closing date of May 14. The Commission also approved closing the Eastern turkey season in Upshur and San Augustine counties.
- Open in Lynn County a nine day

buck-only mule deer season with no special archery season.

• Set a 20-inch minimum outside antler spread of the main beams restriction on mule deer bucks in Briscoe, Childress, Cottle, Floyd, Motley, and Hall counties.

• Clarify that deer antler restriction regulations that state in each county where antler restrictions are imposed, a person who takes a buck in violation of antler restrictions is prohibited from subsequently harvesting any buck deer with branched antlers on both main beams in that county during that current deer season.

• Lastly, The Commission adopted changes that simplified archery regulations by remove requirements for broadhead hunting points to have two cutting edges and a cutting width of 7/8 of an inch. Also removed were the minimum pull requirement of 125 pounds and the minimum crossbow stock length of 25 inches.

After re-evaluating a proposal that would permit the use of air guns and arrow guns to take certain game animals, game birds, alligators, and furbearers, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission

has rescinded the previous rule they adopted in March and has requested staff to modify their recommendations and propose new rules to be considered by the Commission at their next scheduled meeting in August.

Hunting season dates for the 2018-19 seasons can be viewed on the TPWD website. **T★J**

Lt. Colonel Oliver North Poised to Become NRA President

Lt. Colonel Oliver North, USMC (Retired) will become President of the National Rifle Association of America within a few weeks, a process the NRA Board of Directors initiated during its highly successful Convention held in May in Dallas. "This is the most exciting news for our members since Charlton Heston became President of our Association," said NRA Executive Vice President and CEO Wayne LaPierre. "Oliver North is a legendary warrior for American freedom, a gifted communicator and skilled leader. In these times, I can think of no one better suited to serve as our President."

North said he was eager to take on this new role as soon as his business affairs

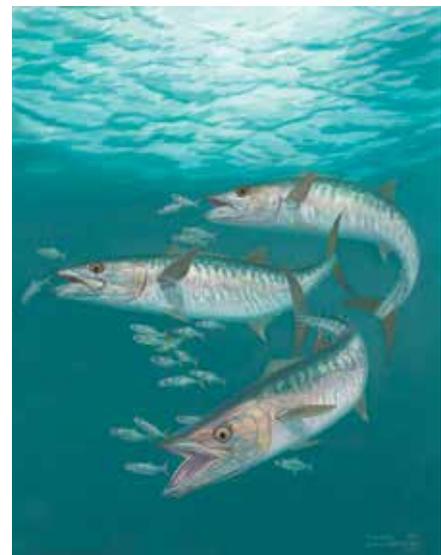
Cover Art

They are called "kings" for a reason. They are a primary staple for near-shore and offshore anglers fishing Gulf waters.

Smaller sized king mackerel are very sporting on light trout tackle and help round out a day after limits of specks have been caught from the surf. Further offshore kings in the 40 to 50 pounds class or more are referred to as "smokers" as they will burn-off line when they make their noted sizzling runs.

Popular wildlife and sporting artist Randy McGovern has captured three of these pelagic speedsters as they feast on available bait. His "We Three Kings" is aptly named and expresses "reverence" for these sleek gamefish.

For more information on "We Three Kings" plus other fine works of art by Randy McGovern, visit www.randymcgovern.com, email at Randy@McGovernwildlife.com or call (770) 598-4090. **T★J**



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were put in order. North is retiring from Fox News, effective immediately. "I am honored to have been selected by the NRA Board to soon serve as this great organization's President," North said. "I appreciate the board initiating a process that affords me a few weeks to set my affairs in order, and I am eager to hit the ground running as the new NRA President."

The NRA Board acted quickly to begin the process for North to become President, after former NRA President Pete Brownell announced in Dallas, in order to devote his full time and energy to his family business, he had decided not to seek election to a second term. In his letter to the Board, Brownell wholeheartedly endorsed North for President.

"Discussing this with Wayne LaPierre," Brownell said in the letter, "he suggested we reach out to a warrior amongst our board members, Lt. Colonel Oliver North, to succeed me. Wayne and I feel that in these extraordinary times, a leader with his history as a communicator and resolute defender of the Second Amendment is precisely what the NRA needs. After consulting with NRA-ILA Executive Director Chris Cox, First Vice President Childress and Second Vice President Meadows, I can report there is extraordinary support for Lt. Colonel North."

"Pete has served the NRA with great courage and distinction," LaPierre said. "I am grateful that he joined me in enthusiastically recommending Oliver North to the Board of Directors."

After the announcement, NRA First Vice President Richard Childress informed the board that he had multiple commitments in the next several weeks and was unable to be immediately available to serve as interim President. The Board then selected Second Vice Pres-

ident Carolyn Meadows to serve as its interim President. Meadows will step aside in a few weeks, when Lt. Colonel North is prepared to take on his new role as NRA President.

LaPierre congratulated the NRA Board for its action. "The board acted quickly and with great vision," LaPierre said. "Oliver North is, hands down, the absolute best choice to lead our NRA Board, to fully engage with our members, and to unflinchingly stand and fight for the great freedoms he has defended his entire life." 🌟🌟

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Announces New President/CEO

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Board of Directors has announced Kyle Weaver as its new President and CEO, effective June 30, 2018.

"It is a tremendous honor to serve as the leader of the most respected wildlife conservation organization in the country, one that does so much for elk, elk habitat and America's hunting tradition," said Weaver. "Moving forward, as a team, we will elevate the delivery of RMEF's mission, including our lands and access work as well as advocating for our hunting heritage."

Weaver comes to RMEF from a long and successful career with the National Rifle Association, where he rose from an entry level position to ultimately serve as an NRA Officer and Executive Director of General Operations. His oversight included educational, safety and training programs, grassroots fundraising, as well as hunting and conservation programs. He brings extensive experience with board relations, volunteer management and fiscal responsibility and oversight, along with program building and imple-

mentation. "My entire career has been dedicated to protecting, promoting and supporting our rights in the outdoors as hunters and conservationists. I am excited and welcome this opportunity. I look forward to using my full energy to serve our donors, members, volunteers, partners and sportsmen and women everywhere in furthering RMEF's conservation mission," added Weaver.

"We are excited to have Kyle join us and look forward to his leadership as we build on the success of RMEF," said Philip Barrett, chairman of the RMEF Board of Directors.

Larry Potterfield, a long-time friend of Kyle, lifelong hunter, author, decorated business leader and founder and CEO of Midway USA, added, "The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation plays a critical role in the conservation of one of America's great wildlife resources. Its long-term success is critical for the preservation of the species and the rights of hunters. Kyle Weaver is the perfect choice to lead this great organization into the future."

A passionate and avid hunter, Weaver has supported RMEF for well over a decade and is a life member. Currently, the RMEF president and CEO position is held by Nancy Holland, who stepped into the role in February from her board position to facilitate the transition to the new leadership. Upon completion of this transition, Nancy will return to her role on RMEF's Board of Directors.

Kyle is a graduate of Longwood University in Virginia, where he attended on a collegiate baseball scholarship. Weaver is a founding board member and current Chairman of the Fathers in the Field mentoring ministry. He, wife Ashley and their family will be relocating to Missoula. 🌟🌟

NSSF Expels

Dick's Sporting Goods

The National Shooting Sports Foundation® (NSSF®), the trade association for the firearms, ammunition, hunting and shooting sports industries, Board of Governors unanimously voted in May to expel Dick's Sporting Goods from membership for conduct detrimental to the best interests of the Foundation.

Dick's Sporting Goods recently hired a Washington D.C.-based government affairs firm, for "Lobbying related to gun control." Dick's Sporting Goods CEO Edward W. Stack announced earlier this year

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the retail chain would end sales of modern sporting rifles, voluntarily raise the age to 21 to purchase firearms in their stores and called for more restrictive legislation. Dick's later announced they would destroy the remaining modern sporting rifle inventory. NSSF responded that business decisions should be individually made, but was nonetheless disappointed and the decision does not reflect the reality of the vast majority of law-abiding gun owners.

NSSF has a membership of more than 12,000 manufacturers, distributors, firearms retailers, shooting ranges, sportsmen's organizations and publishers. **T★J**

Top Sportfishing, Hunting and Shooting Equipment Brands for 2017

Sportsmen are spending millions of dollars on fishing equipment, but which brands are they buying? Southwick Associates surveyed more than 11,000 anglers in 2017 through their online AnglerSurvey consumer panel to identify the top brands in the market.

In 2017, some of sportfishing's most frequently purchased brands include:

- Top combo brand: Shakespeare

- Top fishing line brand: Berkley
- Top hard bait brand: Rapala
- Top dough bait brand: Berkley
- Top jig brand: Dirty Jigs
- Top sinker brand: Bullet Weights
- Top swivel brand: Eagle Claw
- Top rig brand: Sea Striker
- Top fly line brand: Scientific Angler
- Top fly leaders brand: Rio
- Top clothing brand: Columbia
- Top hat brand: Columbia
- Top landing net brand: Ego
- Top tackle box brand: Plano
- Top fishing knife brand: Rapala
- Top cooler brand: Coleman
- Top trolling motor brand: Minn Kota

Southwick Associates also surveyed more than 20,000 hunters and recreational shooters in 2017 through their online HunterSurvey and ShooterSurvey consumer panels to identify the top brands in the hunting and shooting market.

In 2017, some of the most purchased hunting and shooting brands include:

- Top rifle ammunition brand: American Eagle
- Top reflex/red dot sight brand: Vortex
- Top brand of scope mount: Leupold
- Top propellant/powder brand: Pyrodex

- Top bow brand: Bear
- Top arrow brand: Easton
- Top brand of nocks: Nockturnal
- Top archery target brand: Hurricane
- Top archery sight brand: Tru Glo
- Top reloading press brand: Lee Precision
- Top reloading brass shell case brand: Starline
- Top reloading shot brand: Eagle
- Top coverall brand: Bass Pro/Redhead
- Top backpack/waist/duffle brand: Badlands
- Top decoy brand: Zink/Avian-X
- Top trail camera brand: Wildgame Innovations
- Top hunting knife brand: Buck
- Top holster/ammo belt brand: Blackhawk
- Top choke tube brand: Carlson
- Top grip/buttstock brand: Magpul

A variety of key fishing products are examined in the Southwick Associates 2017 Fishing Participation and Equipment Purchases Report. This in-depth resource illustrates angle, hunter and shooters participation and shopping behaviors, including the percentage of sales occurring across different retail channels, price paid, and demographics for each groups buying specific products. **T★J**

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A Lot to Offer Offshore



Texas' Gulf waters offer diverse structure to fish, teeming with a variety of pelagic species.

Story by Robert Sloan

PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

On the horizon we could clearly see a flock of frigate birds working over a school of fish, and that's where the big Hatteras was heading. Getting closer we stared in disbelief, it was something you had to see to believe. A huge whale shark was surrounded by blackfin tuna and one 400-pound class blue marlin was in a feeding frenzy. The 10 to 20 pound black

fin tuna were using the shark as a shield to keep from getting eaten. That was out at a Cerveza Platform, roughly 80 miles offshore, and sitting in close to 1,000 feet of cobalt blue water.

The Gulf of Mexico has a lot to offer offshore fishermen along the Texas coast from the Sabine jetties to the U.S./Mexico border. King mackerel, red snapper and ling highlight the near shore species that

are well within an easy run for the mosquito fleet of small console boats. Farther out in the deeper water tuna, dorado, wahoo, sailfish plus blue and white marlin are caught. It all depends on how far you're willing to run.

"Most of the fish on the offshore menu are easy to reach in semi-calm seas," says Bill Panto, who has about 30 years of fishing off the Texas coast, and around



the world. “The Gulf of Mexico is one of the most difficult places to fish. It’s often rough, and the distance you have to run can beat you up pretty good. But once you get a taste of what can be caught it’s a type of fishing that will keep you coming back for decades.

“One of the best trips I’ve ever made was to one of the huge floating drilling rigs well over 100 miles off the Freeport jetties,” says Panto, who is a former Army Green Beret.

“Four of us went out there for a three-day run of fishing for tuna, wahoo, dorado and blue marlin. The water around that rig was well over a thousand feet deep.

When we arrived at about 10 p.m., the water was being churned up by black fin and yellow fin tuna.

We started out with big poppers on spinning rods, then switched over to chunks of bonito free-lined under the lights of the rig.

The next day we opted to troll with four rods behind the 36-foot Contender, “Muy Loco.” We ended up with dorado, wahoo and yellowfin tuna. On the third day we headed in with full boxes of fish. It was a fun time, but we were totally exhausted.”



PHOTO BY ROBERT SLOAN

Yellow fin tuna not only provide a test of one’s angling skills, but also provide some tasty table fare.

The crazy thing about fishing along the Texas coast is that the depths differ a lot from one end of the coast to the other. For example, you can run 7 miles off the Sabine jetties and still be in about 25 feet of water.

On the middle coast you can head out from the Port O’Connor jetties and be in 70 feet of water within 7 miles. And out of the Port Mansfield jetties you can fish the six fathom rocks, 5 miles out, and be in close to 50 feet of water.

Offshore fishing out of Mansfield and Port Aransas offers some of the best quick hit fishing you can find on the Texas coast. Out of Port Aransas Hospital Rock is about 36 miles out in 230 feet of water. The Aransas Bank is 40 miles out and covered by 204 feet of water. South Bakers Rock are another set of underwater structure that is 40 miles out in about 260 feet of water. On any given day anglers can troll those spots and have a good chance of hooking up with dorado, wahoo, sailfish, tuna and marlin.

On one occasion a couple of friends and I put in and made a run out of Port Aransas to fish the shrimp boats. These were working boats, pulling nets, as opposed to sunken wrecks. When a shrimper pulls in it’s net and begins to cull the by-catch all hell breaks loose. The cull is shoveled through a slot on the side of the boat.

The jacks show up first, then black fin tuna, sharks and even yellowfin tuna. This kind of action occurs roughly 10 to 15 miles offshore.

The way to catch the yellowfins is easy. While one person is at the helm, the other anglers free-line fresh pieces of by-catch behind the moving shrimp boat. This moves the tuna away from the shrimper and they are easier to catch. The yellowfin tuna hold and feed about 10 to 30 feet deep. This is a classic way to double down on both blackfin and yellowfin tuna. It’s crazy fishing with a lot of good eats at the end of the day.

Speaking of crazy fishing you might want to check out the snapper fishing over nearshore rocks out of Port Mansfield. I’m talking about fishing within a mile to five miles off the beach.

The water gets deep right off the surf and the rocks attract red snapper, kings and even dorado. This is well within state waters, so the snapper fishing is open year-round.

One particular day we went out to a rig about 10 miles offshore. Upon our arrival we saw tarpon rolling on the surface. We hooked up with two before they disappeared.

On another occasion, we found a shrimp boat about 7 miles out. We idled up to the stern. I threw over a handful of fresh chum and all of sudden a sailfish shows up. We spent an hour or so trying to catch it. Never did hook up.

On the opposite end of the Texas coast is the Sabine Bank. It's several miles off the Sabine jetties. On that bank are a number of rigs.

But that's not the big draw. Sure, the rigs hold kings and ling, but if you're looking for an absolute wild day of fishing tie on a 1-ounce silver spoon and fish the big schools of pogies. This is pogie central. One school can cover an acre of water.



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Deep water moves in close to shore out of Port Mansfield. Sometime the only slack in the hot action is when your line is not in the water.

You can actually see the kings busting into pogies, and they will climb all over a big and flashy spoon.

Farther off the Sabine Bank, anywhere from 30 to 55 miles, are wrecks and mud lumps, along with scattered rigs. One day

we out and I had procured some GPS numbers to a sunken boat.

It was 54 miles out of Sabine and over the next several years this one boat held tons of red snapper, grouper well over 50 pounds and ling, barracuda, kings and more. It was not only fun to fish, but also scuba diving, as well. On most days the water was clear and the spear fishing was off the charts fine.

The offshore fishing out of Galveston and Freeport can be some of the best you'll ever experience. The key is to head out with semi-calm seas. The best fishing will be way offshore.

For example, some of the best blue-water fishing out of Freeport will be at the Cerveza platforms about 80 miles out in just over 900 feet of water. The Tequila rig is about 75 miles out in close to 700 feet of water. The Little Sister rig is in close to 900 feet of water. It can be a tough run to reach these popular fishing destinations but worth the effort.

Since they are in such deep water you can catch just about anything from a yellowfin tuna to



PHOTO BY ROBERT SLOAN

Offshore rigs come in all sizes and distances from shore. These structures also attract a variety of fishing boats as well as blue water species.



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

In mid-July the Gulf of Mexico shrimp season reopens and shrimp boats become favorite targets for blue water anglers. Pelagic species will congregate under the shrimp boats as the crew culls its catch after dragging their nets all night.

400-pound-plus blue marlin.

The heaviest yellowfin I've ever caught was around 200 pounds and not far from Tequila. We hooked up with that monster in six to eight foot seas. I spent roughly two hours in the fighting chair before we put that one in the cockpit. It was more than likely a state record.

Sometimes you don't have to go that far to get into big fish offshore. The strangest catch I've ever made was about a 20-pound wahoo about a mile off the Galveston beach. This is a blue water fish that is generally caught in 100 to 900 feet of water. It hit a silver spoon.

The most remarkable catch I've made offshore is a ling that weighed just under 54 pounds. It's the heaviest fish in the fly fishing record book along the Texas coast. It was caught around a well.

One unique thing about offshore fishing is that there are so many options. One is to fish weed lines. These are long bands of Sargasso that attract lots of baitfish that in turn lure in gamefish like ling, tripletails, dorado, wahoo and even the occasional billfish. One very good tactic is to troll lures along the edge of a weed line. That's especially good in the dark blue deep water about 50 to 70 miles out. You never know what's going to latch onto a lure out there.

But you don't always have to use lures.

Live baits are deadly on just about any gamefish in the Gulf. Three of the best blue marlin baits you can have include a hard-tail, bonito or blackfin tuna. For big kings live pogies are tough to beat. In fact, they are the most used baits in kingfish tournaments.

Something else to keep in mind is that chumming is an excellent way to catch anything from ling to tuna. If you can find an anchored shrimp boat they will usually trade a basket of fresh by-catch for a six pack of cold beer.

Fishing offshore is not everybody's cup of tea. Long runs in rough seas can be brutal.

Conversely, when the Gulf is smooth the fishing is some of the best you'll ever tap into. **T★J**



PHOTO BY ROBERT SLOAN

The top of the Gulf of Mexico food chain include marlin. Big battle wagons to the mosquito fleet ply the waters for these prized gamefish.



The GREAT One!

Every sport has seen dominant players come ago. In pro bass fishing arenas, Kevin VanDam is like the Energizer bunny dressed in a gorilla suit. He just keeps going and going. No, make that casting and casting.....and catching and catching.

When and where this guy will catch a snag is anybody's guess. But for now VanDam just keeps right on building on a storied career and haunting generation after generation of competition like one of those bad dreams that keeps coming back no matter how many times you dream it.

Once recognized as the Kalamazoo Kid because of his Michigan roots, VanDam outgrew that nickname many moons ago in exchange for "KVD," simpler-yet-stronger stage moniker that has since become a familiar stamp branded onto fishing lures, apparel and other products

made by manufacturers who pay for the privilege to use it.

He has also been referred to as "The Great One," a lofty title befitting only of a quintessential super star with a sparkling resume to back it up.

VanDam has all of the bases covered, there. In fact, there is no one in the sport — past or present — who comes close in terms overall accomplishments.

At 50, VanDam either owns, is tied for, or is well within reach of grabbing several of the sport's most meaningful records.

Let's start with ones he doesn't already own, first.

Most Angler of Year Titles: AOY is considered by many to be the sport's most coveted title. It's based on consistency and goes to the guy who accumulates the most points by end of the season. Points are awarded in each tournament based on

how high you finish in standings.

VanDam has reeled in the AOY trophy seven times. In 1992, he became the youngest to win it at the age of 25. Only one angler - Roland Martin - has more AOY titles with nine. Martin was one of the early pioneers of the sport who retired from tour level competition in the early 2000s.

Bassmaster Classic Titles: The Bassmaster Classic is the BASS year-end championship that brings together the top points qualifiers for a three-day derby that awards \$300,000 to the top finisher. It's been said that winning the 'Classic is a career maker that can be worth \$1 million to the champ who plays his cards right towards endorsement royalties, guest appearances, speaking engagements, etc.....

VanDam has won the 'Classic four times. He is tied with the legendary Rick Clunn with the most Bassmaster Classic titles.

Most Tour Level Wins - KVD owns this one free and clear. In April, he added an unprecedented 25th tour-level trophy to his mantle with a dominating victory in the Bassmaster Elite Series event held April 26-29 on Grand Lake in Grove, Okla.

VanDam's most recent win shattered his own record of 24 wins and further cements his reputation as the greatest angler of modern times.

Many believe VanDam's all-time win record will never be broken. Martin is second in the Bassmaster all-time win column with 19 and Denny Brauer is third with 17. Both anglers are retired from the pro tour.

Clunn is the only current Elite Series pro remotely close to VanDam in total wins with 15. Clunn turns 72 this July. Oklahoma's Edwin Evers has 11 wins at the age of 44, but he needs to go on a roll to catch VanDam, who is showing no apparent signs of losing his touch. The four-time Bassmaster Classic champ won three times in 2016, once in 2017 and once in 2018. Many pros have fished entire careers and never found their way

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to the win column at the tour level. Some bass pundits believe Alabama's Jordon Lee could be on track to eventually be a threat to VanDam's record. Lee has registered two Bassmaster Classic wins and racked up \$1.7 million in earnings since turning pro in 2014. He is only 27.

All Time Money Winner: VanDam isn't just the winningest angler of all-time. He is also the richest. Or at least he should be.

His most recent win gave him \$6.36 million in career winnings, more than double that of Skeet Reese of Auburn, Calif., who has \$3.27 million.

VanDam's winnings are likely a drop in the bucket compared to what he earns off his sponsors, which include some of the biggest names in the industry.

A 2007 bassmaster.com story showed that VanDam earned \$500,000 annually off his sponsors, third behind Gerald

Swindle (\$515,000) and Reese (\$600,000). My guess is the sponsor dollars have been shaken up since that story appeared. The

Great One has won 15 tournaments over the last 11 years, including two Bassmaster Classics. **T★J**



BASS PHOTO

Kevin VanDam grabbed in his 25th BASS career win in April with a dominating performance at Oklahoma's Grand Lake.



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Maintenance Hogs

A few days ago I had a customer come in and said we had cleaned his gun two years ago and now the safety won't go on. I checked the serial number of the firearm against our records and it showed we had cleaned his rifle four years ago.

He said he had not taken the rifle out of the closet in all that time but had wanted to show it to his grandson and it wouldn't work. Upon further inspection of the rifle, sure enough the sear was stuck and would not hold the striker back. I had to remove the stock plus move the trigger back and forth several times to get some lube to move. This freed up inside the trigger. What had happened was the gun oil we used had dried and needed to be moved around so it could work again.

Guns are mechanical tools and they need to be used. The worst thing you can do is to put a gun in a case, throw it under the seat of your truck and in an emergency expect it to work. I have to admit I have a pistol in the door of my car that is there for an emergency. Many times I have checked it to find it full of dirt, spilled soda and even one time an old French fry.

