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Year Round Inshore Angling Adventures

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For more information on "Hurry Dad" and other fine works of art by Ralph J. McDonald, visit www.countrysidestudio.com.



An End & New Beginning

Oh what a time to reflect and rejoice. It is a time to embrace our religious heritage, our family, friends and all of the blessings that have been bestowed on each of us. Without this time, because of the holiday celebrated, none of this would be. It would be so much less, and instead it is so much more.

It seems fitting that Christmas, that celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ, occurs during the last month of the year. It marks our remembrance of the start of a journey for one that resulted in eternal life for all that believe. It is appropriate that reverence for this gift of gifts be given. We acknowledge the fading away of the trials and tribulations of the past and celebrate the new beginning to come.

As hunters and anglers much of what we do is surrounded by tranquil silence. A calming quiet so as to not disturb the moment, or the critters pursued.

Everything seems to be in a celebratory mood. All senses are stimulated. The beginning and end of days are as colorful as at any time of the year. On some days there is a frosty crispness that dries or even burns the inside of the nose as a reminder of the struggles that lie ahead. Plus the impending challenges will determine who amongst our "wild friends" will survive winter's wrath.

All of these impressions play on the emotion of the moment and of the season. This is why we rejoice for the blessings of just being and all that has been given.

Many reminisce of times past. It is fitting those that have departed remain a part of the present, because without them the traditions of today may not have become. This is how our heritage has been built and sustained — a passing from one to another.

Emotions run in a variety of directions, but those that struggle or seem overwhelmed with challenges should know they are not alone. Those that are closest to them carry some of that burden, and many times the answer is only a prayer away.

There is the excitement of the young — the ones just starting to get their legs under them. Then there are youngsters that come of age to be included; even if it is just to observe for another year, add to this jubilant time. Maybe next year another step will be taken, while for others the time for a "first" may be at hand. It's part of a growth process that really can't be hurried. Everything comes in its own time.

Throughout this month time is found for individual thought. In just a few days the calendar will not only turn to another month but to the start of a New Year. Even the biggest "Scrooge" surely must have just a bit of optimism of what might await.

It doesn't make sense to doggedly repeat the same mistakes of the past. A few changes made, a little bit of luck, just being in the right place or meeting the right person may make the difference. Combine the spiritual feelings with the emotions of the heart of family and friends can result in a "holiday elixir" that is both calming and uplifting.

So the Christmas wish for each is to enjoy those hallowed places where the challenges of life are forgotten as they are overshadowed by the majesty of the surroundings and moment. Pass on these traditions to the next as we celebrate the end and await a new beginning.

All of us on Team TOJ wish you a very Merry Christmas and all the best in the New Year of 2019.

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

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

TEXAS OUTDOORS Journal
1706 West Sam Houston Parkway North
Houston, Texas 77043

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

E-MAIL ADDRESS: toj@airmail.net
TOJ Online: www.texasoutdoorsjournal.com

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

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Convenience is Key When Choosing a Place to Fish

Recreational anglers cite a lot of reasons for choosing their favorite locations to fish, but one thing it better be is close to home. AnglerSurvey.com recently polled anglers on what was most important to them when choosing a place to cast a line and found that nearly 60 percent of them placed proximity to home as a key factor.

In the survey where respondents could cite multiple factors that play into their decisions, past fishing success (47 percent), having a quiet place to fish (45 percent) and the availability of fish, particularly those they are seeking to catch (44 percent) were also very important.

Other factors in order of how many respondents selected them include:

- Water quality (24 percent)
- Location is recommended by a friend or family member (14 percent)
- How much it costs to fish there (13 percent)

- Available parking (12 percent)
- Nonboat access (8 percent)
- The size of the body of water (7 percent)

“Fishing is an activity that can be enjoyed for an hour or two before or after work or school or when there is a little down time in a person’s life, so convenience and the ability to run out, fish and get back home are first and foremost in many anglers’ minds,” says Rob Southwick, president of Southwick Associates, which designs and conducts the surveys at HuntersSurvey.com, ShootersSurvey.com and AnglersSurvey.com. “Efforts on behalf of the fishing community to bring fishing opportunities and access into suburban and urban neighborhoods may be a critical part of efforts to maintain fishing’s future.”

To help continually improve, protect and advance hunting, shooting and other outdoor recreation, all sportsmen and sportswomen are encouraged to

participate in the bi-monthly surveys at HuntersSurvey.com, ShootersSurvey.com and AnglersSurvey.com. Every other month, participants who complete the surveys are entered into a drawing for one of five \$100 gift certificates to the sporting goods retailer of their choice. **T★J**

Concealed Carry Permits Surge to More than 18M

More than 18 million Americans are legally carrying concealed firearms today, up from 11 million four years ago, according to the U.S. Concealed Carry Association in a Washington Examiner report. Interestingly, it’s not just conservative Republicans who legally carry firearms. Half of permits are going to those who identify as Democrat.

USCCA Founder and President Tim Schmidt said the findings show that firearms are an issue that is more about freedom than political ideology. **T★J**

Cover Art

The Christmas holiday is certainly time for family and friends to spend afield or on the water. This month’s cover art by renowned wildlife and sporting artist Ralph J. McDonald is entitled, “Hurry Dad” that depicts the young son getting a piggy-back ride on his Dad’s back to a duck blind already being buzzed by mallards.

Ralph, as he is known to his friends, was Duck’s Unlimited’s Artist of the Year in 1981. In 2006 for a second time he was named DU’s International Artist of The Year. In the summer of 2006 Ralph was inducted into the National Outdoor Legends Hall of Fame.

Each year for the past 14 years McDonald has produced a painting of a young boy or girl in a waterfowl setting for Ducks Unlimited. Prints of these paintings have been auctioned at the organization’s dinners throughout the United States and Canada. The sales of these prints have raised over \$27 million for DU’s conservation projects.

For more information on “Hurry Dad” and other fine works of art by Ralph J. McDonald, visit www.countrysidestudio.com, or call (800) 235-1402. **T★J**



“Hurry Dad”



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DEER BLINDS, SET-UPS & MEMORIES



Deer hunting remains a family thing and it's still a big deal when a shot is made, the deer tagged and brought back to camp.

Story and Photography by Robert Sloan

About 50 years ago my neighborhood buddies and I looked forward to October because that was when we would get together with our dads and start building box blinds for deer hunts in the Pineywoods. It's was a big deal. Everybody tried to outdo everybody with a bigger and better blind. Looking back, I can't ever remember building one that was more than a few feet off the ground. Having an elevated blind was not that big of a deal. But it's certainly the way to go these days.

There was nothing better than that first morning of deer season. We were up well before dawn, cooked breakfast at the cabin, gathered up our gear and guns and headed out into the darkness of the woods in Polk County, deep in the heart of the Pineywoods. We would set up in the blind and be as quiet as possible, and always on the lookout for deer. Back then our plywood blinds were made on the cheap. Two by fours, plywood, a few hinges for windows and a couple of old office swivel chairs was about as good as it gets. We were out of the weather and into the hunt.

These days you don't see many home-made blinds. Plastic elevated box blinds rule. And there are tripod stands, tree stands and of course pop up blinds to buy. Regardless of what type of blind you use half the fun is getting them to deer camp. From there it's a group effort with brothers and sisters, dads and moms. First, you've got to find a place for the blind, get it to "The Spot", set it up and get ready for the hunt. That's a big deal.

Overall, deer hunting hasn't changed that much over the years. It's still a family thing, and it's always a big deal when you finally make the shot, tag the deer and bring it back to camp.

Probably the one thing that has changed the most with deer hunting is the type of blind we use. The lightweight pop-up blinds seem to be very popular. Most are easy to put up. For some of them you simply pull them out of the bag, give them a jolt and bingo – they open up and you are good to go.

The pop-up blinds are lightweight, easy to set up and definitely will put you on some unsuspecting deer. They are especially good to use during the rut. You can set them up along well-used game trails and near fresh scrapes. The one I

use is made up with Realtree camouflage, and has lots of little slots for brushing up the blind. It's actually pretty comfortable, even in the rain.

While deer hunting over the past five decades I've found that using an elevated blind is not always the way to go. That's especially true if hunting in the Pineywoods and the Hill Country. In dense brush and forested areas you're better off hunting on the ground. You have more visibility below the clutter of limbs.

I used to bow hunt a lot on National Forest land in Walker County. I would literally strap a tree stand on my back and hike into the woods. It was an ordeal. After several season of doing that I opted to hunt on the ground and found I could cover more ground and got plenty of shots.

Just sitting on the ground and leaning up against a tree can be pretty productive, unless you fall asleep. That's especially true during the rut and bucks are running all over the place. That's how I had a pointblank encounter with nice 10-point buck while hunting along a creek bottom

near Lake Livingston. I was set up near a line of scrapes I had found.

If the truth be told I was actually dozing when I heard a crunch. I opened my eyes, leaned over and there was buck looking at me from about 10 feet away. I would have never seen that buck from an elevated blind. He literally eased out of a thicket to check on his trail of scrapes.

A whole lot of East Texas deer hunters set up on harvest plots that can cover an acre or more. That's how I started hunting. We had a deer lease up around Warren in East Texas.

On that lease we had three harvest plots. Each one had a box blind to hunt from. If the wind were not just right the deer would spook from our scent.

After a while we figured out that setting up make shift brush blinds was the way to go, so we could hunt down wind of where the deer would likely approach. As kids we loved that kind of hunting. It was an adventure as it was real time hunting at eye level with the deer. Times change and now a pop-up blind is the most productive way to hunt the food plots.



A low-profile tripod stand can be set up adjacent to a group of scrub oaks and blend in really well. If a deer, hog or exotic game animal is taken from the stand it can easily be repositioned to another area that hasn't been recently hunted.

"I do a lot of deer hunting, and most of the time I'm using a bow instead of a rifle," says Colby Denbow. "I hunt in the Hill Country where there are lots of cedar trees. There are some areas where it's best to hunt from a tree stand. But I've shot my best bucks while hunting way back in the brush and cedars.

"I keep two tree stands up and have three pop up blinds," she explained. "That gives me five areas to hunt on any given day. One day last season I was hunting from a pop-up blind with my sister Allie. We saw a lot of deer that morning, and they never knew we were within 40 yards of them. Allie ended up shooting a pretty nice buck with her crossbow."

There are many situations where hunting from an elevated blind will definitely allow you to see more deer. That's especially true if you hunt in South Texas. A tripod stand is among the most portable and productive things you can use for covering lots of land and getting an elevated view. It's especially good during the rut. You can move and set up in areas that haven't been heavily hunted.

Carlos Fernandez has been hunting his family ranches, south of San Antonio,



Memories obviously made as Allie Thorpe beams with pride over the buck she shot last season with a crossbow, while hunting on their family ranch west of Fredricksburg.

for years. His specialty is hunting from tripod stands.

"Our biggest ranch is wide open with very little brush," he says. "When the deer come out they are very skittish. That's why I like a low-profile tripod stand. I can

set up adjacent to a group of scrub oaks and blend in really well. I've had both pigs and deer walk right past my stand. If I make a kill, I'll move the stand to another area that hasn't been recently hunted. Both deer and pigs know to stay away

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EXOTIC GAME HUNTS IN TEXAS

from areas with a lot of hunter traffic.

