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(see page 75, #1 for more information)

**Autumn Temptations - White Bass Galore**

# TEXAS OUTDOORS

*"Texas' Most Comprehensive Outdoor Publication"* **JOURNAL**



November 2018 / \$3.99

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JOURNAL

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"Secret Rendezvous"

For more information on "Secret Rendezvous" and other fine works of art by Dallen Lambson, visit [www.dallenlambsonart.com](http://www.dallenlambsonart.com).



## Thankful and Engaged

November is more than just the eleventh month of the year. It is the month set aside to give thanks for all that God has blessed those that live in this country and particularly Texas.

This is also the month when elections are held and the upcoming mid-term vote will shape the near-term and long-term course of our country. The outcome will be more than pivotal as a decision to either continue on a prosperous course or to have a dramatic change that will undo the recent positives that so many said could not be achieved.

I find it sadly ironic that a nation founded on a belief in God struggles to have believers turn out to even cast a vote so their voices are heard. It is disappointing that too many are not engaged with the political process or fail to “toe-the-line” when important decisions are being made. That is a right too many fail to exercise. Many times it allows a decision to be made that does not truly represent the will of the majority. That is why it is so important to be honestly informed and engaged in the election process.

Recently, a reader wrote about an article that correctly pointed out the inaccuracy of mainstream media’s “fake news” coverage on building a handgun via a 3-D printer. He was appalled at an example used about a part of the country that has the most strict gun laws and one of the highest homicide rates. He felt we should stick to just covering hunting and fishing. Unfortunately he honed in on about three paragraphs of the story and missed the message that simply set the record straight.

A few months earlier another reader complained that we obviously support the National Rifle Association and was upset with that fact. He said we supported NRA’s bias agenda that prevented reasonable gun control measures. He too didn’t want to acknowledge the facts and was speaking from a uniformed and emotional position. I responded to both personally but was disappointed in their shortsighted responses.

As hunters we do support the Second Amendment and will point out falsehoods made by the liberal left. We will continue to resist those that want to infringe on one sacred right in order to prevent loosing the benefits of other rights and privileges.

Even anglers become outspoken when the opportunity to enjoy recreational waters are threatened by some governmental entity. In fact when government overreaches the boundaries of their existence people become more engaged. It is certainly true for many dedicated to the out-of-doors.

Given the fact that over 98.5 percent of TOJ readers buy a combination license we know most all y’all hunt and fish. However, there is an increasing challenge this state is facing as more and more people from other parts of the country are drawn to the opportunities available in Texas.

Those that are not native born, but “got here as quickly as you could” and embrace Texas traditions, culture and heritage blend nicely into what makes this state great. Those from other countries or parts of this country that want to try to make the Lone Star State something it never has been, and hopefully never will become, should know that all resources will be rallied to prevent the demise of our proud heritage.

This month we will pause to give thanks to God Almighty. Hopefully there will be a rally of likeminded and engaged Texans that will unite in one voice at the voting booth to proudly proclaim, “Don’t Mess With Texas.” Do your part — pray and vote.

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

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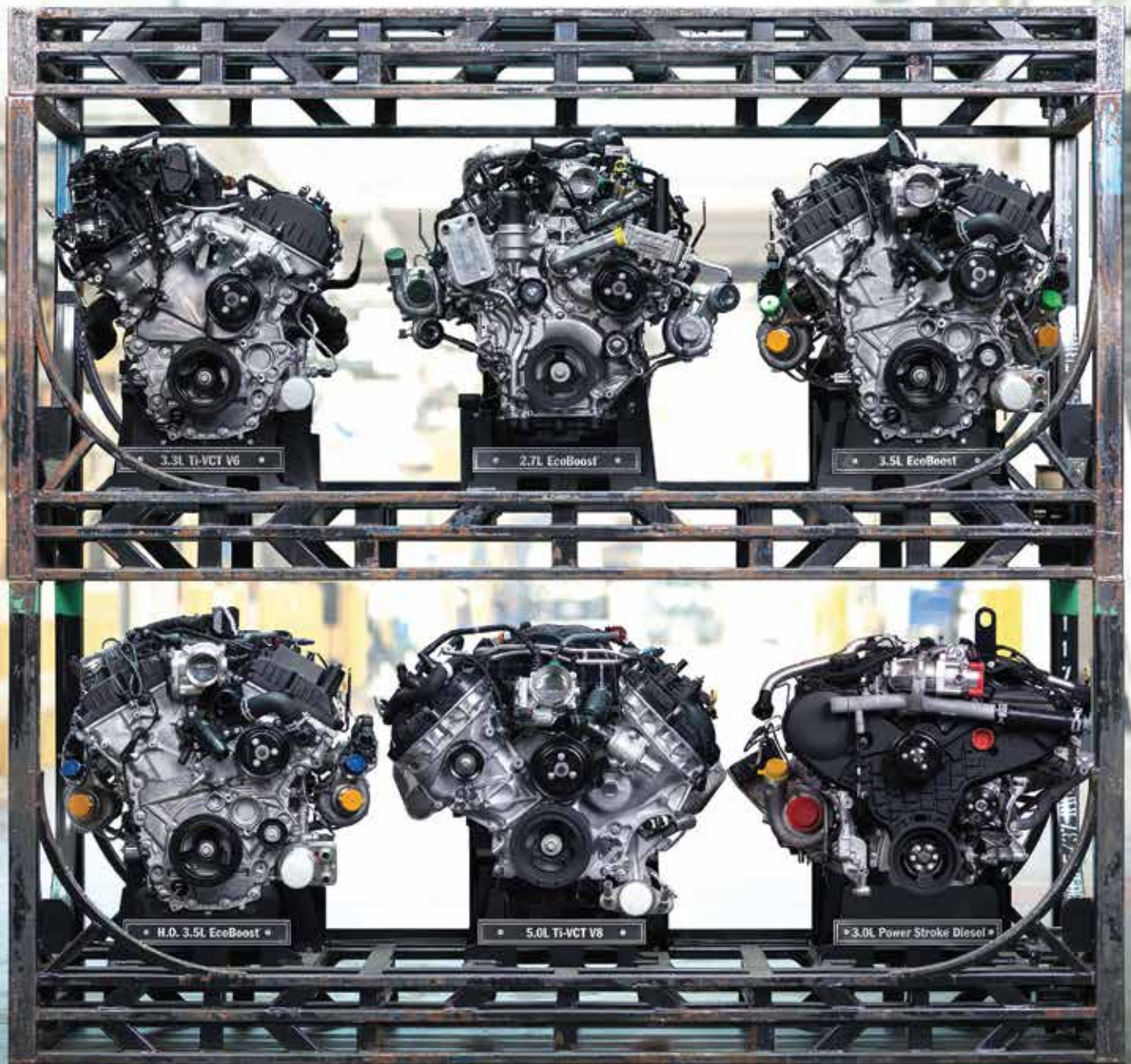
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## Sportsmen and Woman Pump More than \$93 Billion into US Economy

New economic reports reveal that more than 53 million Americans consider themselves sportsmen, spending more than \$93.5 billion in 2016 on gear, licenses, travel, clothing, gas and more in connection with their hunting, target shooting and sportfishing activities.

A series of reports released in September by the National Shooting Sports Foundation, American Sportfishing Association and the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation show expenditures made for hunting, target shooting and sportfishing gear and services in 2016 supported 1.6 million jobs and provided \$72 billion in salaries and wages. These monies also generated nearly \$20 billion in local, state and federal taxes, much of which benefits vital conservation and educational programs that improve areas for everyone who enjoys the outdoors.

"With plenty of great land and waters to hunt and fish on, and thousands of shooting ranges to visit, people in every state are enjoying these pastimes. Their

spending has profound, positive effects on many segments of the American economy," said Jim Curcuruto, Director Research and Market Development at NSSF, the trade association for the firearms industry.

"If hunting, fishing and target shooting were a corporation, it would rank #25 on the Fortune 500, ahead of Microsoft," says Rob Southwick, President of Southwick Associates. "While time spent outside may come across as something to do after the real work day is done, in reality, hunting, fishing and target shooting is a critical industry, generating jobs and income for thousands of communities across the country. Key highlights of the reports include:

- Nearly 600 million combined days at the range or afield were spent by millions of hunters and target shooters in 2016.
- Each year, 35.8 million people 16 years and older take to America's waters to fish.
- More than 28 million people over 16 years old took to our nation's forests

and gun ranges to hunt and target shoot in 2016.

• The number of people who participate in sportfishing, hunting and target shooting represents 16.5 percent of the total U.S. population.

• When factoring in multiplier effects, spending by sportsmen created economic activity in excess of \$220 billion.

Hunting, fishing and target shooting add \$119 billion of overall value to our nation's gross domestic product and generate \$17.6 billion in federal taxes and \$12.2 billion in state and local taxes. **T★J**

### Why are Gun Owners More Politically Active?

A study by University of Kansas political scientists that found gun owners are more politically active than Americans who don't own guns caught the attention of a Hearst newspapers reporter. NSSF's Mike Bazinet told the reporter that the study was an exercise in confirmation bias as it started from the premise that if

## Cover Art

"Secret Rendezvous" is the title of this month's cover art painted by revered and talented second generation artist Dallen Lambson. Since I was first introduced to this son of an artist friend (Hayden Lambson) Dallen has impressed with his creative ability along with somewhat clever art concepts and titles. His first painting to make me smile was his "now-day" concept entitled "Bad Call." It portrays a bowhunter receiving an unexpected cell phone call while he is in his stand with a big buck passing within range. The ring of that "Bad Call" messes up the hunter's opportunity at a buck of a lifetime.

"Secret Rendezvous" also strikes a humorous bone as a well conceived painting of a natural ritual that will be played out countless times during the next few months across the Lone Star State. November is right in the middle of the fall rut for whitetail deer and it is obvious this mature monster has been preparing for this encounter with a doe for some time. A sapling has been worked over and the dense cover is reminiscent of parts of East Texas or river bottoms across our state and even some isolated motts of hardwoods surrounded by mesquite covered flats.

The challenge for dedicated hunters is to unravel the mystery of where



"Secret Rendezvous"

these "Secret Rendezvous" will occur. As astute hunters know, hunt the doe and a buck will probably follow.

For more information on "Secret Rendezvous" and other fine works of art by Dallen Lambson, visit [www.dallenlambsonart.com](http://www.dallenlambsonart.com), or call (208) 351-5530. **T★J**



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not for the “out-sized” power of the NRA, more gun control legislation would have been passed.

“That viewpoint does not recognize the reality of the year-over-year effect of the organized disparagement of law-abiding gun owners and their conflation with criminals who misuse guns carried out by gun control politicians and groups and the disproportionate attention that treatment gets by the remaining traditional media,” Bazinet said. “Maybe that’s really why gun owners are more politically active.” **T★J**

## Top Social Media Influencers – How About You?

Fewer mysteries are greater than anglers and hunters’ media habits and preferences. Since 2010, Southwick Associates’ Media Monitor (SAMM) has provided outdoor media insights to its industry subscribers. In the latest issue, SAMM now includes greater insight into social media influencers of the sportsmen and women community.

According to SAMM, in the second-quarter of 2018, magazines took the lead

again as the top outdoor media source for hunters and shooters, while internet/social media and magazines tied for the top spot among anglers.

Television, state regulation guides, podcasts and other sources are also ranked. YouTube and Facebook continue as the top social media platforms accessed by hunters, shooters, and anglers for outdoor information and entertainment purposes.

On Facebook, the top 15 influencers include Jim Shockey among hunters and shooters, and Kevin VanDam as the most popular among freshwater anglers.

Influencers on YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter are also tracked.

SAMM is a quarterly survey that tracks hunters, shooters, and anglers’ use of outdoor media including television, magazines, websites, social media and more. The service also ranks the top individual outdoor TV programs, websites, magazine titles and more.

Beginning in 2018, SAMM now tracks podcasts, and top influencers within key social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter.

Each SAMM also includes a “Digging Deeper” feature that provides detailed insights into outdoor media consumption and habits, which for example, reveals how most podcasts are consumed and the top reasons for using YouTube. **T★J**

## More than 16 Million MSRs in Private Ownership

More than 16 million modern sporting rifles are in the private and legal ownership of Americans, making them the opposite of uncommon, despite the latter claim by U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.). Sen. Feinstein asked Judge Brett Kavanaugh during his confirmation hearings if AR-15 style rifles could be banned because they are designed for military use.

In fact, they’re not and Judge Kavanaugh wasn’t taking the bait. He responded that the question centers on judicial precedent, which holds that semiautomatic handguns are commonly-owned.

Since semiautomatic rifles operate in the same way, one bullet fired for each pull of the trigger, they are commonly owned by the millions of law-abiding Americans. **T★J**

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# ON THE HUNT FOR POL REDS



*Clear tides, miles of shorelines and plentiful numbers of redfish await fall anglers.*

*Story and Photography by Robert Sloan*

Port O'Connor has what seems to be an endless supply of redfish, that's mainly because there is an infinite supply of places to find and catch them. There are miles upon miles of island shoreline that attract reds. There are lakes, lagoons, reefs, a pass and the jetties. You can fish deep or shallow. You can fish with live bait, topwater lures and jigs and there is always the option of fly fishing.

Guide Dodd Coffee says the fishing at the jetties is one his go-to tactics just about any time of year.

"The Port O'Connor jetties are not your normal set of rocks. They are wide open and offer both deep water and shallow fishing options. I spend a lot of time fishing the jetties with live baits like shrimp and croaker. Growing up and fishing Port O'Connor with my dad, we ran all over the place and rarely fished the jetties. We had a Lone Star boat and a 25 horsepower Sea King outboard. Back then we fished the flats, backwater lakes and reefs. That's mostly shallow water fishing, and we would load up with reds. It was just about all wade fishing and our number one lure was a gold spoon."

Incredibly, that fishing is still good today, even with substantially increased numbers of anglers tapping into the action. Drift fishing for reds at places like Pringle Lake and Contee Lake is excellent. Most of that is fishing with lures, or live bait under popping corks.

There is no doubt that wade fishing rules at POC. It's a way to catch a lot of reds in just inches of gin clear water. It's all good.

The one thing that makes fishing so much fun at POC is the clear tides. Port O'Connor is located on the middle Texas coast. That's where the clear water flats begin on the Texas coast and continue all the way down to the lower Laguna Madre.

Another unique thing about POC are the many spoil islands in the bays, and of course there is Matagorda Peninsula and Island that stretches for many miles. Matagorda, Spanish for "thick brush." The combination of these two land mass results in a 38 mile long coastal barrier located approximately seven miles south of Port O'Connor.

One of the most popular places to fish along Matagorda Peninsula is Greens Bayou, located about half way between

POC and the Colorado River. Greens is one huge shallow flat. It offers the option of drifting or wading, with the second option being the most popular.

Just east of Greens is Cotton's Bayou. Between Greens and Cottons you can wade all day long for reds just about any time of year. Fall and early winter are excellent times to wade this area. That's where I've been fishing for years.

My best catches of reds have been just west of Greens about 50 yards off the shoreline. That's where there are sand bars paralleling the shoreline. It's sort of like a redfish highway.

One of the best days at this location was about this time last fall. I was wading the second gut off the bank and felt a solid thunk on my jig. That turned out to be a 25 inch red. I stood in that one spot and caught an easy limit of slot reds. I was standing in a foot of water and fishing a Yum Money Minnow in three feet of water. That was a classic redfish bite, and not that unusual for that area.

At Cotton's you can wade down either side of the bayou and look for tailing or wading reds. Over the years Cotton's has consistently held good numbers of tailing

reds. I usually wade into the shoreline and walk on dry land while looking for tails in the flooded grass. In that situation a 1/8-ounce gold weedless spoon is best. Another option is a small swim jig rigged on a weedless jig head.

There is very little fishing from the bank in POC. Just about every place you fish will require a boat. However, there is one good area that you can drive up to and either wade or put in a kayak. It's called Boggy Slough. It's located on the west side of town. This is a big slough that is about a half mile long and 400 yards wide. It's got a pretty decent bottom with firm mud and shell on the upper end, which is where you'll find most of the reds. The entire slough is about two to three feet deep.

If you're into kayaking you can put in at the mouth of Boggy Slough at West Matagorda Bay and paddle along the Powder Horn Ranch shoreline. Just up from Boggy Slough is an area some locals call Boggy Slough Two but is noted on charts as Broad Bayou. It's another prime shallow flat that's perfect for sight casting to tailing or wading reds.

One of my favorite stretches of water to fish is the Intracoastal Waterway that



*Topwater lures are a great option as they cover lots of water and redfish find them almost irresistible in the fall and winter months.*

runs through Port O'Connor and on up towards Seadrift. That's several miles of water and the shoreline on both sides will hold reds during November and December. The water along the shoreline of the ICW is surprisingly clear on most days. The shoreline of the ICW from the Sanctuary and southward for a few miles is primo redfish water. It'll also hold some pretty big trout, as well.

My favorite way to fish the ICW is with a trolling motor. It's just like bass fishing. I'll cruise down the bank while fishing topwater lures and swim jigs in the pockets of grass. A Super Spook Jr. in clown or bone is tough to beat.

Another option is to walk the shoreline. That's the best way to find tailing reds on the ICW. Just be very careful about your boat. There's a lot of barge traffic, and they tend to move a lot of water up and down the bank. The best thing to do is to keep one person in the boat and one walking the bank.

If you like stalking reds in gin clear water you need to fish along Blackberry and Dewberry islands. They are located on the bay side of the ICW south of POC and run on down to Charlie's Bait Camp. That's about 10 miles of shoreline and it's all top-notch water for sight casting to reds. The water is usually so clear you have to be very careful about the reds seeing you, before you see them.

During late fall and winter the water along the flooded grass of these two islands is very clear. Your best tactic here is to ease along the shoreline grass and look for reds. Sometimes they will be tailing and waking. A whole lot of the time they will be up in a foot or so of water feeding on crabs and mullet. This is some of the best fly fishing water in POC.

Pringle Lake is one of the most popular backwater estuary lakes in the POC area. It's located in behind Matagorda Island off of Espiritu Santo Bay. It's several miles long and about a mile wide. That's a lot of water but it's a redfish hotspot. It's the perfect blend of bottom with mud and grass. It's basically clear water that's about one to three feet deep. You can wade some of the shoreline, but it's best to drift or pole it from a shallow running skiff. You can control your drift with a trolling motor and drift sock. Most of the fishermen in Pringle fish jigs or live shrimp or finger mullet under popping corks.



*Wadefishing is a way to catch a lot of reds in just inches of gin clear water.*

A good way to find tailing reds is to ease along the shorelines. Some of the best tailing water is on the south shoreline. That's also where you can wade without bogging down in a lot of mud.

The numerous islands that you'll find at POC offer many additional miles of great wade fishing. The drill is simple, you ease up to the shoreline, anchor the boat and make a wade. A lot of the islands have a firm sandy bottom with a mix of shell. But others have plenty of mud. A mix of mud and grass is like a magnet for feeding reds.

If I had to pick one area to catch reds it would be the pocket of water where Contee Lake, located on Matagorda Island, feeds into Espiritu Santo Bay. That's a mix of sand, mud, shell and grass – the

perfect recipe for reds looking to feed on crabs, mullet and shrimp.

Heading west from the mouth of Contee Lake is three or four miles of primo shoreline wading. It's mostly clear water with sandy pockets and grass. This is one of my favorite places to fish, and I only need two lures. One is a Super Spook Jr. in silver/pink, the other is a 3 1/2 inch, pearl/chartreuse Yum Money Minnow rigged on a 1/8-ounce screw lock Assassin jig head. Sooner or later I'm going to catch reds along that shoreline with either of these two lures.