Airplanes, boats, sports cars, motorcycles and guns are all mechanical items that we don't use very often, or often enough. When we don't use them regularly they become maintenance hogs.

When you first get a boat you use it all the time. You invite friends to go fishing or water skiing.

The boat runs great and is fun to use, and then you get busy. When it is not used for a few months and then wonder why it won't start. The battery is dead and the carburetor, injectors or worse is gunked up from old gasoline.

Now it has to go to the mechanic to have the carbs or injectors cleaned and the battery replaced. If the boat had been left longer without use many more problems would have happened.

The same is true with guns. Gaskets go bad, the wood or fiberglass start to get soft and more. The main reason private airplanes are such maintenance hogs are because they never get flown

enough. A good private pilot will fly a plane 100 hours a year. That is barely enough to keep the oil lubricating the engine.

Now I have to admit it - I do the same thing. I own and collect motorcycles, classic sports cars, as well as, a good number of Walther pistols. I currently have more than 20 motorcycles which I have to keep running and looking good. For me to ride that many bikes are impossible. I had to hire a young man to come by once a week and ride each bike for 30 minutes then clean it off and put it away.

I do the same with my Walther pistols. I cycle the slides, cock the hammers and pull the triggers on all of them at least once a month.

I do have a few of these pistols in long term storage but I packed them in Cosmoline grease and wrapped them up in an old rag before I put them away. I know it will take me several hours to clean these guns up if I ever wanted to use them but I also know that the grease will protect them from any corrosion while they are stored.

If the customer had used his rifle for target shooting or hunting at least once a year he would not have had the problem. If you keep a handgun in your car for an emergency you should go check it now to see if it works.

In much of Texas and particularly the southern part of the state we have severe humidity and heat. Most cars are air-conditioned which makes for a big problem with guns and having them rust.

Going from 100+ degrees to a nice cool air-conditioned car can cause a handgun to hold moisture which will start to corrode the gun. Without the right lubricant you will have problems when you need your gun the most.

The same is true of the handgun in the drawer by your bed. I know I'm all the time putting things in that drawer which should be stored somewhere else.

I have pulled out my handgun to find it covered with hand cream from a bottle that the top came off. It might be a good



The tiger trigger would not move because of old lube. Guns, like other mechanical items need to be used regularly to assure they are operating properly.

time to check the gun you depend on the most and make sure it works.

The same is true with ammunition; if you store your ammo in a wet humid place you will have problems with it. Keeping ammunition in the garage or in the attic is just asking for trouble. Keep ammunition in a closet where it will remain cool and dry and it should last 50 years or more.

There is some yellow tipped 50 caliber ammo which was on the market that is dangerous. It came from Venezuela and had been stored wrong. The cases had corroded and even the powder was starting to deteriorate. Some of the ammo just would not fire and some would blow up the gun. The ammo had been repainted and repackaged to look good but it was very bad. It didn't take too long to remove it from the market.

Just remember mechanical things like



It is not a good idea to have soda spilled on the pistol you depend upon, or discover a candy wrapper stuck to the wrong place.

to be used and the more they are used the better they work. So to keep your outdoors toys in good working condition. You have to go shoot your guns more, ride

your motorcycles more and go fishing in your boat more.

Just remember to have fun while you're doing all this maintenance. ☆☆☆

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The Love of Brush



Lake Fork guide Gary Paris shows off two nice crappie caught while fishing over brush piles.

Once the bait shows up, predators like crappie and bass won't be far behind.

Story and Photography by Matt Williams

If fish could talk, there is little doubt they would express plenty of love for brush piles. My guess is crappie and bass would scream the loudest. Both are prone to gravitate to mangled, tangled fish hotels like cowboys to honky tonks.

The love for brush comes natural. It provides a foundation for zooplankton and other microorganisms on which shad, minnows and other little fish feed. Once the bait shows up, predators like crappie and bass won't be far behind. The bigger fish sometimes use brush as cover to ambush the little guys when they swim dangerously close.

Fishermen are pretty fond of brush piles, too—so much so that they routinely plant them at strategic locations for the purpose attracting fish, particularly crappie and bass.

Planting brush piles is a sweaty drill that takes time and hard work to accomplish.

Cut the brush. Haul it to the spot. Outfit the brush with blocks or sandbags so it will stay glued to bottom. Then dump it overboard.

The theory is crappie and bass will, in time, find the brush and set-up camp around it. Anglers who zero in on the sweet spots can naturally boost their chances of catching fish using any number of baits and prescribed fishing techniques.

For crappie, small jigs and shiners are the main orders of the day around brush piles. Bass anglers meanwhile rely heavily on Texas rigs, jigs and crankbaits to do

their damage.

Years ago, sinking brush piles far from shore, usually in association with a underwater points, ridges or channel swings, was considered a good way to create honey holes that you could have all to yourself. Today, that's only partly true.

Brush piles still attract armies of fish as well as they ever did, but the idea that you can build one and call it private for very long is nothing more than a pipe dream.

That's because innovative electronics technologies from industry leaders like Lowrance, Garmin and Humminbird combined with quality mapping programs have made it possible to scan a lake's bottom like never before and locate "sweet spots" in relatively short order.

"There just aren't any secrets anymore," says Bill Fondren of Brookeland. "If you sink it, sooner or later somebody else is going to find it and fish it. I don't agree with it, but that's the way it is. If you find somebody sitting on a brush pile you put out about all you can do is move on and hit it another day."

Fondren isn't a hammer and nails kind of guy, but he knows a thing or two about building fish hotels.

The veteran crappie fishing guide does the majority of his business on the 114,000 acre Sam Rayburn, but pointed out that building brush piles is a tactic that will work elsewhere.

"I you build it, the fish are going to come," Fondren said. "It will work on any lake, anywhere in the country."

Location, Depth are Key

Fondren likes to build his brush piles in relation to underwater structure away from high traffic areas. He prefers points that originate in shallow water and extend well into the lake proper before colliding with a channel or some other abrupt change in contour in 30 to 35 feet of water.

"I'll mark the end of the point with a buoy, then I'll go back into water that's about 12 to 15 feet deep and start working my way back out," he explained. "I'll use my electronics to look for some type of secondary structure on that point, such as a dip, indentation or drop off. That's where I'll drop my brush pile."

The guide says he has more than 60 brush piles on his home lake. He has them to positioned at varied depths ranging from 15 feet out to 35 feet.

The shallower brush piles are most attractive during late spring and early summer, when the fish are leaving spawning areas and headed towards their summer haunts.

Deeper brush will hold fish from summer through winter. Fondren says how and where the fish will position around the brush depends on oxygen content, sunlight and cloud cover.

"They'll almost always be suspended," he said. "Sometimes they'll be on top of the brush, out to the side or right down in the middle of it. That's where good electronics can help."

Quality Construction

A fish hotel is only as good as you build it. Quality materials are at the heart of every good brush pile.

Fondren says the type of brush used is especially important. His favorites are willows and sweet gums.

"The worst thing you can use is cedar or cypress, because you will stay hung up down there when you go back to fish it," he said. "I really like willows, because the 2/0 hooks we use will usually slide off the limbs pretty easy. You'll still get hung, but it's not near as bad as cedar."

Fondren says it is important to check with local authorities and/or property owners before cutting any trees along the shores of a public reservoir. In many cases it is illegal.

Size and Shape Matters



These brush piles when placed will attract the whole food chain and eventually attract crappie, bass and other gamefish.



Points that originate in shallow water and extend well into the lake proper before colliding with a channel or some other abrupt change in contour in 30 to 35 feet of water are good places to place fish attracting brush piles.

Brush piles of all sizes will attract fish. A small pile built using a couple of bushy limbs should be just fine if you fish alone or from a small boat with one to two passengers. It's best to have several different piles so you can move around and not catch too many from one spot.

Fondren does his fishing from a 24-foot pontoon, usually with multiple customers on board. He builds what he calls "a real brush pile" using 8-10 large limbs. The limbs are hauled to the spot using an opened sided barge of equal size. He spaces the brush to form a horseshoe shape around the nose of the boat.

"When I come back I can nose my pontoon into the opening so everybody has a shot at the fish," Fondren said. "I can use my electronics to see exactly where they

are positioned."

Anchoring It Down

How well the brush is secured to bottom and how it is positioned also lends to success.

Fondren weights his piles using cinder

blocks that are available at building supply stores. He connects the block to the base of the limb using stainless steel wire that won't rust and he snugs it tight.

"You don't want any slack or the wire will eventually break," he said.

Fondren said crappie piles should always be positioned so they stand vertical in the water column, whereas brush piles for bass should be leaning to the side. He sometimes attaches a sealed gallon jug to the top of the limb to prevent crappie brush from laying over as it sinks.

"You can also hold it up with a piece of trotline string, but I like to use a jug," he said. "Once it is down there it stays put pretty well."

Keep 'Em Fresh

Any brush pile constructed using natural materials will rot or lose its appeal in time. Fondren likes to pull maintenance on his sweetest spots once a month by adding fresh limbs to the mix.

"I'm a firm believer in keeping things fresh and green down there," Fondren



PHOTO COURTESY TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

Artificial structures made from PVC pipe and other man-made materials are another option plus they never need to be replaced or refreshed.

said. "I don't completely rebuild it, but I think adding a few limbs definitely helps. The green leaves bring in the bait fish, and that's what attracts the crappie."

Artificial Options

Most hardcore anglers will agree there is no substitute for a tangled maze of limbs when it comes to attracting and holding crappie and other sport to a particular spot, but artificial structures made from PVC pipe and other man-made materials work pretty good as well. Adding to the appeal of man-made structures is they are everlasting, meaning they never need to be replaced or refreshed.

Fisheries managers with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department have been very active in carrying out artificial fish attractor projects over the years. The agency has engaged in partnerships with a number of private organizations like Friends of Reservoirs and the Brazos River Authority to bolster critical habitat on aging reservoirs all across the state.

TPWD's Spencer Dumont said nearly three dozen different habitat project restoration projects have been funded using \$70,000 generated by the sale of the department's largemouth bass

conservation license plates since 2015, along with another \$50,000 in partner support.

"The primary structures used are what we call Georgia structures — a PVC frame with 100' of irrigation tubing entwined around the pipe developed by fisheries managers with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources," said Dumont, TPWD Region 2 regional director. "A variant of the Georgia structures is a cube with the tubing impaled over the PVC pipes. We also use commercially available Mossback fish habitat structures. Old fashioned brush piles are used occasionally, too."

The exact locations of the artificial structures are readily available to anglers at tpwd.texas.gov/fishboat/fish/recreational/lakes/fish_attractors.phtml.

The link shows maps of nearly 45 Texas lakes where fish attractor projects have taken place. It also GPS coordinates to each attractor. Enter the coordinates into a GPS chart plotter, go to the spot and drop a line.

"The benefits are primarily for attracting fish and increasing angler catch, especially in habitat-poor water bodies," Dumont said. "Some projects

in smaller water bodies have focused on habitat to improve fish recruitment with spawning beds and juvenile fish habitat. Another benefit of the projects is anglers can see directly what their purchase of a conservation license plate has accomplished.

Off-shore fish structures in habitat-poor water bodies provide adult fish with feeding areas and cover."

Lake Fork fishing guide Gary Paris is one the many anglers who have found some success around TPWD fish attractor program. The guide and his clients hammered out some nice limits around the structures earlier this year and he's hoping they'll continue producing right on through summer.

"Some of them are loaded," Paris said. "And the fish are big. Some of my customers tell me they haven't caught this many quality-size crappie in a long time. There are some big bass hanging around them, too, along with some bluegills bigger than your hand."

The neat thing about fishing around those structures is it's hard to get hung up. Hooks don't stick in the plastic very easy." **T★J**

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Off-Season Hunting Practice

We've all heard legendary football coach Vince Lombardi's saying "Practice does not make perfect. Only perfect practice makes perfect." I guess if you think about it, that's a true statement. But let's carry the practice thought a little further. I think when you practice a lot you have the freedom to experiment and try things you would have never thought of trying in normal real life circumstances.

Here's what I mean. I've learned a lot about holding over on long shots, adjusting for the wind etc. while hunting for ground squirrels. If I miss, it's not a big deal and I'm shooting a .22 so ammo is cheap. I'll get 400-500 shots/day so I have plenty of practice.

So when practicing you can experiment with different ways of doing things. Here's an example. I used to rodeo a lot. I was at a rodeo school put on by Charlie Winnett and he had Mel Autry (who was my hero) as the instructor. Mel told me I needed to learn to jump out a horse. I'd never heard of jumping out a horse so I started learning. All cowboys sat down on the back of their bareback horses and got situated and then nodded to open the gate, right?

Unfortunately, sometimes you get some chute crazy horses that will be biting you, laying down, flipping over etc. It's a big game to them. They're drama queens. So to jump one out you put your hand in the rigging, stand above them with your

legs on each side of the horse and nod. When the gate opens you drop down and off you go.

So that's what I mean, when you experiment and practice you come up with new ideas and get better. I could not have just blindly done that in a rodeo in a real life situation.

The way I learned to hit running animals was somewhat by mistake. When I was a kid we hunted on a lease down by Hondo. I hit a small buck at 10 yards and he took off running. I put the deer in the center of the scope and shot again and had two bullets about 3-inches apart in the chest. I learned then to hit something running when it is within 20-30 yards, don't even look at the crosshairs. Just center it in the scope and the crosshairs will be where you want them to be.

I think I'm a lot better shot than I would be because in the spring I can ground squirrel hunt for a couple of months and get a lot of shooting. Then as that is winding down I go bowfishing which allows me to shoot my bow a lot.

So yes, I think ground squirrel hunting with my Crosman airgun or .22 makes me a better shot while big game hunting.



You need to practice shooting freehand. Many times that's the only shot you'll have.

Getting a good trigger pull is second nature. Shooting off of a backpack as a rest or using a bipod, bush or rock is second nature and taking a faster shot with my bow is natural since carp can get spooky and don't always allow you to get the perfect shot.

So out of respect for the "Perfect practice makes perfect" theory let's explore ways we can implement that into our hunting world in the off season.

GOOD TRIGGER PULL

I think when you do a lot of shooting it can help make this simple task automatic. Like taking a breath, letting out half, using the first pad of your finger to pull instead of wrapping your whole finger around the trigger and so forth.

We all know that getting a good squeeze is an important element in making a good shot so why don't we practice that step more often? You can by shooting more in the off-season.



When hunting you may only have a second to improvise and use whatever is handy for a rest.

Also practice shooting holding your rifle stock tight, loose and at different spots on the stock. See which one yields the tightest groups for you. Also experiment with different brands of ammo and different grains of bullets.

RESTS

This is a big one. When hunting out of a deer blind you have a controlled environment but if you are still-hunting you never know when or where you may run into game. At a moment's notice you may have to improvise and use a rock, tree limb, backpack, fencepost, bipod or get into a setting position to stabilize yourself for a shot. Practicing these different shooting positions will give you more confidence to take a shot different than the norm.

WINDAGE

Practice shooting during windy conditions — by doing so will allow you to know how much to adjust for a variety of wind velocities and directions. During this exercise you can also practice making yourself more stable to offset being buffeted by the wind.

SCOPE MOUNTED

Is your scope mounted so you can just throw up your rifle and it is automatically focused? By this I mean you don't have to move your head forwards or backwards to have a full field of view. This is called eye relief. You may have a two to three inch range where you can hold your head and still see 100 percent view. You want to mount your scope so it is at the semi farthest point.

That way you don't get a scope bite. This is even more important when shooting uphill since your scope will be closer to your eye and probably held somewhat in an awkward position.

You need to have all your scopes perfectly adjusted so you can just throw them up and shoot. If you're practicing a lot you'll have noticed this.

I just grabbed a Brownells' adjustable torque wrench the other day to ensure that I use the proper in./lb. when tightening my scope. You'll want a torque wrench so you properly tighten your scope. If you tighten it too much you can damage the scope tube.

BOWS

Even though this is somewhat like comparing apples to oranges I still say that bowfishing helps me be a better shot with my bow, or at the very least a better

bowhunter. When bowfishing you have to take some quick shots. I've noticed that tournament bowfishermen are always shooting. If a fish is in sight, they take a shot at it. While you don't want to do this when deer or big game hunting, I think it helps a quicker response and ability to

shoot faster.

As we enter into the heat of summer don't put your guns and bows away until fall. Keep them out and shoot as often as you can. You might just find yourself feeling a little more comfortable with them once hunting seasons arrive. **T★J**



If no other rest is available learn to shoot in the kneeling position. Notice how Ron Spomer is using his sling to further brace himself.



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Finding Fish

Finding where the fish are supposed to be is easy. All you have to do is cruise around looking for a concentration of boats or simply follow the wake of another boat on their way to find fish. That supports the logic that all the fish (or at least most of them) in a river, estuary, or ocean are concentrated in a single area barely large enough to accommodate all the boats.

At times, folks who fish the well-known places are successful and catches may even be impressive.

You can count on occasionally discovering that these popular places prove to be enduring a dry spell when fish aren't responding to whatever bait or lure you are offering. The built-in consolation is that nobody is catching any fish, so that

means you're as good as the other anglers in that spot.

If you do come upon a gathering of fishing boats, a safe policy is to throttle down and cruise slowly around the fleet, watching very carefully for signs of activity. It doesn't take long to tell whether anglers are catching fish or simply waiting for the action to begin.

Where radios are used, you can often figure out what's happening long before you arrive on the scene by listening to the chatter. The rule of thumb says that the more radio activity, the fewer the fish that are being caught.

Discovering your own concentration of fish adds a new dimension to the sport and spices up a day on the water. Start with the assumption that all the fish in the

water are not trying to shoulder each other out of the way so they can have a prime position under the fleet of boats. Some will be in similar habitat elsewhere, while others may prefer a totally different set of conditions.

The most successful fishermen take the time to study the preferences of the species they seek. This secret to finding fish demands a systematic program designed to eliminate variables. Simple things such as favorable water temperature, oxygen content, presence of baitfish, currents, tidal stage and so forth help narrow the search. And, understand

that water depth where others have found fish can be a critical factor. If you can learn the water depth where others are catching fish, there's a strong possibility more fish will be at the same depth in another location.

On those memorable days when you start catching fish shortly after you are the only boat in sight or you are nestled among a fleet, there is a tendency to try to stay there for as long as the action continues.

There seems to be no such thing as catching too many fish. In your mind, those outstanding times make up for the days when catching a satisfying number of fish doesn't happen. Leaving fast action in one spot in order to find fish in other locations seldom enters the thought process.

One way to develop the approach of finding fish on your own is to stay with the fleet until you catch enough fish to satisfy your desires. Then, after you have had a good beginning, go ahead and look for other spots on your own.

Before you do, this is the perfect time to try different lures or baits or other techniques. It's all part of the learning process and you may very well discover a more effective method than the one that was catching fish.

When you do decide to leave the fleet to explore different waters, you will be relying on your own knowledge and ability.

Anyone who must depend on others to tell him where the fish are will never become a leading angler, because he will only score on those days when the fish are concentrated under the fleet. Along some parts of the coast, there are known spots where the fleet gathers every day whether or not the fish are biting.

The key to finding fish lies in removing as many variables from the equation as possible. Ask yourself questions and try to find the answer. In your judgement, will the fish be inshore or offshore, on the bottom or above the thermocline. Could they be at mid-depth or closer to



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Whenever you have the opportunity to use your own skill and experience to find fish, be sure to give it a serious try.

the surface?

What type of bait or lure will be most effective in producing strikes? Sometimes, trolling can be an effective starting point because it covers the most water in the shortest amount of time.

Understanding basic fish behavior also adds considerably to the solution of finding fish. Tides, currents, and flowing water of any type are important factors. Some species cruise into the currents or tidal flow looking for food, while others wait just out of the moving water waiting for the flow to bring the food to them. Feeder streams emptying into the main flow should attract your attention. Look for deeper channels where water enters an estuary or drains it.

And don't forget that fish are cold blooded which means that water temperature affects them. In cooler water, digestion takes more time and fish feed less frequently. Consider, too, that they tend not to chase a fast moving lure very far.

All of us have the tendency to ignore a boat that seems to be off by itself in what we might suspect is a non-productive area. The assumption is that the skipper may be

searching for fish with very little success or lacks knowledge. That may be true in some cases, but it could also be anglers who set out on their own and have found fish. It's worth investigating.

Whenever you have the opportunity

to use your own skill and experience to find fish, be sure to give it a serious try. You could find spots that others have overlooked, but more importantly, you'll enjoy greater satisfaction when you find fish on your own. **T★J**



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

The secret to finding fish demands a systematic program designed to eliminate variables.

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Lake Roundup

CENTRAL TEXAS



By John Jefferson

Last month, I began this column by writing: "There's an old baseball saying that goes: 'You win some, lose some, and some get rained out.'"

I used that to illustrate how cold and windy it was that day Don Steussy and I fished **Lake Travis**, together, and that you need to consider some days as bad weather days and just stay inside near the coffee pot.

In late May, I should have taken my own advice.

We had been to the coast the weekend before and hadn't gotten quite enough of a fishing fix. We promised ourselves we would treat us to some Central Texas plugging the following weekend.

We loaded up the kayaks and left early Saturday morning. The weather forecast was hot, dry, and very windy. Remembering my old geography prof at Oxford-on-the-Brazos who once told me the best time to go fishing was when you wanted to go fishing, we said dang the torpedoes, and gave it full throttle.

Arriving at a small, private lake where we have fishing privileges, we saw the water was fairly calm. We launched, and everything looked fine. That would soon change.

I started along the protected east shore while my wife Vicky headed along the dam, fishing the rip rap. It was cloudy, and the gentle breeze barely rippled the water near the shore, so I tied on a Teckel

Sprinklerfrog, probably the hottest-selling artificial bait in America last year.

I held my breath as the lure sailed toward the shore, remembering several previous exciting trips there. Then nothing happened. Multiple casts resulted the same. Then the wind started picking up.

I didn't need paddle-power to keep moving along the shore, just an occasional directional assist to stay far enough off shore to propel a decent cast. The sun was still behind the clouds, and it was a pleasant day.

Plus I was on the water with my favorite baitcaster and Vicky was near the end of the dam and still in sight. What could go wrong?

The breeze took me to the end of the bluff-sheltered side of the lake before my enthrallment with being there ended. I had one strike just as the bluff leveled off, and it didn't hook up. The Teckel frog specializes in that since the double hooks curl up along the lure's back instead of hanging down where fish strike. That keeps the lure from hanging up in moss, and I think it is one of the lure's attractiveness, since it churns over weed beds where the fish are located. Missing a strike like that just energizes me.

I back-paddled and hit that spot again hoping for a reprise of the first strike, but nothing-doing. I drifted into

shallow water at the end of the lake, hoping for a late-bedding bass, but to no avail. I turned around to go back where I had started, but was shocked at the wind, now in my face.

It was steady at 15 mph, gusting to about 25. But that just keeps a guy cool and builds muscle – right?

Several trips back to the dam and drifting along the same shore were uneventful, except for the physical strain going back south into the southeast breeze. Kayaks cut through wind and water fairly well, but after a while, it becomes a strain.