“Something else I do is build a big tree stand with a view of lots of land. I might not get a shot out of the tree stand, but with a pair of binoculars I can see where animals are moving. From there, the next afternoon I can move in with a tree stand and have a good chance of getting a close shot at a deer or pig.

“I’ve got two young daughters that are interested in hunting. The key is to keep them from getting bored. When they get serious about taking a shot I’ll probably set us up in a pop-up blind so we are on the ground and can easily relocate. Plus, they can stand up and move around when they get fidgety plus they can see out of the blind in all directions. When hunting with kids you’ve got to keep them interested in what’s going on.”

There are plenty of hunters out there that try and get the family involved in hunting.

“Once you get the kids out there they really get into the adventure,” says Ricky Cerrato. “We hunt in the Hill Country and usually see lots of deer. My two sons have been hunting with me for years. At first they really didn’t care if we killed anything.

But now it’s a totally different story. Last season one of my sons was with me on a hunt in December. We were in an area that had a lot of deer traffic. We set up a corn feeder and then put together a brush blind about 50 yards away. We got an early start the next morning and were set up in the blind right at daylight.

“The brush blind we were hunting from was definitely nothing fancy. It was basically a big oak tree that had fallen down. We cut some limbs and stacked them around the tree trunk. Then we clipped a bunch of cedar branches for a little more camouflage. We left a couple of fold up chairs in the blind. Just after daylight we had a few does come to the feeder. We were so well camouflaged they never knew we were there.

“About an hour later my son grabbed my arm and pointed at one of the biggest bucks we had ever seen on that ranch. We sat there for about five minutes, before the buck finally turned sideways. My son braced the gun on a limb, made the shot and put the buck on the ground. I couldn’t believe our luck. But one thing is certain, neither one of us will ever forget about that hunt. That’s what it’s all about.” **T★J**



Deer hunting hasn’t changed that much over the years. It’s still a family thing, and it’s always a big deal when a nice deer is brought back to camp.

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Mass Exodus — New BPT Circuit Draws 68 from Elites, 11 from FLW

First came the rumble, then poof... they were gone.

Most pro bass fishing junkies will agree that's a fair summary of the major shake-up that took place earlier this fall as many of the sport's super stars pledged to jump ship from proven leagues where they built storied careers, many to join an all-new tournament circuit promising to escalate the sport to unprecedented levels while allowing competitors to reel in some lucrative paydays along the way.

The shake-up started in early September. That's when Major League Fishing announced the formation of the Bass Pro Tour with plans to fill an 80-angler field for eight regular season tournaments and championship in 2019 — by invitation only.

MLF is based in Tulsa, Okla., but the organization has some Texas ties. Texas bass pro Gary Klein of Mingus and Boyd Duckett of Guntersville, Ala., co-founded the MLF concept seven years ago. It quickly morphed into a popular, made-for-television bass tournament series with a passionate following worldwide. MLF has rated as Outdoor Channel's top program for three years.

The new BPT tour has financial backing pledged by Bass Pro Shops founder Johnny Morris, media giant Outdoor Sportsman Group and several other fishing industry and non-endemic sponsors. Likewise, the advertised payouts are plump, with more than \$700,000 awarded at each tour event and championship purse of more than \$1.2 million. The BPT will be a springboard for anglers to qualify for lucrative MLF Cup events and the General Tire World Championship.

While the criteria used for choosing the inaugural BLT invitees remains cloudy, the direction in which most of the invitations were cast is crystal clear.

The roster reads like a who's who of the sport with 68 anglers announcing their departures from the Bassmaster Elite Series and 11 from the FLW Tour.

Among them are more than a dozen Bassmaster Classic champions, six FLW

Cup champions and a combined total of 16 Angler the Year winners plucked from what have been pro fishing's two dominant leagues for decades. Names on the list include Kevin VanDam, Skeet Reese, Gerald Swindle, Andy Morgan, Jason Christie, Brent Ehrler, Edwin Evers and Mike Iaconelli, just to name a few.

While there are no rules to prevent BPT anglers from fishing different circuits, scheduling conflicts will make it impossible for them to compete on another major tour.

Hence, the invitees were ultimately put in a position to make a decision to either take their careers in a new direction or stay with their respective leagues. Facing a two-week deadline, they weren't given much time to file a response, either.

Anglers took to social media like Facebook and Instagram to go public with their decisions. Likewise, an unprecedented mass exodus began to unfold.

Some anglers called the decision a no-brainer, citing the BPT platform as one where they can better control their own destiny, offer sponsors better exposure and potentially earn more money while working to grow pro fishing and build fan bases to levels comparable to other major sports.

For others the decision didn't come so easy. Some anglers reportedly lost sleep and prayed a whole lot as they weighed their options in deciding which direction to go at such a pivotal crossroads.

In what many perceived as an effort



Texas Elite Series pro Keith Combs of Huntington says the show will go on with the Bassmaster Elite Series and he expects the field to become increasingly stiff as new talent comes on board to fill open slots created by the recent departure of some of the sport's biggest names. Photo courtesy B.A.S.S.

to persuade some of its veteran anglers from strapping their saddles to a different horse, Bassmaster made the decision even tougher by sweetening the 2019 Elite Series format with a reduced field to include up to 80 anglers, significant payout increases and reduced entry fees. FLW, meanwhile, chose to stick to its current model.

In the end, the BPT pasture apparently appeared too green for many pros not to cross the fence through the open gate.

Only a handful of Elite Series pros offered BPT invitations declined the opportunity. Among them were Chris Zaldain, Bill Lowen, Seth Feider, Drew Benton, Stetson Blaylock and Steve Kennedy.

Only time will tell how all of this will shake out. Spooky as it may seem for some anglers, none will deny it is an exciting time for the sport filled with anticipation.

Competition typically breeds quality as well as increased opportunity. New doors are sure to open for aspiring pros, and many will have the chance to earn bigger paydays than ever before.

No doubt, losing more than five dozen pros, including top-tier names like VanDam, Swindle and Reese just months ahead of its season opener is a crippling blow to the Elite Series. But BASS officials say the organization plans to move forward and not look back.

"We still have a strong corps of excellent anglers that have remained loyal to B.A.S.S.," said Dave Precht, BASS vice president of editorial and communications. "While their names

might not be quite as recognizable as the ones you mentioned, they soon will be. We have a great lineup of Elite events this coming year and expect to continue to have great viewership on Bassmaster LIVE, an increase in our 1 million monthly unique visitors to Bassmaster.com and of course attendance at these tournaments."

Precht added the 2019 Elite Series field will likely be fleshed out by anglers from other BASS circuits.

"We have a qualification system in place that provides for 11 top anglers from the Bassmaster Opens and the top individual angler from the B.A.S.S. Nation to join the Elites," he said. "If necessary we have other avenues for recruiting Elite anglers, including going further down the Opens standings."

Keith Combs, a eight-year Elite Series pro from Huntington, was one of several BASS veterans who wasn't invited to the BLT in 2019. The 43-year-old angler has enjoyed a wealth of success with nearly \$1 million in earnings since joining the circuit in 2011.

Combs says he wasn't surprised to see

some Elite Series pros make the switch to the BLT, but he was shocked by the large number that chose to take the leap.

"I really didn't expect to see that many guys leave," Combs said. "It's certainly going to be different out there, but it will be alright. BASS will be alright."

In a recent bassmaster.com blog, Combs said he thinks the Elite Series field will be stronger in coming seasons than ever before.

"Fishermen get better every year," he said. "There is more money in this sport right now than there has ever been, and more anglers have the opportunity to make a living fishing now. I really look for the best talent to start increasing at a rapid rate.

"With more money, and an 80-angler field, there is going to be a lot better opportunity for anglers to promote sponsors," he added. "If a guy isn't cutting it on an 80-man field, he is going to get cut quick. The way I see it, I'm going to have to fight very hard to keep my spot going forward with a smaller field. It certainly isn't going to be easy. The competition is going to be fierce." **★**



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A woman wearing a black cap with 'WATERLOO' in pink, sunglasses, and a white jacket is smiling while holding several large fish on a boat. The boat has 'XS' written on its side. An orange buoy is visible in the background. The sky is blue with some clouds.

YEAR ROUND INSHORE ANGLING ADVENTURES

The Lone Star State offers 12 months of diverse coastal fishing for a variety of revered gamefish.

Story and Photography by Danno Wise

When the right conditions are present, fishing the Land Cut most often results in a memorable day on the water.

Texas has a very diverse inshore fishery. From Sabine Lake to South Padre Island, anglers can target a variety of species in several different settings throughout the year. For those fishermen who are willing to travel throughout the Texas coastal region and want to do something different during the year, there are plenty of options.

With 2018 coming to an end, now is the time to start making out the 2019 angling adventures calendar. Here is a glimpse of what many Texas saltwater fishermen consider to be the highlights for each month of the year.

January – When it gets cold, really cold, vast numbers of speckled trout move into deepwater areas. These may be channels or holes in the bay or port areas adjacent to the bay.

However, in areas where rivers feed into a bay, trout will move up into the river to escape the chill of winter. The Sabine, Trinity, Colorado and Guadalupe Rivers are just a few of the more well-known winter trout hotspots. The Brazos, which empties into the Gulf, not a bay, also can have outstanding winter trout action when the temperature drops. These rivers are also relatively protected, making them good locations to fish on winter days when wind is blowing. Unlike many popular spots in the bays, fishing in the rivers gets hotter as the weather gets colder.

February – Trophy trout fishing lasts all winter but is usually at its zenith in February. Up and down the Texas coast, fishermen will be targeting sow specks over muddy bottom flats.

It is true that February weather is often blustery. However, this does not deter determined trophy trout seekers. In fact, many of the year's largest trout are landed on some of the worst weather days – cold, misty, foggy, rainy, wind . . . trophy trout seem to be caught quite often in weather better suited for duck hunting.

As most anglers know, this is a patience game this time of year and they usually throw big topwaters or slow sinking plugs waiting for a few big strikes. It is admittedly hard to be patient in cold, nasty weather, but those who are up to the challenge often end up with the trout of a lifetime on a miserable day in February.

March – Sheepshead may not top many fishermen's list of target species, but when they begin to gang up around

jetties and structure near Gulf passes in March, the fishing can be stupid good. Big sheepshead are able to put up a determined fight in deep water and provide excellent table fare for those willing to keep and clean them. Whether you are looking for steady action with hard-fighting fish, a cooler full of fish for fillets or a combination of both, it is hard to go wrong with sheepshead around the in March.

Most jetty systems on the Texas coast are accessible by land, allowing anyone to get in on this action. There are a few that are accessible by boat only, but so long as the weather allows, boating anglers are able to load up on sheepshead along the rocks as well.

April – In recent years, black drum have become an exceedingly popular targeted species – especially along the Middle and Lower Coast regions. During spring, drum are ganged up and the bite turns on – big time. The “drum run” is basically the spring version of the fall redfish run – only with black drum instead of red drum.

During April, easy limits of drum are often possible, which is great news for the growing number of fishermen who consider drum among their preferred “fillet fish.” While they are most sought after along the southern half of the Texas coast, every bay system in the Lone Star State boasts a healthy black drum population and experiences good black drum action in the spring.

May – The Land Cut, that almost mythical stretch of Intracoastal Waterway that connects the Lower Laguna Madre to the Upper Laguna Madre is apt to produce memorable catches of various species at any time. However, during late spring and early summer, the Land Cut routinely spits out impressive boxes of big speckled trout. Plenty of top end trophy trout are caught from the Land Cut this time of year. Almost more impressive is the sheer volume of “big” – 24- to 26-inch – trout caught from the stretch of water each year.