Regardless of where you fish in POC you are going to be around lots of other fishermen. The worst thing you can do is run in on them, and mess up the fishing for everybody. If possible keep about 100

yards away from other waders. Remember that waders cover a lot of water, 200 to 300 yards from their boat.

The absolute worst thing someone can do is “burn the shoreline” where waders are fishing. I see it all the time. That’s irresponsible so be sure to show respect to fellow anglers and hope they will do the same.

The other things to watch out for will be duck hunters during November, December and January. Definitely don’t run through a spread of decoys.

Keep in mind that the very small town of Port O’Connor is “off-the-grid” and doesn’t have a stoplight. However, there are an adequate number of hotels and places to eat.

The Speedy Stop is the only place to get gas, ice and groceries. For tackle you need to check out Port O’Connor Rod & Gun or Marty’s Landing. It has excellent fried chicken along with a good supply of tackle.

If you want some excellent fried and grilled seafood Cathy’s is the place to go. And for Mexican food check out Josie’s. **T★J**



*Port O'Connor has what seems to be an endless supply of redfish, with an almost infinite variety of places to find and catch them.*



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## When Is Your Barrel Bad?

Your rifle has been shooting great for the past 12 years. You have killed everything you've shot at. This is your favorite rifle and you love to go out and just shoot it. The rifle stacks bullets and you love to show off its accuracy.

Well something has happened and your baby just isn't shooting like it used to. The groups have opened up from .700 to just over 1.5 inches. You've checked the rings and bases, tried a new scope, even shot a different load and the rifle is just getting worse. Has the barrel gone out? Is it shot out?

How do you tell when a rifle barrel is shot out? Why does shooting soft brass bullets through a hard steel barrel wear it out? Very few hunting rifles will ever wear a barrel out from shooting.

The most common reason a barrel gets worn out is from neglect or abuse. The old story about being rode hard and put up wet really is true with a rifle barrel. I

rebarrel about 70 to 80 rifles a year, most of them are permanently damaged from rust in the barrel by not being cleaned after a hunt.

Now some rifles will have their barrels shot out from abuse. I had a customer pick up a new custom rifle and 200 rounds of ammunition. He went to shoot the gun and to check the sight in, after an hour he came back and wanted more ammunition. He said, "The rifle shot great at first then I couldn't get it to shoot well". He had shot all 200 rounds of ammunition in just over an hour. The barrel must have been red hot!

I checked the barrel internally and it had flame cracking all the way through the length of the barrel. It was fouled so bad I could never get the copper out of the lands and grooves. Needless to say I had to put a new barrel on the customers rifle.

Another customer in New York bought a custom rifle from us for a very important



*The inside of this barrel has been abused and is full of rust.*

hunt. He was going on his dream hunt for Marco-Polo sheep. We built him an Ultra-Light rifle in 300 Remington Ultra Mag. The customer shot the gun a lot. He went to four different long range shooting schools and put in hours of practice time.

About three weeks before his hunt, he called and said the rifle quit shooting accurately. We talked and I realized that he had shot over 900 rounds through the 300 Ultra. That is enough shooting with a high pressure ultra high velocity round like the 300 Rem Ultra mag to wear a barrel out. We were able to rush and install a new barrel for him and he ended up shooting a monster of a Marco-Polo sheep at over 900 yards.

The worst rifle caliber I have seen a bad barrel on was a 17 Flintstone. This caliber is a 22-250 case necked down to 17 caliber. It will shoot a 25 grain bullet to velocity over 4,500 feet per second. The first one of these I built was for an old employee of mine. About the time we had a good round worked up for this caliber, the barrel was ready to be replaced!

Several factors will wear a barrel out. First is high velocity and high pressure. The front of the chamber will turn white hot when you shoot the gun. The higher the velocity, the more friction you will have which creates higher temperatures. Also the higher the pressure of the caliber you are shooting, the faster you will wear a gun out.



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A 300 Winchester will last about 1500 rounds of firing where a 308 Winchester will last about 2800 rounds. A caliber like 30-30 may last 4000 to 5000 rounds. The service life of a 1911 in 45 ACP is 18,000 to 20,000 rounds.

A second factor that will shorten the barrel life is the type of powder used. A slower burning powder will wear a barrel out faster than a fast burning powder. The slower powder is burning in the barrel longer so it will burn hotter than a slow powder.

Also a ball powder will hurt the throat of the barrel chamber quicker than a stick or flake powder. The little balls act like a sand blaster and blast the lands and grooves of the barrel. What happens when you get wear in the throat of the chamber? The bullet will start to strip brass or copper from the outside and foul the barrel. The more fouling you get in the throat area, the more pressure it takes to push the bullet through the fouling. If the copper build up gets too bad then the pressure will peak and cause the cartridge to blow a primer and stick in the chamber.

So what can you do to help keep your rifle shooting well and make your barrel last longer? First, clean your guns after you use them. Don't get lazy and just put the rifle in a soft gun case and throw it under your bed when you get back from the hunting lease. Take a few minutes and clean the barrel and chamber, wipe down all the metal parts and put a little lemon oil on the wood stock or just wipe off your fiberglass stock.

Never shoot your rifle when it gets real hot. Take your time when sighting in your rifle, it may take 30 to 40 minutes or more, but it will be worth it in the long run.

Think about the caliber of gun you really need. Are you really ever going to shoot an elk at 800 yards where the 300 ultra works well? The slower the bullet goes, the longer the life of your barrel will be. Shoot a little heavier bullet so try a 150 grain in a 270 caliber instead of the 130 grain. A 200 grain bullet in a 300 Win will shoot better, flatter and punch deeper holes than a 150 grain bullet will.

Lastly, use the correct cleaning solvents and take your time in cleaning. Never use one of the abrasive bore cleaners. If using an ammonia based copper solvent, make sure to neutralize the ammonia before you put your rifle up for

the year. The best way to neutralize the ammonia solvent is to use an alcohol based solvent like Gun Scrubber or Gum Out carburetor cleaner or just good old rubbing alcohol works. Follow that up with some gun oil.

The bottom line is the most important thing you can do for your rifle is to clean it after you use it. **T★J**



*The ball powder on the right is more abrasive than the flake powder.*

An advertisement for Third Coast Thermal. The background is a dark, high-contrast image of a rifle scope. The company logo, "Third Coast Thermal", is prominently displayed at the top in a stylized font with a green reticle graphic. Below the logo, a list of product categories is shown in white, uppercase letters: BINOCULARS, DAY OPTICS, LASER DEVICES, HELMETS, THERMAL, LASER RANGEFINDERS, and NIGHT VISION. At the bottom, the phone number "832-827-4574" and the website "www.thirdcoastthermal.com" are listed in red and white text.



## Under Pressure

It's happened to me, and I'll bet it has happened to you as well. After a week of working the weekend finally arrives. Friday night is spent getting all the rods and tackle together. Saturday morning, you're up at the crack of dark and make the two hour run to the lake. At the lake, launch fee paid, boat in the water. As you point the nose out towards your favorite spot, the sun is just turning the sky a little pink. A 20 minute run and..... UNBELIEVABLE! There are already two boats fishing your hole. Who are they? Why are they catching your fish? And how did they find your spot?

Well, they could be high school anglers practicing for the next event. They might be tournament guys fishing for a check, or they're recreational anglers just like you having fun. It doesn't really matter who or why, your day is off to a bad start.

How they found your spot could be chalked up to modern technology. Let's say for a minute that your "spot" was a small hump topping out at 15 feet, surrounded by 20 feet of water.

Back in the day you would have had to get a topo map and/or a lake map with contour lines. You had to understand how to read those contour lines.

You'd spend hours studying the maps, looking for spots like this, spots nobody else would see. When you got to the lake

you had to run to about where the spot was, and idle around 'til it showed itself on your graph. If you were lucky, this took 15-20 minutes, or it could take a couple of hours.

Once found, you probably had the spot all to yourself, as most anglers wouldn't do the work required to find these spots. In order to return to your spot, you would do your best to triangulate the spot using landmarks visible in the distance — "Between the tree on the west bank, the blue dock on the east bank and a little south of the powerline" or something along those lines. Once you arrived you'd line everything up, and start the search for the exact spot on your graph again.

All of that has changed. Today I can pull up to the ramp at a lake I've never been to, fire up my graph, and pull up the lake on my map chip. Going into my settings allows me to highlight all the water that is 20 feet deep and all the 15 foot water in another color. Now I just look for small islands and those are humps.

Furthermore, I can move my cursor over the hump, like a crosshair on a bullseye, and mark a waypoint. Now my graph will map a path to the hump that will bring me to within about 20 feet of my destination.

Drop the boat into the water, fire it up and BOOM — I'm on your "secret" spot.

I didn't know it was your spot, I didn't even know you knew about it, but here I am.

As we encourage others to go fishing, we are our own worst enemy when it comes to crowded water. The more information we share, obviously the fewer secrets we have.

I spend a lot

of time reading all varieties of outdoor magazines. I've seen countless articles about hunting pressured whitetail bucks on public land. Texas is a private land state and we don't have nearly the amount of public hunting as a Montana or Colorado. That said the articles are informative and interesting. And if you think about it, they can be a guide to fishing also. After all, most of our lakes ARE public waters, open to anyone for fishing.

### HUNTING FISH

Most of the articles will tell you that deer activity will be impacted by hunter pressure. That deer, especially the older, mature, bigger bucks we want, will change their routine when hunters enter the woods. They'll tell you that you need to out-work the other guy to get your buck.

Well we can do the same as fishermen. Starting with WHEN we fish.

Back when I spent my days as a guide, I worked a very small lake with lots of big bass. When Saturdays rolled around you might see 20, 30, or even 40 boats on the lake. But on a Wednesday, even in the prime days of spring, you'd typically only see five or six boats. This plays out on lakes across Texas every weekend. That's because most people have the weekends off. That's when they can go, so they go.

It is not only recreational fishermen, it is guides, tournament anglers, and the pleasure boating crowd, too. I know a bass or striper can't read a calendar, but they certainly know when boat traffic increased by a hundred fold. And like deer, they'll adjust their behavior accordingly, especially big trophy fish. Just like deer, the big ones didn't get big by being stupid. So do your best to get on the water when the other guys are at work.

I encouraged my clients to book Wednesdays first, as it was the farthest day from the weekend on both ends. Tuesdays and Thursdays were next, with Mondays and Fridays last. I honestly wouldn't take trips on Saturday or Sunday unless I absolutely had to for one reason or another. That is exactly the opposite of how most guides fill a calendar. Plus it



"Old School" required an angler to check out lake maps, be able to read contour lines and other points of reference to find those "special fishing holes."



gives you the best shot at having at least some portion of the lake to yourself.

Another tip for the deer hunter on public land would be to go further into woods than the other guy. Again working a little harder should pay dividends.

As a fisherman I read that as go into thicker cover. When pressured, big bass respond by either moving deeper, or burying up in the thickest cover they can find.

Going back into a creek and working cover that is so thick it is a difficult task is working harder than the next guy. Pumping a jig up and down in thick, matted grass can be an awesome technique for big bass, but it takes a little time to master the technique. And it can be frustrating when you hang up, or get slop all over everything. Many anglers will give up and return to cruising the bank with a spinnerbait. They may catch fish, but I bet you'll catch bigger fish. Deep water is also a way of getting away from the others.

Most anglers will do exactly what I described above. They'll find a likely looking spot, drop the trolling motor and troll the bank, throwing a bait at any visible cover. Maybe a Senko, spinnerbait or 'trap. Maybe a Texas rigged worm, squarebill or shakey head.

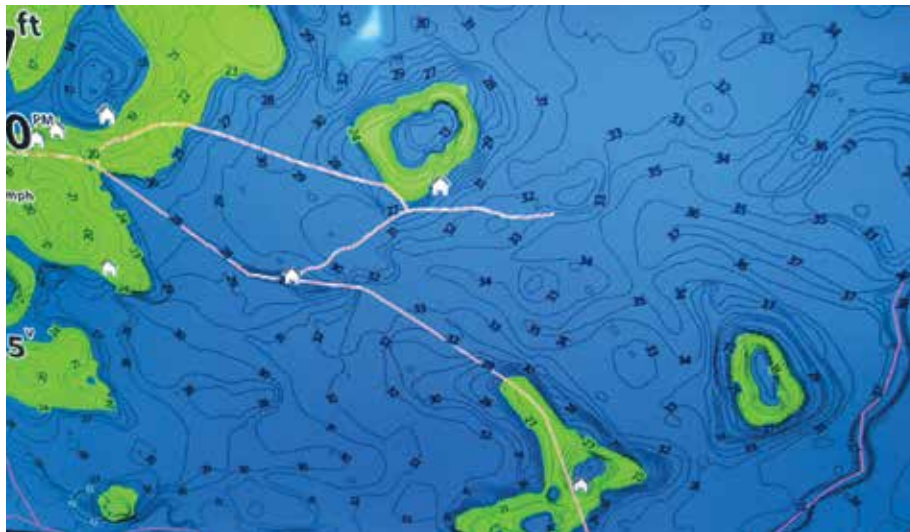
Fishing an expanse of deep, open water with no visible target can be a challenge to many anglers. But with the available techniques for plumbing the depths, most anglers would be well served to spend the needed time to learn how to catch these deep fish. My original scenario notwithstanding, deepwater fisherman often have much less competition for the better spots.

### **Use Mother Nature to Your Advantage**

Another common suggestion for the deer hunter is to mind the wind. If a wary buck catches your scent, you'll never see him.

While fish can't smell you, the wind can play a role in how you fish. Wind will drive plankton and such towards the bank. This will bring in the baitfish that feed on this micro vegetation. In turn, the bigger fish that feed on the baitfish will not be far behind. All else being equal, a bank with wind piling into it will have more fish than a bank on the lee side.

Further, wind direction will also help position fish, and help you know from



*New electronics will highlight different water depths, set waypoints and plot a course to those new found "hot spots."*

which direction to present your bait. Fish will let the wind do the work by facing into the breeze. This brings the food to them, as opposed to having to chase it down. Although casting into the wind is more difficult, it usually pays off with more fish.

Another common suggestion is to look for core areas when deer are pressured. The theory is that pressured deer will stay on, or near these areas longer. Core areas are places where a buck feels secure, usually very near his bedding area. He'll stay tight to this area until the woods quiet down.

Fish have core areas they use, too. When their regular haunts are invaded, they will usually pull back to the first available sanctuary. This usually involves going a little deeper, generally to the first drop-off, creek channel, ledge or other structure nearby. By backing off of the places you would normally catch fish, you can often connect with those very same fish.

Look for steeper drops that allow the fish to get to safety without having to travel long distances. If you can figure out where the fish will go when pressured, start there first and let the other anglers drive the fish to you.

### **Clint Eastwood**

I've used quotes from Clint Eastwood many times before and this again brings to mind one of the great ones missives. From the movie "Heartbreak Ridge" comes the advice, "Improvise, adapt, overcome." This is an unofficial slogan of the US Marine Corps, and very appropriate of the

fishing situation being discussed.

As we look back to the opening words, the question becomes, what to do? Someone has beat you to the spot where you intended to fish and now you must improvise, adapt and overcome if you are to catch any fish.

Plan ahead for this by having a second and even third "spot" in mind. Look to the maps well before you get to the lake and find other humps just like the one you chose to fish first. If that one is taken, you have more in your back pocket.

You may also want to try to determine where those fish are going to go when they get tired of being hammered by the anglers that found your spot. Eventually those fish will move on, and just maybe a look at the map will show you a channel or ledge that may be just the place they will be looking for.

While we're at it, let me offer one more suggestion for the offshore fishermen. Once you find fish away from the bank you often find large schools of them. This means you can very likely sit it one place and catch fish after fish on consecutive casts.

Now I won't suggest to you that fish can actually talk to each other, but I will say this — I have seen situations where fish that have been released would seem to have gone back and told the others what is what. Again, maybe they didn't go back to the school and tell them not to bite the green worm over there, but the bite quit anyway. Consider putting the first few fish in your livewell, to be released a little later. **T★J**

# PROVEN PLAN PAYOFF



***When preparation, planning and persistence combines with a little luck resulting in a buck of a lifetime.***

*Story and Photography by Bob Zaiglin*

*Overmature bucks are characteristically sedentary, forcing sportsmen to pay a lot of dues before they get the opportunity to see them.*

I first saw the buck in early January, and with 12 tines, several pushing 12 inches, I immediately realized that I was looking at a buck of Boone and Crockett proportions. Standing not 50 yards from me on an aerated strip of brush, it was not a difficult shot, but I had already taken a nice buck and would have to wait until the following season to match wits with this magnificent animal. On a parcel of land exceeding 100,000 acres, I knew that would be challenging — if not impossible.

The following season my sole objective was to relocate the big 12, but knowing that the six-plus-year-old could have succumbed to natural causes remained on my mind. The fact that it appeared healthy the year before and an adequate amount of moisture had occurred during the spring fueled my optimism. Persistently returning to that same area we first met, I observed a number of bucks, some scoring in the 160 inch range, but I was after only one particular animal and was willing to go without until I had the opportunity to see the buck I now considered an apparition. I had a good idea where it lived, even though I was unable to locate its sheds, but in the ocean of thorn scrub, I could have walked within feet of those appendages without seeing them.

Much of my time early in the season was spent in an elevated blind where I first saw the animal. There were also several wagon-wheel-shaped strips of plowed ground planted in oats, extending outward from the blind into the brush that enhanced my view, attracting a number of doe I counted on to lure the buck into the open.

Without a glimpse of this wraith for several weeks, my optimism had plummeted, when by coincidence one of my wildlife interns spotted what he described as an incredibly tall-tined 12-pointer working a scrape not a half mile from my blind. Immediately I positioned a tripod within viewing distance of the scrape and inundated the area with a doe in heat serum I hoped would at least reduce my scent, if not lure the buck back to the scrape. Sitting motionless on top of that tripod every morning and evening for several consecutive days was as exhilarating as it was disappointing, until another individual sat in the tripod while I returned to the blind. Abruptly the

hunt turned into a cat and mouse affair, as each time I sat in the blind, it would show up at the scrape and vice versa. It got downright frustrating until I gambled one evening. I had fully intended to sit at the scrape, but at the last moment changed my mind and harvested my first buck that entered the all-time Boone and Crockett record book.

This episode in a hunter's career proves the point that luck plays a major role in taking a unique animal. And although it plays a huge role, nothing is more important than persistence.

There is an old saying that luck represents the crossroads where preparation meets opportunity.

Preparation is imperative to success, but it includes both one's knowledge of deer behavior and the ability to persevere the mental challenges of the pursuit.

Hunting a mature, free-ranging buck is particularly challenging because they are characteristically sedentary. An old buck's ability to avoid detection is augmented by its inherent ability of reducing movement to conserve energy adverse to young bucks that are extremely active, thus more visible.

Hunters cognizant of the behavioral differences exhibited by mature bucks acquire information on the habitat these lethargic monarchs prefer, by searching for antlers throughout the summer months to not only locate the animal, but more importantly to verify that the particular

deer survived the gauntlet of winter. The brush country is a harsh environment.

Predators such as the coyote and occasional lion, not to mention the fact that bucks are often their own worst enemy, play a heavy toll on survival. There is no guarantee that a buck observed in one season will survive to the next. Locating their shed antlers not only verifies their existence, but it can add impetus to one's preparations to pursue the animal.

Determining the whereabouts of a particular buck is irrelevant; however, if one can't make the shot, thus a little practice to hone one's shooting skills if not make adjustments to that preferred firearm prior to the hunt is imperative. It's also important to recognize the fact that one's shooting ability remains only one piece of the puzzle to success.

Another element of preparation for a hunt is one's physical ability. An hour long walk each day not only makes an individual feel better physically, it establishes a sense of accomplishment which can fortify a hunter's confidence. It can also make the difference as to whether one can breach the next hill or bluff, which could be rewarded with a view of the animal they're after.