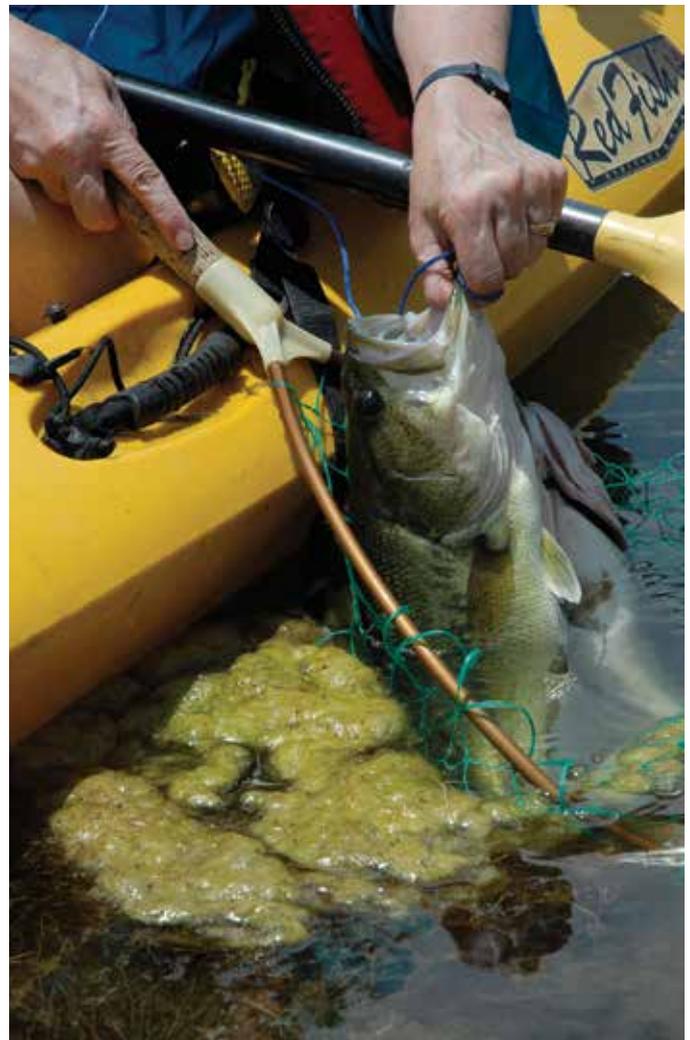


PHOTO BY JOHN JEFFERSON

The scrappy bass that the author had to have help landing when it refused to come to the net and a break-off was likely on the light line on the reel being used at the time

A strike now and then would have eased the pain, but that didn't happen.

I saw Vicky catch a small bass. She paddled over and told me she had three and they all had been deep. I'm notorious for staying with one lure until I lose it, but even I realized that the topwater bite had ended — if it had ever really begun. I changed weapons.

In fact, for the next few hours, I went through quite a selection from Bass Assassins to Mister Twister Mag Buzz Worms, a Cotton Cordell Silver Spot lipless crank, and a couple of others. I was at least proud of myself for changing tactics as the fish kept telling me they weren't hungry for what I was serving.

By noon, the sun was blaring down and wind was remaining just under the level that requires it to be named.

I could see Vicky heading back toward where the truck was parked, and decided it was time to do 15 for the team and call it a night.

As I neared the take-out point I wanted to make my first, last-cast with something different. I opened my tackle bag and noticed a small, yellow and white spinnerbait.

I don't remember buying it and think I found it stuck in some brush where an errant cast by an unknown angler had deposited it.

It was sort of a scraggly, pitiful piece of rubbish whose rubber skirt's strands had matted together in places from being cramped in a plastic tackle box with other neglected baits. For reasons I can't explain, I felt sorry for it.

It was like a stray dog that needed a pat on the head. I set aside my baitcasting rig, picked up my spinning rod spooled with light line and tied on the little second-hand rose.

I let my cast sink for a count of 3.5 and began reeling. Suddenly, there was a startling jerk on the line as the rod tip headed south. Fish on!

I let out a yell and saw Vicky look my way. As I started trying to reel in the fish, the reluctant marauder had other plans. It made its first jump and somehow the hook remained attached.

It was about as big as Vicky's three combined. Then I remembered the light line I had put on the reel for white bass and crappie. I couldn't remember the line test, but knew it had to be around six-pound test.

Knowing that, I gingerly played the fish, hoping to wear it out. That lasted several minutes, and I realized I was about to eliminate another item from my bucket list.

For years, I had hoped to someday hook a fish too big to land by myself. This was it. It wouldn't come close enough for me to net it.

And of the two of us, it was not the one getting tired. It was still about 12 feet away and jumped twice more. I started hollering for Vicky.

When I would sneak a glance to see how close she was, it looked like she was just sitting 150 yards away ignoring me. Kayak safety dictates paddlers keep a whistle or other noisemaker within reach. With my left hand, I grabbed mine and started blowing it. I learned later that Vicky had offered verbal directions on whistle usage.

The wind had taken me almost to the north bank, again, by the time she finally got to me. I felt like Hemingway was looking down, contemplating his next book. The entire allegory took about 10 minutes, a long time for a 17-18-inch bass, but one I didn't want to lose.

She netted it easily, but still about 12 feet away from me.

It won't make the record books, but it's

certainly my light-line record.

Lessons learned: If fish won't bite on the bait you're using, change bait. After trying other baits unsuccessfully, look at your options, and follow your gut instincts.

Even with second-hand cast-offs.

Bass will be deep in July. Fish accordingly. I'll use topwater baits early, but will switch to small, soft plastics around 9:00.

Also look for schooling bass on the surface. Jigging spoons, Shad Raps and Tiny Torpedoes are wise choices. 🌟🌟



PHOTO BY JOHN JEFFERSON

Since nothing else had caught fish for the author, a hunch pointed him to this small spinnerbait he once found hung on some brush in the lake. The lure was too light to use on his baitcasting rig, so he attached it to spinning rig spooled with light-test line, leading to a tenuous landing.

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Although water can be obtained by vegetation consumed, deer relish freely available water.

Story and Photography by Bob Zaiglin

There is something especially unique about water, particularly when it comes in the form of rainfall. Just the sound of it hitting the rooftops is therapeutic, and nothing like rain brings a sparkle in a landowner's eyes or initiates more discussion at the local coffee shop.

To the serious deer advocate, it's a precious commodity that can make or break a hunting season as they realize how critical this nurturing liquid is to the development of those calcium appendages they hold in such high esteem. Water

unquestionably is an integral part of wildlife management that dictates for the most part how large those racks or coveys will be in the fall.

Then again, rain in South Texas is actually a gift we never expect. When it occurs it results in jubilant celebration by those dependent on it — not only for its collateral benefits but for the fact that life as we know it depends upon it.

The amount of rainfall and particularly when it occurs, dictates just how successful we are at managing wildlife. But it's never guaranteed, thus we must employ every

scientifically supported strategy to make it available to the animals and birds we manage, which can be accomplished in a variety of ways.

Water conservation is nothing new to Texans, particularly to those in major cities where rationing water for various activities from watering lawns to washing vehicles has been established during the increasingly frequent shortages. To farmers and landowners, water conservation has been a way of life as they continually search for various ways of providing water to both domestic and



Water is paramount to all wildlife, which employ a variety of methods of obtaining it, like this flycatcher obtaining droplets falling from a deer.

wild stock that inhabit their properties.

The primary source of water for all of us, including the wildlife we cherish, is rainfall. The last three years have been abnormally good when it comes to precipitation, but at present we are rapidly transitioning to drought with a minimal amount of it this past spring. Should this dearth of rainfall continue, drought will overwhelmingly deplete the benefits that we have enjoyed and benefitted from over the recent past.

Prolonged drought is a common occurrence across the Lone Star State, thus it's not if but when it occurs that we must be prepared for.

When it comes to providing wildlife water, stock ponds ranging in size from .1 of an acre to a couple of acres remain a practical source of this valuable liquid, but the effects of evaporation rapidly deplete such resources.

The iconic windmill, once a ubiquitous feature of the landscape, assuaged the acute demand placed on water, but even when these towering mechanisms were functioning optimally, they remained dependent on wind, not to mention excessive and oftentimes expensive maintenance.

Today they are being replaced by solar-driven submersible pumps, obviously a more efficient method of delivering water to the surface. However, even

these electronic-powered devices are dependent on the water table or depth of water in order to continue functioning on a consistent basis.

For example, there are places in Maverick County that are nearly void of water and I know of some ranchers whomust purchase water and ship it in at a considerable cost. To put it into perspective, water is more valuable than gasoline. Without it none of us, let alone wildlife, can exist, making it even

more necessary for us to be conservation-oriented and more importantly efficient in its development and use.

Second only in importance to the presence of water is its availability. Where water exists on a particular property plays a critical role as to how the habitat is

utilized by its inhabitants.

Forexample, a property of say 500 acres, which approximates the average ranch size in Texas, with only one dependable stock tank on it will experience over-browsing and grazing around that site simply as a result of the concentration of animals, a situation that can be diverted by the development of additional tanks say in each corner of the property.

With four tanks (1 tank per 125 acres), the animals can and will utilize more of the ranch, thus reducing the impact of what I refer to as forced concentrations around a required resource on a limited basis.

The dispersal of water is one of the most effective methods managers can control if not eliminate excessive use of highly preferred forage species.

The most efficient yet expensive method of dispersing water is by the use of gravity.

Basically, by locating an elevated point on a property, water can be pumped to a large holding tank located at the site, facilitating gravity to deliver water through a number of pipelines to troughs positioned throughout the lower segments of the property.

By doing so, one not only satisfies the water requirements of the wild



The once ubiquitous windmill has been replaced by less than attractive but more efficient solar-powered submersible wells.



One method of reducing the impact of deer on and around limited water sources is to disperse water across the landscape.

inhabitants, but it encourages animals to utilize more of the ranch, in turn reducing the possibility of habitat abuse as no single place is utilized more than the other. And to the landowner, it represents a substantial increase in land value.

But how can a deer hunter on a small 200-acre piece of deer turf benefit those deer without breaking the bank, which in essence is the real question.

This is even more important to those who don't own the property and oftentimes are not sure how long they will be allowed to remain on it.

A number of cost effective ways of providing water are

available. One of the most cost efficient ways of providing water to wildlife is the construction of water guzzlers. A procedure successfully implemented in the rugged and often dry mountains of the Trans Pecos, guzzlers represent a valuable source of water to desert sheep, mule deer, and a myriad of other species occupying this mountainous region. This same tool can be employed in other portions of Texas with minimal expense.

A guzzler or above ground water catchment is similar to the once common cisterns that were filled by rain water hitting the roof of a house. The galvanized roofing material representing the water-gathering capability of a guzzler is slightly inverted in the center, facilitating the flow of rain water to a pipe leading to a water holding tank before it flows to a trough equipped with a cut-off valve. The size of the water apron or roof varies, and additional panels can be added should they be required. Not only is the construction of a water guzzler an effective and inexpensive way of obtaining rain water, it represents a sense of pride by the individual building it, and a sense of satisfaction every time they observe a deer drink from it.

Man-made guzzlers can be modified in a variety of ways, and after that first one is constructed, those proceeding it can be modified as required. There are also a variety of commercially produced guzzlers on the market targeting a variety of species.

Another method of conserving water on an ephemeral basis following a rain shower is run-off from ranch roads.

Thousands of miles of ranch roads "senderos" are maintained annually throughout the state. In order to circumvent the eroding effect of run-off, mounds and water diversions are often established to interrupt the continued flow of water, particularly on roads that occur on a slope. By diverting the water off a road and into a cut-out diversion into the brush, the maintainer operator can dig out a small pond-like structure at the terminal end of the diversion, which can retain water for several weeks following a rain shower. It's not going to last forever, but every little bit helps, particularly in July and August when rainfall is extremely limited.

Manually delivering water to troughs positioned throughout a property is also

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an option. I work with several landowners that place a 200-gallon polyethylene tank on a trailer and transport water to pasture troughs when required. It is time-consuming, but its benefit to wildlife outweighs the burden of performing the task.

Drilling a well is the ideal way of providing water for wildlife, but it is expensive and in some cases impossible. There exists places that are limited, if not void of water, forcing landowners and their managers and oftentimes lessees to be creative in developing water sources.

A thorough knowledge of the landholding can prove especially beneficial when one's objective is to find water.

For example, if portions of a ranch are composed of a tight clay loam soil, small circs of one-tenth to one quarter of an acre in size can be established on select portions of a drainage.

Once again, the debilitating effect of heat and evaporation play a significant impact on longevity of the water, but hopefully not before the next thunderhead appears on the horizon.

It's true, animals like deer can absorb water from the forage they consume,

but they relish open freely available water. Fifty percent of a quail's body, for example, is composed of water, thus they require it on a daily basis. The provision

of water regardless its longevity or expense remains as the most critical element for wildlife because without it, we wouldn't have any wildlife to manage. **T★J**



One cost effective method of providing water to wildlife is the construction of water guzzlers.

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Without a doubt, more people take to the water during July and August than any other time of year. However, because so many more options are available during those months, the water hardly seems crowded.

From back lakes to the open bay and from the beachfront to the blue offshore waters of the Gulf of Mexico, good fishing will be found virtually everywhere during July.

Bay fishermen will still have their hands full with speckled trout, redfish and flounder. Surf fishermen will have an opportunity to land specks, reds, jacks, ladyfish and Spanish mackerel on a consistent basis. Many of the Gulf passes will also be temporary homes for tarpon and kingfish.

A little further offshore, kings, ling, bonito, dorado and more will be viable targets. In the big blue water, tuna, wahoo and a variety of billfish species will be tangling with anglers willing to invest in the fuel to chase them. **T★J**



July is an unbelievable time to fish the extreme southern end of the Texas Coast. Fishermen heading out of either Port Isabel or South Padre Island will have a myriad of angling options this month. Tarpon will be filling the Brazos Santiago Pass, as will kingfish, Spanish mackerel, snook, bull reds, speckled trout, jacks, mangrove snapper and more.

Inside the bay, snook fishing will be good in areas such as South Bay and Mexiquito Flats. Trout and reds will also be found in the shallows, particularly in areas such as Gas Well Flats and along the west side grass flats. Later in the day,

look for the specks to move to the deeper grassbeds and channel edges. Good numbers of lower end keeper specks should be available throughout the day along the Intracoastal Waterway. Flounder will also be hanging along the edge of the ICW and in the channels that intersect the spoil islands.

Offshore anglers heading out of Port Isabel or South Padre Island will be able to begin trolling as soon as they clear the jetties in July – or even before. There will be plenty of kings in the pass. Just outside of the pass, ling and bonito will be found as well.

A short run from the pass will put anglers on wahoo, sailfish and blackfin tuna. Marlin and yellowfin tuna will be targets for bluewater aficionados willing to run a bit further offshore. Dorado will be able to be found just about anywhere along the way, particularly if floating structure is located.

According to Capt. Steve “JR” Ellis of Get-A-Way Adventures Lodge in Port Mansfield, fish in the upper end of the Lower Laguna Madre will also be in a summer pattern come July.

“Starting in July, our fish will be in a summer pattern that will pretty much hold all the way through September,” said Ellis. “Really, this time of the year some of our



PHOTO BY DANNO WISE

Through the summer months of July and August redfish will provide a lot of the angling action. From chasing schools of spoils over grass flats to sight casting to them along shallow shorelines and back lakes.

best fishing is early in the day, before it gets too hot.

“If we are fishing for trout, we’ll be concentrating on grass beds, potholes and channel edges. We can catch some fish on topwaters on the flats early, but once it starts getting hot, they will be out on the outside edges of the grass and deeper grass



PHOTO BY DANNO WISE

Early and late area best options to beat crowds and find fish. Starting with topwater lures and then switch to soft plastics on jigheads could provide hook ups with quality speckled trout like this one caught by Josette Guerra.

flats. Good numbers of keeper specks will also be found along the ICW.

“Redfish are a little different,” he explained. “We can find them on the flats all day long. In fact, I usually like to start looking for reds on the flats a little later in the morning after the sun is up high so we can sight cast to them. There will be a whole lot of reds on the sand flats on the east side during July. Plus, we’ll have some really good sight-casting and fly fishing in that area.

“The jetties will also be really good in July. There will be a lot of bull redfish showing up around the jetties and in the East Cut. There will also be some Spanish mackerel, kingfish, snook and tarpon out there, so I’ll be out there quite a bit this month.”

Anglers heading to Baffin Bay should start out early morning fishing shallow rocks, grass lines or shallow grassy flats with small sand pockets. As the water warms up throughout the day, they should follow fish to deeper water – whether it is edges of grass flats or submerged rock piles. Fishing with croaker around the deeper rocks will produce the most fish. However, bigger fish will be up on the flats, especially early in the day.

There will be some decent trout fishing in the Upper Laguna – again primarily with live croaker. And, Packery Channel will be holding good numbers of black drum, redfish and trout from mid-summer on. **T★J**



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Offshore action out of the lower and middle coast will heat up. Kingfish will be the major draw for the nearshore crowd. However, don’t be surprised to find kings along with other pelagic species like dorado, ling, wahoo and billfish further offshore and around weed lines.

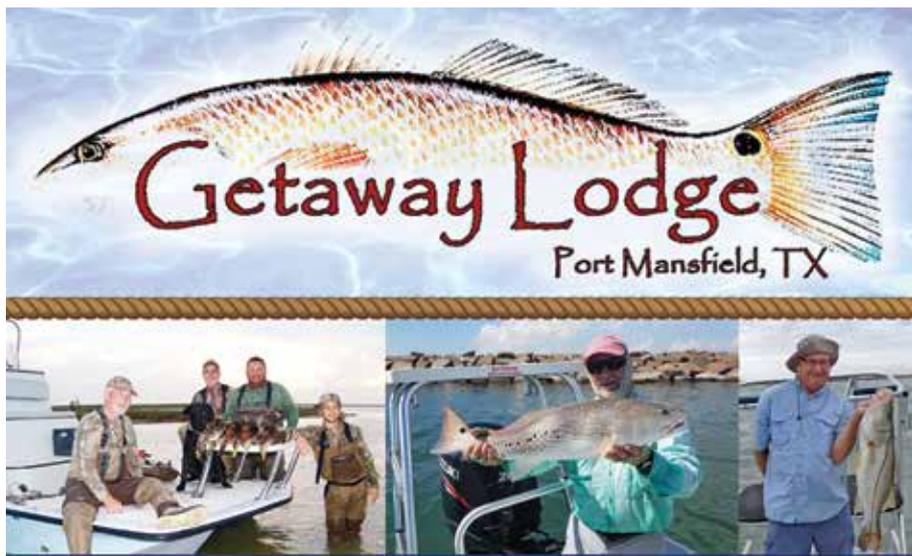


As is the case in most areas of the Texas coast this month, anglers in the Aransas

area will have a two-part plan — catch fish and avoid the crowds. Usually the best way to accomplish both tasks during mid-summer is to fish the low light periods. The fish are more active during the cooler early morning hours while the opposite holds true for the summer tourist crowds.

Throughout July, there will be good numbers of trout along the channel edges and around the wells in Aransas and Corpus Christi bays. The wells will produce good fish during the midday heat as well, but conditions must be calm for a safe outing to these mid-bay structures.

Redfish will be feeding on the flats



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during July. Areas like Dagger and Hogg will have plenty of active redfish, particularly early in the day. Fishermen looking for reds should concentrate on the sand pockets and the edges of grass beds.



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Fishing soft plastics or live bait under a Mauler on light tackle is a great way to attract speckled trout and redfish while drifting grass beds and sand pockets.

Aransas and Corpus Christi bays will also be the primary destinations for most fishermen leaving out of Rockport during July. There they will usually find good numbers of trout along the channel edges and around the wells. The wells will produce good fish during the midday heat as well, but conditions must be calm for a safe outing to these mid-bay structures.

Redfish will be feeding on the flats during July. Areas like Dagger and Hogg will have plenty of active redfish, particularly early in the day. Fishermen looking for reds should concentrate on the sand pockets and the edges of grass beds. Following birds, working slicks and fishing along the surf and beachfront will be other options available to Rockport fishermen during the month of July.

On windy days anglers should look to often overlooked Copano Bays. Given its proximity this bay is protected from the prevailing

winds by the peninsula that is home to Fulton and Rockport. Fish the shorelines, channels and reefs for both speckled trout and redfish. On light or no wind days drop run and gun looking for slicks or birds working. Once found drop the trolling motor to stay on fish.

Seadrift guide Capt. Nathan Beabout of N&M Sportsman Adventures says July seems to be a bit of an overlooked month when it comes to coastal angling.

"July is the last month on people's minds to go fishing it seems like," said Beabout. "I think a lot of this has to do with the weather – it's usually either blazing hot or contains heavy downpours. But, some folks do stick it out and are rewarded for their efforts.

"It can be a tricky month especially on days of no wind. Now on the Middle Texas Coast, we rely so much on wind because of the lack of natural tides. Wind driven currents can create water flow around reefs or dirty streaks on our shorelines.

"On days over the past few weeks where stretches of our south shoreline is too clean, we have been fishing the dirtier, more wind-blown water of our north

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PHOTO COURTESY BILL L. OLSON JR.

It will be hot in July and one way anglers will beat the heat is fishing at night. Billy Olson shows off a 31 inch redfish caught on live shad at night while fishing the Packery Channel jetties.



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Capt. Nathan Beabout says summer patterns are paying off with sight casting opportunities to redfish as well as wade fishing for speckled trout in the 26-30 inch class.

banks. I laugh when I see the looks on my clients faces when they jump out to what seems to be a mud hole, but actually holds

about four to six inches of visibility. What most do not understand is that the bait fish are going to congregate in this water because of the protection the low visibility offers. During the summer months, we have found that in this muddy water, especially on sunny days, bright flashy colors of soft plastics in super models or five inch baits work better than darker colors.

"One of my favorite things to throw in this knee deep muddy water is topwaters and the pink/silver Spook Jr. for us has been my go-to bait. Most stretches of shoreline that looks muddy, I can almost promise you will have to yourself, and I know what boats are thinking as they pass by but that is a whole other story.

"From clean water to muddy, big trout continue to bless my customers and me when the conditions are right at certain times of the month. It has been a consistent 5 to 10 day window that has produced multiple fish from 26 to 28 inches and we have seen several fish over the 30 inch mark. I believe if you walk in their backyard long enough, you are bound to get one of them to mess up.

That is why we are out there, all of us, with visions of a monster on the next cast.

"The same patterns we follow in July are the same patterns we followed in April and May and will continue to follow through most of September. Just remember to key in on rafts of bait, whether it is up tight to the bank or hundreds of yards off it over the more scattered sand pockets. In the instances where gin clear water with tons of bait is working, slow down the wade and walk quietly."

Port O'Connor fishermen should also expect good fishing, despite the heavy rainfall that region has experienced this spring and early summer. The surf should be holding plenty of solid speckled trout. The jetties will also be lined with specks, as well as bull reds, sharks, and, later in the month, tarpon.

As the month wears on, the back lakes and bays should begin to "salt up," giving anglers an opportunity to box good numbers of specks from around the various mid-bay reefs. Bird activity should also be going strong throughout the month of July. **T★J**



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Protection From the Sun



One of the things I see on social media from time to time is a “remember when” kind of post. Written about a time gone by, the post asks if you remember things from your childhood.