A Land Cut angler's dream is to have a right wind direction and velocity to make a controlled drift along the edge of the



Light winds and clear water beckons an angler to break out the flyrod for some sight casting to gamefish while wading, or from a boat.



September is usually when the biggest of big tarpon are jumped as they are on their return trip to Mexico during winter.

channel where big specks usually lie in wait to ambush an easy meal. When these conditions are present, fishing the Land Cut most often results in a memorable day on the water.

June – As summer gets going, it seems as though a myriad of angling options suddenly appear. It is during these times that anglers need to take advantage of more time-sensitive opportunities. One of the most fleeting inshore angler opportunities in the Lone Star State is the chance to catch giant triple tail in West Matagorda Bay.

While triple tail can be caught all along the Texas coast from late spring through summer, West Matagorda Bay is unique in the number and size of triple tail and the consistency in which they are caught. This is way different than a typical Texas bay fishing excursion as it involves fishing tight to structure for double-digit sized fish. It is also one of the more memorable angler experiences one can have. Not to mention, it yields some of the best fillets available.

July – “Green to the beach” is music to most Texas anglers’ ears. This is especially true during summer along the Upper Texas Coast, where surf fishing action for speckled trout can be fast and furious when the conditions are right. Although anglers along every stretch of Texas coast



In October some of the most consistently light winds and good sight-casting conditions occur in October, making it the perfect time to fish the flats for redfish and trout.



By August, just about every Gulf pass and jetty system in Texas has schools of bull reds present.

fish the summer surf for speckled trout to some degree, it is most prevalent along the Upper Coast, and to a somewhat lesser degree, Middle Coast.

There is a somewhat primal feel to wading the surf and throwing spoons, plugs and plastics for beach-run specks. Many Texas coastal anglers live for it and spend every possible day in the surf while the good fishing lasts (usually through late summer).

August – By August, just about every Gulf pass and jetty system in Texas has schools of bull reds present. Once they show up, these mature redfish will stay through fall. Often, some of the most consistent conditions and fishing action

occur in August, shortly after these fish show up.

In some areas, and on some days, this is a bottom-fishing or blind-casting lures propositions. However, when the water conditions allow, fishermen can often see coppery-colored blobs, which are actually schools of roving reds. Under those conditions, fishermen can follow schools of feeding fish throughout the day.

September – Summer’s final month is also usually the peak of tarpon fishing along the Lower Coast. While fishermen along the Upper and Middle Coast have substantial tarpon fishing action throughout summer, the Lower Coast tarpon fishery is different in that it is mostly centered

around the jetties (South Padre and Port Mansfield) and beachfront.

Big tarpon are regularly hooked in the surf and off the jetties. Tarpon fishermen working along the beach or jetties by boat can find consistently good tarpon fishing from the mouth of the Rio Grande to the Port Mansfield jetties.

September is usually when the biggest of big tarpon are jumped as they are on their return trip to Mexico during winter. This fishing can last through October and even into November, depending on when the first few hard fronts hit.

October – Some of the most consistently light winds and good sight-casting conditions occur in October, making it the perfect time to fly fish the flats for redfish and trout. Conventional tackle anglers certainly will have their share of outstanding sight-casting days, but doing it with a long-rod takes the experience to a whole new level.

Whether out of the boat or wading, fly fishing the flats during October is something every Texas inshore angler should experience.

November – No fish is more associated with November than flounder.

During November, flatfish will begin their annual migration into the open Gulf to spawn. This typically doesn't happen until there is a drastic temperature drop, which seems to almost always occur right around Thanksgiving.

However, for weeks before the "run" begins in earnest, flounder will be coming out of the marshes and back lakes and staging for this annual event. This gives anglers a better opportunity to target concentrations of flatties.

December – Thanks to a series of relatively mild winters, snook have expanded their range over an ever-increasing length of the Texas coast. The largest population, though, remains in the Lower Laguna Madre. Linesiders here move throughout the bay system and connected passes and waterways throughout the season.



A good topwater bite can turn on just about any month of the year. When it does and the tug on the end of the line is a solid yellow-mouth speckled trout, that alone makes the day's effort all worth it.

While snook can be caught all year long, where they are caught changes seasonally. During winter, massive concentrations of snook can be found in the Brownsville Ship Channel. Because there is such a large number of snook in one spot, this often offers visiting fishermen their best opportunity at successfully target a Lone Star State linesider. **T★J**



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Bullet Expansion at Long Range

If you're in business there is a saying "the customer is always right". Well some times the customer is uninformed, been told something wrong, watched too much television, or is just wrong.

I had two customers order custom rifles from me. They both wanted light weight hunting rifles in 7mm Remington Magnum. They wanted the rifles to be easy to carry, accurate and reliable. Now these things are all fine and easy for me to do, but then came a few not so easy things that they wanted.

First, they were going to use the rifles on an elk hunt. Now the 7mm Mag is not the best choice for elk hunting but it will still work fine.

Second, they wanted the rifles to shoot 180 grain Berger bullets. Still not a problem I can order a faster rate of twist for the rifling in the barrel. A 1 in 8 twist instead of our usual 1 in 9 twist will work fine.

Now for the real problem, they want to be able to shoot and kill their elk at 1000 yards. They told me they want to become long range hunters and won't shoot less than 800 yards on any big game animal.

Now I have some ethical problems with this type of hunting and don't agree with shooting game animals at very long range. If you are going to try long range shooting here are some things that will help you be able to make the longer shots.

First, pick the right caliber. The 7mm Remington Mag is a great caliber. It is accurate, light on recoil and kills game very well within its limitations.

A 7mm Mag shoots a 150 grain bullet about 3,000 feet per second which gives it

2,600 foot pounds of energy at the muzzle. At 500 yards the velocity is down to 1,975 feet per second and the energy is at 1,300 foot pounds. At 1,000 yards the velocity is 1,235 feet per second and the energy is 500 foot pounds. Not what I would consider enough energy to cleanly kill a whitetail deer let alone an elk.

Now what happens when you use a longer heavier bullet like the 180 grain Berger?

First, the best velocity I can get with this bullet in a magnum caliber is 2,650 feet per second. So the down range energy is only 1,350 foot pounds at 500 yards and velocity at 1,000 yards is 1,150 fps with the energy being 575 foot pounds. I'm not sure that any one would want to shoot a rabbit at that range with this type of energy let alone an elk.

This bullet has a high ballistic coefficient, so it will shoot flatter. Let's compare the two different loads.

The 150 grain load drops 40 inches at 500 yards and the 180 grain drops 36 at the same distance. At 1,000 yards the 150 grain bullet drops 310 inches and the 180 grain drops 280 inches.

Well what do you think? Is it worth it to shoot a 7mm Rem Mag loaded with a Berger bullet for long range hunting?

The other big problem with long range hunting is will the bullet expand enough and will it penetrate enough to get into the vitals and cleanly kill the game animal being hunted?

I called both Hornady and Barnes and asked them what is the minimum velocity needed to make their bullets expand. Both

companies said 1,500 feet per second is perfect but some bullets will still expand 10 to 15 percent as slow as 1,300 feet per second.

I ran the numbers on several different hunting calibers to see at what range the bullet drops below 1,300 feet per second. The one caliber that surprised me was the 6.5 Creedmoor, using a 143 grain Hornady ELDX bullet, it doesn't drop below 1,300 feet per second until 1250 yards but it does drop over 600 inches at that range.

So what is a good caliber for long range hunting? The real question that needs to be answered is what is going to be hunted?

If only deer, caribou and pronghorn antelope is being hunted then pick one of the big 30 caliber rifles. A 300 Ultra or the 30-378 Weatherby, both make good long range rifles. The 30 caliber guns shoot 180 grain or 200 grain bullets better than any 7 Mag will.

The new 28 Nosler using one of the new high ballistic coefficient bullets would be the best bet in the 7 mm category. The velocity of either of these big 30's are 3,300 feet per second or better so they have more energy and less drop at 500 or 1,000 yards.

Now if you are really going to try and shoot an 800 pound game animal like an elk you need a bigger caliber. The 338 Ultra, 338-378 Weatherby or the 338 Lapua all make great long range hunting rifles. Any of these calibers will shoot the heavy 225 or 250 grain bullet over 3,000 feet per second and will have adequate foot pounds of energy to penetrate deep

Long Range Bullet Expansion

Caliber Bullet	100 Yd Velocity	500 Yd Velocity	1000 Yd Velocity	1000 Yd Drop
6.5 CM 143 ELDX	2750 fps	1969 fps	1536 fps	-289 inches
7 R Mag 150 TSX	3000 fps	1977 fps	1235 fps	-320 inches
300 Win 180 TSX	3000 fps	2220 fps	1577 fps	-254 inches
338 Ultra 250 TSX	2900 fps	2074 fps	1417 fps	-291 inches

enough to kill big game at long range. The 338 caliber guns may not shoot as flat as the big 30's but the difference is small.

Now let's take a look at bullets. Many of the bullets with the higher ballistic coefficients are not made for hunting. Many of these types of bullets are made for target shooting and will not expand reliably.

Also, bullets need a certain velocity to perform right. If the velocity is too high then the bullet can expand too much and come apart. If the velocity is too low then the bullet will not expand at all, and just go right through the animal with out any shock. So how fast does a bullet need to be going to work right?

Looking at different reliable web site resources, some show a bullet needs a velocity of about 500 feet per second to expand reliably. As little as 1,300 feet per second will expand a soft nose bullet but a bullet like a Barnes TripleShock or a Berger VLD hunting bullet will need more velocity to accomplish adequate expansion.

The Nosler Partition or Swift A-Frame bullets will expand at a lower velocity and penetrate better than most solid copper bullets will. Also many of the match hollow point bullets won't expand no matter how fast or slow you make them go. Match bullets are made for target shooting not for hunting.

Not every one is going to be able to handle the recoil of the bigger caliber rifles. Muzzle breaks help a great deal and make the 338's kick less than the 7 Mags. The bigger caliber rifles will be a little heavier than the 7 Mags will be. The barrels will also be longer so all the powder can be burned up inside the barrel. If you hate the noise the breaks make and don't want to carry a half pound heavier

rifle then don't plan on shooting 1,000 yards at game.

If you really want to shoot big game at long range carry a big enough gun to cleanly kill the animal being hunted. Use the right type of bullet — one that will shoot accurately and will expand at the lower velocity 1,000 yard shots will have. Buy a good scope, one that has range finding lines or ballistic turrets. Also make sure the scope has a parallax adjustment on it.

Last and probably the most important is to practice; go shooting at longer range

wherever you can. If you can't shoot two inch groups at 200 yards then you can't hit an animal at 1,000 yards.

Start out shooting prairie dogs at long range. If you get to where you can hit them at 600 or 800 yards then you might consider hunting game animals at long range.

Try shooting prairie dogs with your large caliber hunting rifle; it will give you great practice for long range hunting. After all you won't be using a 22-250 varmint rifle for shooting mule deer at 800 yards. **T★J**



A perfectly expanded Barnes 30 cal bullet that was removed from a bezoar ibex shot at 450 yards.

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'Tis the Season — Part Deux

Last year at this time I did a gift guide for sportsmen. I received so many positive comments I thought I would do another one this year. I try to find unique, new products for the outdoorsmen and women in your family.