And even though most deer hunting is conducted from stationary positions, a physically fit individual has a greater command over how their body performs when handling a firearm. For example,



*Avid sportsmen scout throughout the late summer period locating sheds, and observing deer at water to not only find a desirable buck, but to more importantly verify the survival of a particular buck hunted in the past.*



*Perseverance often makes the difference between an enjoyable vs. successfully memorable hunting season, and paid off for the author on this Boone and Crocket buck in 2000.*

an individual performing a moderate weight training exercise on a consistent basis will be able to handle that rifle with more finesse, increasing their ability to shoot more precisely.

The most important attribute a hunter can possess is perseverance, particularly when one's mind starts unraveling, or more importantly when one gets worn

down and begins to think about giving up.

It is that 'stick and stay, make it pay' attitude that often makes the difference between an enjoyable versus an incredibly memorable season.

Perseverance was unquestionably the reason I enjoyed an incredible hunt in 2000. It all started the day after Christmas when I spotted a tremendous buck at a considerable distance as I four-wheeled my way on a wet, slippery Dimmit County ranch road. Not halfway to my destination, the buck, like an apparition, appeared in the middle of the road, inundated by a low-lying fog. Sliding to a halt, but before I could focus my spotting scope, the buck dissipated. Moments later I was following his tracks ostentatiously displayed in the damp clay. Within an hour I was glassing the massive 12-pointer, having what appeared to be a double row of tines on its left beam,

calmly feeding on the shoreline of a large stock tank. Utilizing the backside of the tank dam for cover, I got close enough to critique the animal's rack, but a sudden change in wind direction disturbed the animal, initiating one of my most challenging hunts in South Texas.

Incessantly, I visited that tank every morning and evening for several weeks before it paid off. I don't know how many times I thought this particular buck would not return, tempting me to hunt elsewhere, but I took this impressive animal by simply enduring the elements from really cold to intensely hot periods without any clue the animal was still in the area.

Giving up is like blowing the shot, and there are many distractions a hunter must circumvent with climatic conditions only a minor one. The major pitfall sportsmen succumb to is not the weather, but the sighting of a different buck that may not even be equivalent in size to the one they're after, but as time wears on, the anticipation of achieving one's goal erodes, coercing one to give up and take another buck.

It happens to all of us, but as we mature in the sport and develop a genuine

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relentless sense of perseverance, we come closer to living out those dreams we once believed were only enjoyed by others.

Another unique trait exuded by successful deer hunters is the ability to apply pressure on themselves to improve. They don't hunt because it is a competition with others, but a way to compete with themselves, unraveling the deer hunting puzzle with less regard to taking the deer, and more emphasis on the effort they put into the hunt.

No matter how much energy one expends when it comes to locating a particular buck, luck always plays the ultimate role. I'd rather be lucky than good any day of the week. It's probably a fact that most outstanding deer are harvested by lucky sportsmen. Hunters must be prepared for the unexpected as those monarchs can show up at any time. Sure, they are equipped with an olfactory system that can alert them of a man's presence long before they see their paramount predator, but deer too must rely on luck. No telling how many times a trophy buck stepped out in front of one's blind moments before the hunter arrived or after they departed. That is why perseverance remains paramount to success because you want to be in the right position when that buck's luck runs out. 🌟🌟



*The survival of a buck from one season to the next is impacted by not only predators, but bucks themselves as they intensely compete for breeding rights, which sometimes results in fatal injuries.*



*Knowledge of deer behavior is essential to relocating a particular animal.*

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# Lake Roundup



## CENTRAL TEXAS



By John Jefferson

I'll start with the good news. November is a tale of two seasons. Sure, there'll be cold blustery weather at times. Before and after those, however, there'll be excellent fishing for bass, crappie, sunfish and cats. GO!

**First: Lake Austin.** Recently known as one of the top trophy bass fishing destinations in North America, this long, winding waterbody, that twists and turns through some of the most scenic and expensive real estate in Texas, went into a habitat decline several years ago. Excessive numbers of grass carp were put into the lake to control nuisance aquatic vegetation. That operation was bountifully successful – at least in eliminating vegetation. The carp ate everything except boat docks and boats. The fish habitat was devoured. Practically all of it. The Austin bass fishing community agreed. From what I saw, I agreed, too. And when habitat disappears, fishing declines significantly. It did.

To try to restore the habitat, TPWD fishery biologists and volunteers from Texas Tournament Zone and Friends of Reservoirs (FOR) installed artificial fish attractors on September 25.

“Until natural aquatic vegetation becomes established again,” said Marcos De Jesus, TPWD Inland Fisheries District Supervisor, “these fish habitat structures will provide target areas for anglers to improve their chance of

catching fish.” As Teddy Roosevelt might have said, “Bully for TPWD and the volunteers!” A grant from the FOR Partnerships, matched by the Round Rock Bass Pro Shops, and the sale of conservation license plates financed the project. Let's hope this helps restore this formerly fine fishery. It was ranked in the top 10 nationally – before the grass carp dropped in for dinner.

On a sad note, however, Lake Austin is infested with zebra mussels. So is **Lake Travis**. An article in The Austin American Statesman on September 23 reported zebra mussels had already started clogging water intake systems on **Lake Travis**. Yes, that's the same Lake Travis that supplies drinking water for the City of Austin, its residents, and residents of several other Central Texas communities. And it could have been so easily avoided. These critters are one of the most threatening, disgusting arrivals since I started writing this column 23 years ago.

The “avoidable” part of the equation is that merely *cleaning, draining, and drying* your boat after being on any given lake would have left any trace of the mussels at the lake the boat had just come out of, instead of spreading the mussels to other lakes. Is that too much to ask of fishermen or other boaters that uses the lakes – and drink water?

The danger from the mussels is scary. They multiply faster than it takes unconfirmed rumors to become fake news. They love to colonize on any surface – especially on screens on water intake pipes. That gets expensive in a hurry. It's already been detected on Travis. Volunteers in a lake clean-up there were reported by the Statesman to



PHOTO COURTESY OF DUKE KINLEY

*As the section on the possibility of closing Decker Lake was being written, Duke Kinley sent this image of him with probably an 8-9 pound largemouth bass caught on Decker on September 27.*

have found plastic water bottles covered with mussels. They also mess with boat motors.

**Next: Decker Lake, AKA Walter E. Long Reservoir.** One of Central Texas' favorite, most productive, and most diversely fished waterbodies is being considered for possible draining. I'll try to be concise as space is limited. There's a proposal for a couple of golf courses on the Decker Park tract, which includes the lake. There's also possible closure of the Decker Power Plant. That will eliminate some or all of the water piped in from the **Colorado River**.

Several branches of local government are involved, including the Austin City Council. Four proposals are being considered. Two of them mean draining all or most of the lake. There have been two hearings gathering public comment. The next one is on October 24. Hopefully, there'll be another after this issue of TOJ is published.

If you care to comment, contact Jeffrey Vice at Austin Energy, Gregory Montes at Austin Parks and Recreation, or your City Council Representative.

Decker is fished by bass anglers, crappie enthusiasts, carp and buffalo anglers (many from other areas and countries), and families with kids just fishing for perch and catfish. It was the first Austin water my wife ever swam in, as many others do during hot summers. Most cities would spend billions to have a lake like this. Losing it would be a tragedy. If you care, let your voices be heard. It sounds like the City wants to know your viewpoint.

November may be the last month until spring to float and fish our streams. November has off-and-on-again good weather. Check the extended forecast before you hit the water. Rivers like the Colorado below Austin, the **Llano** and the **Guadalupe** are ideal. And full of fish! If you've never paddled a Central Texas stream in the fall, you've been denying yourself a unique pleasure.

November is also the beginning of the trout season on the Guadalupe below **Canyon Dam**. The Guadalupe Chapter of Trout Unlimited (GRTU) will stock trophy-size rainbows and browns around Thanksgiving. TPWD's stocking of smaller trout will start in December. And if you want to learn more about trout fishing, GRTU's popular TroutFest on the Guadalupe has been set for February 23-24. There'll be seminars and booths full of information, products, and fishing opportunities.

A few writers are said to have a talisman nearby to provide inspiration and to ward off evil spirits, deadline demons, and writers' block. I seldom, if ever, have writers' block; I usually have something to say. But there are occasional fits of procrastination.

Above my computer is a still-in-the-box "Dipsy Doodle" fishing plug. That was my most coveted lure while growing up. By the time I could afford one, they were out of production. They were advertised as can't-miss solutions for catching bass – something I had never done. I also think it was the lure my mentor in the ways of the woods and creeks, Uncle Josh Munro, had attached to his short, creek rod and reel, which hung over the small table in the kitchen of his little backwoods cabin on Beech Creek. I stared at it during every meal.

Today I looked at mine longingly after I received a release from Bass Pro Shops



PHOTO COURTESY OF TPWD

*To remedy loss of fish habitat on Lake Austin, TPWD biologists and volunteers embedded artificial fish attractors in the lake.*

about old fishing lure values. It spoke of lures found in "Grandpa's old tackle box." It said the Comstock Flying Hellgramite recently brought close to \$10,000. The last Heddon Jenny Mohawk went for \$20,000. And the only other Giant Copper Haskell Minnow in existence sold for over \$100,000.

I'm told the main value in old lures, though, is pride of ownership. Collecting them is more nostalgic reverence than financial appreciation. But I remember the night I was broke and traded a tin can of my grandfather's old lures to Bobby Choate for a tank of gas at his Austin service station. Choate either sold or gave the lures to his friend, Jackie

Hewlett, a tournament champ, who later displayed them in his large lure collection at a book signing for Russell Tinsley's book, *Fishing Texas*, that I hosted at my photography studio.

I didn't mean for that last sentence to have such a cast of characters, but that all came to mind when I read the Bass Pro release. Bass Pro was founded by Johnny Morris, whose professional fishing career ironically began with those early Texas tournaments, the first such ever in America. Hewlett placed high in the first tournament in 1955 and won it twice after records began being kept.

Go catch a fish and maybe your lure will become famous! **T&J**

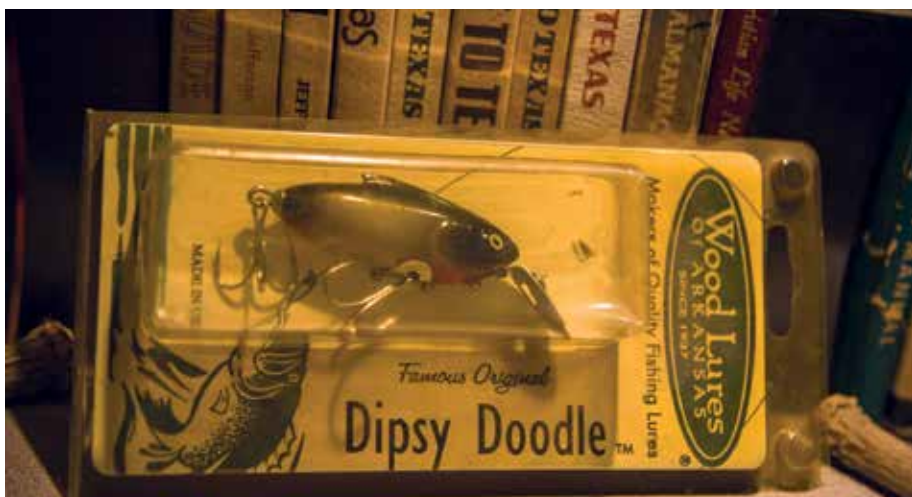


PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN JEFFERSON

*Old fishing lures have nostalgic value, and a few are worth money.*

# TRANSITIONING TO THANKSGIVING



*When the weather window of opportunity is open, anglers often experience great days for Texas Big Three.*

*Story and Photography by Danno Wise*





change.

Anglers can still have great conditions for sightcasting or they may experience spring-like winds before and during fronts. Fish may be found on skinny flats or in deep holes and channels. Really, fishing in November is more reliant on weather than just about any other month of the year.

Because of this, November can provide anglers with memorable days on the water as well as a lot of blown out days because of the frequency and severity of fronts. However, a consistent pattern of fronts moving through the coast generally begins to emerge by month's end. At that point, anglers can plan and time their trips around fronts, with the best fishing usually occurring a couple days after a front has passed and lasting until the next front is about to push through. Even then, there are no guarantees with weather in November, so coastal anglers need to be prepared for whatever conditions the day presents.

Again, although a handful of other species will still be available, the focus will primarily be on three target species – speckled trout, redfish and flounder. And, each of these species will be making transitions as to where they will be found and how they can be caught throughout the month.

Trout will still be found on the flats through much of November, but will

slowly but surely be moving off the sand flats to muddy bottom areas, which is their preferred habitat during the winter months. They will also begin spending most of their time on the edges of the flats, closer to deep water where they can escape during any periods of cold weather. In general, they will be found on the shallow to mid-depth flats during warmer days early in the month and between fronts later in the month.

During and immediately after fronts will mostly be in deeper water – channels or deep structure (reefs, etc). Once the first truly hard front pushes through, trout will never stray too far from the safety of deep water, so at that point, anglers should concentrate their efforts along the edges of flats even during warmer days.

After a few hard fronts have passed, a good number of trout will also begin making their way up rivers throughout the Texas coast. As long as there is not too much freshwater runoff, rivers such as the Colorado, Trinity, Sabine, Guadalupe and others will produce tremendous catches of speckled trout beginning in late November. This fishing will hold through winter and, although it's rare to catch trophy trout up these rivers, boxes of solid keepers are commonplace. Another plus to fishing the rivers is they are protected from most wind directions, allowing anglers to fish in all but the worst weather conditions.

**B**y November, autumn has arrived along the Texas coast and, actually, is quickly yielding to winter. In the weeks leading up to Thanksgiving, the first few fronts have pushed away seasonal visitors – both aquatic and land-based. As a result, there are fewer fishermen on the water and the focus of those who are is squarely back on the “Big 3” of the Texas coast — speckled trout, redfish and flounder. But, there is a dramatic transition of fishing patterns for these species in Texas bays during this time, meaning fishermen need to be flexible and ready to adapt to frequently changing conditions in order to consistently be successful this month.

During November anglers can expect to experience a little bit of everything when it comes to conditions. On any given day, fishing can be like fall or winter. It can pendulum back and forth between the two as fronts pass and weather conditions



*In order to effectively work finesse-type baits, anglers need to move slowly themselves, so wading is the best option.*



*The best scenario for anglers in search of redfish is to find a shallow flat with a channel cutting through it.*

Reds will also be changing locations, albeit a little less dramatically than trout, as they are more hardy and tolerant of cooler weather. However, they too will be moving to flats near channels and guts. The best scenario for anglers is to find a shallow flat with channel cutting through it.

Reds can generally be found on the flats throughout November, but will fall off into the deeper channels when the weather turns cold. However, they'll pop right back up onto the flats as soon as the sun begins warming the shallows. This can happen even on relatively cool days, as the midday sun will sufficiently warm the water for fish to feed in the shallows. But, again, they will usually hug the flats closer to deep water, so finding a flat with deeper water or channel bisecting it gives redfish everything they need for this quick transition and will usually see good numbers of fish stacked up on it.

Midday hours become more productive on the flats during November – especially later in the month. Even on warmer November days, the water is substantially cooler than it was just months – or even weeks – earlier. So, an extra early start isn't as necessary. The fish will be much more active once the sun is up and has warmed the water a bit.

Additionally, calm days between fronts offer outstanding sight-casting opportunities. In order to take advantage of it, anglers need a high sun angle for

maximum visibility when attempting to spot fish on the flats.

Flounder will be staging and getting

ready for their annual “run”. The run usually begins in earnest around Thanksgiving. Before the flatfish begin migrating out of the bays, however, they can generally be found stacked up around drains where the marshes and back lakes empty into the main bay, giving anglers an outstanding opportunity to catch multiple fish in a single location. Once they begin moving, they generally follow channel edges as a sort of “highway”. Once migrating schools are located, anglers can generally continue following them day after day as they move progressively closer to the nearest Gulf pass.

Flounder fishing has actually been improving all along the Texas coast in recent years. Increased numbers can be attributed to a reduced bag limit from five to two fish in November. Additionally can only be taken with rod and reel — gigging is not allowed from Nov. 1-30.

November is typically one of the best months of the year for flatties, so most Texas inshore fishermen anticipate outstanding flounder fishing in the fall.



*Trout will also begin spending most of their time on the edges of the flats, closer to deep water where they can escape during periods of cold weather.*



*In November the best fishing usually occurs a couple days after a front has passed and lasting until the next front is about to push through.*

anglers should throw dark or bright colors. These conditions also necessitate sound or water movement to help attract fish as well. Paddletail baits will be more effective than straight tail baits. Popping corks and inline rattles can also be used. For topwater plugs, chuggers or prop baits – or baits with high pitch rattles – work best in these conditions.

In clear water anglers should use translucent or natural colors. In this situation, stealth is often necessary so, no or low-pitch rattles and straight tail plastics are better options.

Bait fishermen can still score good

catches in November as well, although their live bait choices are typically limited to shrimp and mullet at this point. As is case with artificial lures, bait fishing tactics should adjust based on conditions.

Shrimp and popping cork rigs are ideal when covering water, fish are feeding aggressively and/or there are muddy or rough water conditions. Freelined shrimp generally works better when fish are finicky or in clear/calm conditions – especially if fishing structure. Live mullet fished on Carolina rigs in potholes are productive when fish are on the flats.

In muddy water, cut mullet or skipjack, if it can be found, fished on bottom is an excellent way to catch reds. Mud minnows or live shrimp towed along the bottom behind a Carolina rig works well for flounder.

While success in the weeks leading up to Thanksgiving often is reliant on an angler's ability to get on the water due to weather, it can be well worth the effort. So, when the window of opportunity is open, anglers should take advantage, as good days on the water in November often turn out to be great ones. 🌟🌟

Because of the ever-changing conditions encountered during November, anglers can expect to throw virtually every bait in their box at one point or another. Topwaters can be productive throughout the month, anglers just need to adjust how they are retrieved based on conditions. Usually, these baits can be retrieved faster when it's warm and need to be brought back slower when it's cold.

The change of conditions doesn't just effect the retrieval rate, but also what type of baits are more effective. When fishing the flats between fronts, fish are more aggressive and anglers can work faster moving "power baits" such as spoons and paddletail plastics. These baits work well and allow anglers to quickly cover water. During post-frontal conditions, when fish are notoriously finicky, "finesse baits" such as straight-tail plastics and suspending plugs are better choices.

In order to effectively work these baits, anglers need to move slowly themselves, so wading is the best option. If fishing out of a boat – a drift sock is a must on all but the calmest days. In some situations, anchoring, staking out or PowerPoling down to thoroughly work an area may be necessary.

Color selection will also vary greatly during the month depending on conditions. Muddy or rough water means



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## Boning Out Your Big Game

I love big game hunting. I love the planning, the hunting, the camping—just everything about it.

But after the hunt if you just drop your deer off at the game processor then your hunt is over. Why not extend your hunt and cut it up yourself?

It's going to be a little hard to explain how-to in an article but it can be done. Let's get started.

If you only bone out one deer every few years then it will be hard to get proficient. However, if you have a pile of 8-10 deer, particularly doe and cull bucks to meet a management plan you can practice and get good. Once you get good you should be able to bone a deer out in 30 minutes and not that I've ever raced and timed it but maybe even in 10 minutes or so.

Before you panic remember, cavemen were cutting up game and getting by without knowing all of the cuts for hundreds of years, so even if you mess up, simply get it in the pot, it will not be a crisis.

I'm going to show you how to market it a little better and get some unique cuts



*The author is shown boning out an elk. He bones out antelope on up to moose the same, but says you have to then break them down a little further on the larger animals.*

off your game.