Things like riding in the car without seatbelts, riding your bike without a helmet, or playing in the street and spending all day outdoors. All of these things take me back to my childhood, as I can answer yes to all of the above.

Unfortunately, reminiscing about days gone by is not always a good thing. Recent events set me to thinking about some of the things we did and got away with, and some we may not have escaped.

As July in Texas is similar to the fires of hell, I decided this would be a good time to go into a subject too many of us ignore. Just as we now know seatbelts save lives, we also know that the sun is not our friend. I can remember a trip to Galveston when I was eight or nine years old. I ran and played on the beach all day. And I managed to get one super sunburn.

A few days of extreme discomfort, and I was back in the game so to speak. In my twenties it was all the rage to be tanned. A dark tan was achieved by spending many hours poolside, rotating like a shank on a spit. To top it off people actually purchased oils that were designed to enhance the effects of the sun. Yes, we got a great tan. But at what cost?

EDUCATION

Cancer. The word instills fear in pretty much everyone. Let me say right here that I have not been diagnosed with any cancers. However, I have had several friends get the news recently.

One of the most common cancers among the people I know is skin cancer. Years of fishing, golf, hunting, and myriad other activities that take place in the outdoors have caught up with them. I am by no means a cancer expert so I turned to the American Cancer Society's website for some information. Here is some of what I found.

There are three main types of cells in the top layer of the skin (the epidermis): Squamous cells: These are flat cells

in the outer part of the epidermis that are constantly shed as new ones form.

Basal cells: These cells are in the lower part of the epidermis, called the basal cell layer. These cells constantly divide to form new cells to replace the squamous cells that wear off the skin's surface. As these cells move up in the epidermis, they get flatter, eventually becoming squamous cells.

Melanocytes: These cells make the brown pigment called melanin, which gives the skin its tan or brown color. Melanin acts as the body's natural sunscreen, protecting the deeper layers of the skin from some of the harmful effects of the sun. For most people, when skin is exposed to the sun, melanocytes make more of the pigment, causing the skin to tan or darken.

Given the above, it comes as no surprise that there are three main types of skin cancer.

Basal cell carcinoma — This is the most common type of skin cancer. About 8 out of 10 skin cancers are basal cell carcinomas (also called basal cell cancers). When seen under a microscope, the cells in these cancers look like cells in the lowest layer of the epidermis, called the basal cell layer.

These cancers usually develop on sun-exposed areas, especially the head and neck. These cancers tend to grow slowly. It's very rare for a basal cell cancer to spread to other parts of the body.

But if a basal cell cancer is left untreated,



Covering up is the best protection from the sun. Begin with clothing that covers exposed skin as well as applying SPF 30 sunscreen regularly.

it can grow into nearby areas and invade the bone or other tissues beneath the skin. If not removed completely, basal cell carcinoma can recur (come back) in the same place on the skin. People who have had basal cell skin cancers are also more likely to get new ones in other places.

Squamous cell carcinoma — About 2 out of 10 skin cancers are squamous cell carcinomas (also called squamous cell cancers). The cells in these cancers look like abnormal versions of the squamous cells seen in the outer layers of the skin.

Like Basal cell carcinomas, these cancers commonly appear on sun-exposed areas of the body such as the face, ears, neck, lips, and backs of the hands. They can also develop in scars or chronic skin sores elsewhere.

Squamous cell cancers are more likely

to grow into deeper layers of skin and spread to other parts of the body than basal cell cancers, although this is still uncommon.

Melanoma — These cancers develop from melanocytes, the pigment-making cells of the skin. Melanocytes can also form benign (non-cancerous) growths called moles.

Melanomas are much less common than basal and squamous cell cancers, but they are more likely to grow and spread if left untreated. Other names for this cancer include malignant melanoma and cutaneous melanoma.

Most melanoma cells still make melanin, so melanoma tumors are usually brown or black. But some melanomas do not make melanin and can appear pink, tan, or even white.

Melanomas can develop anywhere on the skin, but they are more likely to start on the trunk (chest and back) in men and on the legs in women. The neck and face are other common sites.

Having darkly pigmented skin lowers your risk of melanoma at these more common sites, but anyone can get melanoma on the palms of the hands, soles of the feet, and under the nails. Melanomas in these areas make up a much larger portion of melanomas in African Americans than in whites.

Melanoma is much less common than basal cell and squamous cell skin cancers. But melanoma is more dangerous because it's much more likely to spread to other parts of the body if not caught early.

There are other skin cancers, but these are the ones that most outdoorsmen and women will encounter.

PREVENTION

Unfortunately, the negative effects of the sun are cumulative over a lifetime. In other words, the tanning and sunburns suffered when younger will be added to whatever exposure occurs today.

I didn't know the dangers when I was younger. Now I have no excuse, and neither do you.

Knowing my history with the sun, I now take all precautions when going outdoors. First is sunscreen. A sunscreen with a protection factor of AT LEAST 30 SPF is recommended, and higher is better.

Apply before getting dressed, to all exposed portions of the body. Get dressed with UV protective clothing. Today there are numerous products that are both



The area around the head and face need to be protected with a wide brim had and a facemask.

cool, and provide UV protective. Wear shirts with long sleeves, long pants, and a hat with a large, shielding brim. There are also UV protective gloves available, as well as buffs designed to further protect the head, neck and ears. Wearing this garb I probably won't win any fashion contests, but I'm ok with that.

One product I keep at hand at all times is a lip balm with SPF protection. There are several on the market, and I use it repeatedly throughout the day as drinking and eating can wipe it away.

Speaking of repeated use, you need to re-apply your sunscreen about every two hours. After a couple of hours sunscreen tends to lose its effectiveness. Water, sweat and even your clothing will also remove sunscreen. Additionally, you should limit your exposure to UV rays

by planning activities for early morning and late afternoon — skipping the mid-day period.

TREATMENT

The best thing I can say about skin cancer is that it is rarely fatal. Left untreated of course, it can lead to severe problems. But, when diagnosed early it is usually relatively easily treatable.

The first thing you need to do is get a screening — especially if you notice any abnormal or new spots, bumps, or other areas on your skin. Treatment most often involves simply removing the suspect area. While not pleasant it certainly beats the alternative.

As stated earlier, I have been fortunate — so far. But I'm not taking any chances from this point forward. And I implore you not to take chances either. **T&J**

An advertisement for Texas Outdoors magazine. The main text reads: "DON'T LET YOUR SUBSCRIPTION RUN OUT! EASILY CHECK YOUR LAST ISSUE DATE: ***** 27965 0817 ***** JOHN SMITH 444 TEXAS AVE". A red arrow points from the "0817" to a circled area on the magazine cover. Below the main text, it says: "FIRST TWO DIGITS ARE THE MONTH LAST TWO DIGITS ARE THE YEAR". The magazine cover shows a person fishing in a lake.



Satellite “Insurance”

It doesn't matter what cellular service you subscribe. If you hunt or fish, sooner or later your network is going to let you down, leave you stranded and out of touch.

I am amazed at the number of coastal anglers that don't even have a VHF radio on board their craft. It is even more disturbing to see ill-equipped offshore anglers without a primary and backup radio. When it comes to a properly equipped “Ditch Bag” with a portable, hand-held VHF inside too many offshore anglers respond with a blank look on their face.

Similarly when traveling and hunting portions of Texas or hunting remote areas of the High Country in New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming and other western states, cellular service should not be the only communication resource. Find yourself in a jam in some canyon, or up against a mountain and the prospects of connecting with a signal to a cellular antenna tower are slim.

Even in the Lone Star State there are areas where communication abilities are lacking simply because coverage

is provided by another carrier. If you are not with that company you can't talk. If there is an emergency how will help be contacted?

There is a 12,000 acre ranch west of Brady that I have enjoyed hunting free ranging axis deer the past several years. However once I leave Llano on my way to the ranch I hit a “No Service” zone because this part of the state has service from another cellular provider. Whenever I go to this ranch to hunt I know I will no longer be connected to the outside world with normal cellular service.

When trying to describe “big country” and that is the Trans-Pecos region of west Texas. On a recent trip to Alpine, the Davis Mountains and beyond cellular service from my provider was not an option. Once up in the mountains and service was completely out of the question.

On one hand that is a bit disturbing when it comes to running a business. In the case of an emergency it could be devastating. The need to have a satellite phone as an alternative communication tool was obvious.

The importance of having a reliable communication tool in the form of a satellite telephone was recently acknowledge during a post-Hurricane Harvey symposium presented by the Texas Tribune at Texas A&M Corpus Christi in mid-May. State and local



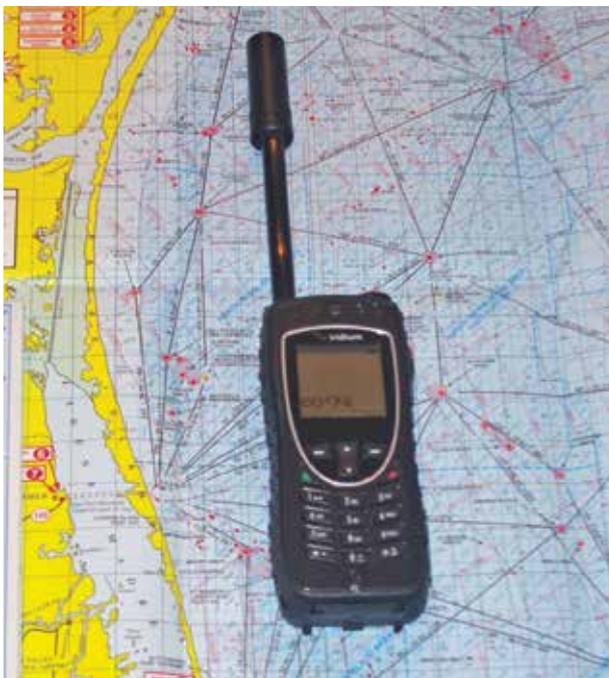
By depressing the red-button on the Iridium Extreme a distress signal will be sent out, and then a phone call is returned resulting in connection with help.

officials gathered to assess for the public what they collectively did right and what measures needed to be taken in the event of a future storm.

One state representative said he was stunned to see a group of first responders in Rockport huddled around a small piece of ground trying to get a signal to connect use their cell phones just after Harvey had moved through the area. This small spot was the only area where a cell phone signal could be received and its signal strength was one bar at best.

The recommendation today is to appropriate funds so first responders will have satellite telephones to communicate. This will help first responders and other emergency personnel coordinate inbound rescue equipment or easily call for additional resources.

Just a few decades ago cellular service was a bit of a novelty. Today it is a necessity to simply carry on business or other aspects of normal life. As frustrated as we often become when service is not available or from other aspects of not being able to communicate with loved ones there is an affordable solution — satellite telephones. It is so valuable that when I travel or go offshore I will



In addition to charts and other navigational and communication equipment, a satellite phone should also be included.

have this important tool with me — just in case. It has become my “electronic communication insurance.”

Rick Hennegar, Vice-President of Gardline Communications Inc explains that satellite phones have become more affordable to buy, plus how they have plans available to satisfy anyone’s communication needs. “As a direct service provider for Iridium satellite phones we have the product that can be matched to a variety of plans to fit their budget and communication needs,” he said.

“It starts with the Iridium 9555 Satellite phone and moves up to the Iridium Extreme. Communication abilities are similar, but with the Iridium Extreme is the first phone with a programmable, GPS-enabled one-touch SOS button. With a Satellite Emergency Notification device compliant SOS button design the Extreme will alert your program contact of your location and will help create a two-way connection to assist in the response.”

Many coastal boaters with a VHF radio are familiar with the DSC button that is interfaced with the on-board GPS. In event of an emergency the Distress Signal Call button is depressed and a signal including GPS coordinates of the location is sent out.

“The big difference in what is available with the Iridium Extreme is that when a distress signal is sent out, then a phone call is returned and connection with help is made,” Hennegar said. “This would provide a great deal more assistance for the responder as to what is needed as well as assurance and comfort for the one in need of help.”

Another bit of insurance with a satellite phone is that weather does not affect its ability to connect with the satellites.

“These are low orbit earth satellites that are about 450 miles above the earth,” Hennegar explained. “This is different than the television satellites that orbit about 22,000 miles above the planet and some people are familiar with disruption in their service.”

This means that rain, snow, cloud cover or other forms of weather will not affect the ability to use a satellite phone. “If there is lightening in the area the static electricity could momentarily impact connections but this would only be momentary,” Hennegar said.

As mentioned earlier there are a variety

of models available to fit every communication need. There is service plans to also fit the need of the customer. These range from fixed minutes for a set monthly fee on up to packages with significant minutes for those with greater talk-time needed. For those that want the ability to utilize their cellular service with connections routed via satellite, that is available too.

For most outdoor enthusiasts this is communication insurance in the form of a satellite phone. Its primary use will not be to chit-chat but provide peace of mind when venturing far offshore, when return home times run late or when venturing into remote backcountry wilderness areas.

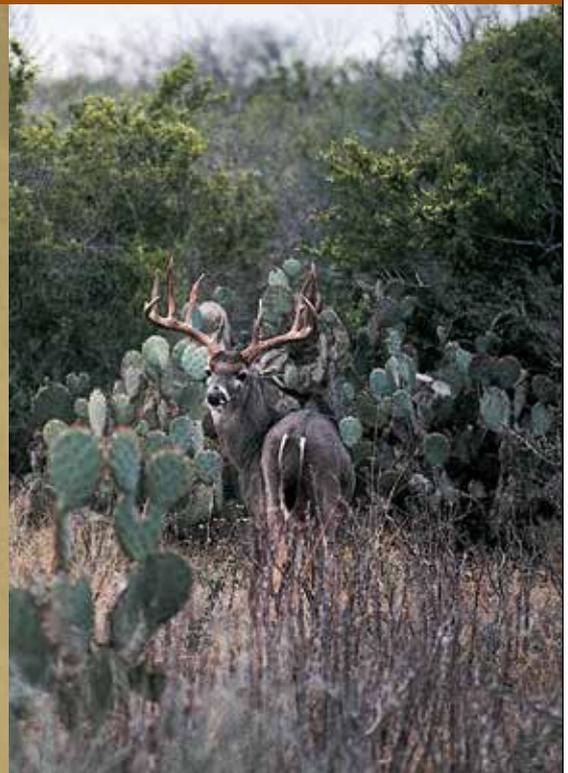
For more information on the full lineup of Iridium satellite phones and service plans visit www.gardlinecomms.us, or call (281) 679-6141. 🌟🌟



The Iridium satellite phone is the emergency communication tool the author uses when hunting remote areas or venturing offshore.

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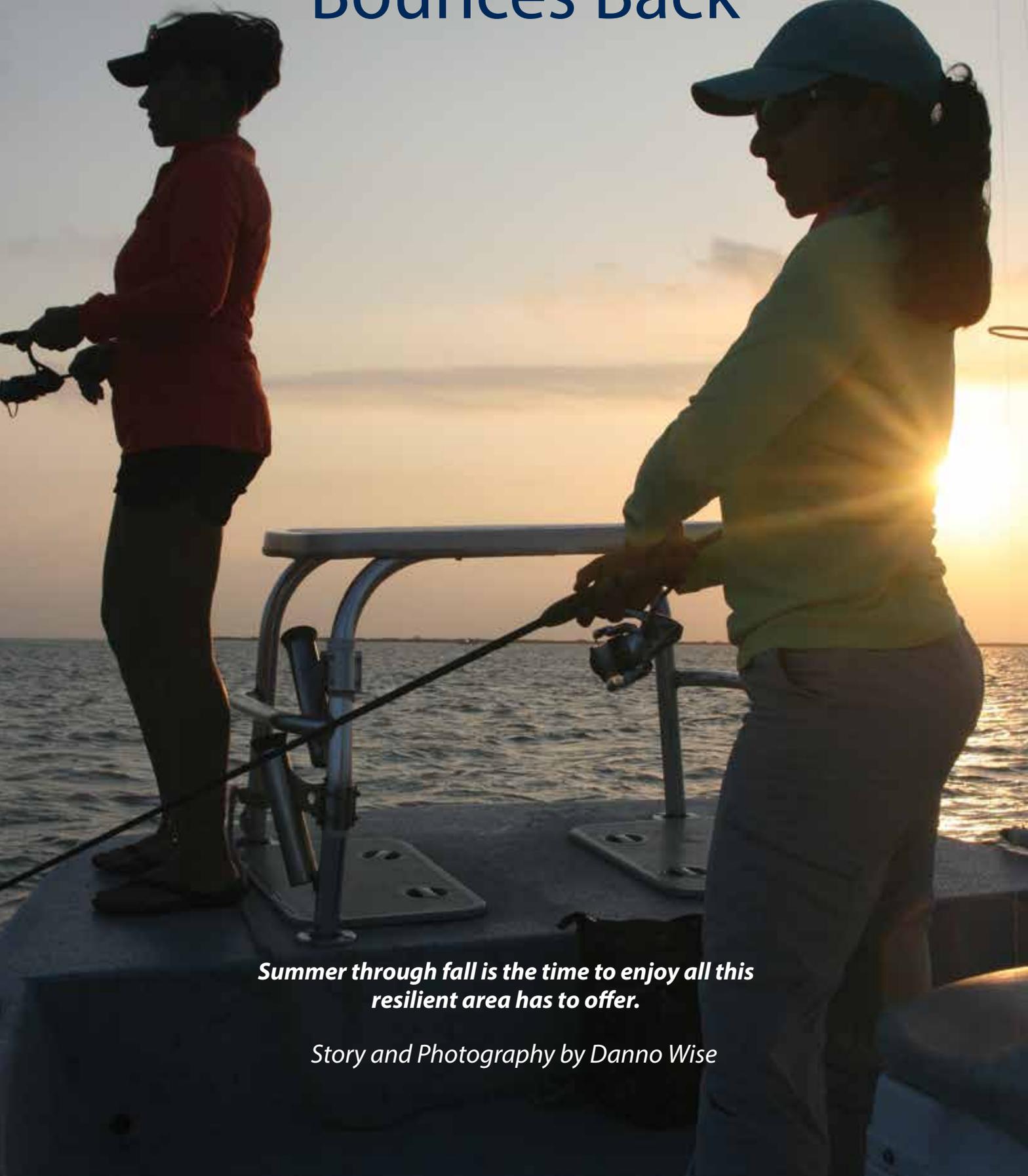
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COASTAL BEND

Bounces Back



Summer through fall is the time to enjoy all this resilient area has to offer.

Story and Photography by Danno Wise

Padding of paws across the deck — not exactly the sounds you would expect to hear while scanning a tranquil flat for redfish. However, if you fish with Rockport guide Capt Scott McCune, you'd better expect it, because he takes his retrievers, Trigger and Kona, wherever he goes. McCune is an interesting and unique individual. Not just because of his habit of taking his canines on charters.

This former rodeo cowboy has a degree in computer technology, yet chose bull riding and fishing as his career. He is seemingly a stream of contradictions, much like the area he fishes — the Texas Coastal Bend. This fabled region, a mashup of interesting characters and places, has been close to the collective heart of Texas fishermen for more than 100 years.

However, nearly a year ago, the endless procession of anglers heading to the region came to an abrupt stop thanks to Hurricane Harvey. However, much the same as the people who make the place, like McCune, whose ranch and homestead was devastated by the storm, the Coastal Bend Region is on the rise and once again welcoming anglers.

HOW HARVEY AFFECTED THE AREA

Hurricane Harvey destroyed buildings, homes and businesses throughout the Coastal Bend. The area was completely devastated. Furthermore, recovery efforts

were slowed by the massive amount of help needed in the Houston area following the storm. Another contributing factor to delayed response of materials and manpower was the fact Hurricane Irma hit the Florida coast three weeks after Harvey. Then came the devastation in Puerto Rico. This trio of horrific hurricanes thoroughly taxed all available resources.

However, the resilient residents of Texas' coastal bend area relied on each other and began picking up the pieces shortly after the storm passed. So, while signs of storm damage are still common sights throughout the mid-coast communities, the area has certainly regained its footing.

Harvey also had an impact on the fishery. For one thing, it changed the configuration of some flats and channels. It also moved the vegetation lines in various bays.

As soon as they returned to the water,



D.O.A. Shrimp will produce good numbers of keeper specks through the summer months and on into the fall.

guides and anglers began reporting seeing several differences in the contour of bay bottoms as well as the amount of vegetation found on some flats. Now, nearly a year later, both fish and fishermen have been able to adjust to these physical changes in the bays.

WHERE TO FISH DURING SUMMER

Both reds and specks are active throughout the summer in Coastal Bend bays.

And, at one time or another they will be in virtually every part of these bays — flats, channels, reefs and wells. There are lots of good deepwater areas in the region that serve as classic summer pattern fishing spots.

However, the miles of shallow flats will still be good during early morning and late afternoon even during the extreme heat of July and August.

Some of the most consistent fishing in the Coastal Bend in the next couple months will be centered around the wells in Aransas Bay and Corpus Christi Bay. These wells hold schools of trout throughout the summer.

A number of anglers will also be fishing the reefs in San Antonio Bay for trout. The beachfront will also be producing good numbers of speckled trout on days when the conditions are right — which means most days during July and August.

There are a number of good spots to pick up reds as well. One of the best ways to target redfish during summer is to look



Above: Capt Scott McCune fishes while his yellow lab, Kona, scans the horizon.

Left: Josette Guerra and Marta Reyna casting at daybreak as they drift a flat for redfish and speckled trout.



Jasmine Rebecca Fine and Shelley Meyers with a pair of keeper specks.

in the sand pockets and along the grass lines in Aransas Bay. Areas like Dagger Island and Hogg Island, as well as Estes Flats will have plenty of active redfish, particularly early in the day. The sand pockets and the edges of grass beds will be the keys in those areas, too.

Finally, the small back lake and bay drainages can be really good on an outgoing tide – especially in the afternoons. As summer turns to fall, expect schools of bull reds to be showing up in the passes and along the beachfront and jetties.

HOW TO FISH DURING SUMMER

Along the Coastal Bend fishermen use a variety of natural baits during summer months. Shad, live croaker, piggy perch, shrimp and mullet will all be threaded on hooks by anglers targeting redfish, trout and black drum. Lures will also work, though – topwaters, soft-plastics, spoons and DOA Shrimp will all produce good numbers for fishermen willing to throw them.

There's a couple of different things that happen during summer as far as bait selection for Coastal Bend fishermen. For live bait anglers, they're going to see croaker getting a little larger in size. At the same time the piggy perch are also growing.

While croaker will be the number one bait choice for most fishermen, they will be replaced by piggy perch once the croaker are too big and the piggies have grown big enough. Of course, live shrimp will still be the choice of many. Additionally, shad and mullet are other good options.

When fishing the reefs for trout, anglers will usually use shrimp and croakers.

Shrimp will be fished under a popping cork or freelined while croaker are typically freelined or fished on a Carolina rig with an inline rattle weight.

When conditions are calm, as they often are in summer, a lot of anglers will be on the wells. There, they will be freelining croaker, piggy perch or shrimp for trout.

For redfish, mullet – both cut and live – will be a frequently used bait.