As a group we can be terribly difficult to buy for because we tend to buy ourselves all of the gear we like. Here are some suggestions for this holiday season, arranged by budget.

\$25 and under

Spike-It Products — \$5.00-\$7.00

Spike-It has long been known for their lure coloration products. I've mentioned dipping a bait in chartreuse dye for years, and it occurred to me a few readers may not know what I'm referring to, and if they do, they might want to know about some newer options available.

Dip-N-Glo dye products cannot only add color, but some have a garlic scent as well. I use the liquid in a bottle for soft plastics, dipping the last half-inch of tail to add color. Now you can use an aerosol spray, or marker pens to achieve the same result. The garlic scent is strong, and will be evident immediately upon opening the container.

In addition, there is now UV Glo, that does just what it sounds like. Sprayed on crankbaits and such, it adds a UV glow to the bait under water.

Lure Lock Boxes — \$15.99-\$19.99

Lure Lock tackle storage boxes are new to the market and feature a sticky, gel-like coating in the bottom of each tray. The idea is to protect your lures and keep them in place during transit. By keeping the baits from rattling around, you protect the finish from chips, scratches and such. A little pricier than a standard box, the return on your investment comes in the form of keeping your lures in play longer.

Amish Outfitters Tote Bag — \$11.95 and up

When I first saw Amish Outfitters I had to give them a look. After all, when you think of fishing, "Amish" is probably NOT the first thing that pops into your head.

Capt. Frank has a lot of neat products, most of which are designed for the northeastern fishing crowd. No surprise there. But there are several items that are useful for fishermen anywhere.

The three and four box totes are designed to work with his Tube Caddy system, but they do an awesome job of carrying the standard lure boxes used by all fishermen. The Tube Caddy system involves individual tubes of appropriate sizes for the baits being stored. The tubes are then carried in boxes which are sized accordingly. The bigger boxes will hold 20 tubes, and extra tubes can be purchased separately. A great way to organize crankbaits and the like, then carry those you'll need on a particular day.

Skirmish Baits — \$24.99

Skirmish makes a great swimbait, and the finish is unbelievable. That's the key with these guys, the paint. Some are so realistic you'd have a hard time telling it's not real if you saw it in the lake. At this price you'd sure hate to lose this bait! As a gift however, it's hard to imagine any bass fisherman wouldn't love to see this under the tree.

\$50 and under

Bass Mafia Tackle Storage — \$30 and up

Ok, so right up front, these are expensive. The Bass Mafia Bait Coffin is one of those items I might not buy for myself. At \$30 and up, I just have a hard time convincing myself to pull the trigger. However, they are expensive because they are well made. I'd guess you could drive a truck over one of these boxes and see no ill effects. Don't try that with the cheaper boxes.

For those that want a more reasonably priced alternative, the Bait Casket retails



Give and fish the best, Lew's Pro Ti Rod and Reel



Vortex Diamondback Tactical scope



Custom Painted lures from Skirmish Baits

at \$12.99. Bass Mafia has products specifically designed for all manner of lures, at various price points.

GillZilla Aparell — \$24.99-\$39.00

GillZilla is new to the market, and is Texan owned. After a conversation with

his daughter about “Zilla” referring to the largest of something, her next fish brought the comment, “Look Dad, GillZilla!” And the rest is history.

With some makers offering fishing apparel running to \$100 plus, GillZilla is determined to keep their products affordable for everyone. And as their shirt states, “Size Matters!”

Bug-A-Salt— \$39.95

This thing is silly, and FUN. I got one last year at Christmas and I had to wait for “fly season” to put it to use. Once the weather warmed and the flies showed up, I was in business. The range is about the same as a fly swatter, but it’s a lot more fun. Load up with table salt, pump the action, flip off the safety and bang away at flying pests. Word of warning-If you go after wasps be sure to get really close and be ready to run.

\$100 and under

Heybo Apparel — \$50.00- \$75.00

Heybo is another new apparel company in the fishing business. What sets them apart is their style. I have a lot of clothing suitable for fishing. The problem is, it all LOOKS like fishing apparel. That’s ok if I’m fishing, but what about the rest of the time? I don’t always want to look like I just stepped off the boat.

Heybo has a different look, one that has garnered compliments on more than one occasion. “Nice Shirt,” has a good feel to it, and is not something I’m used to hearing while wearing a “fishing” shirt.

Berkley Big Game Lip Grip with Digital Scale — \$59.99

I suppose this could have been included in the \$50 and under category. At the Berkley website it is listed at \$59.99, but many retailers had it at \$49.99. Either way, every angler ought to have one of these in the boat.

Whether using it to weigh a trophy fish, or just playing “MLF” with your buddies, this little tool will see a lot of use. It can be used to land fish you may not want to grab with your hand, and it will give digital readout of the weight of the fish. Simple operation, auto-off to save batteries, take the fib out of your fishin’ buddy!

\$500.00 and under

Vortex Optics Diamondback Tactical — \$499.99

So you want to give a really great present to a hunter in the family. It’s hard to beat the Vortex Diamondback Tactical scope. For the money this may be the best long-range scope on the market. Anything I’ve seen that is comparable is at least three times the cost, sometimes more than that.

With 6-24 magnification, this scope can deer hunt at a hundred yards, or target shoot steel at a thousand yards. Features include first focal plane, tactical turrets, 30 mm tube, nitrogen purged, o-ring sealed main tube, and a no-fault lifetime warranty.

When I saw this at a new product show, I didn’t believe it would end up retailing at the price Vortex was projecting. Many times manufacturers have to make adjustments when they actually get to market with a prototype. Vortex however hit the bullseye!

MOBO Gobbler — \$299.00

Another gift option for the turkey hunter is the MOBO Gobbler. When I first saw this at a trade show I knew I had to get one. Consisting of a decoy body fitted to a remote control car chassis, the MOBO will handle surprisingly rough terrain. The speed is good and the turning radius is sharp, but doesn’t let the deke fall over. The tail folds out and fits in a slot at the rear of the bird, and there is even a beard attachment included.

Over \$500

Lews Pro Ti Rod and Reel

So you want to give the best? At \$349.00 for the reel, and \$249.00 for the rod, this is another one of those products I probably wouldn’t purchase for me. But I’d buy one for my wife. I’m so fortunate to have a lady that likes to fish as much, or more, than I do. Our honeymoon was a week of fishing. Every year, we spend spring break (she’s a teacher) at a lake we both love to fish. Our year revolves around school, hunting season, and fishing. She deserves nothing but the best, and I can truly say this outfit is one of the best.



Bass Mafia



Amish Outfitters Tote Bag



LureLock Boxes

So there it is, the 2018 Gift Guide for the Outdoorsman or Woman in Your Life.

I trust this guide has helped you choose some of the gifts you’ll give this holiday season, and I hope your Christmas is everything you want it to be. You might want to leave the magazine casually laying around the house, opened to this suggestive column. ★★

HEADING SOUTH FOR WINTER



Astute anglers migrate to Texas' lower coast to take advantage of phenomenal fishing opportunities during colder months.

Story and Photography by Nate Skinner

The curvature of the Texas coastline plays a major roll in determining the patterns that anglers adhere to in order to successfully stay hooked up with the fish that inhabit its bays and estuaries. Two of the largest contributing variables to these patterns are wind velocity and direction. These two factors ultimately control how large of a playing field anglers have to work with in terms of fishable water.

The geographic orientation of Texas' lower coast is a perfect example of how this equation comes together. For the purposes of this article, consider the lower coast to be the stretch of bays located south of the JFK causeway in Corpus Christi all the way to the southern most waters of Texas at Boca Chica. With the exception of Baffin Bay and a few other areas, these waters are for the most part elongated in a north to south direction.

These bay systems contain extensive shorelines that offer protection from winds that have any sort of easterly or westerly factor, allowing them to handle the rapid changes in wind direction and velocity associated with wintertime cold fronts extremely well.

These bays are also situated at a latitude that remains more mild than the upper Texas coast. Corpus Christi sits at a similar latitude to Lake Worth Florida, just south of West Palm. Port Isabel and South Padre Island are at a latitude similar to Miami. While sever cold fronts do have a stronger influence on this region in Texas than in southern Florida, there are similarities and water that in general can be more mild than waters further north on the Texas coast.

Combine this information with the renowned concept that an angler's next personal best speckled trout is merely one cast away anytime he or she is fishing in lower coast waters. It just makes sense why folks migrate south to fish every winter.

Lower coast estuaries also boast additional traits that make their fisheries excellent during the winter season. One of the most prominent features is seagrass beds. Unlike upper coast bay bottoms, which are primarily composed of mud, shell, and sand, southern bays contain immense stretches of grass beds that are littered with potholes and sand pockets. These grass beds help hold loose sediment

close to the bay bottom, which results in cleaner and clearer water conditions. When frontal systems produce strong winds and turn bay waters upside down, stretches of water containing seagrass beds will preserve their water clarity the longest.

The shallow depth of bays along the lower coast is something else that anglers can take advantage of during the wintertime. For starters, shallow water warms much faster than deeper water. On days that begin with cold morning temperatures, anglers can expect to find the action continually increasing as the day progresses and the rising sun rapidly heats up the flats.

Shallow depths also minimize the amount of deep water areas that are available for the fish to take refuge during periods of cold temperatures. Deep water features are not as drastic on the lower coast as they are in bays further to the north. An example of deep water along the lower coast would be an area that is one to two feet deeper than the rest of its surroundings. Anglers that know where these depth changes occur can pin point where the fish may stack up during cold spells.

If frigid conditions persist along lower coast bays for an extended period of time, the deepest water available for the fish to retreat to lies within the Intracoastal Waterway, as well as in harbor channels, and minor ditches or guts. This significantly narrows down the most productive areas for anglers to target during this type of weather scenario.

I have always called Texas' upper coast my home waters; however, I began traveling to bays further south during the winter months in my late teens and early twenties. My motives were similar to just about every other angler's reason for doing the same thing. A change of scenery intrigued me, and I was drawn to the opportunity of being able to pattern when and where monster speckled trout would stage and hopefully

feed.

My buddies and I enjoyed some phenomenal trips to Baffin Bay and Port Mansfield during this time. In the midst of our youth, I'm not really sure we truly understood what was taking place between all the factors and variables that played a roll in the success we experienced. Back then, it seems a lot of it was dumb luck. There's no way I could've explained to someone why the fish did what they did.

Years later, I have been blessed to have had the opportunity to fish with some of the saltiest professionals in the game. Understanding why they travel to the lower coast during the cooler months of the year and how they choose to target specific areas has made me a better overall angler, no matter where I'm fishing.

Captain Nathan Beabout of N & M Sportsman's Adventures is a Seadrift area fishing guide that migrates south from the middle Texas coast to fish out of Port Mansfield during December through April. Last winter, I experienced one of the most memorable trophy trout fishing trips I've ever been on while wade fishing with him on the Lower Laguna Madre for two days. The excursion was even more significant for two of the other anglers that were with us, as both of them landed their personal best spotted sea trout. One of them even caught his personal best early on during the first day, and then topped it



John Mikkelsen shows off his personal best trophy trout that weighed 9.5 pounds and measured 30.5 inches in length.

later that afternoon.