### FORE SHOULDERS

Hang the carcass by the back legs. Have someone hold the carcass steady and grab the front left leg. With your boning knife separate the front shoulder off the carcass. You'll be surprised. There is a seam that you will hit and it will practically fall off. If you hit a bone, it's the end of the paddle bone so just cut a little bit closer to the carcass. Repeat this on the opposite side.

If you bone out the front shoulder for sausage you will only end up with a big handful of meat due to all of the gristle and tendons. Instead you'll have to trust me on this one and try it just once. What you're going to do is to smoke the whole shoulder at once. If you smoke it slowly all of the gristle will disappear and you'll eat everything except the bone.

For more check out this E-article on Amazon Kindle [www.amazon.com/COOKING-DEER-MEAT-Tom-Claycomb-ebook/dp/B006E22M5Y/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?s=amazon-devices&ie=UTF8&qid=1537634096&sr=8-2&keywords=tom+claycomb](http://www.amazon.com/COOKING-DEER-MEAT-Tom-Claycomb-ebook/dp/B006E22M5Y/ref=sr_1_2?s=amazon-devices&ie=UTF8&qid=1537634096&sr=8-2&keywords=tom+claycomb).

Here's how I cook it. Put it on your smoker for three hours and then put it in a turkey roasting pan and put in your oven set on 180 degrees. Put in two to three cups of water and sprinkle it with seasoning salt. I like Tony Chachere's seasoning.

If you wake up in the middle of the night check on it. If it runs out of water it is ruined. If low, add some more water. The next morning check it out. If it falls off the bone it's done, if not, turn it up to 325 degrees. It will finish fast now.

After you learn your stove you may want to cook it all night at 190 degrees. It works good to do it on a Friday night



*The author's nephew, Monty tries his hand on boning deer. The author says he likes to bone them out while hanging upside down. Then he can trim and package them on a table.*

when you get home from work that way you can doodle with it Saturday morning. It is not ready unless it falls off the bone with a fork.

Now pull all of the meat off. Amazing, all of the gristle etc. has disappeared. There is not enough meat left on the bone for an ant to eat. Now chop it into 1/4 to 1/2 inch pieces. Put butter in a Lodge black skillet and toast hamburger buns on both sides. Slap on a handful of meat and douse with your favorite BBQ sauce. I use Kraft. I don't frequently use Tabasco sauce but I do on these.

If you only think you can eat one, cook three. It will rival any Texas chopped brisket sandwich you've ever had. I used to lay bacon strips over the shoulder while smoking but haven't in 35 years.

### BACKSTRAPS

Make a cut down the backbone on each side. You'll hit a sideways bone on the hindquarter which is the pelvic or butt bone. From that cut scoop out the backstrap down to the fourth rib. I make chicken fried steak out of these with milk or onion gravy and garlic toast.

### HINDQUARTER

There are four cuts you'll want to separate here. Standing with the stomach cavity facing you make a cut down the inside of the femur bone starting at the knuckle bone down to the ball joint.

On the outside go an inch or two below the knuckle bone and there is a seam separating the knuckle and the outside round or gooseneck. Remove the knuckle.

On the backside there is a seam separating the gooseneck and the top round. Make a cut along the femur bone and hit that seam in back. Remove the top round. Pull the aitch bone from the round. I pull the top muscle (gracilis) off the top of the top round. I like to make chicken fried steak out of the top round.

Now remove the gooseneck. On the backside of it you will notice a cigar shaped muscle. That is the eye of the round. Remove it if you like really lean round steak.

I used to make a lot of deer roasts but now I use the knuckle, outside round and eye for jerky or sausage since they are so lean.

On the Chuck (forequarter) bone this out. You can use this for a roast or grind into sausage.

#### MISCELLANEOUS CUTS

Ok, we've covered the major muscles. Now for the fun part. Let's market out our deer and save some unique cuts. On deer these will be small but on elk and moose they will be a lot larger and more comparable to a steer.

First let's cover the flank steaks. Where the stomach wall ties into the hindquarter. Right where you start making the incision between the hind legs to open up the stomach to remove the entrails you will cut between two tear shaped muscles (oblique abdominal muscle). Cut these out and remove the tough tissue on top. Now remove the flank steak from the tough yellow tissue on the bottom.

Now for the tri-tip. Before you remove the knuckle as described above, half way down the knuckle under the knuckle bone you'll see where an ice cream cone shaped muscle is attached. Mark it and remove it.

Now we have the tri-tips and flanks steaks. I sprinkle them with some coarse McCormick steak seasoning and smoke slowly. On the flank steaks I lay on them some chopped green peppers and onions and jalapenos to add some additional spiciness. Roll them up and pin together with toothpicks.

You can also marinate the above cuts if you want to. Let them smoke semi-slow on medium heat until done. Then, slice paper thin and serve as hors d'oeuvres. You'll love these and wish deer had six flank steaks. On deer they're small but you can also save the inside & outside skirt muscles and use them for fajitas.

So, I've told you how to bone out a deer and how to use each cut. The boning will be pretty much the same no matter what but you can vary how you do each cut and cook it multiple ways. There's no one right or wrong way. It's however your family likes it. I used to make a lot of deer roasts but 35 years ago I decided I didn't like them and started making more jerky and sausage.

On a steer I can think of seven different ways to cut the ribeye alone. On the chucks we used to make East Coast chucks, West Coast chucks, 3-pc. chucks, 2-pc. chucks, chuck rolls, neck off chucks and the list goes on.

Obviously, I can't cover it all in this one article but hopefully this is enough to get you started. Next month I'll do one on sausage making. Good luck. **T★J**



*If you shoot a deer in the backcountry and can't hang it up try cutting a line down its back and pulling the back straps out. Then skin one side the rest of the way, removing the right forequarter and hindquarter. Then flip the deer over and do the other side.*

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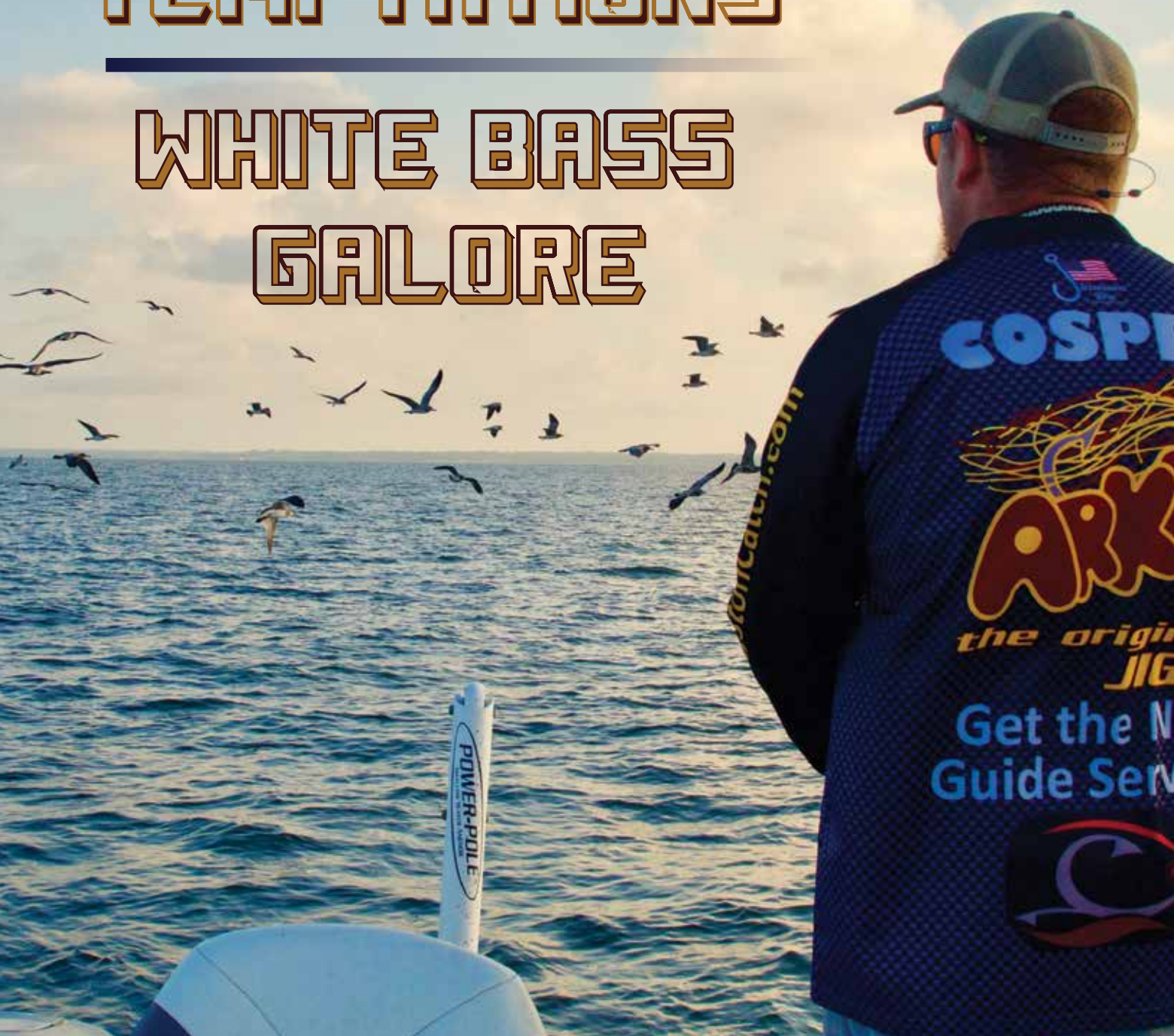
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# AUTUMN TEMPTATIONS

## WHITE BASS GALORE



***Lake Livingston boasts a premier fishery for white bass that anglers should take advantage of this fall.***

*Story and Photography by Nate Skinner*

Cool autumn breezes, working birds, and aggressive schools of fish have always seemed to go well together. The upper Texas coast is my home, and these three variables become a staple in my life each year during the fall months.

I had never once thought to associate the occurrence of these things with freshwater lakes. At least not until I met Lake Livingston fishing guide, Simon Cosper of Get the Net Guide Service, and spent a day on the east Texas lake with him catching white bass until my wrists and arms had endured all they wanted.

When we left the dock in Cosper's 22 foot center console bay boat, we headed straight towards the center of the second largest lake located entirely within Texas. As we came off plane the sun was just peeking over the horizon and there were already swarms of birds circling through the air, frantically gazing at the water's surface.

Cosper killed the outboard, deployed the trolling motor, and began examining his electronics while easing the boat towards a mid-lake hump near the edge of a significant drop off. Every minute or so he would indicate that his sonar reading was marking fish, but it just didn't seem to be what he was looking for.

He kept scanning the water around us while paying close attention to the birds' behavior. Then all of a sudden, something caught his eye and he kicked the trolling motor into high gear.

"Over there," he directed as he pointed towards a wad of gulls and terns picking at the surface of the water a few hundred yards away. "That's where we need to be."

As we approached the area it was clear there were aggressive fish present. Every now and then the water under the hovering birds would erupt with action as schools of white bass boiled the top of the water column.

Once we were within casting distance, we launched slab spoons towards the feeding frenzy and began buzzing them through the water. We couldn't have turned our reel handles more than three or four times before almost simultaneously hooking up.

We quickly landed two solid white bass before hastily casting back out to repeat the drill. Not long after our baits hit the water, we hooked up again. After

landing the second pair of fish, we looked up to find that birds had quit working and that the school had gone down below the surface. This sent Cosper back to the helm to study his electronics.

"We've got one heck of a school below us," he stated. "I'm pretty sure it's the same one that was just here on top under the birds a few minutes ago. Drop your bait straight down off the side of the boat and let it fall to the bottom. Then vertically jig it."

In addition to the spoons we had tied to the ends of our lines, there were also teaser flies rigged about 18 inches above each of them. This extra hook would soon come in handy.

Cosper kept making comments about the ball of white bass that were lighting up the screen of his sonar device while I began jiggling. A few seconds later I set the hook into what felt like a log, until it decided to swim. It turned out to be two chunky white bass. One had inhaled the spoon, while the other fell victim to the teaser fly hook.

Catching them two-at-a-time quickly became the norm. We continued employing this vertical presentation technique until the action died off. It didn't take long to find another set of birds and repeat the process all over again.

Cosper claims that the reason white bass can be caught in such great numbers right now, comparable to when they schooled up for their spring spawning

run, is pretty simple. "Right now, the only thing white bass are concerned with is eating," he stated. "They are super aggressive, and this time of year can be one of the most consistent seasons for catching them in the lake, depending on what the weather is doing."

Cosper said the most important factor anglers should focus on when planning to fish Lake Livingston this time of year for white bass revolves around understanding their transitional pattern out of summer into fall. "As water temperatures cool, the fish are slowly migrating to deeper water near the river channel and mouths of creeks," he elaborated. "The best areas to find them are over mid-lake humps and ridges in 10-15 feet of water that are adjacent to deeper drop offs that reach 25-30 feet in depth."

After a cold front rolls through the area, Cosper claims that anglers must make an adjustment in order to continue consistently catch white bass.

"Immediately following a strong front, the fish are going to be a lot more lethargic," confesses Cosper. "They will typically suspend in deeper holes near the same humps that they were found over prior to the front arriving."

Targeting white bass after a strong front is very similar to just about any other type of fishing. Patience and a finesse-like approach work best.

"To compensate for their lethargic attitude, I'll really slow down my bait



Lake Livingston guide Simon Cosper says in order to compensate for the lethargic attitude that white bass can exhibit during the fall, anglers should slow down their bait presentation.



*When white bass are schooling, it's pretty easy to catch them two-at-a-time using a flutter jig on the bottom and a teaser fly tied 18 inches above it.*



*Ryan Welch shows off a chunky white bass that will produce some tasty fillets. In the fall the white bass action can be fast and furious resulting in easy numbers being caught.*

presentation,” Cosper admitted. “I’ll use light flutter jigs and a dead sticking technique in which I’ll try to keep my lure in the strike zone while not really employing any action to the bait.”

Another thing Cosper heavily relies on when targeting white bass is his electronics. “I’m not sure how anyone could consistently stay on these fish without employing the use of their sonar equipment and technology,” he explained. “It just makes sense to take advantage of these technological resources. When a school is marked on a device this time of year, it usually is pretty impressive.”

Vertical jigging is the go-to method for landing a pile of white bass in a hurry when a school is found suspended. However, don’t be surprised when these schools come up to the water’s surface in a feeding frenzy under the birds. When this occurs, anglers can pretty much chunk whatever bait they prefer to catch them.

Cosper indicates that encountering schooling fish along the top of the water column is fairly regular scenario between fronts. “It’s almost amazing how hungry these fish seem to be once the wind turns back out of the southeast after a cold front hits,” he added. “There are plenty of



*The reason white bass are caught in such great numbers in the fall compared to their spring spawning run is because now, the only thing fish are concerned with is eating.*



days that we never have to vertically jig, because the birds are working everywhere over aggressively feeding schools of white bass.”

According to Cosper, white bass are primarily feeding on shad as they chase them around the lake. During stretches of mild weather he claims that the fish will push swarms of shad into the shallow water flats at the edges of channel swings on points and creek swings near the bank.

“When this occurs, it can provide anglers with some of the fastest action that they’ve ever experienced,” Cosper informs. “I like to throw mid range diving crank baits as well as topwaters under these circumstances. Smaller, puppy-sized saltwater plugs like a Super Spook Jr. will work well too.”

The shallow water pattern is not as near as consistent as the deep water scenario during the fall. Mid-lake waters within the central portion of this huge Trinity River impound are going to hold the best opportunities for anglers to encounter white bass suspended as well as schooling on top.

White bass receive plenty of hype

## White Bass Facts from TPWD

- *White bass are the fifth most preferred species among licensed Texas anglers.*
- *White Bass are extremely prolific and large females sometimes release nearly a million small eggs during their early spring spawning season.*
- *White bass may grow eight or nine inches in length during their first year of life.*
- *White bass more than four years of age are rare.*
- *White bass are native to the central United States west of the Appalachians, including the Great Lakes, as well as river systems in the Ohio and Mississippi river valleys. In Texas the species is native to the Red River drainage.*

from anglers during the spring when they migrate up streams, creeks, and rivers to spawn. This species is extremely fun to catch, and there’s no reason to wait until springtime to get in on the action.

Make sure the electronics on the boat are in good working order, develop plans to check out Lake Livingston and prepare for an adventure. The next school of hungry whites awaits. **T★J**



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# CoastWatch | Danno Wise

Technically a fall month, November often begins as an extension of October, with fish following traditional fall patterns. However, fishermen along the Middle and Lower Texas coast know that a few hard cold fronts can also push into an early winter pattern. As a result, fishermen need to be ready to adapt to a variety of fishing patterns throughout the weeks leading up to Thanksgiving.

While there will still be some opportunities for tarpon and snook in deep South Texas, for the most part, anglers will be concentrating on speckled trout, flounder, redfish and perhaps black drum during the 11th month of the year. The past few Novembers have provided outstanding flounder fishing along the Middle and Lower Coast, so many anglers are anxious to chase flatties again this November. Anglers are reminded that gigging is not an option this month and are restricted to hook and line.

There still be consistent redfish action on the flats this month. And, November usually marks the start of trophy trout time across the bottom half of the Texas coast as well.

Of course, like most fall and winter months, November finds the bays nearly empty of traffic. This allows anglers to cover more water, if necessary, to find fish. As the temperatures begin to drop, this freedom to roam plays an increasingly important role. With fish spending mornings in deeper, more insulated water then moving up onto the flats when the sun is high overhead, fishermen find themselves having to follow the fish to make a full trip. **T&J**

Fishermen leaving from Port Isabel or South Padre Island will still be able to target a variety of species, especially early in November. Before the first few hard fronts significantly drop the water temperatures, anglers will still be able to chase tarpon in the Brazos Santiago Pass. Snook will also be in the pass, as well as on the flats on the south end of the Lower Laguna Madre and in South Bay. Again, that is until the water temperature drops. Once the temperatures plummet, the resident population of snook will move up into the deeper water of the Port of Brownsville.

Early in November, mangrove snapper and bull redfish will also be found in good numbers around the jetties. Flounder will be pushing out of the bay and should be consistent near the pass in areas such as Children's Beach and Barracuda Cove.

The flats on the south end of the Lower Laguna will be holding plenty of specks and reds, as well as snook and flounder. As the water temperatures continue to drop, speckled trout will



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

*Redfish are more tolerant of water with lower salinity levels as well as lower water temperatures. Redfish action will continue to be good throughout the 11th month of the year.*



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPT. NATHAN BEABOUT

*Capt. Nathan Beabout says topwater baits will still produce good results once the cool weather moves in, but larger topwater plugs will work better once the temperature drops.*



become much more consistent along the channel edges and deeper flats.

Port Mansfield guide Capt. Steve “JR” Ellis of Get-A-Way Lodge says light fishing pressure and plenty of active fish makes November an ideal time to visit the Lower Laguna Madre.

“We have some really good fishing in November,” said Ellis. “But, we have absolutely no boat traffic due to hunting seasons, football season and all the other stuff going on that time of year.

“By then, we will have had our first good front so temperatures will be dropping. This means water will be clearing because the warm water blooms and suspended particles will begin to go away. It also means our fishing patterns will begin to change.

“As the temperatures start cooling, our shallow water stuff, as well as our offshore and beachfront fishing, will begin to taper off. We will start looking more in the mid-depth and deep water areas as November wears on.

“In November, I’ll be fishing in East Cut a lot. That is a good area this time of year because it has deep and shallow water in the same little area. The

ICW should also be getting going. And, the Land Cut – if you’re willing to run that far – should be really good. All the submerged bars will be getting good, as well. Really, any area with spoils will be good during November, as the fish will start stacking up over that soft bottom around the spoils.