However, most Coastal Bend fishermen will opt for fresh cut shad or live piggies (if they're available) when targeting redfish during the summer months.

And, of course, anglers should have



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some fresh dead shrimp handy in case they run across a school of black drum on the flats.

For lure fishermen, the best way to target reds with artificial baits during the summer is drifting the flats with gold spoons and soft-plastics under popping corks.

Trout can be caught on a variety of soft-plastic jigs as well as D.O.A. Shrimp. Any of these baits can be used alone or in conjunction with a popping cork. And, both reds and specks can be caught on topwater plugs early and late in the day.

LOOKING FORWARD TO FALL

As summer gives way to fall and the water temperatures begin to cool, fishing along the Coastal Bend explodes into a myriad of inshore angling opportunities. Additionally, many sportsman will take advantage of early season cast & blast trips to get in a little dove hunting and fishing during a single session.

Redfish will be the main attraction during fall. The shorelines of San Jose Island and Matagorda Island, as well the traditional hot spots such as Estes Flats and Dagger will be among the best bets for schools of reds during early autumn. There will also be plenty of redfish in all of the back lakes throughout the Coastal Bend Region. And, huge herds of big bull reds will be roaming along the jetties, beachfront and passes from late summer through fall.

Trout will be going through a bit of



Good boxes of keeper sized specks will be common into summer and through fall.



Capt Marvin Engel with a nice redfish he caught during the hotter summer time period.

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As summertime temperatures continue to increase anglers will opt to fish topwater lures during the cooler early and late periods of the day for speckled trout.

transition. As the water temperatures begin to cool, Nueces Bay will become a focal point for mid-coast trout fishermen. However, Redfish Bay and Aransas Bay will also produce good results, with anglers able to enjoy good topwater action most mornings.

During the balance of the day, trout will still be found around the reefs and over deeper grass flats.

Flounder fishing will also begin picking up as summer fades to fall. First in the back lake areas, then in bay and finally in the passes during the fall flatfish run.

Up until the first few truly hard fronts push through the Coastal Bend, fishermen can also target tarpon with consistency. These fish will be found all along the beachfront, but will be most concentrated around the Port A jetties.

CAN STILL STAY & PLAY

Want to plan a fishing vacation to Coastal Bend instead of just a day on the water? It is still very much possible to have a full vacation experience while visiting and fishing the area.

Even though the area is not back to its pre-Hurricane Harvey level of available rooms there are plenty of hotels, bungalows, cottages and homes that can be rented.

On busy weekends the smaller Coastal Bend towns may sell out of rooms, but Corpus Christi and other neighboring towns that were not as severely impacted by Harvey generally have ample accommodations. and North Padre Island, Portland and Corpus Christi's east beach are near by options that can provide a great jumping off point for visiting the entire area. Plus, Schlitterbahn Water Park and all of the middle coast popular beaches are ready to welcome visitors as well.

Many favorite restaurants and shops are back open including several of the more popular ones like the Boiling Pot and Paradise Key in Rockport, Charlotte Plummer's in Fulton, Mickey's in Aransas Pass, and Stingrays & Virginia's in Port Aransas.

Even though some things look different, both on land and in the water, Texas' Coastal Bend is still home to some of the premier fishing destinations along the entire Gulf Coast.

And, summer through fall is the perfect time for anglers to enjoy all this area has to offer. **TOJ**

Graphic design advertisement for TOJ (Texas Outdoors Journal) featuring a word cloud background with terms like 'CREATIVITY', 'DESIGN', 'MARKETING', and 'ADVERTISING'. The central text reads:

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Lake Roundup

EAST TEXAS



By Matt Williams

NACOGDOCHES — July may not be the hottest month of the year in eastern Texas, but it's pretty darned close. Factor high humidity into the equation and it can almost feel like a sauna out there at times.

One of the best ways to beat the summer heat is to fish at night. Plenty of anglers do it, but not just because it's cooler and more tolerable after the sun goes down.

Water temperatures typically cool off a few degrees at night, which naturally puts the fish in more of an active mood. You might catch a big fish or two while you're at it.

There couple of ways to approach night fishing:

Grab a Texas rig or jig and set up camp around main lake structure like points, pond dams, ridges, humps and drop offs in mid-range depth ranges. It's best to stay for a while and fan cast the target structure repeatedly. It's sort of like setting up and waiting for a big buck to pass through. It can get boring after a while, but it can be worth it.

Others like to stay on the move and cover water with a moving bait like a spinnerbait, Chatterbait or a buzz bait. Flats, channel breaks, points and grass beds are good places to key on.

Regardless of the approach, it's usually best to play the game around the full moon phase. Some theorize the fish feed better around the full moon phase. It's

certainly much easier to see under the muted glow of a full moon. That makes it easier to get around and see targets for casting. The next full moon falls on July 27.

If you fish during the daylight light hours, do it early and late. Start off shallow using a topwater, frog or Texas rig. Then move away from the bank with a Texas rig, jig or drop shot once the sun gets up.

There also could be a decent flipping bite at the lake's northern reaches provided the water remained clear through June and the grass is 8-10 feet tall. The best action usually occurs in relation to the Big Loco Creek channel and deeper flats adjacent to it.

TOLEDO BEND — Veteran fishing guide Tommy Martin has seen lots of summers come and go in eastern Texas and he is well schooled on hot weather affects bass movements and fishing patterns on his home lake, Toledo Bend.

With hydrilla coverage still lacking for the most part, Martin thinks the best way to catch a big bag of fish now is to key on main lake structure in water ranging 18-24 feet deep.

"You'll have some fish setting up on brush piles, but the old worm holes are going to be hard to beat this time of year," Martin said. "They always are."

Martin likes to spend the majority of his time in the mid-lake portion of the reservoir where he'll key on underwater points, ridges and humps, some in close proximity the main boat lane. His go-to bait this time of year is

a Texas-rigged Zoom Trick worm matched with a 3/16 ounce slip sinker. Best colors are Junebug and red bug.

"You'll also be able to catch 'em on a 5/8 to 3/4 ounce football or a Carolina rig, but day in and day out a light Texas rig is my favorite."

The guide added that there also will be some fish to be caught away from the bank using deep diving crankbaits like a Strike King 10XD or 8XD in some sort of shad pattern. "These fish are going to holding in specific places, so making the right cast is a big deal," Martin said. "Often times a big crank bait will catch the biggest fish in the school."

There also will be some bass to be caught in shallow water, but the bite can be a grind at times.

"You'll need to be in the backs of the creeks to do much good shallow this time



PHOTO COURTESY RICHARD JUE
Fishing around bridge pilings or deep brush piles is a good way to catch some nice crappie on Lake Conroe and other east Texas lakes in July.

of year," Martin said. "The main thing to look for shady areas. Some the better fish will come on frogs, buzz baits and Whopper Ploppers. Sometimes they'll blast a topwater right in the middle of the day."

July also produces good numbers of crappie for anglers who are privy to the location of brush piles in water ranging 25-30 feet. The fish are almost always suspended. According to fishing guide Stephen Johnston, the best depth range early in the day is 10-12 feet; 15-18 feet when the sun is big and high. Live shiners and jigs work equally well at times.

LIVINGSTON — Lake Livingston north of Houston entered summer in great shape with water levels just above full pool. Fishing guide Randy Dearman says water temperatures will likely be pushing the upper 80s by the time this issue of TOJ hits the streets, but that doesn't mean bass anglers will need to look deep to find fish. In fact, on Livingston, summertime means fishing pretty close to the bank.

"Boat docks are going to be big deal this month," Dearman said. "Just about all of them could hold fish, but those that are built on points or near a channel swing will always be best. Docks provide shade and they attract a lot of bait fish. That's where the bass are going to be."

Dearman says he will probe around docks in four to nine feet of water with moving baits like a spinnerbait or square bill crank bait first. If that doesn't work he'll switch to a Texas rigged Rage Craw or a lightweight jig/craw combo with a stout hook.

The guide says the upper reaches of the Trinity River also can come into play during the summer months.

"Old log jams are where they'll be," Dearman said. "Look for stuff that's right on the edge or overhanging the river in about 10-12 feet of water."

Anglers looking for a good fun fishing option this month will want to check out Livingston's bountiful white bass fishery. Get on the right spot at the right time and you can catch the brawny bruisers until your arms hurt.

"Livingston is full of them," Dearman said. "And they're pretty big, too. The bite is going to be wide open over humps and old roadbeds from the Highway 190 Bridge at mid-lake to the south. Just watch for the birds. When they're gathered over a spot, you can bet the whites are having

their way with the shad."

Dearman likes to use topwaters and lipless cranks to target fish that are feeding on or near the surface. He'll switch to a spoon when the fish go to bottom in 12-16 feet of water."

CONROE — Lake Conroe was brimful and fairly clear as May gave way to June. Barring any hurricanes or big rains, the water level will probably drop a few inches but things will still be in good shape as we head into July.

If you're planning a fishing trip to Conroe this month, it would be wise to plan it outside the July 4 holiday. The lake is typically packed with pleasure boaters on Independence Day and the weekends surrounding it. The holiday falls on Wednesday this year.

Fishing guide Butch Terpe says the lake will offer mixed bag of opportunity for anglers this month, with channel catfish being the most reliable for tight lines and fast limits. Terpe targets the whiskered fish over holes pre-baited with range cubes to keep the fish concentrated in water 18 to 22 feet deep. His preferred bait is a cheese bait he dips with a sponge hook, but punch bait and night crawlers also will work.

The guide says black bass call for a little more forethought and skill. He says the blacks are usually active on topwaters and other shallow offering at first light, but the bite is usually short lived.

"Once the sun gets up is when I'll move away from the bank and start targeting pond dams, railroad trams and humps in the 10-20 foot range, usually with a Carolina rig or deep diving crank bait," Terpe said. "Areas with brush piles can be a huge plus."

The guide pointed to night fishing as another good summertime bass fishing option, especially on days when the outside temperatures turn oppressively hot.

Attractive as brush piles are to bass, they are even more attractive to roving schools of crappie. Terpe says the best piles will be standing vertical in water that's 15 to 20 feet deep. He'll fish them mostly with shiners, but says a jig will work just as well some days. It's best to have both.

PALESTINE — Like most East Texas lakes, Palestine headed into summer at pool level or real close to it thanks to bountiful spring rains. Anglers looking to wet a hook on the 26,000-acre reservoir

during the summer months might follow Ricky Vandergriff's lead and be on the water at first light to get in on some of the best fun fishing around.

Vandergriff says that's when white bass will be actively schooling on shad. Some of the best action will be at the lakes southern reaches, most often in relation to main lake points.

"There should be a lot of it (schooling activity) going on," Vandergriff said. "Sometimes they'll be right up close to the bank."

Vandergriff says he'll use several baits to exploit the whites, depending on what they are doing. If they are on top he'll tempt them with lipless cranks and topwaters. Once the fish go down he'll break out the slab spoon and look to the nearest drop, usually in 12-14 feet of water.

Black bass? Vandergriff says he'll spend a high percentage of his time fishing at the southern reaches of the lake his time of year. Not only will the water be clearer, but it provides access to water that's deeper and clearer. Plus, there are plenty of boat docks for him to soak his bladed jigs, square bill cranks and jig/craw combos around..

In deeper water, Vandergriff will key on main lake points using a Carolina rig or deep diving crank bait in a citrus shad pattern. Water depths of 15-16 feet should be ideal.

The guide added that there should be some decent crappie and channel cat action throughout the month, as well. Vandergriff likes to target crappie around brush piles in water that's 18-22 feet deep. There also should be some fish hanging near bottom around the bridge pilings at the Highway 155 crossing.

Baited holes are always good for a limit of frying size channel cat on Palestine, as are boat docks in water ranging four to six feet deep. Night crawlers and punch bait are the tickets.

SAM RAYBURN — The bass fishing on Big Sam has been on fire all year long, and fishing guide Randy Dearman predicts the blaze will continue right on through the summer months.

"I'm looking for there to be a really strong topwater bite this month on everything from frogs to Whopper Ploppers," Dearman said. "There are always a lot of fish shallow on 'Rayburn during the summer, and topwaters are a

great way to catch them. You probably won't see a lot of numbers, but you'll see some really nice fish. It's a good way to catch a big one in July."

Dearman says there will also be some quality fish setting up out deep around brush piles, ledges and points in 18-25 feet that can be caught on Carolina rigs, deep cranks and football jigs.

"Using your electronics to stay with bait will play a big part in that bite," he said. "Find the bait and that's where the fish are going to be."

Dearman says July also produces some outstanding crappie fishing with the best bite coming around brush piles staged in water that's 30-35 feet deep, usually in relation points and secondary drop offs. He says the fish will almost always be suspended, usually in the 12-15 foot range. Sometimes they'll be on top and other times they'll be out to the side or right down in it," Dearman said. "Your electronics can tell you a lot." **T★J**



By Brian Hughes

July is here, and with it comes the heat. I mean real, Texas heat — the kind of heat that can really take it out of you. Stay ahead of the game by hydrating before you feel the need. Drink water on the way to the lake instead of coffee or soda. Drink water throughout the day, and take a break if you feel the slightest bit out of the norm. Seek shade and cool off before going back after the fish.

Of course, fishing at night will be an option that many anglers will choose to help mitigate the heat. Just remember to keep boat lights on after dusk. It's not only common sense and safer, it's the law.

FORK — July can be one of the best months on the lake if you can stand the hot weather. The bass will move out deep

in huge schools. You'll want to run the main lake, checking humps, channels and points with your electronics. When you find baitfish, you'll find bass.

Best of all, you can catch a lot of fish in one place. The first thing you'll want to look for is the thermocline. Identify at what depth the thermocline is setting up, and stay above it in your search. Baitfish, and for the most part gamefish, won't venture below the thermocline. Deep-diving crankbaits are good search baits.

Once you've located fish, double back with a jig or worm. Use a ¼ ounce weight, on 17-20 pound test line, and an eight or 10 inch worm. Rip it off the bottom and let it fall back down on a semi-tight line. You can substitute baits like a Yamamoto Kreature on this rig. Greens, reds, and plum colors will produce the best results.

July will also see schooling fish on top of the water. When you spot these fish get ready with swimbaits on a jighead, 'Traps and Alabama rigs. Keep in mind they are Fork "schoolies" can be as big as 10 pounds or more.

For those wishing to fish at night you'll want to start in the creeks, about halfway into them, fishing 5-10 feet deep. Start with buzzbaits and spinnerbaits shallow, and then work your way deeper using a 1/4 ounce jig or 10 inch worm. Black/blue, red shad and June bug are good color choices.

CEDAR CREEK — On Cedar Creek, July is known for schools of sand bass — really BIG schools. Thousands of fish may school together throughout the day. You can limit out in a hurry when you're catching them on every cast.

Cruise the main lake, looking for humps and drops on your electronics, but keep an eye on the surface as well. When you see the schools show up, usually later in the day, you'll find them over deeper water.

While a popper or Torpedo will usually catch a few on top, the best and quickest way to get a bunch of fish in the boat is a slab in ¾ ounce. Use chartreuse or chrome colors.

You'll want to cast past the fish and let the bait swing back toward the bottom. Reel six or seven times and let it fall again.

Keep in mind that you can also hook into some of the hybrids on Cedar Creek. Hybrid striped bass will usually be around the edges of, or below, the sandies. For this reason most avid CC fishermen will use gear designed for bigger fish, even while

seeking the sand bass.

If you hook into a hybrid with light sand bass gear he'll break you off every time. Gear up for the bigger fish, and you're ready for whatever the lake gives you.

Catfish will also hang around the main lake area off the humps. The most common approach is an egg sinker from ½ to one ounce, a two foot leader, and a circle hook. Use cut bait and keep it in the area of fifteen feet.

Crappie fishermen should look to the brush tops. Cedar Creek has countless brush piles, and every year the locals add more. Brush draws baitfish, and baitfish draw crappie. Search the 15-25 foot range, and keep your baits above the tops of the brush. A one-sixteenth ounce jig tossed about fifteen feet past the brushpile should be allowed to swing back over the target and through the fish.

POSSUM KINGDOM — Stripers on PK will spend much of the summer on the main lake, and in the river channels, in depths of 20 to 40 feet. But just like sand bass and hybrid stripers you'll find them where the baitfish are. A one ounce horse head jig, with a bucktail in white, chartreuse, or a combination of both, is a good place to start.

A big slab spoon in chrome will also catch fish, especially on some of the shallow/deep ledges. By that I mean ledges that are only five to 10 feet deep, but drop into 50, 60 or even 70 feet of water. Stripers will come up from the deeper water and heard baitfish up onto the shallow ledge and then rush in to feed.

This is an early morning thing and will usually be over pretty early in the day. But for the hour or so that it lasts it can be some very exciting fishing.

For sand bass use either a slab, or small jighead (1/8 ounce) with a white curlytail plastic body. For those not familiar with the lake, the practice of "glassing" fish is a good way to get started. When you get to a bend in the river early in the morning, stop and use binoculars to watch the water in both directions, up and down the river. Eventually, you'll see schoolies start blowing up. Run over to the area, shut the big motor down and troll over to the school. Now you can throw poppers and Tiny Torpedos at them.

Black bass anglers should follow the brim. First thing in the morning bass will hit topwaters and spinnerbaits while they



PHOTO COURTESY RICHARD JUE

Sometimes a bigger tug will come in the form of a hybrid stripper. Some anglers will fish larger tackle even when they are targeting sand bass, just in case a hybrid takes their bait.

chase the brim. After that you'll get bit on shallow crankbaits and Texas rigged worms.

When the inevitable happens and the sun gets high in the sky, you'll need to move to the ledges in 20 or 30 feet of water. Here you'll use the Texas rig or Carolina rig.

Another place to spend some time would be the Cedar Creek area on PK. Texas Parks & Wildlife Department had implemented a program to increase cover for fish in this area. This cover is to consist of sunken cedar trees, planted native vegetation and such.

COOPER — Jim Chapman Lake (formerly known as Cooper Lake) receives almost no recreational boat traffic. This makes it a great destination for fishermen looking to get out on the weekend or a holiday. Check for schooling fish on main lake humps, looking for shad and suspended fish on your graph.

You'll also want to keep an eye out for

fish blowing up on the surface. Your best chances for finding fish will be early in the morning and late in the day. I've fished the lake mid-day before and that can be brutally hot and non-productive.

When you find some fish throw a four to six inch swim shad on a 3/4 oz. jig head. Any color is good as long as it is chartreuse. Another approach is to use the metal spoons and slabs. Drift over the humps with slabs in the one ounce to one and a half ounce range. Let the wind push the boat and focus on the bite, which can be subtle. Drop to the bottom and reel a couple of cranks back up to set your drift depth. Keep the shad bait handy in case they show up on top, as this can happen at any time.

Largemouth bass fishermen can have the lake all to themselves at night. The last time I spent time there we went for a week and stayed in one of the wonderful cabins at the State Park. Fishing for bass at night we never saw another boat.

Standard night fishing fare worked for us fishing around the launch area and the timber on the upper end of the lake. Spinnerbaits, buzzbaits, and 10" worms in dark colors all produced.

One of my favorite night fishing baits is a Bandit crankbait in black. The 200 series bait dives from four to eight feet. This diminutive bait will catch a lot of fish at night and I honestly don't know why more companies don't make a crankbait in black.

Well, unless it's because more anglers don't fish crankbaits at night. This is probably due to a fear of getting hung up and losing the bait. I've found that fishing in areas like boat docks, launch areas, and along sea walls will keep you away

from most of the stuff that will steal your bait. When you encounter a laydown or brush, just switch to a worm. I think the effectiveness of the lure stems from the fact that not many fishermen use these baits at night. Anything we can do that is different will usually produce fish.

Cooper crappie should be in and around the Corps of Engineers brushpiles. These are marked on most quality maps.

SQUAW CREEK — Just outside the town of Glen Rose, Squaw Creek is a rather small power plant lake. While it gets a lot of attention in the winter months, by July this impound is all but forgotten by most anglers. This makes it another great destination for the fisherman looking for a little solitude. There are some special regulations in place due to the fact that it is a nuclear plant so be sure to check the rules, hours of operation and registration procedures ahead of time.

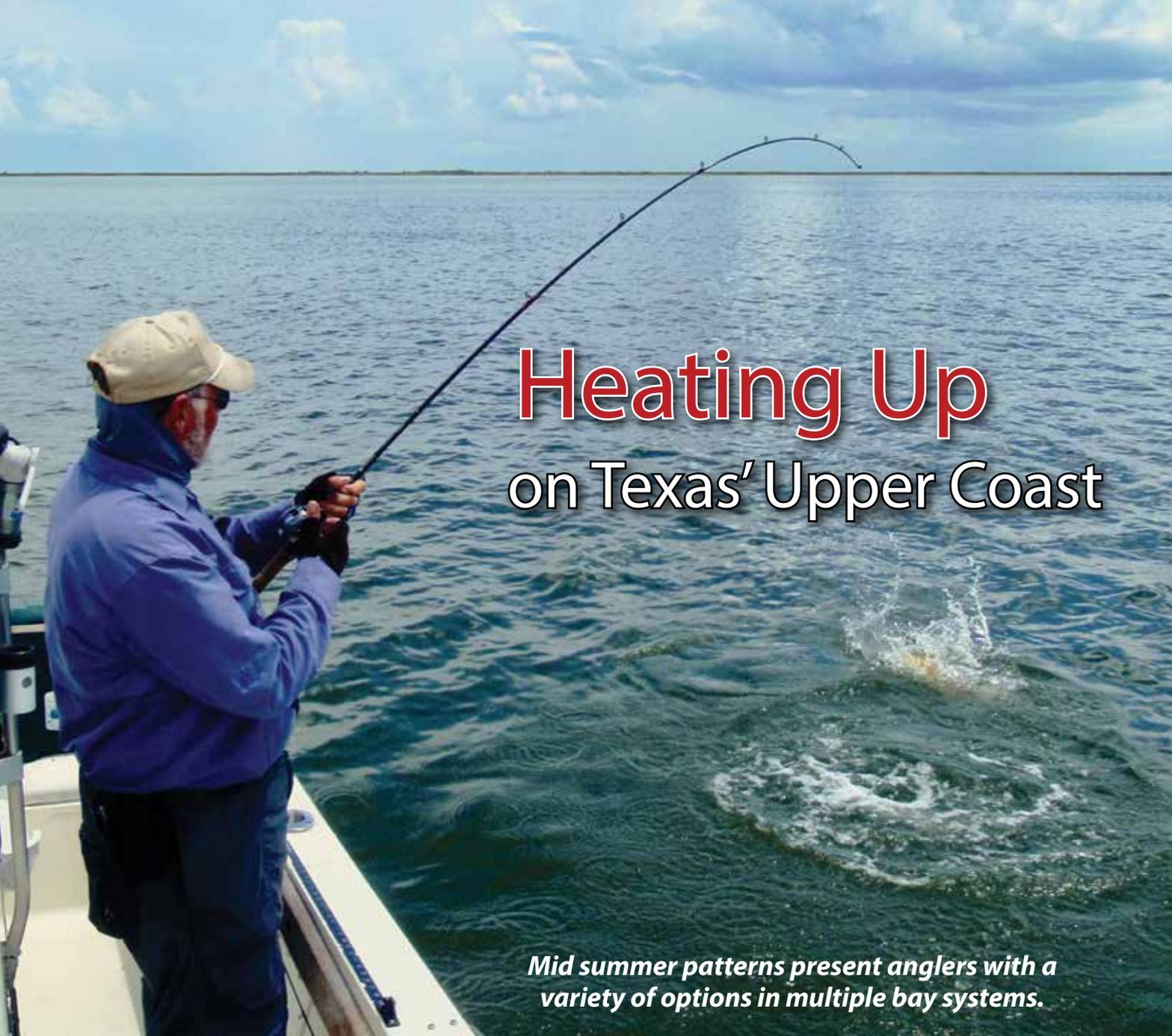
Fishing will be a typical summer pattern of topwater baits early, moving to spinnerbaits and Senkos and then on to deeper baits. Start with buzzbaits, frogs, Whopper Ploppers and popper baits. Fish in and around the shallow cover near the channels.