The night before our first day to fish, a strong cold front arrived in Port Mansfield. The winds began gusting from the northwest at 15-25 miles per hour sometime after midnight. Because of this, Beabout decided to delay our start time and we didn't launch his boat to head out until after nine o'clock in the morning. By that time, the winds had diminished to around 15 miles per hour and that's where they remained for the duration of the trip.

The two heaviest trout of the trip included an eight and a half pounder caught by Mike Sullivan that measured 29.5 inches, and a gargantuan nine and a half pounder caught by John Mikkelsen that stretched to 30.5 inches. Both of these fish were safely released. In addition to landing these two giants, we also caught and released numbers of solid trout plus hoards of redfish.

Beabout indicated that the biggest reasons for our success during this two day stint were the weather conditions we experienced and the timing in which we focused our efforts on the water.

"Significant weather changes like a



The reasons for traveling south during the winter to fish are obvious, and the playing field for targeting large speckled trout is vast.

cold front, prompt drastic swings in the barometric pressure that trigger larger trout to feed more aggressively than they normally do," he explained. "Timing when to fish around these weather changes is key. After a cold front passes, it can be better to wait for conditions to

improve and hit the water a little later during the warmest parts of the day."

Beabout states the Lower Laguna Madre out of Port Mansfield provides him with plenty of options for fishing during the wintertime and on into spring.

"The lay of the land allows me to fish effectively in a variety of conditions, even when the winds are strong," he elaborated. "I prefer to fish during prefrontal and postfrontal periods because this is when the best feeding times take place.

Veteran Matagorda Bay fishing guide, Captain Tommy

Countz, is another well versed pro that makes a move to the south during the cooler months of the year. Countz runs out of Corpus Christi and focuses his efforts along the Upper Laguna Madre and Baffin Bay during the late winter and early spring in February and March. He states his biggest motivating factor for traveling south each year is the weather.

"Once we get a big northern and a freeze in the Matagorda area, most of our trout fishing in the bay is pretty much over with," he confessed. "After it gets real cold and tides drop out, the majority of our trout move into the ICW and the Colorado River."

Countz claims that he can consistently experience more successful days when fishing down south during February and March.

"The way the Laguna Madre lays out just provides a ton of options, plus there are areas that can handle a strong north wind really well," he said.

Captain Mitch Richmond is a fishing guide for Getaway Lodge at Port Mansfield who grew up fishing the upper Texas coast on East and West Matagorda Bays. He was drawn to the Lower Laguna Madre many years ago by the area's clean water and diverse flats.

"The way this bay is oriented and composed allows it to rebound very quickly after a strong front hits," Richmond stated. "Plus there's always the chance of catching a trout of lifetime."

During the winter months, Richmond



Capt. Nathan Beabout with a chunky speck he caught while wade fishing the Lower Laguna Madre out of Port Mansfield.



Trophy specks are far too precious to be caught only once, and should be released to fight another day.



Redfish can be found cruising the same waters as large speckled trout along Texas' lower coast.

likes to wade fish small stretches of water that are anywhere from a foot to two feet deeper than the surrounding area.

“These deeper areas may only be about 60 yards long,” he explained. “Any type of hole, ditch, or gut that drops from about thigh deep to waste deep can be dynamite.”

Captain Paul Johnson is also a Getaway Lodge guide, and is an Alvin, TX resident that has spent many years fishing Galveston Bay in addition to fishing the Lower Laguna Madre. Johnson claims the Port Mansfield area can take strong north winds much better than the Galveston system.

“It’s incredible how many fish can be caught during periods of gusty winds,” he confessed. “Plus when the wind dies to a moderate pace overnight, anglers can expect to find excellent water conditions the next morning.”

The reasons for anglers to migrate south this winter are obvious. The playing field for monster trout is vast, and the options are seemingly endless. Choose the right location at the optimal time and let the lower coast take care of the rest. **T★J**

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Lake Roundup

CENTRAL TEXAS



By John Jefferson

I guess you heard we had a little rise on the river. Well, make that *all* of the rivers and streams in the Hill Country and Central Texas. It didn't happen overnight. In fact, it took about six weeks to reach a crescendo. Starting about September 2nd or 3rd, the rain began.

Dove hunters enjoyed opening day shooting, but then it got soggy. I counted 17 straight days of rain after that. It wasn't heavy rain, just continual soaking. The ground was thirsty, but by the time it was over – assuming it *is over* – the ground and most inhabitants were saying “*No Mas! No Mas!*” The sun came out just long enough to make the grass grow faster.

Then, October rain arrived. Mid-month, a 10 inch rain hit Junction and the **South Llano River**. The Hill Country is just that: hilly, with ravines and creek beds that carry rainwater rapidly downhill toward the rivers. The 10 inch rain all over the area did just that.

It washed a Junction RV park off the map and took four lives, but that was just the beginning. The rain bomb, as the weather guys call it, fell over most of the center of the Edwards Plateau. The ground was already saturated. There was no place for the water to go except downhill, then downstream, gathering more runoff as it gushed and gashed eastward through Mason County and then over the dam in Llano. From there, the river – now much wider and more powerful – turned south

and ravished Kingsland as it emptied into **Lake LBJ**.

North of there, the San Saba River watershed acted much the same way, but with slightly less power. It emptied into the **Colorado River** above **Lake Buchanan**, which was about 10 feet below full pool at the time. Buchanan filled quickly. From there, floodwaters were released through **Inks Lake** into LBJ. Those turbulent waters met the churning, chocolate Llano River at Kingsland to form a perfect storm of a flood.

The RR 2900 bridge across LBJ, probably already quaking a little from the power of all that water from the Hill Country was struck by either a large, uprooted tree or a wayward boat that had torn free of its moorings. The center section of the bridge was ripped apart, tumbling through the current until it sank. Reading about it, I could almost hear Jamie Lee Curtis screaming “The bridge is OUT!”

But this was reality, not a movie. That water raced through LBJ and into **Lake Marble Falls**. There, a man was trying to start his boat's motor to move it to safety, but the boat got caught in the current and swept downstream and *over* Starcke Dam into **Lake Travis**. The boat's whereabouts are still unknown, but the man was washed all the way down the lake to the Spicewood community, where men helped him out of the turbulence. He had gone under six times and was very weak, but lived. That's a record-long float!

Assuming the heaviest rain is over, fishing had been suspended indefinitely – except bank-catfishing, which sometimes gets exciting during a flood. The Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) did an excellent job of opening flood gates to release water ahead of the heavy floods, but it was an overwhelming task. Despite anticipating inflowing water and lowering lakes to receive it, Travis endured a near record flood. Many homes were



PHOTO COURTESY OF PHILLIP WALKER

Canyon Lake fishing guide Phillip Walker with four smallmouth bass. Walker reported that smallies were in a feeding frenzy before the flood.

totally flooded. Some totally submerged. LCRA could not estimate how long the high water would exist. All boating was prohibited on all seven Highland Lakes and on the **Colorado River** below Austin.

Travis took the brunt of the floodwaters, quickly filling from nearly 20 feet low on Labor Day, and left its banks for miles. I couldn't find my favorite white bass hole on Sandy Creek. The *creek* was hundreds of yards wide. The opposite bank was obscured among large trees mired in the water.

The **Pedernales River** begins near Fredericksburg, and drained that portion of the Hill Country rain bomb, ultimately flowing into Lake Travis to further flood the area.

A little to the south, the **Guadalupe River** flooded, too, sending raging, muddy water and debris over the Ingram Dam, where kids dam-slide. The river is usually a 50-60 foot slide down the dam to the river, but a video that Charlie (Four) Schreiner sent me during the flood showed the river only about 12 feet below the top of the dam. All that flood water tore downstream and into **Canyon Lake**. From there, the water crashed through the dam and into the stretch of river famous for trout fishing.

Canyon rose to 3.91 feet above full

pool level, so more water was released into the trout fishery. TPWD district fisheries biologist, Marcos de Jesus, says the trout will probably survive unless too much *warm* water comes through the dam. The cooler weather during October may mitigate that concern, unless we get more rain.

Guadalupe River Trout Unlimited planned to stock the river with trophy-size trout twice before December 1, according to member, Phil Dopson. That's still the plan but additional rain could change that.

Phillip Walker, a Canyon Lake guide, reported something interesting right before the rain bomb detonated. He sent a picture of him holding four nice smallmouth bass. Walker says that *zebra mussels* have helped clear up the lake water and smallmouths — being sight-feeders — have gone on a feeding frenzy.

Marcos de Jesus says that the smallmouths concentrate in the lower third of the lake near the dam, preferring clear water in rocky areas. The Zeebs, he says, have cleared up the water there and up river. He cited a slight “boom” in smallmouth population this year possibly due to the expanded habitat. TPWD Inland Fisheries Director, Craig Bonds, agrees that zeebs can aid water clarity, but can adversely affect shad populations.

In the Great Lakes, the mussels have cleared the water some, but led to expanded populations of *Round Goby*, an invasive prey species that smallmouths feed upon, but that Texas doesn't want! Something else to worry about.

Bad News and Good. Marcos de Jesus says he expects some of the artificial fish habitat structures recently placed in Lake Austin went south during this extraordinary flood. More flood gates were opened than ever before. It also may have washed many of the grass carp downstream. He expects fishing to boom like 2015-2016 with new flooded habitat on Travis and Buchanan. If the 2900 Bridge structure remains in LBJ, it could provide new fish cover. LCRA says it won't remove boat debris from the lakes, but didn't address the bridge clutter.

Decker Lake. The notion of draining Decker seems to have been also washed away with the flood – at least for now. The October 24 meeting with city staff only presented two proposals, neither of which included draining the lake, as two



PHOTO BY JOHN JEFFERSON

On October 14, this was what the Cypress Creek boat ramp looked like with the water at elevation 666 mean sea level. Forty-eight hours later, the water had risen almost to the top of the ramp. Several days later, the entire park was totally under water, as was the road leading to it. Notice where the strip of vegetation appears out in the lake just beyond the end of the ramp. That could be a prime fishing area when the ramp re-opens.

of the original four props contained. The city boys say water rights from LCRA will be retained. Questions about how that will be financed went unanswered.

But don't break out the Champaign, just yet. Prop. 1 is the most fishing friendly. Prop. 2 includes the golf course. Most of the public doesn't care for selling rights in parkland to golf promoters. Golfers say

Austin has enough courses and courses throughout America are closing. Prop. 1 contains much commercial development like kayak rentals, a marina, overnight camping grounds, possible rowing area, and more. Fishing access could be limited.

To comment, contact Jeffrey Vice at Austin Energy or Gregory Montes at Austin Parks and Recreation. **T★J**



SIGNS OF THE TIME



There are several things to consider to increase the chance of seeing a trophy caliber buck in December.

Story and Photography by Bob Zaiglin

The time to pursue that buck of a lifetime is during the rut, simply because you never know what will show up.

As the sun dipped below the horizon I was stealthily making my way towards a small oats patch established in the middle of a dense stand of South Texas thorn scrub. The chilly winter air smacking me squarely in the face insured me that the blue norther arriving would disperse my scent southward, providing me an excellent opportunity to observe a mature buck or two from a concealed vantage point I had previously established on the south end of the field.

Crawling on hands and knees, pausing only occasionally to remove the ubiquitous sticker burrs from my hands, I covertly reached the field's edge and a curtain of brush that prevented deer from seeing me. Peering around the side of the wilted, partially defoliated bush, I noticed a cloud of dust near one of the persimmon mottes within the red, sandy field.