“We also do really good on big trout in November. We’ll start throwing more topwaters because fish are getting away from eating shrimp and crabs and starting to eat more fish – especially big trout. This time of year, those big trout will come out of the deep water onto the flats to feed. When they do, they want to eat one big mullet and go back to the deep water.

“So, most of the time if we are looking for big trout in November, we will throw topwaters. When we are throwing plastics, I like to throw a little darker color plastics as the water cools. I also like going with



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

*Fishing with rod and reel for flounder will pick up this month and is the only option available to box some flatfish. Gigging is not allowed in November.*

a lighter jig head because beginning in November you really need to start slowing your retrieve – no more ripping the lures through the water.

“November will be a real good month for catching number of trout over the deeper flats and the channel edges. But, we’ll still have plenty of reds around, too. You can usually find schools of reds up on the flats during the middle of the day. You’ll also find quite a few reds around

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the spoils this time of year.

“So, really, November is one of my favorite months to fish. We have really good fishing, but no boat traffic, so you can pretty much have the bay to yourself most days.”

Fishermen fishing the Upper Laguna and Baffin Bay will have a number of options during November. Redfish, trout, black drum and flounder will all be active in these waters in the weeks leading up to Thanksgiving. The Kennedy Ranch Shoreline is a traditional hot spot for producing mixed bags during November. Live shrimp under a popping cork or soft-plastics will usually get the job done. Good numbers of keeper specks will also be found along the edges of the ICW and the flats adjacent to the ICW.

As the water cools, the muddy flats of Nueces Bay usually begin producing good numbers of solid specks. Topwaters are usually the way to go when looking for larger trout in November. Many times in November, fishermen can find active flocks of gulls working over schools of trout in Nueces as well. Another option for Corpus area anglers is to work the deeper flats and channels on either side of the JFK Causeway. **T★J**



Aransas area fishermen will see good action for all of the saltwater "Big 3" during November. As the weather cools, fishermen looking for speckled trout would do well to head into Nueces Bay. The mud and shell in Nueces will be holding plenty of specks from late fall through winter.

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

Anglers looking for redfish will find

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

Over the final couple weeks of the month, anglers should expect the flounder run to kick into high gear. Typically, flatfish will get moving as soon as the first hard front hits. At that point, it's a simple matter of following the migrating masses of flounder out to the Gulf.

Rockport fishermen will also have plenty of options during November. Redfish should be plentiful in the shallows. Anglers should look for good numbers of reds to be stacked in front of the drains and back lakes, especially on a falling tide. Good numbers of specks should be hanging around the reefs in San Antonio Bay. Some large specks will also be cruising the shallows in areas with muddy bottom and scattered shell.

The area's smaller bays, such as Copano, Mesquite, and St. Charles, will also be holding plenty of specks and reds this month. Once the first few cold fronts push through, look for flounder to start making their way out of the back lakes.

Seadrift guide Capt. Nathan Beabout says the rainy weather of late summer and early fall will have an impact on fishing patterns in November.

“To talk about what we should be expecting on the Middle Coast in November, I have to start off with our current state (early fall),” said Beabout. “Late summer and early fall was really wet. Over 20 inches of rain fell in September alone on a big part of our area. Half to three quarters of San Antonio Bay has a layer of tea stained water on the surface.

“Now we know that freshwater is lighter than saltwater and as you run across the bay our prop wash throws up greener salty water from the bottom. With this flush of the bay hundreds of thousands of shrimp have been flushed out of our delta marsh. And, as the wind and tides stir up this freshwater our salinity levels will drop.

“We also know that freshwater doesn't affect redfish as much as trout, but these trout are always searching for the right balance of salinity. We still have an abundance of places to fish with little effects from the freshwater.

“Now, I am not trying to scare anybody

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PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPT. NATHAN BEABOUT

*Soft-plastic jigs and jerkbaits will be effective for those wade fishing for speckled trout in potholes on on the grass flats.*

off of the water with this discussion. I am leading up to what we can expect in November and the fall months.

“With a big water temperature drop in September, from what should have been the mid to low 90s, but because of the amount of rain we were in the low 80s. Going into the fall a bit cooler than normal this is going to keep fish active and make feeding patterns a bit more predictable. Couple that with the cool fronts we hopefully receive this year and we will start to see aggressive pre-and-post front bites.

“Conditions on the Middle Coast could shape up to be some of the best we have seen in years, just like the spring/early summer of 2017. With the river floods we had in late winter then our bays were thriving with life and fish were congregated up feeding in areas that haven’t produced in years.

I am looking forward to what this fall fishing will have to offer. This flush of freshwater couldn’t have occurred at a more perfect time of the year. If you don’t have plans to fish this fall, I would make a few, because you will not want to miss this action.”

Early in November, Port O’Connor anglers will see trout to still be holding over sand and grass flats. The topwater bite will still be good, with smaller topwaters like the Super Spook Jr producing the best results. Soft-plastic jigs and jerkbaits will also be effective for trout in potholes on the grass flats.

As the weather and water cools, fish will begin transitioning to their winter

homes – which means flats over muddy or mud and sand mix bottoms that are located close to channels. Topwater baits will still produce good results once the cool weather moves in, but larger topwater plugs will work better once the temperature drops. 🌟🌟



PHOTO BY DANNOWISE

*As the water temperatures continue to drop, speckled trout will become much more consistent along the channel edges and deeper flats.*

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## A Texas Fest

Pro bass fishing junkies across Texas got a nice surprise late last summer when one of the sport's biggest leagues announced it is bringing its traveling road show to what is arguably the most storied big bass fishery in America next spring.

On August 16, Bassmaster announced that the Elite Series will land at Lake Fork on May 2-6 for the 2019 Toyota Bassmaster Texas Fest. The Texas Fest tournament is one of nine regular season events on next year's Elite Series schedule. Word of the event is big news because it will mark the first time the major league circuit has visited the legendary big bass lake 90 miles east of Dallas.

Historically, major bass tournaments have steered clear of Fork because of its 16-24 inch "slot limit." The limit requires the immediate release of all fish measuring between 16 and 24 inches; only one fish 24 inches or greater may be retained per day.

Lake Fork has a rich history of producing whopper bass. The 27,000-acre reservoir has produced 260 bass weighing 13 pounds or more for the Toyota ShareLunker program, including two state records weighing 17.67 and 18.18 pounds. John LaBove of Greenville caught a Top 50 15.48 pounder at Fork last March. It's the biggest bass reported from Fork since 2013 and third largest reported



PHOTO COURTESY OF B.A.S.S. AND SEIGIO SAITO

*In 2019 Gene Hackney will try to defend the championship he won in 2018 at the Elite Sabine River TX tournament as the venue shifts to fable Lake Fork.*

statewide the last six years.

Fork is a special lake, indeed. And the Texas Fest is an equally special bass tournament, but not just because it plays out under a format that is truly unique from other Elite Series events.

Just so you know, the Texas Fest began in 2007 as the Toyota Texas Bass Classic. The tournament historically brought together the top qualifiers from BASS, FLW and the Professional Angler's Association for what many billed the world championship of fishing.

The name was changed to Texas Fest in 2017, when the tournament became a BASS-sanctioned Elite Series event held annually as a benefit to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The benefit comes largely in the form of a \$250,000 donation made annually to TPWD by Gulf States Toyota ever since the first TTBC was held on Fork in 2007.

TPWD inland fisheries director Craig Bonds says the money is used as funding for several fishing-focused youth outreach programs and in support of various marketing and communications efforts associated with those programs. Bonds said there is added value to the event, because it helps the department connect with anglers nationwide and spread the word about Texas' high quality fishing through various media outlets.

### Catch, Weigh and Release

What sets the Texas Fest format aside from most tournaments are the manners in which weights are tallied and weigh-ins conducted. Under the traditional format, anglers fish throughout the day and retain their five heaviest bass in the boat's livewell. The fish are brought to an organized stage weigh-in then released back into the lake.

The Texas Fest format of "catch-weigh-immediate release" is built around minimizing stress on fish while simultaneously complying with Fork's restrictive slot. Individual anglers are paired with a non-fishing judge. The



PHOTO COURTESY OF B.A.S.S. AND SEIGIO SAITO

*B.A.S.S. Elite Series Pro Keith Poche is shown lifting a fish at weigh in at the 2018 Elite Sabine River TX event. He hopes to do even better in 2019 when the event is scheduled for the first time at Lake Fork.*

judge weighs and records the weight of each bass and the fish goes right back into the lake. The angler's five heaviest bass each day count towards his accumulative, four-day total of 20 fish.

At Fork, the Elite pros will be allowed to bring one fish over the slot to the weigh-in stage each day to show off to fishing fans. Bassmaster.com will cover the event in real-time Internet programming. Plus, it will broadcast on The Bassmasters television program on ESPN2 and ESPN Classic.

Previous Texas Fest events were held Sam Rayburn and Lake Travis in 2017 and 2018.

### Banking on Big Ones

Lots of folks are understandably excited about the Elites coming to Fork, particularly local community organizations like the Lake Fork Area Chamber of Commerce, Wood County Industrial Commission and Emory Tourism who lobbied to bring it there.

If the lake shows out with some big bass like everyone hopes it will, it could be a shot in the arm for area businesses. Big league tournaments have shown to generate serious bucks for local economies.

Lake Fork Area Chamber of Commerce president Michael Rogge said in a Bassmaster.com press release that bringing the Elites to Fork will be a much welcomed meeting of the giants.

"Lake Fork is world-renowned for its record-breaking fishing," Rogge said. "Bassmaster is world-renowned for its elite fishing competitors. It is only fitting that these two giants come together for a classic fishing event. A coalition of community organizations is proud to have the opportunity to host such a premier event as the Bassmaster Elite Series tournament benefiting Texas Parks and Wildlife, which has committed so much time and resources to Lake Fork to make it what it is today. Lake Fork is the destination for fishermen from all over the world because of their efforts."

BASS CEO Bruce Akin said in the release that holding an Elite Series event on Fork is like a dream come true.

"B.A.S.S. and the Bassmaster Elite Series anglers have long wanted to conduct an Elite event on Lake Fork, which is a bucket-list fishery for bass anglers worldwide," Akin said. "The innovative catch-weigh-release format

— along with the support of Gulf States Toyota, Texas Parks and Wildlife and the family of B.A.S.S. sponsors — enables us to finally show what Lake Fork is capable of producing. We can't wait to go there."

Actually, plenty of folks already know what Fork is capable of producing. Elite Series pro Keith Combs of Huntington is among them.

Combs won the 2014 Toyota Texas Big Bass Classic held on May 9-11 at Fork with an enormous three-day of 110 pounds on 15 bass. Combs' total crushed the former three-day weight record of 83-5 that was set by Byron Velvick during a Bassmaster event on California's Clear Lake in 2000.

No doubt, Combs was a fast track towards topping the BASS four-day weight record of 132-8 set in 2008 at



PHOTO COURTESY OF B.A.S.S. AND SEIGIO SAITO

Keith Combs and a host of other B.A.S.S. Elite Series pro anglers will descend on Lake Fork in 2019.

Lake Falcon by Mississippi's Paul Elias. He may have done it with one more day to fish.

Some have hinted that tournament fishing's most storied weight record could be in jeopardy when the Elites come to Fork next May.

Only time will tell on that one. New record or not, it's sure to be like a bunch of big kids walking in to candy store where the jaw breakers have a history of growing extremely large. **T★J**

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## New Experimental Mule Deer Antler Restriction Regulation Takes Effect In Southeast Panhandle

Hunters pursuing mule deer this fall in Briscoe, Childress, Cottle, Floyd, Hall, and Motley counties will be required to comply with a new antler restriction regulation that prohibits harvest of any mule deer buck with a main beam outside spread of less than 20 inches.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is implementing the new experimental regulation with the goal of improving buck age structure and sex ratios in these counties by reducing excessive hunting pressure on younger bucks. A similar antler restriction for white-tailed deer has been in place for a number of years in other parts of the state, and has successfully shifted the age class structure toward older bucks.

Mule deer archery-only season in the antler restriction counties opened Sept. 29 and continued until Nov. 2, with the general firearm season occurring Nov. 17 – Dec. 2. Information about hunting

licenses can be found online.

To protect young bucks, TPWD has set the minimum legal outside spread of the main beams at 20 inches based upon many years of harvest data. In other words, any buck having main beams with an outside spread smaller than 20 inches is NOT legal to harvest. Additionally, any buck with at least one unbranched antler (e.g., spike) is NOT legal to harvest, unless the outside spread of the main beams is 20 inches or more in width. Based upon data collected by TPWD, the average ear-tip to ear-tip spread of 2 ½ to 8 ½+ year old mule deer bucks with ears in the alert position is about 21 inches. This information on ear-tip to ear-tip measurement can be a useful guide to mule deer hunters attempting to field-judge mule deer bucks with at least a 20-inch main beam outside spread.

The experimental antler restriction will be conducted for four hunting seasons. TPWD wildlife officials will

collect age and antler measurements at voluntary hunter-harvest check stations to assess the effects of the regulation on buck age structure. Annual aerial surveys will be used to document sex ratios. Based on findings after four years, TPWD will either propose to extend the regulation, modify the antler restriction, or permanently terminate.

To gather the most harvest data possible, TPWD will offer incentives to hunters who check their harvest. Hunters who bring their harvest to a check station will be entered in drawings for items such as rifles, lifetime hunting licenses, and gift cards donated by Dallas Safari Club, the Texas Panhandle Chapter of the Dallas Safari Club, the Mule Deer Foundation, and Houston Safari Club. These data are essential to effectively evaluate the success of the experimental antler restriction.

More information regarding mule

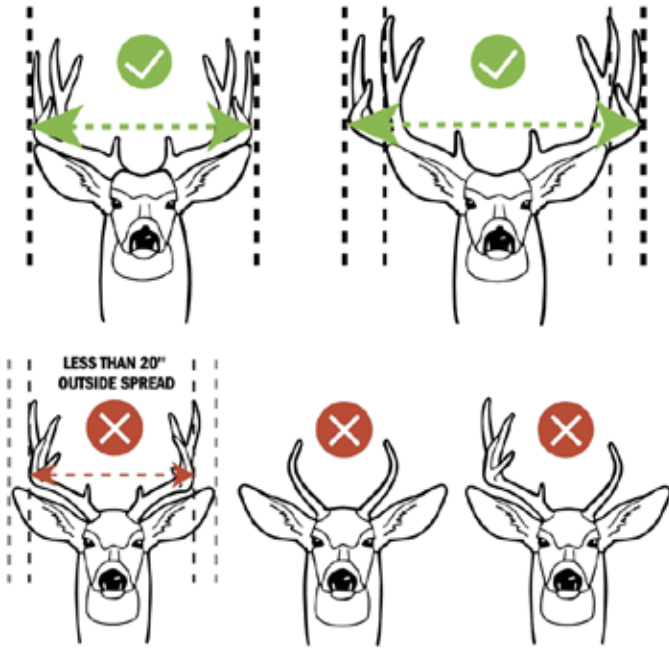
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deer seasons, the experimental antler restriction, check station locations, dates and hours of operation, check station incentives, and drawing results is available online. **T★J**

to a TPWD check station within 48 hours of harvest. Hunters must check each animal harvested and receive a CWD receipt before taking any part of that animal from the zone, including any meat

## CWD Zones

Valid Sep. 1, 2018 through Aug. 31, 2019.

CWD is a fatal disease that has been discovered in white-tailed deer, mule deer, and elk in localized portions of Texas. To detect and manage this disease, the department has designated CWD zones.

Hunters who harvest mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, or other CWD-susceptible species within the CWD Zones are **REQUIRED** to bring their animals

or quartered parts.

Additional regulations may apply, and additional zones may be established without prior notice upon discovery of CWD. The department will make every effort to publicize the designation and location of CWD zones and check stations, as well as any special regulations that may be adopted following the publication of this notice. For the latest updates, call or (800) 792-1112, or visit the TPWD CWD information page. A hunter who harvests a CWD-susceptible species outside a CWD zone and wishes to have the animal tested for CWD should contact a wildlife biologist in that area.

As an alternative to TPWD check stations, a list of Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) Certified CWD Postmortem Sample Collectors who are also TPWD-approved is provided on the CWD information page.

Please report any symptomatic CWD-susceptible species to TPWD. **T★J**

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# Lake Roundup

## EAST TEXAS



By Matt Williams

**N A C O G D O C H E S** - Lake Nacogdoches entered fall with the water level at about three feet below normal with gobs of hydrilla, hay grass and lotus pads growing up and down the lake and in every feeder creek from Pine Cove to the upper reaches the Big Loco. Some the best grass is matted in water ranging from 6-8 feet deep and with scattered stuff as deep as 9-10 feet. Things are setting up for some outstanding fishing from now right on through winter.

Among the best places to look for bass during fall are creek channels. Creeks are going to be holding lots of shad, and shad play a big role in how bass make a living. Translation: Find the shad and chances are the bass won't be far away.

Often times, they'll be congregated in large numbers, too. Where you catch one you might catch 15-20. Possibly more.

One of the main keys to finding concentrations of fish is putting the trolling motor down and covering water. It's generally best to start at the mouth of the channel and work your way in, making sure to pay close attention to high percentage spots like well defined channel swings, bends or places where a pair of channels intersect. These are the types of places bass like to set up camp and wait for unsuspecting forage to find their way dangerously close.

Any number baits and fishing techniques will produce now. Casting

Texas rig plastics or flipping heavy jigs and creatures along grass edges will be heavy favorites, especially if mild weather and low water conditions persist. Some other good choices include spinnerbaits, Chatterbaits, square bill crankbaits, topwaters, frogs and buzz baits.

Even more patterns could come into play if we happen to get a big rain event to prompt a rise in water level and/or a nasty cold front or two. Rising water will put a layer of water on top of the grass while cold weather causes the vegetation to go dormant and even start dying back to a degree.

One of the more pronounced is throwing a lipless crankbait over the tops of submerged grass beds and lily pad stubble. The tactic usually starts working towards the latter part of the month and gains steam right on through winter.

The idea is to work the bait at a speed just fast enough to keep it ticking the tops of the vegetation. Most strikes occur when the bait momentarily snags in the grass and tears free. Some other good baits worth trying over the grass are a Chatterbait, square bill, Zara Spook or swim jig.

**CONROE** - Lake Conroe fishing guide Butch Terpe likes to catch fat bass just as much as the next guy. But come November is when the lake's abundant channel cat wins out in the fun fishing department.

"Conroe is full of channel cat and limits are pretty easy to come by, too," Terpe said. "You won't catch a lot of fish that you'll have to measure, either. The water temperatures should be getting down into the 70s and it seems like the bigger fish always get more cooperative once that happens. We see a lot of fish in the two to three pound range this time of year."

As always, Terpe relies on baited holes to appeal to the channel cat's sensitive olfactory glands and ultimately attract them to a given spot. A few handfuls of cattle range cubes dumped off the side of a stationary boat at a strategic location is usually all it takes to do the trick. Soured grain like maize or chicken scratch also

will work, but it is somewhat messier than cubes.

Terpe prefers a sponge style hook that he covers with a smelly dip bait made from cheese.

He always soaks the bait vertically beside the boat, usually in about 18-22 feet of water in close proximity to the San Jacinto River channel or a major creek.

Fall bass fishing on Conroe won't be as fast and furious as the catfishing, but it will be much improved over that it was two months ago. Bass are sure to be feeding more aggressively on roving pods of shad with water temperatures cooling down and the days growing progressively shorter.

The guide likes to target breakwaters, boat docks and shoreline rocks around bridge crossings using everything from moving baits like crankbaits and Chatterbaits to slow moving Senkos, Flukes and a Texas rig worm. Watermelon/red is the plastic color with the richest history on Conroe.