When that bite plays out, go back through the same areas with a 1/4 oz. white/chartreuse spinnerbait and a Yamamoto Senko in watermelon/red flake. Dip the tail of the bait in chartreuse dipping dye to give it a bluegill-type accent.

Once you've mined all of the shallow fish available, move to the points with timber. You have three good bait options here. Drop-shot a finesse worm or french fry bait just outside the timber. If you are brave enough to throw into the timber you stand a better chance of catching fish. Of course, you also stand a better chance of losing your lure.

The deep diving crankbait can also be effective here. Use shad colors and work as close to the timber as you dare.

The Carolina-rig is probably the best of the three options as you can generally throw deeper into the timber with this rig. Any number of soft plastic baits will work, including the Yamamoto Creature, six inch worms, and even swim shad bodies. Use a one-half to one ounce weight, about a three foot leader, and a 1/0 hook. I like the brass and glass combo to make a rattling set-up, but some folks prefer to use a lead weight and drag the rig instead of the pop-and-hop retrieve I use. **T&J**



Heating Up on Texas' Upper Coast

Mid summer patterns present anglers with a variety of options in multiple bay systems.

The southern end of Sabine Lake is where Capt. Randy Foreman will spend the majority of his time this summer while hooking up with quality specks and reds.

Story and Photography by Nate Skinner

July is here and so are the dog days of summer. The transition out of spring is over and warm water patterns are in full force. Additionally the effects of freshwater inflows from spring rain events have dissipated and a variety of locations on Texas' Upper Coast are starting to produce excellent results.

With summer patterns comes some consistency. Rising water temperatures have concentrated fish in their typical summertime hangouts. Anglers should

soon begin to find steady action in a number of locales, day in and day out, for the next several weeks.

Premier summertime hotspots are littered across just about every upper coast bay system from West Matagorda Bay to Sabine Lake. Some lie inside protected estuaries while others are found in the Gulf.

They all encompass similar characteristics in that they either contain or are located adjacent to deeper water.

Plus the ideal conditions for these areas will continue to improve and become more prevalent as the summer season wears on.

These prime locations for cashing in on a variety of fish present anglers with a diverse set of options and challenges. Those that are willing to trailer their boats this summer can hone their skills while fishing multiple estuaries to find success over the next two months.

West Matagorda Bay

It's hard to mention West Matagorda Bay without talking about the grass beds located along its southern shoreline inside Matagorda Peninsula. Seagrass beds cover the flats of this shoreline in several areas throughout the length of the bay. Some of the best areas to fish them lie near Cotton's Bayou, the Middle Grounds, and Greens Bayou.

The perimeter of these grass beds are surrounded by sand bars and guts, created by the current as tides rush in and out of the many bayous, coves, cuts, and inlets of the peninsula. These processes over time have created a wade fishing paradise for hardware chunking anglers.

Waders will encounter many depth changes along these flats. Topwater lures and soft plastics rigged on an eighth ounce jig head make up the bread and butter here for the wading angler's arsenal.

Veteran Matagorda fishing guide, Captain Tommy Countz, knows these grass beds like the back of his hand. He consistently puts anglers on piles of fish by pointing them in the right direction when wading these areas during the summer months.

Countz is also a guru when it comes to finding tripletail inside West Matagorda Bay, which is one of the area's best kept secrets. According to TPWD data, West Matagorda Bay has the highest landing rate for tripletail caught inside an estuary on the entire Texas Coast.

Countz chases these unique fish along any sort of structure that protrudes upwards from the surface of the water, including channel markers, buoys, well heads, platforms and floating debris.

"Sometimes you'll spot them floating on their side along the surface, and other times you won't know they are there until you drop a bait down along the channel marker or structure," he confessed.

Countz's approach for tripletail is pretty simple. He uses a slip cork to dangle a live shrimp right up against whatever structure he is targeting.

"Running West Matagorda in search of tripletail is a lot like hunting," he explained. "It's about covering water until you find them."

Tripletail are sort of like a big crappie on steroids. They put up a sporting fight and provide excellent table fair. Tripletail are a blast to pursue and targeting them is an experience all anglers should plan on enjoying this summer.

East Matagorda Bay

Few bay systems on the upper coast have gained as large a reputation for affording anglers with monster trout as much as East Matagorda Bay has in recent years. While fishing on these waters, it's hard not to imagine how many specks in the 30 inch class might be swimming around nearby. Even though the summer months aren't normally referred to as the prime time period for producing trophies, there are certainly still some giants to be caught in East Matagorda over the next several weeks.

Mid-bay waters will rule in this estuary for the remainder of the summer season. These open stretches of water are where Captain Trey Prye will focus his efforts

for catching both numbers and quality sized fish.

"By this time of year, the shorelines of East Matagorda Bay have been burned up by who knows how many boats with anglers looking for a trophy trout," Prye informed. "After the fish get run over so many times I feel like they pull out to the middle of the bay and hang tight to the bottom. That's where we find a lot of our decent fish during the heat of the summer."

The western portion of East Matagorda is covered with heavy oyster shell reefs. The eastern half contains scattered oyster shell mixed in along a muddy bay bottom. Fish will hold throughout the entire length of the bay, and making long drifts



Todd Farquharson landed this upper slot red while wade fishing grass beds with Capt. Tommy Countz in West Matagorda Bay.



The clam shell beds along the Louisiana shoreline of Sabine Lake are an excellent summertime hotspot.



The Bolivar Pocket is an excellent wade fishing honey hole for anglers regardless if they access the area by boat or walk in from the beachfront after parking their vehicle.

for them is key.

Anglers should also focus in on streaky water, slicks, and current lines where there is active baitfish present. Sometimes these signs can reveal an area holding fish that is off the beaten path of well known charted oyster reefs.

Freeport ICW

The Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) is quite possibly one of the most overlooked stretches of water to fish on the entire Texas coast. One of my favorite sections of the ICW is located just southwest of Freeport near the San Bernard River watershed.

This area is an excellent summertime honey hole because it contains plenty of deep water, plus it is protected from strong winds. Productive locations to key on lie near the entrances to several back lakes and marshes including Cowtrap Lake, the Cedar Lakes, and Cocklebur Slough.

The cuts leading into these satellite bays have deep channels lined with shell. Trout, reds, and flounder will feed along the shallow oyster flats adjacent to these channels early in the morning, and then pull off into the deeper water nearby as temperatures rise later in the day.

Galveston Bay

Texas' largest estuary provides nothing short of a long list of hotspots for summertime anglers in search of success. One area that is historically known for producing tremendous hauls of specks, reds, black drum, and other species are the Bolivar Wells.

Located northeast of the Texas City Dike, this gas field looks much different than it did many years ago as many of the wellheads have been removed. However, there is still structure underneath the surface where these wellheads once were in the form of large shell pads along the bottom.

Anglers can find a map on Texas Outdoors Journal's website revealing the locations of these removed wells which will show them where they should be able to find the remaining shell pads and plenty of fish. To access this map, go to www.texasoutdoorsjournal.com and click on the "For Anglers" tab.

Then select the "Saltwater Resources" link, which will bring up a table of information. The link to the map is located under "Fishing Information" in the right hand column of the table, and it is entitled "GLO Map of Rig Sites." Click

on the Energy Resources in the Map Content.

Another Galveston Bay hotspot worth mentioning is the stretch of surf located just outside the complex's north jetty known as the Bolivar Pocket. These flats are teeming with speckled trout throughout the summer months and can be accessed by boat or land.

Those traveling to the Bolivar Pocket via truck or car have two options. They can walk in and wade the flats or use a kayak to cover a larger portion of the area.

The Galveston Causeway Bridge connecting Galveston Island to the mainland gives anglers the unique opportunity to encounter hoards of fish at night when summertime temperatures are more bearable.

The concrete pilings supporting this elevated section of Interstate 45 have lights that shine down over the water, attracting swarms of baitfish and shrimp. Anglers can bet on finding good numbers of trout feeding under these lights during moving tides.

Sabine Lake

Summertime options on Sabine Lake are plentiful. A few of them include bird action on the south end of the lake, clamshell beds along the Louisiana shoreline, and both the channel sides and Gulf sides of the jetties lining Sabine Pass. Seasoned Sabine Lake fishing guide, Captain Randy Foreman, will spend the entire summer season fishing these areas, providing his clients with some unbelievable memories of awesome catches.

The Gulf opportunities out of Sabine are also exceptional. Both the surf and the short rigs can be dynamite for scoring numbers of solid specks and redfish.

One overlooked species that the beachfront out of Sabine Pass is covered up with during the summer months is tripletail.

TPWD data reveals that the Sabine area has the highest landing rates along the coast for tripletail caught outside an estuary in the Gulf of Mexico.

The most exciting part about fishing for tripletail along the beachfront out of Sabine is that it is primarily a sight-casting adventure.

Most of the time these fish are up on the surface, floating on their side, waiting to strike anything that resembles a baitfish or shrimp.

The key is to run the beachfront, zig-zagging in and out until you spot one. Typically there are many more nearby within several hundred yards. Captain Tim Young turned me on to targeting tripletail this way a few years ago. We've caught tripletail pushing 15 to 20 pounds using this approach and it's something I look forward to every summer.

Consistency awaits anglers as the heat turns up on the upper coast. Summertime can be one of the optimal stretches of the year to fish when the right approach is used in a prime location.

Embrace the warm temperatures, lather on the sunscreen, and check out the aforementioned hotspots. The best action is yet to come. **T★J**



This angler shows off an impressive tripletail he caught while fishing a channel Marker with Capt. Tommy Countz.



The Bolivar Gas well field looks much different today than it did many years ago, but the shell pads along the bottom where wells were once located still produce plenty of fish.

Take a Rest and More

Whether you are sighting in or out hunting the cardinal rule is use a rest whenever possible. My favorite anecdote is while stalking zebra on foot in Africa. An animal presented itself in an open area but, my support options were few and none. No shooting sticks, no PH shoulder for support as I stand just under 5'4" and he was just over 6'4" — so what to do?

Offhand maybe but, the "find a rest" mantra is imbedded in my head. My option was a lone bush about three feet tall. I dropped to my knees, wrapped the pinky of my support hand around a scrawny branch, tugged it for tension, and center punched the zebra at about 100 yards. He went straight up on his hind legs like Trigger and fell over stone dead. I still wish I had a video of that event. The point is a little support is better than none.

A great deal of sighting in or just checking that our scope is still on is done in the field off a truck hood or a tailgate. We may not have the luxury of transporting our popular, but heavy Caldwell Lead Sled rest.

The new "Nest Rest" Shooting Rest from Birchwood Casey provides shooters with a durable, lightweight product that is easy to transport to the range or field without trying to carry heavy sand bags or metal rests. The "Nest Rest" consists of

a stackable rear rest and a larger front rest. The large rest is 6.6" high x 6" wide x 5" deep and the small rest measures 4.7" high x 5.5" wide x 4.5" deep. The two rests nest and lock together to save space during transport. The small rest also stacks on top of the larger one for added elevation when shooting. This also allows for hands free holding of firearms for easy scope adjustments or maintenance and cleaning.

These rests are constructed of a soft durable rubber material that provides plenty of non-slip grip and the soft construction won't mar the finish of firearms. Retail is \$24.99 at www.birchwoodcasey.com.

Caldwell has support bags for every occasion and a very neat one is the Filled Blind Bag. Designed specifically for hunters its features provide a solid shooting position in all kinds of situations. This bag is designed to be an option for shooters when no other solid rest is available. It is quick and easy because we just flop it over something. It can be used on narrow surfaces like brick walls, fence posts, the window sill of blinds or vehicles or spread out on a hood or tailgate.

The Caldwell Filled Blind Bag is perfectly contoured to match up with most hunting-style stocks to give shooters a solid rest. This bag is available at www.brownells.com for \$16.99 along with many other bags and rests.

When hunting on foot our best bet is to carry along a rest. Options are mono, bi and tripods. A monopod can be as simple as a cane or walking staff. A bipod might be a simple set of shooting sticks that are easy to adjust for height by spreading the two legs or raising the legs by the yoke where they cross. Heretofore tripods have been the most stable but, the most time consuming to adjust for height. That



The fast acting Primos Trigger Stick sets the industry standard for adjustable shooting sticks.

situation has changed.

The new Primos Trigger Stick Gen 3 adjusts to the desired height with just one hand and the pull of a trigger. The new Locking Leg Angles give more stability at more angles in the field. The new Quick Detach Yoke System with Integrated Lock makes it easier than ever to switch from gun to optics and back again plus the new contoured grip features a No-Slip Backbone.

A smooth panning head helps a shooter rotate, scan and set up the shot effortlessly. This system works in all terrain whether standing, sitting, or kneeling and adjusts from 24 to 62 inches. I have used the Primos Trigger Stick tripod in the field and took my best ever blackbuck standing on my hind legs. This system delivers as promised. Trigger Sticks are also available in monopod and bipod versions and can be found at www.primos.com.

Stuff is going to happen in the field or at the range but, we can only carry so much backup. The dandiest thing ever for a quick bore cleanup is Hoppe's BoreSnake. It's the fastest bore cleaner on the planet. One pass loosens large particles, scrubs out the remaining residue



AR loading is made easy with the Butler Creek ASAP Electronic Loader.



Good shooting support is provided by Birchwood Casey's "Nest Rest."



In the field backup, repair and cleaning with the Gun Plumber Multi-Tool and Hoppe's BoreSnake

with a bronze brush, and then swabs it all spotless with a cleaning area 160x larger than a standard patch.

The BoreSnake is about twice the length of the barrel of a rifle or shotgun. One end has a pull cord with a brass weight that is stamped with the bore size. Drop this down the chamber end of your unloaded firearm.

The rest of the rig is woven fabric with a brass brush embedded about half way. One pull through the barrel and we're done for a while. More thorough cleaning can be accomplished by adding a few drops of good old Hoppe's No. 9 bore cleaner on the front end and a gun oil of choice on the back end.

Nice features are that the BoreSnake is easy to pack and machine washable. The full range of Hoppe's BoreSnakes are available at most gun dealers and are easy to find online.

When a screw comes loose, and it will, we don't normally carry around a full set of gunsmith screwdrivers. Birchwood Casey comes to the rescue with their new Gun Plumber Folding Multi-Tool featuring a selection of gunsmith selected bits, including flat 2mm and 6mm hollow ground, Phillips #2, Torx T10 and T15. Hex wrenches in sizes 1/16", 3/32", 7/64" and 5/32" are included, as well as a universal choke tube wrench.

The compact size allows it to fit in a shooting bag, pack or hunting coat. With solid steel construction and a retail price of only \$11.80 the Gun Plumber Folding Multi-Tool is an inexpensive piece of backup from www.birchwoodcasey.com.

AR type rifles in their many configurations are great for hunting,

target shooting, plinking and more. The only issue is the magazines are a pain in the bottom to load.

That has just changed with the ASAP Electronic Magazine Loader from Butler Creek. It is the only product of its kind on the market at this time and made with serious competitors and training facilities in mind.

Snap in a magazine, fill the 60 round

hopper with loose rounds, select the desired round count and press a button. The machine automatically orientates the ammunition and loads the magazine. This is a sweet answer for more range time and less thumb damage. The ASAP Electronic Magazine Loader and many other models may be found at www.butlercreek.com.

Remember to always take a rest, breath, relax, and squeeze. 🎯🔫

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CoastWatch | Danno Wise

July is an unbelievable month for saltwater fishermen along the Upper Texas and Louisiana coastlines. Just about every type of inshore, nearshore and offshore fishing imaginable is going wide open in July.

Beginning in the back lakes, marshes and bays, both reds and specks will be plentiful for light tackle anglers. The beachfront will also be getting going, with good catches of speckled trout expected as soon as the water is green to the beach.

Jetty fishermen will have shots at specks, reds, pompano, Spanish mackerel and more. Kingfish and tarpon will be hanging around Gulf passes and in the nearshore waters.

Offshore fishermen will also have a full slate of options available. Kingfish, ling, bonito, and dorado will all be common targets. Red snapper, grouper and amberjack will be the focus of blue water structure fishermen. And, July begins the prime period for billfish along the Northern Gulf Coast. **T★J**



Long-time Matagorda guide Capt. Tommy Countz says July will be hot, but anglers can find plenty of good fishing action during the less sweltering portions of the day.

"July in Matagorda is going to be hot," said Countz. "So my best advice is to try to get on the water early and try to head in by midday before the thermometer pegs 100 degrees. And, don't forget to hydrate. You can't have too much water on your boat. That being said, let's talk about fishing.

"We've got plenty of options in the

Matagorda Bay Complex. Beginning in mid-July, winds are normally lighter. Any time that the surf gets flat and green, I'm going to be there. We've got about 23 miles of beach front north of our jetties that is accessible by boat and 4x4 and about 23 miles to the south that is accessible by boat only. If it's calm enough I suggest that you anchor on the first bar and get out and wade. I'll start off throwing topwaters and later switch to spoons, 51 Series Mirrolures or soft plastics. Watch for bait activity and slicks – those signs will help you find the fish.

"The grass beds on the south shore of West Matagorda Bay are another good target area during July. I concentrate on the guts running out from the peninsula through these beds. The water is going to be hot and the fish will be sluggish, so slow down your retrieve and try to feel the bites, which may be subtle. This is when braided line and a very sensitive rod like the Laguna Solo enhances your ability to feel bites.

"Boat fishing can be tough in July and August. If I have to fish out of the boat, I'll probably take my clients to East Matagorda Bay armed with live shrimp and either drift the scattered shell on the west end or the big mud flats on the east end. Rig your leaders at least three feet under your cork rig and pop the heck out of it.

"My final option in July is fishing for tripletail in West Matagorda Bay. Unlike trout, your best chance for a big tripletail is to be in my boat.

"Whatever you decide to do, July can be a very productive month to be fishing in Matagorda."

Freeport-based guide Capt. Mike Segall of Reel Three Charters says July is the month to be fishing in his area.

"July is wide open as everyone knows," said Segall. "Offshore, nearshore and deep sea will all be hot this month.

"Nearshore – basically one to three miles out - we will be catching lots of sharks and big bull reds. Sharks will be pretty much anywhere there is bait and will be especially thick if you do some chumming."



PHOTO COURTESY CAPT. TOMMY COUNTZ

The grass beds and guts behind Matagorda Peninsula in West Matagorda Bay is where Capt. Tommy Countz will spend a lot of his time this summer. Mary Covington shows off a solid speck caught while fishing this area with Capt. Tommy.

"State waters (out to nine nautical miles) will be holding kingfish, Spanish mackerel and cobia over the reefs and rocks and oil platforms. We will be trolling deep diving baits and sardines or drift fishing with sardines or live hard tails.

"On deep sea trips we will be catching red snapper, kingfish, cobia and dorado. To find dorado, you should look for current changes and current lines or weed patches. It's usually best to troll skirted plugs or topwater lures along the changes.

"Back inshore, the trout will still be in the surf on those calm days. Look to find bait and mullet in the guts of the sandbars of the beach. Croaker and live shrimp will work well, but a variety of plastics and topwater baits work well also. The ICW and old river will also be holding mangrove snapper and variety of fish along the rocks and shorelines."

Galveston guide Capt. Greg Verm of FishingGalveston.com says fishing in July should be unbelievable this year.

"July is always a good month for us and this year we've already had some outstanding fishing," said Verm. "In July, the surf will be consistently good. We'll

be catching a lot good specks in the surf and around the jetties. We'll also be seeing some bull reds around the jetties. When I'm fishing around the jetties, I'm usually freelining shrimp.

"I'll go out to the jetties just about any day that the conditions are right. But, there will also be good fishing in the bay and marsh. We'll be catching plenty of slot reds and specks, but we'll mostly be focused on specks in the bay. Most of the time, we'll be fishing live shrimp under a popping cork when we're fishing in the bay during July. And, since we'll have lighter winds, we'll see a lot better water conditions, so we'll be able to fish many more areas. But all the deep structure will be holding trout in July.

"We'll also be running a lot of offshore fishing trips during July. Our red snapper season for charter boats opened on June 1 and is the longest season we've had. We will head out 50 miles and catch our limits of red snapper then target kingfish, mahi, ling, triple tail, wahoo and more.

"We'll also be running our Galveston Summer Fishing Camps for Kids during July. This is a great camp to teach our youth the basics of fishing and safety.

Knot tying, casting, proper techniques for battling fish, and more are some of the things we teach at the dock before we load the boats and head out to Galveston Bay and put what we learned in place fishing for redfish, specks, croaker, drum, sheepshead, and anything else that will eat shrimp. These camps are a lot of fun for us and the kids."

Sabine Lake guide Capt. Randy Foreman says July is a dynamic month, offering anglers plenty of different options for chasing trout and reds, including fishing the lake, beachfront and short rigs – each of which will be producing good results this month.