Abruptly, a doe dashed into the open only to come to an abrupt halt, staring back in the direction from which she came. Seconds later she darted back around the motte as a mature, heavy-bodied buck, head down, hazed her around the only protection she had. With a substantial number of tines on long, sweeping beams, with a lot of air between them, my heart raced as I critiqued the rack through my binoculars each time it paused long enough for me to do so.

I should have been preparing for a shot, but it was mid-December and the rut was just gearing up. The hunter side of me was saying 'shoot', but my optimistic demeanor forced me to procrastinate as there was no telling what else would show up, particularly since we had a wet spring. I expected some exceptional antlers as a result. So I continued to analyze the animal's rack, but before I could make a final decision, the doe, tired of being harassed, dashed off into the sea of brush and the buck followed immediately behind her.

The following morning I actually began to drive to another portion of the ranch when I suddenly came to my senses, whipped my truck around, and headed back to the grain field for hopefully another look at the buck I couldn't get out of my mind. With rattling antlers dangling from a slither of rawhide over my left shoulder and my 7mm a-bolt on my right, I entered the field at sun-up.

Without the concealment of darkness, I used the mesquite and persimmon mottes to prevent the only deer in the field, a fawn, the same fawn I saw the night before and apparently the offspring of the doe I hoped to see, from spooking before ascending a rickety, old ladder into a weathered deer blind with a floor covered with barn owl pellets, the producer of which noisily departed moments earlier while I unwrapped the rusty baling wire from the clasp holding the door shut.

After spending 20 minutes or so in the rank smelling blind, I carefully extended my rattling antlers outside one of the windows and performed my best rendition of two love-clad gladiators going at it, followed by a series of low volume guttural grunts. Within minutes I noticed movement in the dense whitebrush thicket like the raptors moving through the tall grass in the Jurassic Park movie. The distinct sound of antlers rubbing against the tall slender vegetation could be heard as the buck headed in my direction, but I didn't have time to prepare my rifle before the same doe I had observed the evening before entered the oats patch. Standing motionless and panting with tail erect, she stared back into the brush.

Once again I saw whitebrush shaking as the buck I hoped to see worked its way towards the field's edge. Just a few feet from exiting the thicket, I recognized the buck, but couldn't get an adequate look at its rack as its head was at ground level, continually angling to facilitate the passage of its wide rack through the gauntlet of vegetation.

Then like an apparition, it appeared, standing in the field motionless with water droplets precariously dangling from its gleaming,



A spooked buck in pursuit of a doe can be drawn in by luring in the doe.

lacquer-black nose, glaring at the doe. Too close for me to move without disturbing the animal, I waited until the doe ventured further into the patch with the buck closely following, only to pause not 30 yards from my blind.

Immediately upon seeing its magnificent rack at close range, my mind was made up. Its wide, sweeping rack of 23 inches decorated with 13 tines, some



Sportsmen must hunt where big deer exist, which requires knowledge of deer behavior and the ability to interpret deer sign.



Does are hunted in the rut because that's where the bucks will be.

originating nontypically off each G-2, was breathtaking.

Unaware of my presence, the buck remained stationary while I maneuvered my 7mm onto a termite-ridden window sill I employed as a rest. The sudden bark of my rifle shattered the quiescent morning, and the adrenalin-driven buck exploded forward, almost exiting the east side of the field before collapsing onto the dusty red soil.

If it's a trophy buck you're after,

December is the time to find one, especially in South Texas. You just never know what will show up, or when, but there's always the chance the next buck that appears could be one for the record books.

At no time of the year are those old, recalcitrant wraiths more apt to make a mistake than in that magical time period referred to as the rut. Even though one's odds of seeing a trophy caliber buck increase in December, there are several

things one could consider in order to enhance success.

One of the principal considerations is not to set one's sights too high. Sportsmen who establish especially high expectations actually set themselves up to fail.

One of the biggest mistakes sportsmen can make is to look at those bucks often decorating popular sporting magazines prior to their hunt. Those aberrant racks they display are oftentimes surreal images of what actually exists in the wild. A hunter must have some perspective of rack size that occurs on the particular piece of deer turf they hunt.

This information can be obtained by looking over photographs of bucks taken on the property in the past or by reviewing harvest data from previous years. By doing so, one can get a pretty good idea as to size of rack they can expect to see. Realistic objectives are vital to success, but when a truly huge buck steps out, nothing short of an aberration the only thing that could possibly go wrong would be a severe case of buck fever.

Don't be afraid to try something new or different. You might not be an authority

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One's ability to check out a number of grain fields over a short period affords them the opportunity to see additional bucks. The reverse is true when spending all of one's time in a blind on a single field.

on antler rattling, but the lovelorn hunk you're after has no idea of your ability.

Rattling is simply the attempt by man to mimic the sound of two males sparring during the rut. It's a well-known and effective hunting technique for luring bucks up close, but at times does are attracted to the same sounds, providing hunters with another opportunity to see the bucks they're after.

An unreceptive doe continuously harassed by a buck will at times attempt to lure her antagonist into a fight in order to facilitate her escape. Sportsmen aware of this behavior won't just give up when a doe comes in to their orchestrated battle, they only become more observant knowing that a buck reluctant to approach the mock battle on its own may be following his partner right into your field of view.

One way of getting a second look at a buck that has been spooked, when accompanying a doe, is to employ a predator call. The sound of a bleating fawn or one in distress is extremely alluring to a doe as its maternal instincts override the female's fear, drawing her towards the sounds of the fawn, but more importantly she will be followed by her partner.

Another method of increasing buck

observations, particularly on ranches incorporating oat patches, is to establish pathways to the fields. By stealthily approaching and parting feeding grounds, one can look over a substantial number of bucks over a short period of time. Setting in an elevated blind located in a grain field is an enjoyable and effective way to hunt, that is, if deer and more importantly the correct deer, show up. However, on a slow evening, one could waste valuable time on a single field, seeing few if any mature bucks. By using planned out pathways, three or four different fields, no telling how many more bucks, can be observed over an evening hunt.


The design and approach of such travel lanes is critical to how effective they are at concealing one's movements. Pathways should be located on the northwest side of a grain field to combat the prevailing southeast wind and on the south side to facilitate one's approach when those northers arrive, coercing deer to the energy-replacing resource cereal grains represent.

When it comes to taking a trophy buck, one must think outside the box, and the more one knows about deer behavior, the more success they will enjoy, particularly when it comes to seeing that buck of their dreams. **T★J**

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CoastWatch | Danno Wise

Given the fact multiple fronts pushed through the Northern Gulf Coast as early as October, most anglers on the Upper Texas and Louisiana coasts are expected a real winter this year. However, these anglers also know cold weather often serves to concentrate fish, making for memorable days when those pockets of fish are found. Per usual, speckled trout and redfish will be the primary target species, although flounder and black drum will also be caught with regularity in December.

Anglers along Texas upper coast and in southwest Louisiana get a bonus of a blast and cast opportunity. With forecasts calling for a colder winter anglers can start the day hunting a variety of ducks and occasional goose on coastal marshes. Once straws are filled with birds, conditions should have warmed to entice speckled trout and redfish to move up to more shallow water to feed. ★★



Long-time Matagorda guide Capt. Tommy Countz says December offers anglers plenty of options.

“For one thing, we will still have some pretty good bird activity in the early part of the December,” said Countz. “So long as the water temperature doesn’t drop too low, we’ll still have shrimp in East Matagorda Bay and the birds will still be working over them.

“After the water temperature drops too low for the bird activity, we’ll start drifting the deeper shell. With the shrimp gone from the bay, the fish have to eat something, so they’ll start feeding on mullet. So, we’ll be throwing mullet

imitating plugs and plastics like Bull Minnows.

“December is also a pretty good month for big trout in East Bay. When it cools down, they’ll start hanging on the mud and shell and we usually see some pretty good fish caught.

“When the water gets cool, we’ll also start looking up the river. The flounder run will be tapering off, but the trout will start going up the river, so long as it’s not too fresh. The colder the weather, the more trout you’ll find in the river. Again, that’s as long as it has decent salinity.

“The other thing I’ll do in December is run over to West Bay for redfish,” Countz said. “After a good, hard front knocks all the water out of West Bay, the fishing can be fantastic. With all the water gone, the redfish have to come out of the back lakes and they get stacked up in the guts. They basically have nowhere else to go. We’ll wade and cast into those guts with spoons and plastics. When it’s right, it is the best redfish action I’ve ever seen.”

In Sargent Capt. Trey Prye of Capt. Trey’s Trophy Charters says December will see him wade fishing shorelines in East Matagorda Bay throwing a variety of topwaters and slow-sinking baits for trophy speckled trout.

Freeport guide Capt. Mike Segall of Reel Threel Charters will be doing something different just about every day in December.

“We have a lot of different things going on in December,” said Segall. “A lot of it depends on the weather, but when we have the right conditions, we’ll have a lot of different options.

“We will still be targeting big bull reds along the Gulf beachfront and jetty areas. As long as it doesn’t get real cold, the big bull reds will be hanging around deep holes and off the channels. Sardines and cut bait and crabs work well.

“Bay fishing will be good for speckled trout over deep mid-bay reefs. We’ll also catch some reds along the reefs. Live shrimp with



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPT. TREY PRYE

Wading or drifting mid-bay reefs in East Matagorda Bay can produce some monster results like this big trout caught by Capt. Trey Prye.

popping corks or rattler corks are a great way to catch these fish. Also, plastics like Cocahoes or D.O.A. Shad Tails in the darker colors work well. Personally, I like red/white or black with a chartreuse tail.

“The deep water in the harbor and ICW will also hold lots of fish. Usually the colder it gets, the more fish pack in those deep water areas.”

Galveston guide Capt. Greg Verm of FishGalvestonTX.com says they will be



PHOTO COURTESY OF REEL THREEL CHARTERS

A variety of fishing options are available out of Freeport. The deeper channels and mouths of marsh drains as well as along the ICW will hold redfish.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPT. TOMMY COUNTZ

When the water is blown out of West Matagorda Bay redfish will stack up in the guts along the shorelines. This angler caught this nice red from one of those guts while fishing with Capt. Tommy Countz.

back to gigging flounder in December in addition to fishing for specks and reds and shooting ducks.

"December will find us gigging flounder on most nights," said Verm. "December is, in my opinion, the best month for flounder gigging here in Galveston and Freeport. We will be targeting West Galveston Bay, San Luis Pass, Pelican, Chocolate, and Christmas Bay.

"As far as fishing, speckled trout and redfish will be good in those same areas. We will also be in the back lakes and bayous for redfish using live mullet fished on bottom and live shrimp under a popping cork.

"We also offer duck hunts and December is a great time for clients to do a cast and blast with us. West Galveston Bay will be covered up with red heads, and the duck hunts are usually action packed."

Galveston guide Capt. Tim Young of Tim Young Outdoors says he'll be in the water as much as possible during December.

"In December, I really like wade fishing before and after fronts," said Young. "But, at the beginning of the month, we could have some birds working. Usually if we have birds this time of year, there are

some pretty good fish under them.

"But, again, our normal routine during December is wadefishing. I'll usually be wadefishing East Bay, playing the winds and fishing the shorelines. If we have hard south wind, we'll be on the south shoreline fishing the best water we can find. If we have a north wind, we'll be on the north shoreline.