Additionally, Terpe says it is a good idea to keep a topwater like a Pop R or Yellow Magic handy this time of year. Just remember the surface bite can be sporadic with the best results coming during low light conditions or when there is some cloudy conditions. Shade provided by boat docks also can make a big difference.

Crappie? Terpe says the fall bite is usually pretty decent and gradually improves through the winter months. Brush piles in water ranging 18-25 feet usually provides the best option, but limits can also be filled around bridges like FM 1097 crossing when the fish are grouped around the support pilings and the cross members that connect them.

**LIVINGSTON** - Lake Livingston got a five inch rise in early September that brought it back to pool level just ahead of the fall equinox. If this November is like most, water temperatures will be dipping into the 70s and the bass will be feeding aggressively on shad as winter approaches.

According to veteran fishing guide Randy Dearman, the majority of the

blood baths will take place in major and secondary creeks and down the lake as well as the upper reaches of the Trinity River.

"That's where I would spend most of my time," says Dearman. "The shad always gravitate up the creeks during fall and the bass go where the bait goes. It happens every year."

Dearman will almost always begin the search for fish in midway up the channel and work his way towards the back. He pointed out that it is important to key on edges of the channel as opposed to the channel gut or the flats adjacent to it. Places where the edge is three to four feet deep are ideal this time of year.

"That's usually where the fish are going to be," Dearman said. "They'll set up right along the break or really close to it, normally around any stump, lay down log or brush. It's real important to fish tight to the cover, too. Bounce your lure off of it if you can. Often times that's what will trigger the strike."

There is nothing fancy about Dearman's bait selection for creek fishing. He typically prefers something moving, like a square bill crankbait (shad pattern), spinnerbait or bladed jig. He'll switch to a Texas rigged craw or worm when the moving baits aren't working.

If you like catch white bass, Dearman says now is a good time to find them stacked on points around old sloughs that dump into the Trinity River above the Highway 190 Bridge.

"They'll be setting up on those types of places before they move farther upstream for their spawning run in December, January and February," Dearman said. "They'll be feeding pretty aggressively and they may even school on the surface at times."

Something else to keep in mind now and in coming months is water clarity. Big rain events around the lake and upstream as far north as Dallas can have a big impact on how clear the water is.

"Water clarity a huge deal on Livingston," Dearman said. "The fishing is always best when the water is clear. If turns muddy it might a good idea to fish some place else until things start to clear up. The water always starts to clear in the backs of the creeks first."

**SAM RAYBURN** - If this November is like most, America's Number One bass

lake will be kicking out big numbers and quality alike. That's the word from Texas bass pro and fishing guide Tommy Martin of Hemphill.

"It should be good," Martin said. "There's a lot of grass in the lake right now and that's where the majority of the fish are going to be."

Martin says most of the grass in the major and secondary creeks south of the Highway 147 Bridge in water ranging six to eight feet deep, but there are a few place where it is growing as deep as 10 feet.

"Those 10 foot patches are types of places where guys are going to catch them flipping a big jig or creature," Martin said. "There's plenty of grass in the creeks and drains behind the Black Forest, Coleman, Caney and in lots of other places."

In addition to the flipping bite, anglers should be able to run up the score around shallower grass using moving baits like a swim bait, swim jig, bladed jig or swim bait.

"There also should be a really strong frog bite along the creeks on buzz frogs and hollow bodies," Martin said. "There always is this time of year."

Another good bait choice worth trying now is the River2Sea Whopper Plopper. You won't catch as many fish with the Plopper as you will on other baits, but the quality will be significantly better.

Another good fall pattern worth exploring is probing the upper reaches of Angelina River in the vicinity of State Highway 103 Bridge near Etoile. Big worms and Carolina rigs rule in this area of the lake during fall, especially when the water levels are three to four feet low. Just careful if you decide to make the run — 'Rayburn is chockful of stumps from from The Canyons north. One wrong move left or right out of a boat lane can be costly.

Fall crappie fishing can be hit or miss on 'Rayburn with the most reliable bite coming around brush piles in water ranging 20-30 feet and around the bridge pilings at the Highway 147 crossing. The fish will likely be suspended. Use



PHOTO COURTESY OF RICHARD JUE

*The fall crappie bite on Lake Conroe is usually pretty decent and gradually improves through the winter months. Brush piles in water ranging 18-25 feet usually provides the best option.*

your electronics to determine the depth at which the fish are grouped up and soak your bait at or just above that depth range. Live shiners are the order of the day.

**TOLEDO BEND** - Toledo Bend was in a bass fishing funk throughout much of the summer but things were showing signs of improvement as September gave way to October. According to fishing guide Stephen Johnston, several patterns should come into play during November.

Early in the month, Johnston will concentrate his efforts towards the backs of major and secondary creeks on the Texas and Louisiana sides of the lake. He will have a variety of moving baits tethered to his line. Among his favorites are a spinnerbait, a Texas rigged worm and a square bill crank bait in a shad pattern.

"There are always a lot fish that move into the creeks during fall," Johnston said. "They will be aggressively chasing shad and they like to gang up in the bends. It's not uncommon to set up in a creek bend and catch multiple fish out of one exact spot. Once the fish get fired up they may even come up and school on the surface. That's when you can catch 'em on a topwater or Rat-L-Trap."

In addition to creek channels, Johnston will spend some time probing around main lake ridges in water ranging 16-20 feet using a Carolina rig, Texas rig, football jig or crank bait. While you may run across a group of fish on occasion, he thinks the offshore bite will be limited to a fish here and there that will be holding around isolated stumps, drops and/or brush.

Johnston says the spoon could be an effective tool this month, too, especially if water temperatures should dip into the 60s.

"It could happen if we get a couple of really hard fronts late in the month," Johnston. "Those fish will group up around timber lines in water ranging 20-28 feet. They usually won't be big, but they are a lot of fun for guide clients catch."

Johnston says crappie will only be where you find them this month. He thinks the best bet will be in creek channels with well defined bends in water ranging 8-12 feet. "They'll be completely off the brush piles and they won't be in the river just yet," Johnston said. "You'll have to use shiners to catch them; they won't hit a jig hardly at all."

**PALESTINE** - Lake Palestine was about two feet below normal as fall got underway. Odds are the 20,000-acre reservoir will be even lower come November without some significant rain totals in October. According to fishing guide Ricky Vandergriff, the low water conditions are sure to make navigation difficult, especially at the lake's upper reaches.

"You're definitely going to have to be careful up there because of the all stumps," said Vandergriff. "You'll need a flat bottom rig to get up into the river. Kickapoo Creek is still navigable in a bass boat, but you'll need to stay in the channel to avoid tearing some stuff up."

The guide says bass bite should be good despite the low water conditions. "Fishing along the edges of the channels and guts will be the key," Vandergriff said. "The big stumps along the breaks are where the bigger fish will be holding."

Vandergriff's go-to baits around stumps and brush are a Big Eye jig, Texas rigged Brush Hog and a bladed jig.

The guide added that there are plenty of fish to be caught down south and they won't be near as tough to get to as those

up north.

"Boat houses are the ticket," he said. "The best ones are close to the main lake. They will have at least six feet of water and brush out in front of them."

Jigs, Texas rigs and weightless Senkos tossed to shady areas around docks will produce the best results. Vandergriff likes to comb open areas between docks using a spinnerbait or a bladed jig he calls the Shimmy Shaker.

Palestine crappie anglers can expect improved fishing as water temperatures begin to chill. The Highway 155 bridge crossing is always a hotspot during late fall and winter. Vandergriff says the best depth range is 18-25 feet, give or take a little.

"Brush piles in 17-25 feet will also holding some fish," Vandergriff said.

Vandergriff likes to go after crappie using an ultra-light rig matched with a small pink/white jig. If the fish won't take the jig he'll make the switch to live shiners. "It's best to use the smallest minnows you can find."

Palestine also produces some outstanding catfishing action for blues as well as channel cat. For numbers of fish Vandergriff likes to set up camp around baited holes in 15-16 feet of water. Punch bait and fresh shad are the best bets.

For bigger fish he targets boat docks. The trick is casting a weightless piece of liver to the outer edges of the dock and allowing it to fall slowly towards bottom. "That's how you'll catch the bigger fish," he said. **T★J**



By Brian Hughes

Stop me if you've heard this before. November fishing will be very dependent upon the weather. I can remember a time long ago when I took a week to hunt

deer on public land in East Texas. An old Camaro was both my transportation, and my hotel for the week. It's amazing that I could actually sleep, considering I had to cram a 6'2" frame into the back seat at night. Just shows you what youth will do for you.

A late season heat wave swept across the state and I was totally unprepared. I had packed several pair of jeans but no short pants. So, after a couple of days I was cutting the legs off my jeans in order to be more comfortable. All of that to say, we never know what November will bring as far as the fishing conditions are concerned. It might be cold, wet and windy, or warm with a little breeze, or both.

No matter what the weather November can be a great month for fishing, provided you take into account the conditions you're given and react accordingly. On nicer days you can plan on using moving baits and catching several fish. During or immediately after a cold front, you'll need to slow down and deliberately fish for each bite. Lure selection will be critical at this time.

**FORK** — It's common knowledge that Fork in November produced the second largest bass ever caught in Texas. Not so common is how the Florida strain bass react to winter weather. They often will go on a feeding binge, especially the bigger fish.

To target these bigger fish you'll want to fish the ledge breaks. Look for ledges or a drop off. Get away from the bank and watch your electronics. Find one with timber, a point, or brush and that's a plus. A jig and pig in ½ oz. or larger is the right choice so you can feel the cover.

Fish the 12-18 foot range, and make multiple casts to the cover. Black/blue is hard to beat, but may choose a green shade or even a white jig and trailer.

The month will usually begin with milder weather so you can use a variety of baits, moving baits in the creeks. Begin about half way back and work the channel edges. Spinnerbaits are a great search bait in November, try chartreuse/white and cover a lot of water. When you catch a fish, make a note of where it was caught and move on down the creek. You can then turn around and go back to those spots where you caught fish. Work the area more thoroughly with a worm or jig, or a bait like a watermelon/red Senko.

November will also see some fish still holding on deep structure in 16-24 feet of water, on the main lake. Work these areas with a tail-spinner, slab or flutter spoon bait. If you see fish on your electronics and you're not getting bites, try a drop-shot. Keep in mind you could be seeing yellow bass, or even sand bass. If you don't get a bite fairly soon, move to another hump and try again.

Crappie on Fork will be at, or moving to, the dam. It just depends on November weather. If it's mild the crappie will probably be on timbered points and around the channels in the mouths of the creeks. They will stage and hang around while waiting to migrate to the deeper water. Use crappie jigs and minnows at 15 to 20 feet.

Once the cold weather sets in crappie will move to the dam in huge numbers. You'll see the boats as there are almost always several there, and this will tell you that the crappie are there too. Politely join the crowd for some really fun fishing as this is almost a social event each year. Jigs and minnows both work but sometimes one better than the other, so bring both.

**RICHLAND CHAMBERS** — As of this writing, late summer rains have brought the lake to full pool and the outlook for winter fishing is great. November will see sandies on places like the old Highway 287 roadbed, Windsock Point, and the Highway 309 flats. They'll probably be close to the bottom this time of year and you'll want to use silver or chartreuse slabs. Work these slowly off the bottom and you will catch both quantities and quality fish. You want to keep an eye out for the birds, as they will be searching for the shad being pushed up to the surface by the feeding fish.

The catfishermen should have a great time as fishing has been exceptional this year. Look to the points with some timber and bait them with range cubes or soured grain.

A good place to start looking for bass will be around the deeper points. A Sassy Shad or Fluke in shad colors, rigged on a jighead or Carolina rig, is a good searchbait. Spinnerbaits, in chartreuse and white, are a good choice around docks and grass, while lipless crankbaits in chrome blue or chrome black will work in the open water.

**COOPER** — Although Cooper never realized the potential for bass fishing it was

expected to, it is still a good fishery. Early in the month work the points up shallow. Always keep in mind how temperature sensitive bass can be. Start shallow and move deeper until you connect with the fish. Try the spinnerbait, 'trap, jerkbait trio of lures in shad colors.

The crappie have done well on Cooper and you should use your electronics and a good map to find the many brushpiles on the lake. Look on the edges of the humps and into the timber as well. Once you've found a pile, drop a crappie jig down to the top of the brush. Don't get into the brush as you'll likely hang up and chase the fish away when you pull your jig loose.

Catfish on Cooper will be on the flats and bars where the gizzard shad will be congregated in numbers. Cut or live bait will catch them. You can also look to the timbered area of the lake where the cormorants roost. When these birds eliminate their bowels, channel cats will feed on the undigested fish left in the product.

Although a bit of an off-putting thought, you can use this to your benefit. Wrap a 4/0 or 5/0 hook with a spinnerbait skirt in white and toss it high in the air to these trees. It will land with a plop and begin to sink, much like the aforementioned bird stuff.

Hybrid fishing is the real attraction at Cooper these days. In November the fish will be keyed in on the shad. Big shad. Look in the shallows, three feet or less, and use a ¼ oz. to ½ oz. jighead with a plastic swim body in shad colors. If you get into an active group of fish, a topwater will catch them as well. Once the water gets cold, look a little deeper and use a bigger jighead, ½ to 1 ounce.

**LEWISVILLE** — I usually save Lewisville for this time of year because



PHOTO COURTESY OF MIKE MCGREGOR

*Gracie McGregor shows off a nice hybrid she caught. Look for these fish to be keying on shad in November.*

the pleasure boaters have moved on to other activities by now and you can actually fish without having to worry so much about boat traffic. You can begin your day fishing for hybrids and sand bass in the Hickory Creek area, working the west side and around the main cut. Fish in 25-40 feet of water, looking for schools of baitfish on your electronics. Drop Sassy Shad swimbaits on a ¼ -1/2 oz. head to the fish, remembering to keep your bait above the school. Chartreuse, Glow-In-the-Dark and other shad colors are what you want to use. Other good locations are windy points, like Twin Poles area. Some topwater fish can be caught on Mag-Spooks and Tiny Torpedos.

As we head into the fall months, all is looking good for our forecast. With weather the main factor, fishermen should be watching for cold fronts and trying to fish a day or two before the front, and the third warm day after the front passes.

November should be another great month for North Texas fishermen. The lakes have plenty of both water and fish, and a few less fishermen thanks to deer season. I'll be one of those fishermen on the water. How about you? **★**

**Decisions,  
Decisions**  
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# Fins or

*Capt. Ruben Garza lands a solid Lower Laguna Madre speck before an afternoon duck hunt.*

**November presents a prime opportunity for outdoorsmen and women to pursue both fish and waterfowl in the same coastal waters.**

*Story and Photography by Nate Skinner*

**N**ovember kicks off a special time of year where coastal anglers and waterfowl hunters will have to choose when they will go fishing and when they will go duck hunting. Sometimes making this decision is an arduous task, as both the rod bending and decoying action can be lights out this time of year.

This is why many outdoorsmen and women will choose to cast-n-blast, or blast-n-cast, depending on the scenario and conditions. Conducting a duck hunt

and a fishing trip in the same day can produce success, not to mention plenty of fun-filled memories. Certain variables will dictate the order in which the two activities should occur for participants to strap the most ducks and catch as many fish as possible.

Some of the most exciting duck hunt and fish combination forays I've been apart of have taken place on the Lower Laguna Madre out of Getaway Lodge at Port Mansfield. Last November, my brother Brandon and I spent two days

wade fishing and hunting with Getaway Lodge guide, Captain Ruben Garza Jr. On this particular trip, both of our hunts took place in the afternoon after we enjoyed catching redfish and speckled trout during the morning hours.

The hunts occurred off of some spoil islands south of the Port Mansfield Harbor in areas where the afternoon breezes played to our advantage. Each morning began with light winds, perfect for working the stretches of shorelines where we were targeting fish. It just made sense



# Feathers?

*Steady shooting resulted in limits of ducks from blinds set up on Lower Laguna Madre spoil islands.*

to cast, and then blast.

While wading along the west shoreline to the north of PM, we experienced non-stop action from trout and redfish. The mid November temperatures were mild, and the topwater bite was nothing less than ferocious.

The afternoon duck hunts did not disappoint either. We set up on the bank of a spoil island with a make-shift blind made out of palm fronds that Garza had cut down and gathered prior to the hunt. We literally just shoved the palm branches into the mud and sat on stools amongst them. The blind was extremely natural looking, and the ducks were unaware of our presence.

The afternoon sea breeze helped to give our decoys some motion. Plus the

birds used the wind as a landing aid, as they cupped their wings and floated down from above, head on into the breeze.

Garza had already informed us that shooting our limit of two red heads a piece would be a fairly simple task. In addition to the crimson-faced ducks, we were also covered up with pintails that had no problem swirling down towards the water's surface for a closer look at the decoys. In fact, after we harvested our limit of pintails, we sat and watched as more of the prized ducks piled into our spread and landed right in front of us. Bluebills, mottled ducks, and the occasional widgeon added color to our straps as well. By the time the two day cast-n-blast had finished, it was clear we had fished and hunted during the right

period of each day.

Deciding whether to fish or hunt first thing in the morning, and then do the other in the afternoon can be a pretty simple decision once all the factors are considered. Some of the most important variables that should be contemplated over are the prevailing conditions, particularly the wind, air temperature, and water temperature.

For much of the Texas coast the first part of November will provide mild conditions. With the exception of when a cold front hits, southeast winds will be the norm along with moderate air and water temperatures. Under this pattern, winds will typically start off light in the morning and then pick up as the day wears on.

This sets up a situation in which

fishing may be a better option in the morning, as water temperatures are not yet cold enough to make fish lethargic and calm winds will result in better water clarity for anglers to fish. Additionally stronger afternoon breezes will make bay waters choppy, forcing ducks to move towards protected shorelines to land rather than allowing them to raft up in the middle of bays and estuaries.

As duck season wears on and water temperatures begin to cool down, fishing later in the day when warmer air temperatures and the sun heat up bay waters may be the ticket. The fish will likely be more aggressive during this time of day, so hunting first thing in the morning will be the better option.

Another variable that should be considered are the major and minor feed times as indicated by the solunar tables located in the back of this issue. These become especially important as the fish transition from a fall to winter pattern and are less aggressive. Fishing during periods of the day in which there is a major or minor feed taking place, and then hunting around these time frames is



*Brandon Skinner, the author's brother, admires his limit of two redheads taken while hunting on the Lower Laguna Madre out of Port Mansfield.*

a good idea.

In addition to the Lower Laguna Madre near Port Mansfield there are several other excellent bays, estuaries, marshes, and coastal areas in which



*The author displays a chunky trout he caught prior to an afternoon duck hunt on the Lower Laguna Madre.*

anglers and waterfowl hunters can plan to string limits of fish and strap limits of ducks. Some of them include the Land Cut, Baffin Bay, the Upper Laguna Madre, the Aransas Bay Complex, Seadrift, Port O'Connor, West Matagorda Bay, and East Matagorda Bay.

Owner and Operator of Laguna Adventures, Captain Justin Cooper, runs duck hunts and fishing trips in the Landcut, Baffin Bay, and along the Upper Laguna Madre. He has floating cabins located in all three of these regions which provide anglers and hunters with a unique coastal experience.

"For our cabin trips, we typically set up our decoys in an area where there has been good flights of ducks and then just leave them there for the duration of the trip," Cooper explained. "This allows us to fish when the bite is best, and then switch straight to hunting without wasting any time. Sometimes we will hunt in the mornings and then fish later in the day, and sometimes we will do the opposite. It all just depends on when the best action for both activities is going to occur."

Cooper has six blinds within two miles of the JFK Causeway on the Upper Laguna Madre. This allows him be able to set up with the wind in his favor under a variety of conditions and scenarios.