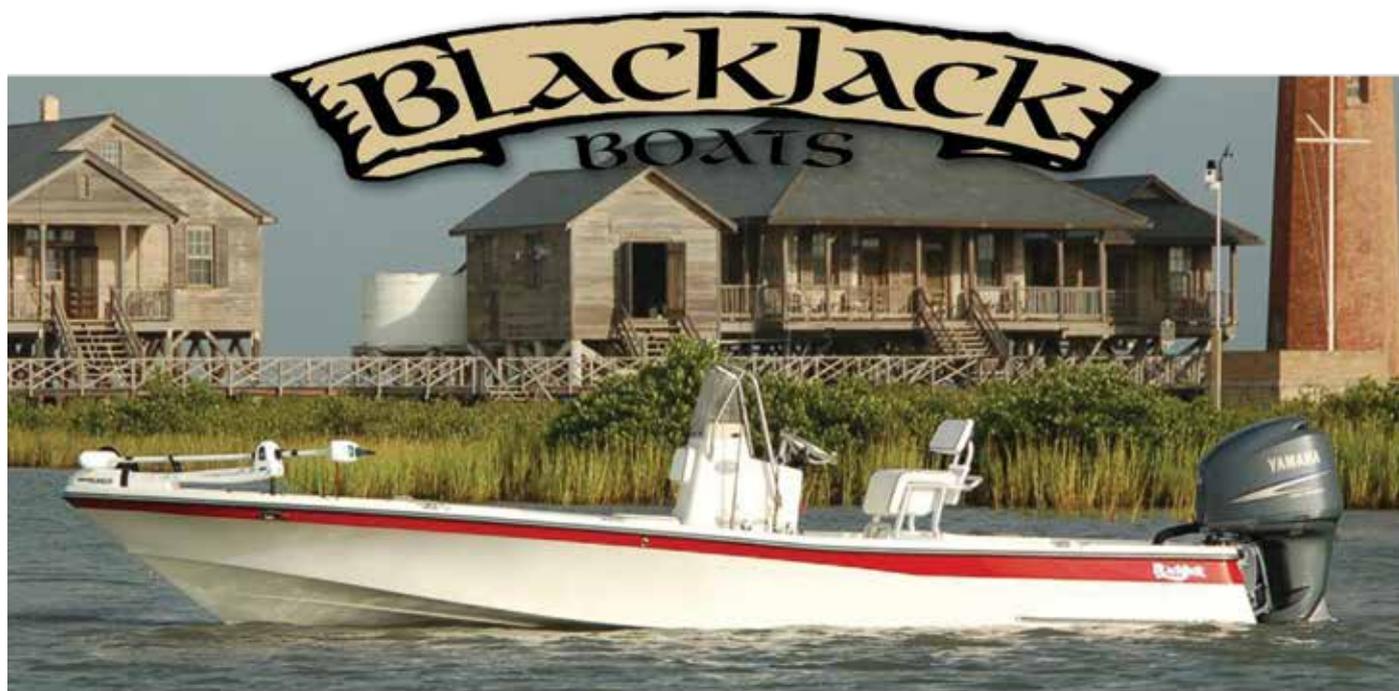
"The bird action will be tremendous in July," said Foreman. "We'll have plenty of fish on the south end of the lake and along the Louisiana shoreline. I'm not always fishing in the lake during July, but if I am, I'll be throwing Down South Southern Shad in either Midnight



In addition to the weather heating up, so will the triple tail action in West Matagorda Bay. This angler caught this nice triple tail while fishing around visible vertical structure with Capt. Tommy Countz.

Money or glow. And, I'll rig those baits on a 1/4-ounce jig head.

"As good as the fishing will be in the lake, we'll also be seeing a lot of fish on the beach and around the jetties, so I'll be fishing out there when the conditions are



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right. Again, I'll be throwing the Southern Shad. In the surf, I'll usually throw the Midnight Money, because it seems the darker colors are always better in the surf.

"We'll also run out to the short rigs

for trout. There are usually plenty of fish around the rigs and you never really know what you'll catch.

"We'll have trout, but also Spanish mackerel, tripletail, sharks, jacks - all kinds of stuff will hang around those rigs.

"Back in the lake, we'll also catch flounder on the Louisiana shoreline. If I'm fishing for flounder, I'll use soft-plastic jigs, but tip them with either chunks of bait or some sort of scented strips. Then, I'll drag them real slow across the bottom.

"One other thing I'll be doing is going into Keith Lake to look for redfish. When I'm back in Keith Lake, I'll use a glow Southern Shad on a 1/4 ounce jig head. But, you've got to make extra long casts in there, so make sure your using a good rod. I personally use a seven foot GL3 Loomis rod so I can get a little extra distance.



PHOTO COURTESY REEL THREE CHARTERS

Reel Three Charters out of Freeport is known for putting clients on good offshore action. They also provide great fishing in back marshes and bays for speckled trout. Deisty Segall shows off a nice keeper speck she caught while fishing with her husband Capt. Mike Segall.

"Really, July is a real good month for us. We've got lots of bird activity, the jetties and beachfront is happening, the short rigs are good - you go pretty much anywhere and catch some good fish in July." **T★J**



On Lake Calcasieu, guide Capt. Kimberlee Poe of Big Lake Guide Service says July should offer perfect conditions for great summer fishing on Big Lake.

"Things seem to be working out like we predicted," said Poe. "The lack of rain has allowed green salty water to make its way all the way up to Interstate 10. It has made for really good fishing throughout the entire estuary. Limits of nice trout have been common in Calcasieu and redfish have been prolific all the way north into Lake Charles.

"We look for this to continue throughout July. The trout fishing will

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PHOTO COURTESY CAPT. GREG VERM

All sorts of excitement awaits in the back marsh areas. This young lady angler caught this beautiful spatial while fishing with Capt. Greg Verm.



PHOTO COURTESY CAPT. RANDY FOREMAN

Sabine Lake will give up some solid trophy sized speckled trout during the summer months.

really turn on around the jetties, surf, and nearshore platforms. We will concentrate most of our efforts in this area, but early morning top water bites on reefs in the lake can be electric. However, most of the time these bites wane shortly after sunup due to water temperatures rising rapidly. It's always a good idea to make a quick stop on a main lake reef on your way to the channel or surf. You never know, you may not have to drive all the way down there after all."

Fishermen leaving out of Venice expect plenty of great fishing whether they are

heading offshore or fishing the inshore waters. Ling fishing will also be coming into its own in July. Most of the cobia will be found along grass lines or other floating structure. Kingfish will be thick around practically every piece of nearshore and offshore structure in the Gulf during July. Big mangrove snapper are another common

catch around these platforms and rigs. Additionally, dorado and wahoo will be within reach of most offshore anglers this month. Tuna are still a viable option as well, although anglers looking for tuna during July will need to make the little longer run to the deep water floating rigs.

Tarpon fishing will also be kicking off in July. Tarpon are generally spotted offshore in the end of June or early July. By the end of July, tarpon should be

common sights along the beachfront and in the passes.

The passes, along with the outside beaches, will also be holding plenty of speckled trout. And, the short rigs located in 8 to 20 feet of water will be holding specks and a variety of other species such as Spanish mackerel during July and through August. 🌟🌟



PHOTO COURTESY CAPT. RANDY FOREMAN

In the summer reds will begin to school and work under birds. This young lady angler shows off the quality of redfish available through the summer months.

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Lake Roundup

SOUTH TEXAS



By Danno Wise

July is what summer is all about in Texas — hot weather, lots of water sports, Fourth of July, fireworks and plenty of outdoor recreation. However, South Texas anglers often look at July as a subpar fishing month because it is too hot, too crowded, fish are too deep, fish are too finicky, etc. But, July can actually be an excellent month to fish for a variety of species on lakes, ponds, rivers and streams across the southern half of the Lone Star State.

Mid-summer is also a great time for casual fishing - pending a relaxing day on the lake catching anything that bites. July always sees plenty of panfish action.

Finding shade is always the key to finding fish during the summer months. Whether the shade is provided by overhanging branches, lily pads, docks or some other structure panfish will generally be packed up in the relatively cooler pockets of shaded water. Once found, they can be caught of natural baits such as crickets, grasshoppers, nightcrawlers and grubs, as well as small jigs and plugs.

Out a little deeper, crappie will also be active. Shiners, minnows and jigs are always safe bets for slabs. This excellent panfish action, coupled with consistent catfishing, makes July a great time for families to go fishing.

COLETO CREEK – Bass on Coletto Creek will be stuck solidly in a summer pattern as July gets underway, says Victoria bass

pro Dennis Lala. This means the bass will be concentrating around whatever aquatic vegetation they can find – mostly lily pads or coontail moss – and deep structure.

“We don’t have hydrilla on this lake like we used to,” said Lala. “But, the fish still want to hang around whatever vegetation they can find. We have quite a bit of coontail grass as well as little pads. The bass will be moving up and down the outside edges of those vegetation lines, feeding on minnows and perch. So, you’ll be able to find fish around just about any vegetation that they still relate to as structure.

“Most of the time in the summer I’ll be fishing in 12 feet of water or deeper. Usually I’ll be working Carolina-rigged plastics along the grass edges. You want to use a real light Carolina rig – nothing heavier than a 1/8-ounce weight — something that will sink really slow. Sometimes I’ll just use a split shot.

“There’s a lot of worms and jerkbaits that will work on a Carolina rig this time of year. My favorites are a Berkley Power Jerkshad or a GULP! Shaky Worm in June bug, watermelon/red, watermelon/candy or Red Shad.

“In summer, we spend most of our time working deep water. But we also have a pretty good topwater bite in July as well. If you want topwater or shallow water action, you’ve got to get there really early. First thing in the morning, we usually have some real good topwater action. When I’m fishing topwaters in July, I like throwing a Frenzy Popper or a Rattlin’ Buzz around any visible structure and up against the shoreline. This can be productive, but it won’t last long. Same thing with spinnerbaits and shallow cranks – you can catch fish in shallow water early, but after that we need to move off to the deep water.”

MEDINA – As one of the deepest lakes in South Texas, Medina challenges anglers a bit differently when fish enter their summer pattern, according to Jim Gallagher of Jim’s Rebait Tackle.

“In July, it is hot and our fish will be well into their summer pattern,” said Gallagher. “Our fish usually get into their

summer pattern in June and, once that happens, the pattern will stay well into September. During summer, main lake and secondary points will be the key.

“The fish will be in deep water most of the day, but we will still have a pretty good shallow water and topwater bite early. That bite is best before the sun comes up or just after sunrise. Shallow water fishing will be good late in the day as well and at night. But, the rest of the time, fish will be really deep. They can be caught during the middle of the day, but it’s tough. You really have to know what to do to catch those fish when they’re holding down deep.

“Fishing in the creek channel can still be real good. But, as I’ve said before, this is a very precise type of fishing — you have to fish in the channel, right in the channel, not on either side of it. Fish will come up as much as 25 feet to hit a bait in the channel, but they won’t move five feet outside the channel to strike. So, you have to find that channel and stay in it – even if it winds. If it goes left, go left. If it goes right, go right. You have to follow the channel. And, you want to concentrate on the steep, deep drop side, not the flat, gently sloping side.

“The water usually isn’t quite as clear up in the river. Fishing up there can be a little easier. You can find fish a little shallower and can fish a little bit later in the day. But, that doesn’t necessarily mean they’ll bite. And, of course, on weekends there is a lot of recreational traffic up there. You should also keep your eyes out for whites and hybrids. You can see them on the surface every now and then. But, if you want to catch them consistently, you’ll have to fish deep. The best way is by running downriggers with Pet spoons or KT spoons and doing figure eights around the islands in 30 – 35 feet of water. Chrome or white are the best colors.

“There are some fish that are pretty easy to catch during summer too. Catfish are always real easy on this lake. And, there are some really big perch in this lake. The key to finding them is looking for shade. Shade has always been the key to finding panfish on Medina. Just about any shaded water will have lots of panfish

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during summer.”

CHOKO CANYON – Summer is hot and the lower water levels mean water temperatures will rise even more quickly during July 2018. However, this does not necessarily mean fishing will suffer. Choke Canyon typically has acres of matted hydrilla that offer bass shade from the summer sun. During periods of lower water, these mats become even more dense than normal. So, bass will have plenty of places to hide during the heat of summer and anglers will have a visual reference point for where to find them.

Early in the morning, there will be some shallow water activity along the shorelines and over the tops of the grass beds. Noisy topwaters are always the most productive surface baits on Choke. The most popular hard bait is the Rebel Pop R. However, various buzzbaits work well also. Once the grass reaches the surface, many fishermen will opt for artificial frogs or weedless topwaters like the D.O.A. PT-7, which can be retrieved through the densest portion of the grass beds without fouling.

As the day wears on, bass will begin sinking lower in the water column and anglers will need to go deep with their offerings in order to continue catching them. Even though the bass will be moving into deeper water, they will not abandon the grass beds. Nor should fishermen. In fact, the best ways to target deep water bass on Choke is by either punching through grass beds or fishing the outside edges of the grass. Anglers wanting to look for traditional offshore structure can do well by working over deep main lake structure like tank dams.

There will also be plenty of fish up the river. Anglers should again concentrate on the deeper structure, in this case, flooded timber and the channel edges. Texas-rigged lizards and deep-diving cranks will be the best deep water offerings for big bass on Choke during July.

FALCON — As with the other South Texas lakes, deep structure will be the key for fishermen on Falcon Lake during July as the lakes resident largemouth will be in a solid summer pattern. Points, ledges and rockpiles will all produce fish. Deep-diving crankbaits, swimbaits and jumbo soft-plastics are the preferred baits. However, a good number of big bass have been taken on creature baits as well.

Those hoping to fish shallow should

get to the lake extra early. Fishing the brushy shorelines in the coves can produce some decent fish first thing in the morning. During the early morning hours, spinnerbaits and surface plugs will draw plenty of attention.

There should also be some schooling bass in the main lake during July. When these fish are found, they'll hit virtually any fast-moving bait. Lipless cranks and small swimbaits are among the favorites.

Catfish should be good up the river as well during July. **T★J**



By TOJ Staff

AMISTAD — Even though this big border impound was over 29 feet low to begin June, there is still plenty of water to fish. In fact to start June there is three feet more water than one year earlier, there is plenty of structure and grass for fish to relate, plus this is just a big lake with plenty of options.

The other good thing is the spring draw down seems to have slowed. That should mean that what we have should be what is available to fish unless we get heavy rains within the watershed and we see a rise. Look for black bass to continue to be at summertime depths of 15 to 45 feet deep. In the clear water bass will come a long way to hit a topwater lure early or a lipless crankbait worked on the outside edge of structure.

Wherever hydrilla is found fish inside as well as outside of it. Up various creeks, rivers and covers there is a lot of standing timber to probe with jigs and Texas rigs.

Stripe bass continue to school in front of the dam in deep water. Big topwater lures or Rat-L-Traps are good options.

Catfish will have slipped to deeper depths. Look for them in water 20-40 feet deep.

O.H. IVIE — At the start of June Ivie

was about 40 feet low, just about the same level for the same time in 2016. Grab your notes to review where fish were caught. Hopefully this popular lake will receive the similar needed rainfall that refilled the lake with about 10 feet of water by the time July 2016 ended.

This is run and gun time on Ivie. Look for white, black and smallmouth bass to be schooling in covers and pockets. Look for surface activity to point the way early and late. During the rest of the day rely on electronics or take a break from the heat.

BROWNWOOD — As of early June this popular lake was four feet low. At the same time in 2016 and for the first two weeks of the month the lake was closed due to floating debris as it was over two and a half feet high.

Whether this lake is full or a few feet low there are always boat docks and that is the primary pattern through the summer. In early June anglers caught black bass in water one to five feet deep. By July the proven pattern suggests black bass will have slipped to water eight to 15 feet deep, but still while relating to boat docks.

Crappie fishing continues to be good in water 15-25 feet deep over brush piles. Both minnows and small tube jigs are good options. **T★J**

HIGH PLAINS



By TOJ Staff

ALAN HENRY — During the third week in May, just before the Memorial Day weekend this lake caught two feet of water and moved from almost eight feet low to about 5.75 feet low. The influence of this rise could still carry over to July resulting in good bass fishing.

A similar even occurred at the same time of year in 2016. This resulted in bass schooling at depths to 50 feet deep in July 2016. Use of electronics will be paramount. **T★J**



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Photos provided by photographer Erich Schlegel, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and the U.S. Coast Guard.



WAHOO!

The “ultimate mackerel,” is the wahoo – a fish that rates near the top in both sportfishing and food qualities. It is normally found far enough from shore to be rather “exotic,” yet is more commonly encountered than billfish and most of the tunas.

The old story is that the name came from a common phrase uttered by an angler when hooked to his first “Wa-hoo!” However, the power and speed these fish possess has been known to get the same reaction even from seasoned offshore veterans every time they hook a good wahoo and feel it peeling long stretches of line from their reel.

In the Texas Gulf, it is very likely that more wahoo are hooked as incidental catches by fishermen working deep water relatively long distances from shore, in search of marlin.

Indeed, one of the best spots to visit when on a serious wahoo expedition would probably be the Flower Gardens reef system, where big ‘hoos hunt the coral structures year ‘round.

Of course, most fishermen familiar with the Texas Gulf are aware that wahoo are also found on smaller reefs, around oil production platforms, in “open” water near current changes and weed lines – and even around shrimp boats.

It is also good news that wahoo are not always found in extremely deep water far from shore, and may be encountered at times around the same sort of structure and open water features a short run from the beach.

My first experience with wahoo came on trips mainly targeting billfish. Along the 100 fathom drop off both Texas and Louisiana, wahoo are common catches. They will eagerly hit lures meant for marlin, as well as “meat” baits prepared for billfish.

They also frequent the same spots as their larger, “billed” cousins, and will be taken on billfish trips whether they are “welcome” or not. It is hard for me to understand why a wahoo would be “unwelcome”, but some fishermen, in



PHOTO COURTESY COE PARKER

Coe Parker shows off a 30 pound class wahoo he recently caught while fishing the Flower Gardens aboard his offshore catamaran Reel Estate.

some situations, do consider them so – usually when they mangle a billfish bait that took a long time to rig and make ready.

Wahoo might be considered a “super charged” king mackerel – as they run a bit larger than kings, a bit stronger, and a bit faster. Smaller wahoo are best identified as not king mackerel by the dark stripes along their silver bodies.

As bigger, hungry versions of their smaller mackerel siblings, they feed a lot in the same manner and on the same sort of forage species.

In deeper water they are probably more accustomed to feeding on ballyhoo, squid, and flying fish than cigar minnows – but they will take this sort of smaller prey when they find it.

When I did quite a bit of bill fishing, captains would tell me of getting exceptionally good catches of wahoo around various oil rig types – but most often around floating deep water

platforms where the activity associated with drilling and production keeps bait species active – and close. While wahoo in numbers might normally be found more often around rigs and reefs, trolling color changes and weed lines are excellent tactics for locating deep water ‘hoos.

If your tackle setup features enough line, 30# rigs will take big wahoo in open water. They normally run long and fast, instead of looking for some sort of structure to wrap the line in.

Wire or heavy mono leaders, of course, are needed, but hooks smaller than those normally chosen for marlin may actually work better. When fishing with live or dead natural bait, circle hooks work as well on wahoo as they do on big king mackerel.

“Billfish lures” probably catch more wahoo than anything, even if they aren’t being pulled for that purpose. Wahoo like jet-head lures and those with tapered, flat “noses” that leave long bubble trails in

their wake.

“When trolling around a rig or over bottom structure, large “plugs” of the “swimming minnow” type – larger versions of the Rebel or Rapala lures - are very good.

While wahoo can “save” a trip to a deepwater haunt when billfish or tuna might be more elusive, where they really have a special value is to anglers closer inshore mainly looking for kings. Like the occasional bull dolphin that really makes a king fishing trip special. A good wahoo caught from inshore water is also something to be very, very proud . At least in fighting ability, a wahoo is a more impressive inshore catch than a sailfish.

In past years, I knew of good wahoo caught at the Tenneco Rigs less than 30 miles off Freeport, and we occasionally hooked a smaller wahoo while trolling or drifting near rigs 10 miles from shore – or closer.

While most of these type catches – or “near misses” - are happy accidents, there was also a “rock” near a drop-off not far out of Freeport that sometimes held wahoo. There they could be hooked on natural bait or kingfish sized jigs trolled at slower speeds.

Chumming can also get wahoo in a feeding mood when drift fishing or working structure. Clear water conditions, and calm – maybe not flat calm sea



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

In the Gulf, it is likely that more wahoo are hooked as incidental catches by fishermen working deep water relatively long distances from shore, in search of marlin.

conditions - seem best for this type of fishing action.

One of my fondest memories of “inshore” wahoo came on a snapper/kingfish trip aboard my friends Wimpy and Hoyt Lowe’s old charter boat, Wango Tango. We were chumming for kings out of Freeport over what would be considered near-shore structure, when a large wahoo showed up. It swam around the boat for a long period of time much like a ling will often do in similar situations.

A fisherman who was working his bait off the stern hooked the big fish – on a 30# kingfish rig and a cigar minnow bait – and then spent a good deal of time “following” the big ‘Hoo around the boat while all the other fishermen had to try to keep from becoming tangled with him. When the fish finally was within reach of a gaff and came aboard, it was a beauty in the 70 pound class. On another trip further out, Wango Tango’s anglers got five wahoo in a single afternoon near the Cerveza Rig, working weed lines.

Besides being very exciting fish to catch, wahoo are an excellent food species. The “meat” cooks white and clean, and has a delicate flavor – much milder than king mackerel. It has an excellent flavor when battered and fried, or when broiled over a wood fire. Personally, I prefer wahoo to just about any fish from the Gulf – even dolphin.

While wahoo are a special blessing when encountered in “inshore” waters, they are fairly common in deeper waters – certainly more likely to be caught than billfish, on most trips. Right now, there are no catch restrictions, size or bag limits on wahoo.

Although I don’t know of any boats or captains actively offering targeted wahoo trips, I also don’t know of any who would turn down a chance to load their fish boxes with these delicious creatures, or let their customers miss the chance to do battle with a ‘hoo on appropriate tackle. **T★J**

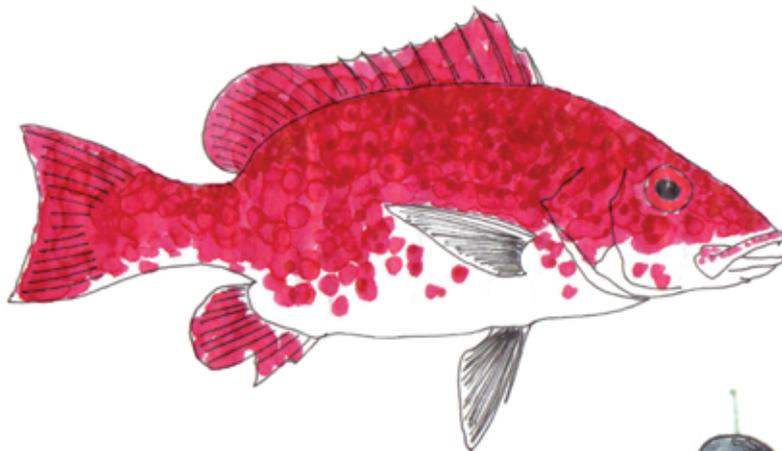


PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Smaller wahoo are best identified as not king mackerel by the dark stripes along their silver bodies.

Offshore Bottom Rigs

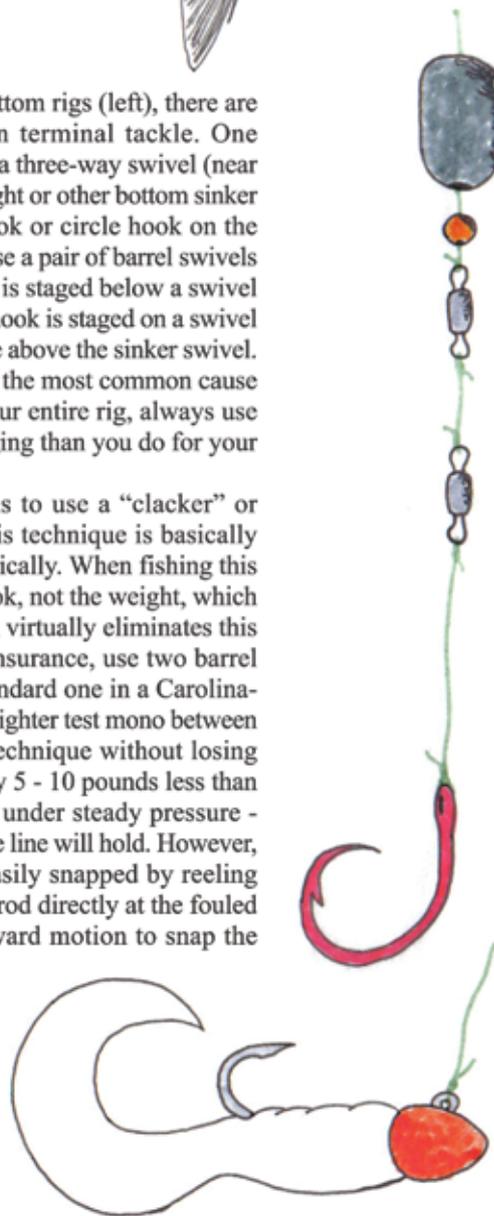
With summer now in full swing, more and more boats will be heading to the bluewater beyond the beachfront. One of the most popular offshore targets for the Texas fleet are red snapper. As most anglers know, snapper are structure oriented fish. They generally hold tight to rocks piles, wrecks or rigs. As a result of trying to get baits tight to this cover, anglers run the risk of hanging up practical as often as hooking up. Although hang-ups are part of snapper fishing, there are ways to minimize the amount of tackle you lose when the inevitable occurs.