"We don't usually have a real consistent topwater bite in December, so I normally throw slow-sinking plugs like Corkies and various MirrOlures. The best bet is to look for the most mullet you can

find, then wade that area throwing those slow-sinking plugs.

"When it gets really cold during December, we'll fish the deeper shell. But, otherwise, I'll be wading the shorelines all month."

Sabine Lake guide Capt. Randy Foreman says there will be several species for anglers to target along the Texas/Louisiana border in December.

"At the beginning of December, we'll still have some good flounder fishing," said Foreman. "But, they'll already be out of the lake, so I'll be fishing for them

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around the jetties and along the channel. I'll be using jigs tipped with scent strips or bits of shrimp.

"If I'm not fishing for flounder, I'll usually be fishing the lower end of the lake for redfish in the lake. The marshes won't have any water in them because of the north winds, so those fish will be moving out of the canals. They'll still be schooling under small shrimp, I'll be throwing soft-plastics in glow/chartreuse.

"I'll also spend a lot of time fishing for drum and sheepshead starting in December. You can use peeled, dead shrimp, live shrimp, scent strips or jigs tipped with scent strips.

"We'll also start seeing some trout on the flats behind the islands on the north end of the lake. I'll be drifting and fishing one to four feet of water. I'll be throwing either 5-inch plastics in Morning Glory/Chartreuse or Red Shad. You can swim those 5-inch baits just like a mullet and catch some good trout.

"Keith Lake can also be good. Up there you'll be able to find a mix of redfish, black drum and sheepshead. When I'm fishing up there, I'll use a jig under a cork." **T★J**



Lake Calcasieu guide Capt Jeff Poe of Big Lake Guide Service says December will find him looking for trout along the shorelines most days.

"December usually means the end of fishing under birds," said Poe. "Hooray and Hallelujah!!! The trout will be located along shorelines and back over reefs. Now is the time for suspending twitch baits such as Paul Brown Corky Fat Boys, Devils and Soft Dines in a multitude of colors. Have everyone in the boat or wading try different colors to find what shade they are eating that day. MirrOdines will also catch a lot

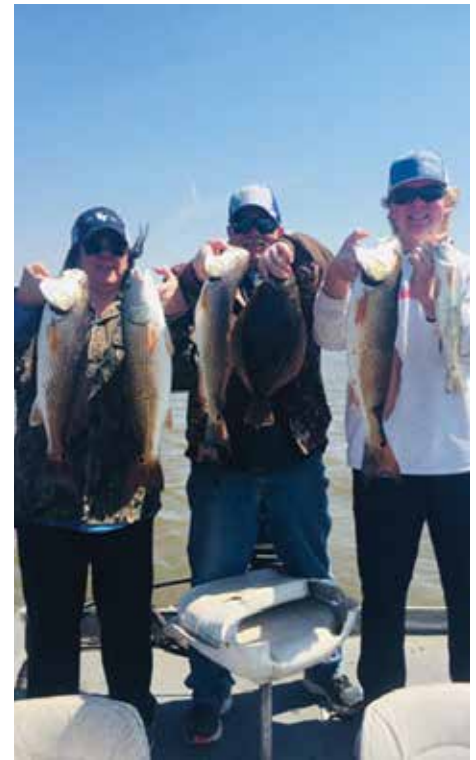


PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPT. RANDY FOREMAN

Sabine Lake will give up redfish, flounder and speckled trout, particularly on bright, mild winter days.

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of fish, outperforming the soft baits on many days.

"Almost any shoreline in Big Lake, West Cove and Black Lake has the potential to produce good numbers of keeper trout, sow trout and/or redfish. Things to look for are concentrations of mullet, slicks or busting fish.

"Red fishing is usually on fire around the weirs on the east and south sides of Big Lake. The boat bay at Grand Bayou will be open during the split of duck season which will be December 3-14. The remaining days of December you must stay on the lake side of the weirs outside of the refuge. Soft plastics are usually a good choice unless they are picky, then live or dead bait will work. But, I have seen reds so plentiful that at times we were able to catch them on a bare hook!!"

Where and how fishermen leaving out of Venice target speckled trout in December all depends on the condition of the Mississippi River. If the river is not too fresh, trout will move up into the river. On the other hand, if the river is full of rain runoff, the trout will be stacked up on the outside beaches. Redfish, however,



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPT. GREG VERM

Blast and cast options abound along Texas upper coast as well as in southwest Louisiana. December and through the duck season closures in January ducks will be hunted in the morning with speckled trout and redfish being caught during the warmer portion of the day.

will be found in the marshes off the river regardless of the river's condition.

Tuna action will still be good offshore. The availability of the winter tuna fishery

is also reliant on the weather. When the conditions allow for a run offshore, anglers can generally expect to catch plenty of tuna in December. 🌟🌟

December is the best month of the year for gigging flounder says Capt. Greg Verm. From the looks of the smile on this young lady that is all the confirmation needed.



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Dear Santa,

I'm not sure if you have America's fish way up there at the North Pole. But if you do, it would be nice to have your elves pack one for every Texas Outdoors Journal reader across the globe.

Size isn't really an issue, so long as the fish are almost too fat to stuff in your fluffy red bag of goodies. My personal best bass is a 12 pounder. So you can mark me off the fish list. I'll gladly take a return trip to Mexico's Lake El Salto or Baccarac, instead.

*Thanks and Tight Lines,
Matt Williams
Texas Outdoors Journal*



Christmas List

A run down of possible gift ideas for the bass angler on your shopping list.

Story by Matt Williams

Picky as we may seem, us bass fishermen are much easier to please than some may think. When it comes time to fill our wish lists, those who stick to the subject are sure to win serious points on Christmas morning.

What follows is a run down of possible gift ideas for the bass angler on your shopping list. Some will fill the bill for the main course, while others belong on the stocking stuffer menu.

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Shimano DC **(fishshimano.com)**

Shimano has a rich history of producing some of the most reliable baitcasting reels in the world. The new Curado DC may be the most trouble free ever.

The low profile reel relies on an internal microcomputer that automatically controls brake force during each cast, start to finish. This prevents the spool from overrunning when casting into the wind, skipping baits under docks or bushes, or simply bombing long casts. You'll know the high tech guts are at work by the trademark whine the reel makes each time you cast it.

The reel holds 90 yards of 14 pound

monofilament line. Available in right or left hand models and three gear ratios, 6.2:1, 7.4:1 and 8.5:1. Weighs 7.9 ounces. MSRP, \$249.00. fishshimano.com.

Lews Pro-TI

Lew's newest low profile baitcaster comes packed with a variety of cool features that makes it a pleasure to hold and dream to use all day long. Among them are a lightweight aluminum frame, titanium deposition side plates, premium aluminum alloy gearing, 11 bearings and a six pin externally adjustable centrifugal braking system that lends to super quiet casting.

It is also equipped with a Speed Dial line indicator for logging size/type of line on the spool, a retractable Speed Keeper hook keeper, a big handle and Winn Dri-Tac grips. The racy black/purple finish makes it a pleasure to look at, too.

The Pro-TI weighs 6.3 ounces and is available in right or left hand models in a 7.5:1 gear ratio. MSRP, \$349.99. lews.com.

Ultrex Trolling Motor

It's pricey but it's worth it. Ask just about anyone who has bolted an Ultrex to the bow they'll tell you it's one most

useful tools to come along since the shallow anchor.

Equipped with its own internal GPS system that works in unison with the trolling motor's "Spot Lock" feature. Spot lock is an electronic GPS anchor that functions at any water depth or location. Once activated, the GPS creates a reference point that automatically tells the trolling motor to maintain its current position so you can hold the boat in relation to brush piles or offshore waypoints without having to make constant adjustments to maintain optimum position. The cable drive is powered by small motor that promotes the feel and quick responses of power steering.

These and other features be utilized using the foot pedal or by remote control. Available for 24 and 36 volt systems, 80 and 112 pound thrust and three shaft lengths. Units sell for \$2,249 to \$2,849. minnkotamotors.com.

Bass Boat Saver

Bass Boat Saver is like one stop shopping — it cleans, waxes, seals and protects all parts of your bass boat (except electronics screens) and trailer from top



Shimano's new Curado DC may be the most trouble free bait casting reel ever.



Lew's Pro-TI is equipped with a Speed Dial line indicator for logging size/type of line on the spool, a retractable Speed Keeper hook keeper, a big handle and Winn Dri-Tac grips.



An all-inclusive bass fishing adventure to a heavy hitting Mexico bass lake like El Salto, Baccarac, Picachos or Comedero makes a great Christmas gift you might just tag along on.



Lew's Custom LFS Baitcast Combo settles the issue of buying a bait casting reel or buy a rod — it's a great package.



Heavy duty braided lines are no match for the Boomerang high quality line snips.



Rapala's 11 inch pliers is designed to get at deep hooked baits and hooks.

to bottom. It sprays on and wipes off to remove dirt, grease, blood, scum lines, mildew and other stains from the gel coat, upholstery, trim, outboard engine and shallow anchor.

Bass Boat Saver also rejuvenates dull looking rubber mats, cleans tires and makes tough carpet stains disappear. It sells for \$19.95 for 24 ounces or \$43.95 per gallon. bassboatsaver.com

Bass Boat Saver Screen Cleaner

Alcohol and ammonia free, the cleaner is designed specifically for streak free cleaning of delicate electronic screens and housings. Easily removes water spots, fingerprints and other junk without worry of discoloration. MSRP, \$13.00 for 4.4 ounces.

Rapala 50 Pound Digital Scale

Here an easy-to-use digital scale that will take the guesswork out of how much fish weigh. Individual fish weights can be recorded in multiple storage banks allowing tournament anglers to keep tabs on their total weight. This digital scale

sells for around \$60. rapala.com.

Fisherman's 11 inch Pliers

Whether you're a bass angler or cat fisherman, you can never have too many sets of needlenose pliers. Rapala's 11 inch model is designed to get at deep hooked baits and hooks.

Designed with a side cutter that works good on fluorocarbon and monofilament line and ergonomic co-molded grips. The pliers are made from nickel plated carbon steel and sell for around \$18. rapala.com.

Lew's Custom LFS Baitcast Combo

Here a good gift idea for those who might be on the fence between buying a baitcaster or good quality rod. Buy a combo. Lew's Custom Black Combo is built around a 7.5:1 LFS baitcaster designed around 10 bearings, an aluminum frame, 10 bearings and a P2 Super Pinion Gear.

The reel is strapped to a matching Custom Black Speed Stick equipped with premium guides, Winn Dri-Tac split grips and Lew's VTR system for improved

sensitivity. Available in 7 foot medium and 7 foot, 3 inch medium/heavy models.

This fishing rod/reel combo goes for around \$280.00. Abu Garcia and Bass Pro also offer good quality combs at competitive price points.

Boomerang Snip Line Cutter

Heavy duty braided lines can be tough to cut using scissors or nail clippers, but they are no match for these high quality line snips. The Boomerang Snips are compact, lightweight, extremely durable, and they can slice through monofilament, fluorocarbon and braided line like butter.

The Boomerang Snip Line Cutter features a 36 inch retractable leash that can be attached inside the boat or to your jacket so it can't be misplaced. It sells for around \$11. boomerangtool.com.

Spoolin' Buddy Portable Line Spooling Station

Here's a handy tool designed to help your fishing line organized in one place so you can find what you need, when you need it, without wasting valuable time fumbling through boxes or



Keep smart phones and other valuables dry in the boat or out with the SEALINE E waterproof case.