"There are some freshwater ponds located on Padre Island that many of our ducks visit during the morning hours

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*A make-shift blind made from cut palm fronds stuck in the muddy bank of a spoil island provide perfect concealment from the ducks on this hunt.*

catch the attention of ducks traveling at a distance. Ten to twelve dozen decoys will usually get the job done.

As far as fishing goes, some of the best action of the year occurs during the month of November. Topwater plugs, soft plastics, and a variety of sinking twitch baits will

entice strikes. It's important for anglers to remember that as water temperatures continue to drop, they should transition their bait presentations to those that imitate mullet.

Whether it's a cast-n-blast or a blast-n-cast that's in store, loads of excitement and fun await those willing to pursue fins and feathers in the same day. Consider all the conditions and factors that are presented, and schedule the two activities in the order that will result in the best outcome. There's nothing better than hunting and fishing, all in the same day.

**T&J**

at certain times of the season," Cooper confessed. "When this is the case, we will start off the day fishing, and then transition to hunting during the afternoon when the birds revisit bay waters."

Captain Nathan Beabout of N&M Sportsman's Adventures claims that combining a successful duck hunt with a fishing trip in the Seadrift and Port O'Connor areas is all about playing the weather.

"On a normal day with a standard southeast breeze, duck hunting in the morning and then fishing afterwards is going to produce the best results," he informed. "Hunting pressure is greater around Seadrift and Port O'Connor in the mornings, which helps to push birds around. In the afternoons if there is not a significant weather change or very much boat traffic, the ducks will sit on the water rafted up rather than flying. There's always a decent flight of birds right before sunset, but other than that, without hunting pressure or a weather change, afternoons can be tough."

Every now and then, prefrontal conditions present themselves and a cold front is set to arrive on the coast during the afternoon. Beabout states that this is the time to switch things up and fish in the morning prior to duck hunting.

"Under these conditions, the bite will be aggressive before the approaching front hits," he elaborated. "Then, the weather change will push ducks into the air for the remainder of the day."

When hunting main bay shorelines on wide open estuaries, hunters will need to use a decoy spread large enough to



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## CoastWatch | Danno Wise

November is usually the first month that truly feels like fall from start to finish, as the weather is typically noticeably cooler on a daily basis and there is a very real possibility of getting a ‘strong front’ before the end of the month.

Shorter daylight hours coupled with more frequent and stronger fronts will accelerate the cooling of the water. This change in temperature generally results in a change in fish behavior, making November a true transition month in terms of fishing patterns. Flounder, speckled trout and redfish will all be very active throughout the Upper Texas and Louisiana Coasts this month.

With hunting and football seasons well underway, fishing and boat traffic is minimal this month, meaning anglers can have the bay to themselves and fish pretty much wherever they want to on a daily basis. All in all, it’s hard to beat November for both quantity and quality of fishing. 🌟🌟



Matagorda guide Capt. Tommy Countz says the exciting angling action of October generally carries over into November on his stretch of the Texas coastline.

“November fishing in Matagorda can be just as exciting as October,” said Countz. “If we are having bird activity, it certainly will happen in November. Our main focus will be on East Matagorda Bay. Cruising the bay scanning it for diving gulls is an easy method for boxing trout and reds. I like to rig soft plastics with ¼ or 3/8 ounce lead heads. The heavier heads allow for longer casts and they work deeper.

“After spotting birds, it’s important to quietly approach them from upwind which allows you to drift towards the activity. This is a rapid-fire operation that doesn’t last long, so make long casts and when you hook up, reel them in and cast again. A unique thing about East Matagorda Bay is that you are just as apt to catch redfish under these birds as well as trout.

“November often finds us drifting scattered shell on the west end of the bay or big mud flats on the east end. Look for bait activity or streaky water and make long drifts. I also enjoy wading the south shore of West Matagorda Bay in November. We normally don’t get any appreciable cold weather in the first half of the month, so topwaters work very well. Work the mouths of drains, grass beds, and drop offs on sand bars.

“November is also when the Colorado River really starts to produce good trout and red action. Heavy lead heads rigged on paddle tails tossed toward the bank and worked out to drop offs are very effective. The river also affords you protection from stronger winds especially when fronts blow in.

“If you really want to experience some great fishing, give November in Matagorda a shot. I know that you won’t



PHOTO COURTESY OF REEL THREEEL CHARTERS

*Along Texas upper coast bull redfish will continue to hang out around the beachfront and jetties. This angler caught this bull red while fishing with Capt. Mike Segall of Reel Threeel Charters in Freeport.*

be disappointed.”

Freeport guide Capt. Mike Segall of Reel Threeel Charters says he will be fishing several different areas in November.

“November we will still be catching bull reds off the beachfront areas in 30 feet of water,” said Segall. “Sardines and cut bait on the bottom will get the job done



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

*On the upper end of Sabine Lake fishing options similar to what is experienced out of Venice LA can be found. In the fall flounder will hold around points and redfish will travel along the reed lined shorelines.*



When the flounder run kicks into high gear the flats around the old sunken concrete ship and shorelines of Pelican Island are good places to fish.

PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

with these big redfish. Big schools of bulls will be roaming the waters until we start seeing colder water temperatures.

“State waters will stay good for snapper and kingfish as long as the water keeps warm. Sharks also will be lurking in the mix in state waters.

“Deep sea will still be good, with kingfish holding over structure areas like hard bottom spots. We’ll also be catching some big vermilion snapper along with the sharks. The best bet for vermilion snapper is a two-hook drop with small chunks of squid. Usually, most structure found 50 to 60 miles out will hold the vermilion snapper.

“Inshore or bay fishing will still be good, also. Drifting the bays and working

the inlets and harbor areas off the ICW will pay off with good catches of trout and reds. Live shrimp is always a good choice, but plastics with a ¼-ounce jig head works well, too.”

Galveston guide Capt. Greg Verm says redfish and trout will be good in November, but flounder is what he’s really looking forward to. Although gigging season is closed in November, Verm says his clients routinely catch limits of big flounder – especially at night.

“We will still be seeing good catches of specks during November,” said Verm. “A lot of these fish will be coming from under the birds. We’ve been having good bird activity and that should continue through at least the first couple weeks of

November. At times, we’ll also have some redfish under the birds.

“But, I’ll spend a lot of time in the marsh and back lakes during November. We will have plenty redfish in the marsh and lots of specks in the back lakes and bayous. There will also be quite a few flounder in the back lakes and bayous. As the weather cools, those flounder will start filtering out. Usually by the end of November the flounder run will be underway.

“For me, the best thing to do during November is sight casting to flounder at night. We won’t be able to gig during November, so we go out at night in our halogen light-lit boats – just like we would if we were gigging and sight-cast to big

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flounder."

November fishing on Sabine Lake is as good – or maybe better – than it was in October, according to Sabine Lake guide Capt. Randy Foreman.

"November is always a good month to fish here," said Foreman. "The pattern at the beginning of November will be about the same as October, except our redfishing will pick up tremendously. When the northwest wind blows, those marshes will drain and those reds have to get out of the marsh. There will also still be some shrimp leaving the marsh. So, we should have some bird activity.

"For the most part, I'll still be slow rolling a big spoon on bottom. But, I'll also be throwing some soft-plastics – mostly in glow or LSU.

"We will have some trout and reds mixed under the birds. They'll mostly be smaller trout – keepers, but not real big – directly under the birds. The bigger trout and redfish will be deeper or off to the side of the main school.

"Keith Lake will be my main spot for redfish in November. I like fishing back up in there with a soft-plastic in either LSU or glow/chartreuse under a cork.

"We'll also have some phenomenal



PHOTO COURTESY OF REEL THREEE CHARTERS

*As long as water temperatures remain mild look for the offshore action to remain very good. Kingfish and red snapper are both reliable options through November*

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



According to guide Capt. Nick Poe of Big Lake Guide Service, November angling action is outstanding on Lake Calcasieu.

"November is one of my favorite months," said Poe. "The weather is usually cooler, but stable, as the cold fronts haven't gotten too strong yet. We have a variety of options both in locations and methods. One of the best things about November is that fish can be found throughout the estuary — from north of Interstate 10 all the way to the south end of 'Big Lake'. Since fish can be found in so many places, you can usually find fish in protected waters no matter how hard the wind is blowing, especially north of the Intracoastal Waterway.

"Trout, reds and flounder can be taken in a wide variety of depths from as shallow as a foot to depths of 20 feet

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along the channel edges. Soft plastics will be used most of the time with 1/16 ounce to 3/8 ounce heads according to depth and current speed. A lighter leadhead is usually better if you can get it down to the fish. MirrOlure Lil' Johns and H & H Beetles are my two favorites. Colors I prefer are Opening Night, Chartreuse Ice, Salt & Pepper and Watermelon Red for Lil' Johns. Beetle color choices include clear, chartreuse and smoke.

“Top waters can also be very effective in addition to suspending twitch baits. I usually start with natural colors but loud, outrages colors such as fluorescent pinks and oranges can at times be better.”

Venice area anglers will still have some offshore tuna action early in November. The best of the tuna action will die down once the mullet migration ends, but that usually isn't until mid-November. So, tuna fishermen should take every opportunity to run offshore during the first couple weeks of the month.

There will also be plenty of inshore action in the waters surrounding Venice during November. Early in the month, redfish will still be in the marshes. As the water temperatures drop, the reds will start moving to the passes and outside beaches.

Ditto for trout. Early in the month, expect to find good concentrations of



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPT. RANDY'S GUIDE SERVICE

*This lady angler caught this nice redfish while fishing with Capt. Randy Foreman. Look for bird activity to increase on Sabine Lake as strong cold fronts move through the area this month.*

speckled trout in the river. However, once the water temperature begins to dip, the specks will move to the outside beaches.

And, keep in mind, water temperature in the Venice area isn't only affected by

the local weather. The Mississippi River drains the entire Midwest. An early winter up north means dropping water temperatures along the southern stretch of the Mississippi River. 🌟🌟



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPT. TOMMY COUNTZ

*Mary Covington caught this nice speckled trout while fishing with Matagorda veteran guide Capt. Tommy Countz. Countz says there are plenty of options in November in the Matagorda Bay systems from fishing mid-bay reefs in East Bay, wading shorelines of West Matagorda Bay and as temperatures drop heading up the Colorado River.*

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## Don't Leave Well Enough Alone

These days our choices of outstanding firearms are limitless, but firearms aficionados always want something that says, “Mine!” It may be as simple as exchanging the factory grips to ones created from exotic wood or going all in on a project with a custom gunsmith.

Some years back I covered a project involving a first generation Glock 19 in 9mm. For the purposes of this article it bears repeating as the do-it-yourself customization of a Glock ranks right up there with the Ruger 10/22.

First I changed out the factory sights with XS Sights “Big Dot” front and white line rear for fast target acquisition. Everything else I wanted was available online from Lone Wolf Distributors, a true one stop shop. Their pre-fit drop in barrel is precision machined from heat treated 416R stainless with broach cut rifling with a target crown, polished feed ramp and bore and since mine is threaded for various attachments I added their screw on LWD Compensator with a locking screw that keeps it from rotating. The vents redirect gasses back and down and it feels like your shooting a .22.

For fun I added a snap in Frame Plug that fills the hole at the base of the grip frame and picked one of their many engraved options. I went for “Come and Take It” complete with the cannon. I swapped out the slide plate with one engrave with Masonic symbols. From Brownells a titanium striker was added that lessens lock time by 50 percent.

To improve the grip purchase for my small hands I chose a simple fix with Talon Grips. These are a pre-cut, thin, rubber, appliqué designed to stick to polymer. To attach you simply clean your guns grip with rubbing alcohol, peel the Talon grip off its backing, lightly wrap it around to fit, push the surface to remove air pockets, then heat the works with a hair dryer, push all the surface down again and done.

The finished product has taken a great gun and made it more reliable and more accurate. All of this was done for not a lot of money and accomplished with my



*Colt 38 Super: Before and After*

own two hands.

Although I swore I would never get another caliber, like many of us I lied to myself. A friend sent me a list of firearms he had for sale and my eyes zeroed in on a cartridge that had always intrigued me, the legendary .38 Super, and this one was a stainless steel Colt MK IV Series 80.

The .38 Super Automatic round was developed in the 1920's and was loved by cops and crooks alike in their Colt 1911's. Its popularity has had its ups and downs, but it is still a favorite with many combat pistol competitors. An added bonus was this pistol came with an extra fitted 9mm barrel — a win-win.

The gun was tight and in good shape, but someone had replaced stock parts with a crummy worn blue ambidextrous thumb safety, cruddy trigger; and grips that were neat, but did not fit with my final design.

This pistol cried out, “Soup me up.”

My first stop was my favorite online store for all things firearms related, Brownells. My shopping list included several parts manufactured by the wizards at Wilson Combat of stainless steel. An extended ambidextrous safety, beavertail grip safety, ultralight hammer, magazine release, hex head grip screws, and an aluminum ultralight match grade short trigger.

For sights I paid a return trip to our Texas friends at XS Sights and chose from their selection of tritium night sights a DXT “Big Dot” front and Novak style rear combination. For grips I went to the vast selection offered by Hogue and picked a pair of G-Mascus G10 Grips in the Blue Lava pattern to match my eyes.

Since my extensive gunsmithing skills would allow me to change out the



*Steyr Scout Rifle with author's add ons.*

grip screws I deemed it necessary to take the works to a super-smith who could not only properly assemble my puzzle but do any needed fitting. Also, the slide needed proper dovetail cuts for the sights. A sack full of pistol and parts went off to my friend Kerry O'Day and his band of craftsmen at MG Arms, Inc. in the Houston suburb of Spring.

The process was completed in their usual timely manner and though I knew I would be pleased with the finished product my joy knew no bounds as I held the Colt in my hands. Not only were all the pieces in their proper place, but O'Day and company had put a high polish on the stainless steel that contrasts beautifully with the grips.

Rifles can use some tweaking too. I have long been enamored with the Scout Rifle concept as envisioned by the late, great gun guru and founder of the famed

Gunsite Academy, Col Jeff Cooper. The story of the development of his dream for a short handy rifle in a caliber suitable for man or beast needs space for another time. His collaboration with the fine firm of Steyr Arms brought about the first of its kind with other companies to follow. I always wanted a Steyr Scout, but I had rifles I did not want to part with in the calibers that were offered. That was until recently when they became available in the outstanding 7mm-08 Remington round. More on this cartridge at a later date as the object of this exercise is to fiddle with things.

Out of the box the Steyr Scout is practically perfect. This lightweight bolt-action carbine has a top rail that accepts either a forward mounted long eye relief scope for quick target acquisition with both eye open or a standard scope. It features pop up iron sights if needed,

a five round magazine with a backup magazine in the buttstock, an adjustable trigger that came with a four pound pull, their respected butter smooth bolt action and famously accurate cold-hammer forged barrel.

The first improvement that usually should be made to any rifle is a trigger job, but was not necessary in this case. What did it need? First a scope and I voted for the Leupold VX-3i 1.5 x 5 variable in the standard mounting position for stand and rest hunting held on by their QD quick detachable rings.

For carrying and support using my military taught "Hasty Sling" method I acquired the sturdy "Rhodesian Sling" from Andy's Leather. This is a two-point sling made with top of the line bridle leather and solid brass hardware. Andy has other choices and all are 100% made in North Carolina. Lastly, even though the 7mm-08 cartridge has mild recoil, the light weight 6.5 pound Steyr Scout came with a treaded barrel that begged for a muzzle break.

Back I went to MG Arms, Inc. for the Super Eliminator Muzzle Break, a proprietary design with holes and baffles that greatly diffuse recoil energy and made this handy rifle an even better performer.

Any or all of the above may be chosen for your next project whether you want to keep it simple or go all in they will say, "Its mine!"

Website resources to acquire the various parts and pieces for these projects included: [mgarmsinc.com](http://mgarmsinc.com), [xssights.com](http://xssights.com), [lonewolfdist.com](http://lonewolfdist.com), [brownells.com](http://brownells.com), [talongrips.com](http://talongrips.com), [hogueinc.com](http://hogueinc.com), [andysleather.com](http://andysleather.com), and [leupold.com](http://leupold.com). 🌟🌟



*Glock 19 made personal with aftermarket accessories.*



## Lake Roundup

### SOUTH TEXAS



By Danno Wise

November is definitely a transition month on lakes in South Texas. Of course, fishing is always somewhat dependent on weather. However, it is even more so in the month of November. Fish in the region's lakes can find themselves in an extended fall pattern for much of November during mild years. If a few hard fronts push through early, fish will move into their winter homes before Thanksgiving.

Before that happens, fish will remain very active in the shallows. Anglers should spend as much time as possible on the water in the next few weeks in order to squeeze out every last shallow water fishing day they can before the fish move to deep water for winter.

As November 2018 gets underway, almost every lake in South Texas is on the rise water level-wise. After seeing lake levels drop continuously through most of spring and summer, the region began receiving substantial rainfall in late summer and early fall, causing lakes to slowly but surely start rising. Many of the area's lakes are still well below pool level, late summer and early fall rains helped replenish many of the feeder creeks and rivers, as well as the lakes themselves.

With cooler temperatures and fewer daylight hours on the way, evaporation rates will slow. If the region receives decent rainfall with some cold fronts, most South Texas lakes should make it through fall "ok."

So far this fall, fishing has been good

across the board on area lakes. This should continue and actually get even better as November gets started. But, again, fishing patterns will change along with the weather this month, so anglers need to take advantage of every available mild weather day, before colder weather settles in.

**COLETO CREEK** – November means shallow water fishing on Coletto Creek, says bass pro Dennis Lala. And, with the lake nearly full, there will be plenty of shallow water areas and shorelines for anglers to cast along.

"The lake is in really good shape and the fishing has been pretty good," said Lala. "Of course, in November the water will be cooling off and the fish will be coming up shallow. We still have some coontail moss around the lake, but we also have some flooded grass and brush and some standing timber. The bass will around all that structure and also right up against the bank and on shallow points.

"Now is the time to be working lures like topwaters and spinnerbaits. I'll be throwing a Rattlin' Buzz and a chartreuse/white spinnerbait. I'll also be fishing a weightless Power Jerk Shad in watermelon/pearl. You can work that bait over just about any structure or along the edges. I'll also cast it right up on the bank and drag it off.

"Topwaters do work well and are a fun way to catch fish. I like the Rattlin' Buzz, but other noisy topwaters like buzzbaits and Frenzy Popper work well also.

"Later in the day the fish will move a little deeper, so I'll add some weight and go with a Texas or Carolina rig along the edges and drops, or out even deeper on the points and some of the submerged structure. Again, I'll be using a Jerk Shad or maybe a lizard on this rig.

"Once the water really starts cooling, I'll start throwing spinnerbaits a lot more. I like a white/chartreuse bait with gold, double-willow leaf blades. Basically, I'll throw that thing all over the place. I'll work down the edge, throw it up on the shoreline, run it through flooded timber or along the flooded brush. I'll throw that bait wherever I can without getting

hung up.

"The other thing to keep in mind is that if it gets really cold and they are pumping at the plant, the fishing around the hot water discharge will get really good. Bass will be up there, but so will just about everything in the lake. Besides black bass, we'll have crappie, hybrids and catfish around the discharge. That's part of the fun when you're fishing by the discharge – you never know what you're going to catch. And, that fishing just gets better as it gets colder – as long as they are pumping."

**MEDINA** – Medina had seen its water level dip below 50 percent capacity this summer before jumping back up to nearly 70 percent full in early autumn. The rise in lake level should make fish extra frisky during what Jim Gallagher of Jim's Re bait Tackle considers one of the best months to fish Medina.

"Fishing is usually real good and pretty easy on this lake in November," said Gallagher. "We will be in a fall pattern and the fish will stay up shallow a little longer. During November we get a few more overcast or cloudy days, which means the fish will stay up a bit longer. However, when they fall back to the deeper water, they won't go down as deep as they were in summer.