When fishing three-way bottom rigs (left), there are basically two ways to tie on terminal tackle. One common method is to employ a three-way swivel (near left) with a heavy pyramid weight or other bottom sinker on one stage and a large J-hook or circle hook on the other. The other method is to use a pair of barrel swivels (far left). In this rig, the sinker is staged below a swivel tied to the mainline, while the hook is staged on a swivel which is run along the mainline above the sinker swivel. In both instances, the sinker is the most common cause of fouling. To avoid losing your entire rig, always use lighter line on your sinker staging than you do for your main line.

Another popular method is to use a “clacker” or “slapper”-type rig (right). This technique is basically like fishing a Carolina-rig vertically. When fishing this type of rig, it is usually the hook, not the weight, which fouls. The use of a circle hook virtually eliminates this problem. However, as extra insurance, use two barrel swivels (as opposed to the standard one in a Carolina-rig), and use a short section of lighter test mono between them. The key to using this technique without losing fish is not to go too light - only 5 - 10 pounds less than your main line. When placed under steady pressure - such as when fighting a fish, the line will hold. However, when hung, this rig can be easily snapped by reeling down tight while pointing the rod directly at the fouled rig, then using a sharp backward motion to snap the lighter line.

Another solution to losing fewer rigs is to utilize heavy jigs. Heavy jigs in the 2 - 4 ounce range can be fished directly on the bottom, but allow the angler more control over the bait. Furthermore, lighter (1-3 ounce) jigs are excellent for catching snapper that are suspended or have been chummed away from the structure. Standard swirl-tail and paddle-tail jigs work well, as do nylon skirt jigs tipped with cigar minnows or pogies.



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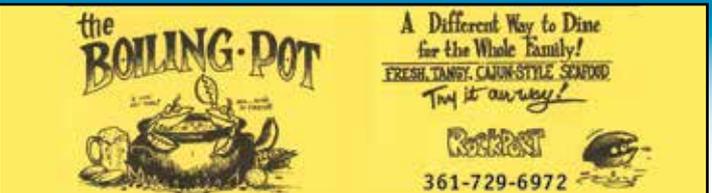


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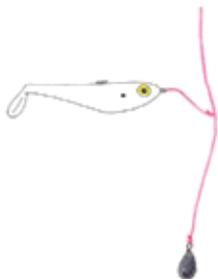
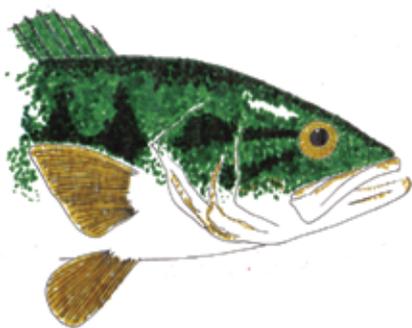
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Going Deep For Summer Bass

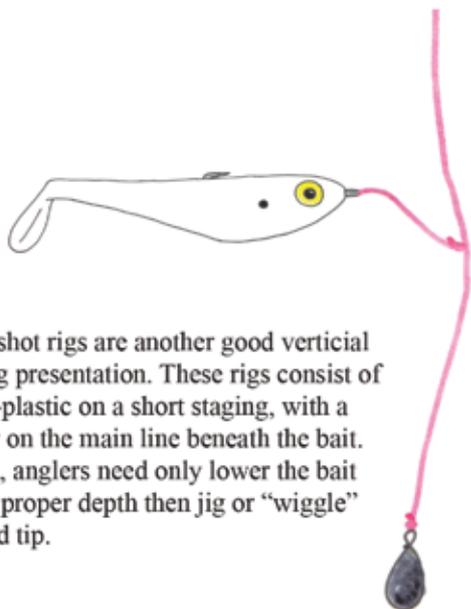


By July, bass on lakes across Texas are smack in the middle of their summer pattern. While more anglers will be making their way to lakes across Texas during the next couple months than at any other time of year, bass in these lakes will also challenge anglers to use much different techniques to catch them.

Deep diving crankbaits are relatively easy to use, as they can be effective with a simple cast-and-reel retrieve. When fish are found in areas with relatively clean bottoms, fishermen can actually “dig” the bait across the lake bottom.

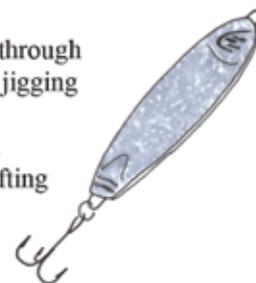


Lipless crankbaits can also be used with a cast-and-reel retrieve. In order to achieve the proper depth, anglers should count down the descent of lipless cranks as they fall through the water column before they begin reeling. Once the right depth is found, anglers should use same count and retrieve speed on subsequent casts. Lipless cranks can also be used in a vertical jigging fashion by dropping them straight down and lifting and lowering the rod tip.

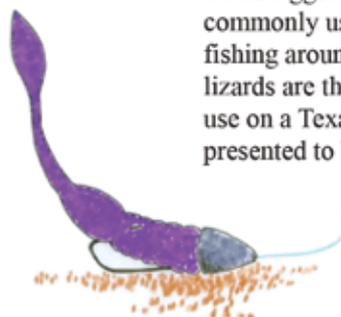


Drop shot rigs are another good vertical fishing presentation. These rigs consist of a soft-plastic on a short staging, with a sinker on the main line beneath the bait. Again, anglers need only lower the bait to the proper depth then jig or “wiggle” the rod tip.

Jigging spoons are also effective, though rarely used in Texas lakes. Again, jigging spoons can be used effectively by dropping them straight down (and counting down the descent) and lifting and lowering the rod tip.



Texas rigged soft-plastics are the most commonly used baits by Texas anglers fishing around deep structure. Worms and lizards are the usual choice of plastics to use on a Texas rig. These baits can be presented to bass at a variety of depths.



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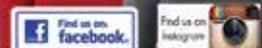
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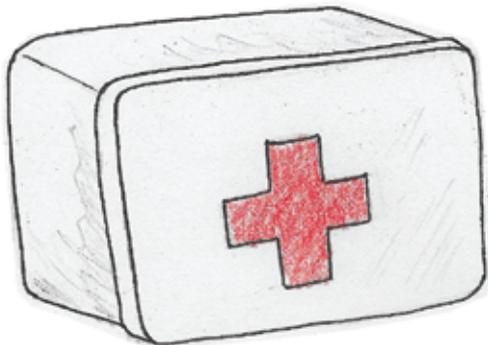
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Packing With A Purpose

July is the perfect time to commence with a variety of pre-hunt activities. Obviously firearm and bow preparations are at the top of the list. Practice will instill confidence once a season arrives.

However, it is also the time to update and prepare other items that will be taken to the field. This includes the pack and its contents. Depending upon how, where and the type of hunting that will be done will determine the type of pack carried and much of its content.



In Texas most of the hunting is done on private land, from established blinds and within fairly close proximity to help if needed. However, a simple fanny pack or small daypack will carry items that may be useful in the field.

At the top of the list is water to drink for obvious reasons. First aid kits should be checked and as well as the expiration date of all medicine (for pain/headaches, nausea, allergies, or prescriptions.) Also replace any bandages, band-aids, topical antiseptic or other items that may have been previously used.

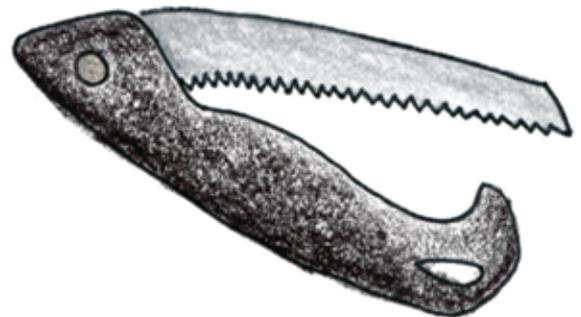
Additional knives and knife sharpeners should be carried. Orange surveyor flagging, rope and/or paracord plus hi-carb or energy snacks may be useful.

For hunters that will be more mobile and plan on spending the entire day on the move, or for those heading to the high country in pursuit of elk or mule deer, a few more items should be included. First the type of pack used will be different.

This type of remote hunting also calls for other items to be carried. Again water is the first consideration and a small micro-water purification system should be included. Whether it is a mountain stream, river or even windmill cistern or stock tank it will provide safe drinking water.

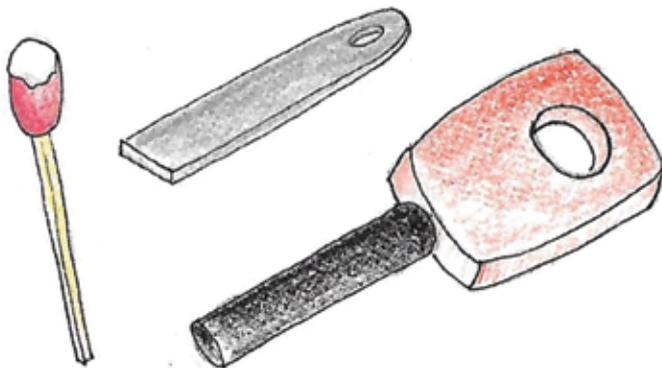
Emergency shelter may be needed in case of an emergency or if a hunter has to spend the night out after harvesting a big game animal at last light. A heavier gauge piece of plastic will do. An even better option is a 10' x 10' piece of rip-stop tarp.

Additional tools to assist with the processing of game may be carried. These include a good folding pack saw and large freezer type food bags to protect the meat. Cheesecloth game bags will protect the meat and keep flies of it.



All loose items should be organized in small individual stuff sacks. These sacks are available in a number of colors and items can be placed in them. Items inside can be quickly identified based on the color of the sack without having to rummage through the entire pack.

Always carry a stuff sack with a couple of different ways of making fire. While on many Texas hunts this may not be needed, it is a good habit to carry fire-making options. Flint and steel, magnesium bar with striker, windproof/waterproof matches and even a trusty lighter full of fluid are good options.



There are other items that may need to be carried based on the where and when a hunt will take place. Modify what goes into a pack based on experience, recommendations from veteran hunters and guides or based on your own experiences as it increases.

Don't forget a compass, GPS, topographic maps, flashlights and extra batteries. Knowledge of how to use each is also paramount.



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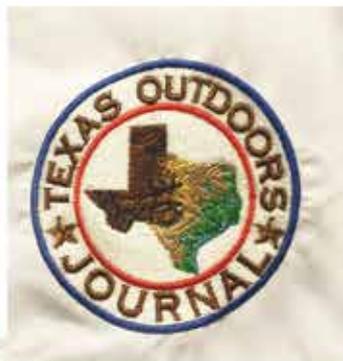
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THROUGH AUGUST 31,

Javelina season, South Zone (*50 counties*). For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

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JULY 5, 12, 19, 26,

Archery Clinic, LBJ State Park & Historic Site, *Stonewall*. Free Basic Archery Clinic at the LBJ State Park Ball Field off of HWY. 290 on Cornet Street. 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Bows and arrows will be provided by the State Park to use for this clinic or you may bring your own. Children 7 years or older as well as adults are welcome to participate. For more information and registration call (830) 644-2252.

JULY 7,

West Bay Slam Tournament and Fundraiser, The West End Restaurant, *Galveston*. For information, tournament rules and reservations call (713)

594-4252 or visit fishwestend.com.

JULY 8,

San Jac Strutters Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation fundraiser banquet, *Coldspring*. For information and reservations call (936) 628-1401.

July 13 – 15,

83rd Annual Deep Sea Roundup Fishing Tournament, *Port Aransas*. Deep Sea Roundup includes Offshore, Bay Surf, Fly Fishing and Junior Division plus a free Piggy Perch contest for the little guys and gals. Registration includes an open bar on all three nights plus a shrimp dump on registration night and full meals on Friday and Saturday nights. The “Roundup” is considered the best value among the Texas Coastal Tournaments. For reg-

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istration, rules and entry information visit www.deepsearoundup.com.

JULY 14,

15th Annual Conroe Chapter Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Big Game Banquet, Lone Star Convention Center, *Conroe*. For information and reservations call (936) 203-1647, visit www.rmefhouston.com, or email jillfrazier@consolidated.net.

JULY 14,

Van Zandt County Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation fundraiser banquet, *Canton*. For information and reservations call (903) 275-9660

JULY 20-22,

Sportsman Channel OUTDOOR FEST, George R. Brown Convention Center, *Houston*. Stop by the TEXAS OUTDOORS JOURNAL booth and let's talk fishing, hunting, or anything outdoors. For more information visit SCOOutdoorfest.com.

JULY 20-22,

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JULY 21,

East Texas Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation fundraiser banquet, *Longview*. For information and reservations, you are able to call (903) 445-2943.

JULY 21,

Texas Lone Star Chapter Mule Deer Foundation fundraiser banquet, *Austin*. For information and reservations call (512) 633-7519

JULY 27,

Blue Bell and Bluebonnet Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation fundraiser banquet, *Brenham*. For information and reservations call (903) 227-2006.

JULY 28,

Texas Gulf Coast Chapter Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Big Game Banquet, *Alvin*. For information and reservations call (281) 245-9723.

JULY 28,

Pineywoods Local Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation fundraiser banquet, *Lufkin*. For information and reservations call (903) 465-7516. **T★J**

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Tide Tables

JULY 2018

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
L12:09A H8:43A 1	L12:43A H9:19A 2	L1:18A H9:53A 3	L1:56A H10:23A 4	L2:37A H10:47A L6:20P H11:12P 5	L3:28A H11:05A L6:23P H11:13P 6	L4:10A H11:17A L6:47P 7
H2:33A L6:13A H11:27A L7:21P 8	H3:33A L7:56A H11:40A L8:01P 9	H4:24A L9:13A H12:07P L8:45P 10	H5:12A L10:04A H12:53P L9:33P 11	H5:58A L10:43A H1:50P L10:22P 12	H6:44A L11:23A H2:51P L11:13P 13	H7:28A L12:11P H3:58P 14
L12:05A H8:11A L1:11P H5:12P 15	L12:58A H8:51A L2:24P H6:41P 16	L1:53A H9:28A L3:44P H8:29P 17	L2:51A H10:02A L4:55P H10:32P 18	L4:00A H10:32A L5:54P 19	H12:39A L5:39A H10:59A L6:44P 20	H2:31A L7:36A H11:23A L7:28P 21
H3:48A L9:12A H11:43A L8:07P 22	H4:40A L8:43P 23	H5:19A L9:16P 24	H4:49A L9:47P 25	H6:14A L10:17P 26	H3:36A L11:25A H2:21P L10:47P 27	H7:01A L11:35A H3:02P L11:17P 28
H7:27A L12:07P H3:42P L11:47P 29	H7:54A L12:53P H4:28P 30	L12:19A H8:21A L1:12P H5:32P 31				

AUGUST 2018

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			L12:51A H8:45A L2:39P H7:13P 1	L12:6A H9:05A L3:29P H9:20P 2	L2:05A H9:20A L4:17P H11:24P 3	L2:53A H9:28A L5:04P 4
H11:12A L4:02A H9:30A L5:53P 5	H2:31A L5:53A H9:34A L6:43P 6	H3:27A L8:01A H10:11A L7:36P 7	H4:14A L8:57A H11:34A L8:29P 8	H4:56A L9:30A H12:56P L9:22P 9	H5:36A L10:06A H12:11P L10:15P 10	H6:13A L10:49A H1:5 L11:06P 11

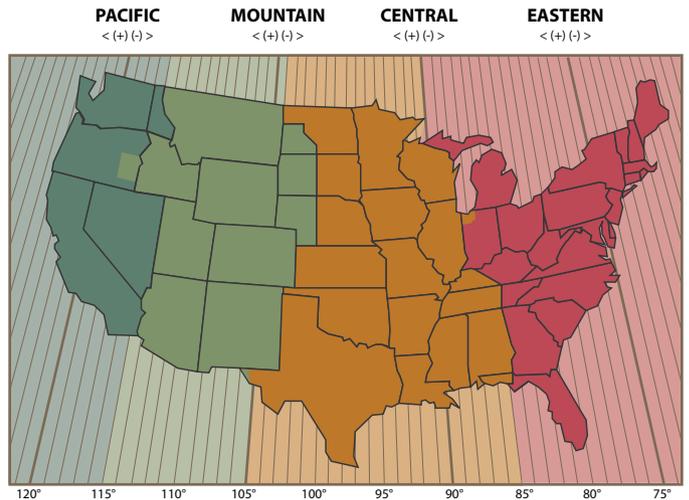
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TIME DIFFERENCES	High	Low
Calcasieu Pass, Louisiana	-2:14	-1:24
Sabine Pass Lighthouse	-1:46	-1:31
Sabine Pass Jetty	-1:26	-1:31
Sabine Pass	-1:00	-1:15
Mesquite Point, Sabine Pass	-0:04	-0:25
Galveston Bay ent. south jetty	-0:39	-1:05
Port Bolivar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



JULY 2018

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 ☀	2 ●	3 ●	4 ●	5 ☀	6 ○	7 ☀
1:50P - 6:50P	2:45P - 7:45P	3:40P - 8:40P	4:05A - 9:05A	4:55A - 9:55A	5:45A - 10:45A	6:30A - 11:30A
8 ☀	9 ☀	10 ☀	11 ●	12 NEW	13 ●	14 ☀
7:15A - 12:15P	8:05A - 1:05P	8:55A - 1:55P	9:45A - 2:45P	10:40A - 3:40P	11:40A - 4:40P	12:40P - 5:40P
15 ☀	16 ☀	17 ☀	18 ○	19 ☀	20 ☀	21 ☀
1:45P - 6:45P	2:50P - 7:50P	3:50P - 8:50P	4:20A - 9:20A	5:15A - 10:15A	6:05A - 11:05A	6:50A - 11:50A
22 ☀	23 ☀	24 ○	25 ☀	26 ☀	27 FULL	28 ●
7:30A - 12:30P	8:10A - 1:10P	8:50A - 1:50P	9:35A - 2:35P	10:20A - 3:20P	11:00A - 4:00P	11:45A - 4:45P
29 ☀	30 ●	31 ●				
12:30P - 5:30P	1:20P - 6:20P	2:10P - 7:10P				

AUGUST 2018

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1 ○	2 ○	3 ☀	4 ☀
			3:00P - 7:00P	3:50P - 8:50P	4:15A - 9:15A	5:10A - 10:10A
5 ☀	6 ○	7 ☀	8 ●	9 ●	10 ☀	11 NEW
6:00A - 11:00A	6:50A - 11:50A	7:45A - 12:45P	8:40A - 1:40P	9:35A - 2:35P	10:30A - 3:30P	11:25A - 4:25P

● BEST ☀ GOOD ☀ FAIR ○ POOR

Fish, game and all wildlife move in search of food in cycles relative to the moon's location to the earth. The time spans listed above are the prime times to start each day at and along each time zone meridian of longitude 75 degrees (Eastern) 90 degrees (Central) 105 degrees (Mountain) and 120 degrees (Pacific) during Standard time and Daylight Saving during the time it is in effect. To determine the feeding cycle time for best fishing and hunting in the area you plan to fish or hunt advance the sum of 4 minutes for each degree west and back up 4 minutes for each degree east. The next prime feeding cycle (not listed on the calendar) will be approximately twelve and one-half hours later. There are minor periods that occur between the prime or major periods. The minor periods are typically fair periods and last only about half as long as the prime periods.

Feeding Times by Dan Barnett have been proven by analysis of 124 - 3 day bass tournaments between 1967 through 1983 to be reliable and accurate in predicting wildlife feeding activity. The Feeding Times are not a cure-all. Weather and other environmental conditions affect wildlife feeding activity. Annual vest pocket books, which show all the major and minor periods, can be ordered by sending a check or money order for \$19.95 per book. For S&H, please add \$4.95 to an order of 1 to 4 books. Make check or money order payable to: Feeding Times. Send to: Feeding Times, P.O. Box 2240, Covington, GA 30015. After Oct. 1, please indicate book year. For questions or comments, you can call 404-373-7151.

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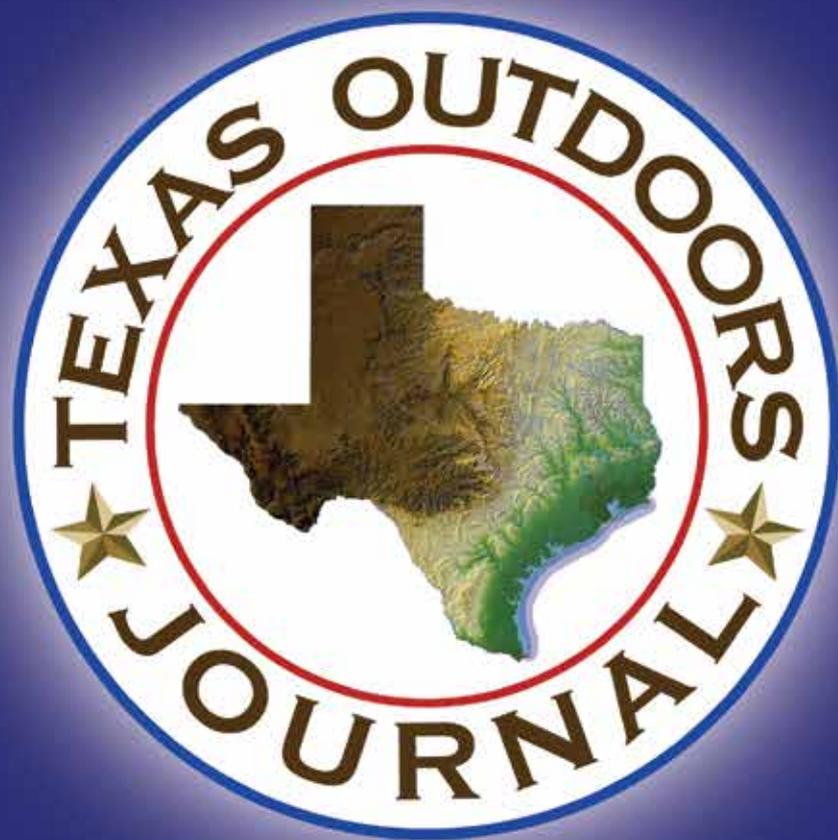
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