"Really nothing changes from October to November until we get our first couple really strong cold fronts. Once that happens, the pattern will change. It will happen at some point before the end of November, but every year is different. Once it turns cold, it will be kind of like spring. We always talk about how rocks are important on this lake during spring. Well, it's the same thing once it starts getting cold at the end of fall. You want to look for the rocks that are facing the sun. Often times, the water around a rock that's facing the sun may be as much as five degrees warmer than the rest of the lake.

"Once we start getting regular fronts and the temperatures stay down, the fish will get in their winter pattern. Winter pattern for us is deeper than on most South Texas lakes and that means mostly vertical fishing. But, the fish won't be



as deep as in the summer. The fishing areas and techniques will be pretty much the same, but they will be about 10 feet shallower than they were in summer. This is a ‘point’ lake, so main lake and secondary points are best bets.”

**CHOKO CANYON** – Finally, the water level on Choke has been moving upwards, with the lake at nearly 40 percent capacity through early fall. November fishing is almost always good on this lake and the influx of water should make it even better this year.

Fishing in November on Choke Canyon is a lot like October, at least early in the month. That means more outstanding topwater and shallow water action with Rebel Pop Rs, DOA PT-7s and Sna-Coils, artificial frogs and buzzbaits among the most productive lures, especially during the early and late portions of the day. During the midday hours, spinnerbaits, Texas-rigged lizards and soft-plastic jerkbaits will do the trick.

After the third week of November, fishermen should start looking out for a pattern-shifting front. As long as the weather and water stays relatively warm, fish will continue in their fall feeding patterns. However, once the first few hard fronts hit, expect fish to start dropping off into deeper water and resuming their winter pattern. This usually happens sometime after Thanksgiving, but can occur much earlier in the month depending on the fronts.

Once the water cools enough to push the fish off the shallows and shorelines, look for them in 15 to 20 feet of water over humps, tank dams and other offshore structure. When they're on deep structure, Texas-rigged lizards, jigs and deep-diving crankbaits are best options.

**FALCON** — On Falcon Lake, bass should remain in a fall pattern for most, if not all, of November. That's good news for fishermen wanting a topwater bite. Buzzbaits, Spooks, Pop Rs and artificial frogs will all produce fish around the flooded brush. Many days - particularly if there are overcast skies - the topwater bite will last throughout the day.

When the topwater bite slows, anglers can generally do well with other shallow water techniques. Spinnerbaits and shallow running crankbaits will produce well on the outside edge of the flooded brush. Jigs and Texas-rigged plastics can be worked in and around flooded brush.

Later in the month, as the temperatures begin to drop, expect fish to start moving toward the points and, later, to the offshore structure. As the fish work deeper, Carolina and Texas-rigged soft-plastics and deep diving cranks will be the best choices. **T★J**



By TOJ Staff

**AMISTAD** — Hope springs eternal because as of the first of October the anticipated rainfall mentioned in last month's report has resulted in a steady rise of “Big Friendly.” Steady and sometimes heavy rains have resulted in this border impound seeing a four foot rise and was continuing to come up as water worked its way down the watershed.

Look for bass fishing to improve as water levels settle and clear. November will be a continuation of what should have occurred in a normal October. Black bass will be feeding and hitting most anything. Buzzbaits, topwater lures, frogs will remain good options. Lipless crankbaits and spinnerbaits are other preferred choices.

With the increase in water and newly flooded vegetation look to these areas to attract baitfish and bass. Senkos or Texas rigged creature baits are good options.

Striped bass continue their annual migration up the Rio Grande, Pecos and Devils Rivers. Look for surface activity as well as monitor electronic graphs.

On top throw big Rat-L-Traps, broke-back lures and Red Fins. For subsurface fish use Rat-L-Traps and spoons.

Catfish will be more active given the moving stained water. Look for these fish in water 12-15 feet deep.

**O.H. IVIE** — More of the same with a little more water is what is forecast for this popular lake. Even though Ivie is only 15 percent of its capacity fish will

be “hemmed up” and on the feed.

Look for shad to be in whatever vegetation was flooded by the three foot rise that occurred as of early October. Anglers should cover water to find fish using topwater lures, lipless crankbaits or spinnerbaits.

Mixed schools of fish will continue to herd shad into coves and pockets. As the temperature dips later in the month look for a transition to begin with fish relating to water closer to deeper depths.

**BROWNWOOD** — In early October this popular lake was less than seven and a half feet low. Should cold fronts collide with moisture from the Gulf of Mexico look for rains to raise the lake level and inundate flooded vegetation.

Best baits for bass will be topwater lures and shakeyheads fished over brush piles. Rat-L-Traps and crankbaits will entice bass that won't rise to the surface.

Boat docks will continue to attract white bass. Crappie will be around brush piles in water 10-12 feet deep. **T★J**

## HIGH PLAINS



By TOJ Staff

**ALAN HENRY** — Typical water temperatures on this lake range in the mid-60s this time of year. Look for bass to be enticed to hit crankbaits and spoons.

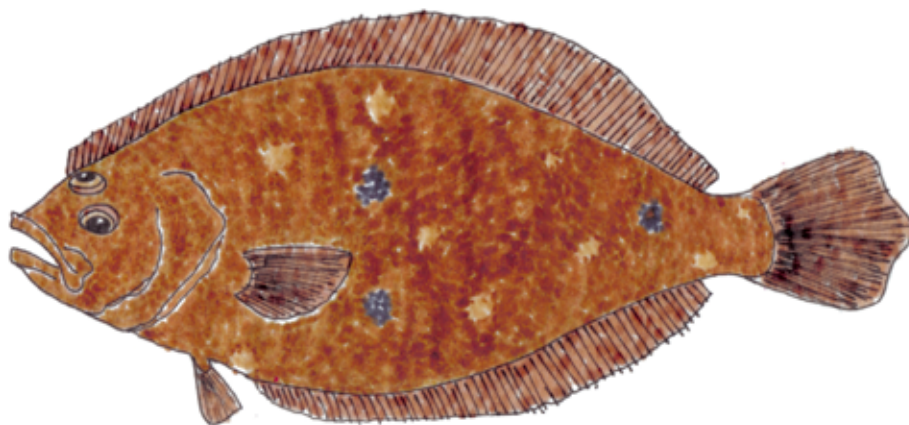
With a slight water rise as of early October, look for catfish to be more active. Fish moving stained water and around baited holes.

**COLEMAN** — This lake was holding steady at about four and a half feet low to start October. Anglers should fish topwater lures and lipless crankbaits to find feeding fish.

Should the lake pick up some additional water then fish the newly flooded vegetation with jigs and flukes. **T★J**



## Fooling Fall Flounder

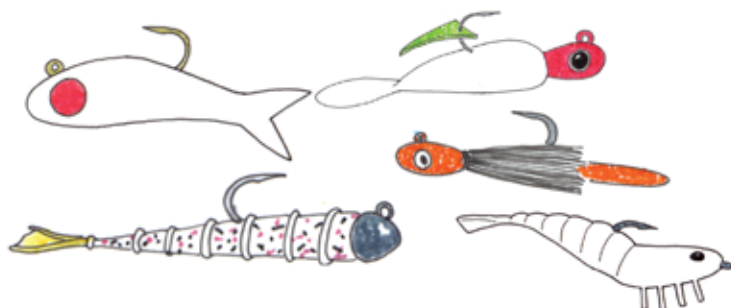
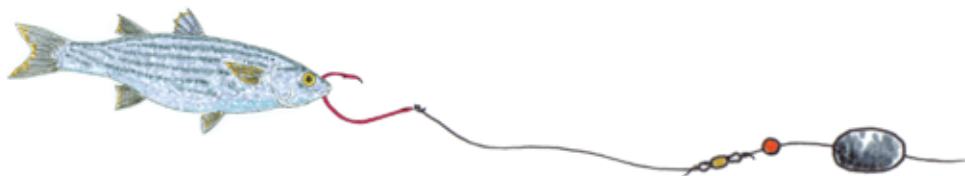


For many inshore anglers along the Texas coast, fall means flounder. After all, 'tis the season when flatfish take part in their annual "run" -- when huge concentrations of flounder make their way out of the bay and into the open Gulf. And, even before the run begins (usually around Thanksgiving), flounder are staging up and getting ready to go. So, all in all, November is the perfect time to target flatties.

The vast majority of flounder fishermen use natural baits. Shrimp, mullet and mud minnows are among the top choices. And, don't be fooled by their appearance -- flounder are voracious predators that can easily attack baitfish that swim to close. So, anglers targeting large "saddle blanket" flounder usually like bigger baits like finger mullet. Regardless of the bait item used, live bait will always outproduce dead when it comes to flounder, so anglers should do their best to use live whenever possible.



Because flounder are bottom dwellers, baits should be rigged on Carolina rigs or other similar rigs that allow the bait to stay on or near the bottom without providing a lot of resistance when the fish takes.



A variety of artificial lures can also consistently produce good catches of flounder. However, anglers should choose lures that 1. imitate shrimp or baitfish and 2. can be fished very slowly along the bottom. A variety of soft-plastic jigs, as well as lures like the DOA Terroreyz and DOA Shrimp are good choices. Many times, it is also helpful to tip artificial lures with chunks of FishBites or other scent strips to attract flounder and encourage them to hold the bait a bit longer.

Fly fishermen can also catch their share of flounder. The key for long rodders is to use heavily weighted flies that can be drug along the bottom. Intermediate, sinking or sink-tip lines will also aid in keeping the fly low in the water column - even in relatively shallow water it is to the fly angler's benefit to use some sort of sinking line as opposed to a floating line if they are specifically targeting flounder.



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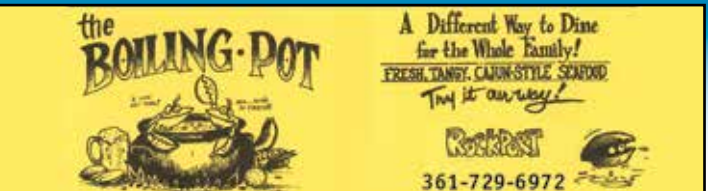
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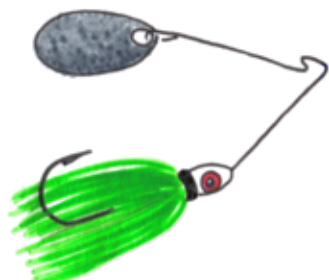
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## Catching Post-Frontal Fall Bass

November is the time when stronger fronts begin pushing through Texas more frequently. As most anglers know, catching fish following a front is quite a bit different than fishing for them prior to a cold front's passage. However, contrary to popular belief, post-frontal bass can be caught. Anglers just need to adjust what they're throwing and how they are fishing.



Finesse baits tend to produce more fish in post-frontal conditions and soft-plastic jerkbaits are among the most versatile finesse baits. These baits can be rigged in a variety of manner to help anglers adjust to the depth at which fish are found. And, once in the strike zone, they offer a subtle, yet tantalizing action to draw strikes.



Jigging spoons are among the least utilized bass lures on Texas lakes. However, they are easy to use and extremely effective when bass are favoring a subtle approach. And, because they are jigged vertically, anglers can precisely locate their lure at the desired depth and keep it there. The flash and wobble of the spoon as it rises and falls, coupled with the fact it stays at the target depth will often draw a strike when other lures do not.

Hard plastic twitch baits offer up a strike-illiciting wobble and can be worked at an extremely slow pace. Suspending models are ideal for post-frontal bass. And, anglers can adjust the depth at which they bait will suspend by adding weight. This can be done by using larger hooks and/or split rings or by affixing one of several commercial produced weighted "dots" or "strips" to the lure body.

Jigs can be very effective when fishing heavy cover for post-front bass. It may be necessary to downsize the jig or even trim some of the skirt to give it a slimmer profile. However, because they are close to snag-proof and can be drug slowly over the bottom and any structure or even jigged vertically, jigs are an excellent way to target post-front bass lurking in heavy cover.

Spinnerbaits are also good choices for post-front bass. However, it is usually best to downsize. And, while spinnerbaits are known as a bait that can be used to quickly cover a lot of water, it is usually most effective to "slow-roll" spinnerbaits by using a slow, steady retrieve when fish are in a post-frontal pattern.

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## Early Season Quail Hunting Tips

The 2018-2019 statewide quail hunting season opened in Texas on October 27, 2018 and will run through February 24, 2019. For many hunters quail season will take a backseat to the opening and first portion of the general deer hunting season. They will leave coveys of bobwhite and scaled (blue) quail alone until later in the season when deer tags have been filled or after deer seasons have closed.

For enthusiastic and dedicated upland bird hunters they have been anticipating the opportunity to hunt behind a brace of pointers and test their shooting skills against this popular gamebird since last season closed. Even though recruitment is down across most of the state these resilient birds may actually have tried to pull off some late nesting efforts once rains started to fall in September. If this proves to be correct hunters will want to resist shots on coveys of juvenile birds, letting them mature so they can be hunted as adults later in the season.

Another challenge early in the season quail hunters face is the more lush, green conditions present due to recent rains. The green up provides an additional challenge for dogs to wind and smell coveys. This situation normally continues until a frost has knocked back the vegetation later in the year.

To counter this early season lushness hunters should always hunt their dogs into the wind. Dog handlers should also work the pointers more slowly and have them “hunt close” as opposed to allowing them to range further away and cover lots of ground. This allows the dogs’ to work ground more thoroughly while their sensitive noses seek out their feathered quarry.



With the warm weather of fall, hunters should be mindful that rattlesnakes will still be active. Snake-proof boots should be worn to protect the hunter.

Hunters should also watch dogs for “false points” that may indicate the presence of a rattlesnake. Snakes give off a scent pointers pick up and will try to “lock on thinking it is a quail. However the snake scent is different than a quail and dogs will start to lock on point, then release and then start to point again as the pointer tries to process this different smell.

When this is observed hunters should call the dog off the point and go to the dog to assess the situation. Many times a rattlesnake will be seen coiled under a bush or in the grass.

Prior to any hunt, hunters should gather to go over safety rules. A simple reminder of hunters adhering to safe zones of fire will keep shooters and pointers safe. Not only should shooting zones be observed, but hunters should also refrain from taking low going away shots that may endanger a dog that does not hold steady to wing-and-shot.

One final consideration is to not overhunt available quail. Since quail populations have been down the past two seasons hunters should refrain from hunting singles. Instead hunt coveys and then let the birds regroup. The quail that survive this hunting season are the broodstock for next year.



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# Outdoor Calendar

## THROUGH NOVEMBER 2,

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

## THROUGH NOVEMBER 2,

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

## THROUGH NOVEMBER 2,

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

## THROUGH NOVEMBER 2,

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

## THROUGH NOVEMBER 4,

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

## THROUGH NOVEMBER 4,

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

## THROUGH JANUARY 20, 2019,

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

## THROUGH JANUARY 27, 2019,

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

## THROUGH JANUARY 27, 2019,

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

## THROUGH FEBRUARY 10, 2019,

Wilson's Snipe (Common snipe or Jacksnipe) season, *Statewide (254 counties)*. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

## THROUGH FEBRUARY 24, 2019,

Squirrel Fall Season, *51 East Texas counties*. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

## THROUGH FEBRUARY 24, 2019,

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

## THROUGH FEBRUARY 24, 2019,

Squirrel Season, *51 East Texas counties*. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

## THROUGH FEBRUARY 24, 2018,

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

## THROUGH AUGUST 31, 2019

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

## THROUGH AUGUST 31, 2019

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

## NOVEMBER 1,

Fort Bend County Chapter Ducks Unlimited fundraiser banquet, *Rosenberg*. Call (713) 392-3477.

## NOVEMBER 2 – JANUARY 27, 2019,

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

## NOVEMBER 3-4,

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

## NOVEMBER 3-25,

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

## NOVEMBER 3 — JANUARY 6, 2019,

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

## NOVEMBER 3 — JANUARY 6, 2019,

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

## NOVEMBER 3 — JANUARY 20, 2019,

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

## NOVEMBER 3 — JANUARY 20, 2019,

Whitetail Deer general season, *South Texas*, 30 counties. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

## NOVEMBER 3 — JANUARY 27, 2019,

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

## NOVEMBER 3 – FEBRUARY 3, 2019,

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

## NOVEMBER 3 — FEBRUARY 24, 2019,

Rio Grande Turkey fall season, *Brooks*,



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

**NOVEMBER 3 - FEBRUARY 24, 2019,** Chacalaca season, *four Rio Grande Valley counties.* For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 5 — JANUARY 27, 2019,** "Dusky" Duck season, *High Plains Mallard Management Unit.* 92 counties. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 8,** Aggeland Chapter Ducks Unlimited fundraiser banquet, *Bryan.* Call (979) 482-7039.

**NOVEMBER 8,** Victoria Chapter Ducks Unlimited fundraiser banquet, *Victoria.* Call (361) 571-0717.

**NOVEMBER 8 - 25,** "Dusky Duck season, first split. *South Zone.* 54 counties. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 10,** Uvalde Chapter Ducks Unlimited fundraiser banquet, *Uvalde.* Call (210) 844-9306.

**NOVEMBER 10,** *Smoke & Barrel, Downtown Lake Charles, LA.* Get ready for the savory aroma of oak and hickory benefiting the United Way of Southwest Louisiana. Featuring over 50 bourbons and whiskeys to taste along with complementing BBQ dishes from leading pitmasters from across the gulf coast. Taking place under the beautiful oaks on the Calcasieu Parish Courthouse lawn in downtown Lake Charles from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Aside from the tasty BBQ and bourbons and whiskey pairings, attendees will also hear the foot-stomping sounds of top regional bands such as Wayne Toups, Michot's Melody Makers ft. Louis Michot of the Lost Bayou

Ramblers, and Mayeux Broussard. Only a limited amount of VIP tickets remain, which includes the bourbon and whiskey tasting, BBQ tasting, parking and bathroom passes, beverages and more. General admission is free, with BBQ and beverages available for purchase. For more information or to purchase tickets, go to [smokeandbarrel.org](http://smokeandbarrel.org).

**NOVEMBER 13,** Lubbock Chapter Ducks Unlimited fundraiser banquet, *Lubbock.* Call (806) 790-0709.

**NOVEMBER 15,** 40th Annual Katy Chapter Ducks Unlimited fundraiser banquet, *Katy.* Call (281) 770-9213.

**NOVEMBER 15,** Weatherford Chapter Ducks Unlimited fundraiser banquet, *Weatherford.* Call (817) 239-4482.

**NOVEMBER 15 - 25,** Duck regular season, first split, *North Zone.* 139 counties. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 15 - 25,** "Dusky Duck season, first split. *North Zone.* 139 counties. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 17,** Sweetwater Chapter Ducks Unlimited fundraiser banquet, *Sweetwater.* Call (325) 338-2146.

**NOVEMBER 17,** Turkey Texas Chapter Mule Deer Foundation fundraiser banquet, *Turkey.* Call (806) 269-1289.

**NOVEMBER 17 - 25,** Mule Deer general season, *Southwestern Panhandle,* 15 counties. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 17 — DECEMBER 2,** Mule Deer general season, *Panhandle,* 40 counties. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 27,** Pittsburg Chapter Ducks Unlimited fundraiser banquet, *Pittsburg.* Call (903) 235-1893.

**NOVEMBER 23 — DECEMBER 9,** Mule Deer general season, *Trans-Pecos,* 16 counties. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 23 — DECEMBER 9,** Mule Deer general season, *Brewster, Pecos & Terrell counties.* For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 23 — JANUARY 27, 2019,** Sandhill Crane season, Zone B. (63 counties). For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

**NOVEMBER 29,** Perryton Chapter Ducks Unlimited fundraiser banquet, Perryton. Call (806) 228-5754.

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