The Spoolin' Buddy portable line spooling station comes in varied sizes capable of holding as many as 15 bulk spools of line from 1,000 to 3,000 yards.



Plano's Guide Series 1449 Case is a rigid little dry box that offers plenty of protection for cell phones, pocket cameras and other valuables.



Rapala offers an easy-to-use digital scale that will take the guesswork out of how much fish weigh.

unorganized storage bins. Spoolin' Buddy also provides a convenient anchor point that makes respooling a breeze.

This portable line spooling station comes in varied sizes capable of holding as many as 15 bulk spools of line from 1,000 to 3,000 yards. It is equipped with handy carrying handle and sells for \$64.95-\$129.95. spoolinbuddy.com.

SEALINE E-Case

Keep smart phones and other valuables dry in the boat or out with this waterproof case. It features ultra-clear polyurethane windows that allow full functionality of touch screens, cameras and other functions plus it has multiple leash points. The Sealine E-Case sells for \$19.95-\$29.95, depending on the size. seallinegear.com.

Plano Guide Series Case 1449

This is a rigid little dry box that offers plenty of protection for cell phones, pocket cameras and other valuables at a modest price point. A heavy duty cam latch and Dri-Loc O-Ring Seal ensure a watertight seal while a rubber bottom lining helps

prevent your stuff from sliding around. Also features a pair of small padlock tabs and a small wrist leash for added security and convenience. The case sells for around \$12.00. planomolding.com

Foul Weather Gear

Nothing can take the fun out of great fishing trip like a leaky rain suit if the weather happens to turn nasty. Simms makes some of very best foul weather gear that money can buy. Two of company's best are the Prodry and Challenger lines. Both are available with matching bibs and jackets that offer maximum protection from moisture, wind and cold. simmsfishing.com.

Stocking Stuffer Ideas

Stocking stuffers are sure to make the angler on your gift list crack a smile, particularly those that are useful. While hard body lures ranging from crankbaits and topwaters are good choices for the bass angler, you can't go wrong with some good quality worm or treble hooks by Gamakatzu or Mustad, a few spools from premium fluorocarbon line from

Gamma, Berkley or Yo-Zuri or some tungsten bullet weights.

Common line sizes used by bass anglers are 14-20 pound test. The most common weight sizes are 3/16 to 1/2 ounce.

Get Them a Guide or a Trip

A guided fishing trip with a reputable fishing guide to great bass lake is always a good gift. Sam Rayburn is among state's best bass lakes right now. You also might consider Falcon, Amistad, Lake O' the Pines, Toledo Bend or Fork. Book the trip at a time of year when temperatures are moderate and the fish are biting best. Spring and fall are ideal.

Another option is a all-inclusive bass fishing adventure to heavy hitting Mexico bass lake like El Salto, Baccarac, Picachos or Comedero. It's always best to plan such a trip using a reputable outfitter like Ron Speed, Jr. (800) 722-0006, Billy Chapman, Jr. (800) 468-2347, or Terry Hollan (806) 359-6288. All have extensive experience and offer top facilities including boats, lodging and guides. **T★J**

Making Your Own Sausage



I love big game hunting. I love the hunt, I love the camp and I love packing out my game. But why let it end there? If you drop your deer off at the processor then your hunt is over. If you make your own sausage, it extends your hunting experience. Plus, you save some money and enjoy good eating for the rest of the year.

To be an official "Sausage Maker" means your family has been making sausage for generations. To reach this level of expertise is a lifelong quest but we're going to short circuit the system and use Hi-Mountain Seasoning. Your old Sausage Making granddad will turn over in his grave but don't worry, you can hit that level later.

The real sausage makers will do a cold smoke, somewhere around 87-92 degrees. The smoke will flavor the meat and the low heat will dry it out. But, that is the perfect temperature for incubating

bacteria which is why you must add the Nitrates or Nitrites which cures the sausage plus adds flavor.

Everyone always asks me, "don't you think that they used to make better sausage 100 yrs. ago?" My answer, "No way."

In the old days they smoked with whatever wood was in their locale and used local spices. Where do you think the name bologna came from? Frankfurters? Polish sausage? German sausage? Italian sausage? (Answers-Bologna, Italy, Frankfurter, Germany, Poland, Germany and Italy).

Now? You can find almost any spice or wood at your local store or order it off the internet. So don't feel like that you're



The author mixes the spices with the meat after coarse grinding it and then further mixes the meat and spices with a fine grind it. This assures a good mix.

a 2nd class Sausage Maker.

So lest you get intimidated to even try to make your own sausage, let's go the simple route at first. Use a store-bought mix. Check out Hi Mountain Seasoning. I made two batches last weekend using their Polish and Original Salami mixes. Both are great blends.

You can make sausage out of any of your big game and even out of birds. Decades ago when we were making sausage on the ranch in Sonora we'd run down to Del Rio and pick up pork fat to mix with our sausage. Now I buy a pork Top Butt. That way I get the fat plus some good hog meat in the blend.

We could argue forever on the lean percentage but I'd say make your sausage somewhere around 75-80 percent lean. You may argue that 90 percent is healthier.

Ok, let's be honest. We aren't really eating sausage to be healthy.

Everyone cautions you to trim off all of the wild game fat, they say that will give it an off odor but don't get too picky or you only end up with a handful of meat. Chill out. Do you not think that it is all left in every hamburger and steak that you eat?

Deer it is probably around 90 percent lean so mix enough fat so it will have a 75-80 percent lean finished product.

I coarse grind my pork and coarse grind my deer then sprinkle the spices into the ground pork. Then I mix it all together



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The author says, "if you buy a good stuffer you'll stuff faster and cuss less."



The author used to use an old Brinkman smoker and use mesquite wood. Now to get even heat he uses a Camp Chef pellet smoker.

and grind again. Meat grinds better if it is semi crystallized (semi frozen).

For packaging you can make bulk packages or stuff into casings. There are natural casing that are pork or sheep intestines. These come salted so soak them in warm water to soften and then put the end on your faucet and flush out the salt or it will ruin your sausage.

Or they make collagen casings. I like them because they have a larger diameter

and you can blow and go but I don't think smoke permeates them as well as it does on natural casings. Before you start stuffing though, make a small patty and fry it up. Does it need more seasoning? Once it is stuffed it's too late.

You can use a hand grinder to grind and stuff but it's a major pain. I recently got a Weston Grinder and stuffer and love them. It's 10 times easier and faster. If you get a rinky-dink grinder you'll be cussing

more and grinding less!

Trust me on this one. If you try to put a horn on your grinder to stuff your sausage you'll be frustrated. Get a Weston stuffer. I love mine and I can stuff at ramspeed.

Smoking options you have two choices — cold smoke or hot smoke. When cold smoking you're depending on the nitrites to cure the meat. For beginners I suggest a hot smoke.

Have fun and happy smoking! 🌟🌟

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Lake Roundup

NORTH TEXAS



By Brian Hughes

December is a great month in Texas. The weather can be beautiful, with mild, sunny days or it can be rather unpleasant, with snow, ice, wind, and brutally cold. Either way, Christmas and time with family will be on the agenda.

Speaking of time with family, I want to mention a program I enjoy every year around this time. Texas Parks and Wildlife long ago established a program of stocking rainbow trout into ponds and small lakes around the state. Over 100 locations across Texas receive these trout from various hatcheries around the state. These are put into the ponds on what TPWD calls a “put-and-take” basis, meaning they expect them to be caught and kept.

These trout are wonderful table fare and make a real treat when added to your holiday meals. Not only are these trout delicious, they are easy to catch, don’t require a lot of expensive gear, and offer a great opportunity to get a little quality time with the kids or other family members.

Check out the site for all of the dates, rules and tips on how to catch ‘em at: tpwd.texas.gov/fishboat/fish/management/stocking/trout_stocking.phtml

Now let’s move on to the lakes’ forecast and December fishing! **★**

FORK — Although bass is what Lake Fork is most known for, there are a couple of other options that come to the forefront

in the winter months. Crappie will be abundant and readily catchable around the dam area. You will see a lot of boats on most days, but be assured it is just fine to join in and enjoy the fishing. Just watch your manners and be polite. Don’t crowd anyone, and ask politely if you want to move in on an area where there are already anglers working. Minnows are probably the number one producer, but some days will find crappie jigs to be more effective.

While most of the year will see the statewide bag limit rule of 25 crappie, 10 inches and longer in place, however, from December 1 until the last day of February the first 25 crappie must be kept, regardless of length. This is to prevent the unnecessary mortality of crappie that have been caught in deep water.

Another option for Fork fishing in the winter months is the exceptional catfishing found on this impound. When the weather is cold and nasty the blue cats will roam shallow water looking to feed. This may last through the day, or only a few hours. You’ll want to start with live shad or cut bait and fish the edges of the timbered channels.

While you want deep water nearby, I’d start in just a few feet of water, working deeper only if I don’t get an immediate bite. Within 10 to 15 minutes I expect to see some action. If I don’t, I’ll move a few yards down the bank and keep trying.

Another key to finding fish will be roosting cormorants. If you see these birds in the trees, be sure to fish under, and around their roost.

Bass fishing will be a mixed bag approach for most of December. With nice weather for a few days in a row, you could see active fish running in eight feet or less. Colder weather for an extended period will keep the majority of the fish deeper, around 20-25 feet, on structure.

You have a couple of choices on most days. Try fishing for one or two bites that will be quality fish, or find the active, smaller fish. I can do the trophy bite thing for only so long before I need to move around and make some casts.

If you can, find a channel in the mouth of a creek and work your way into the creek fishing a jig on the channel edges. A one-half ounce, black/blue jig is hard to beat. Attach a Gene Larew Salt Craw in black/blue as a trailer and work as slowly as possible.

If you think you’re moving slowly enough, slow down some more. You want to give these sluggish fish plenty of time to decide if your offering is worth the effort to eat. Start your search in the 15 foot range, but don’t be limited to any one depth. A better approach is to just stick with the edges of the channel, regardless of the depth. If you can’t stand any more slow fishing, go out to the main lake and drop flutter spoons and drop-shot rigs on the humps and structure.

SQUAW CREEK — For black bass on this lake try a Carolina rig with a chartreuse/pepper fry or a 7” Blue Fleck Power worm. You’ll need to use a leader at least three feet long, and four feet is not unheard of at this time of year.

If you like to crankbait fish, go to the deeper points and humps. Try a Fat Free Shad or one of the XD series crank baits. Throw these at the structure from a variety of directions, until the fish tell you which approach they prefer.

Another successful tactic is to fish the thicker timber with a Texas rigged worm. Look to the 15 foot depth and work shallow to deep and then deep to shallow. You should cover everywhere from about 10 to 20 feet deep. You’ll find Squaw catfish in all areas of the lake. Warm or cold you’ll want to fish cut, or live shad. Look to the creek mouths and channels, and fish the timber edges.

RAY ROBERTS — December on Ray Bob brings several options to the bass angler. Early in the month look to the rocks, which will hold warmth from the sun. As the fish should be more active around this warmer water, try square billed crankbaits. Shad colors if the lake is clear, firetigers and the like if it has a little stain.

You can also fish the main lake rockpiles. Use the Alabama rig or deep

diving crankbaits. For those that want to try to catch bigger fish, jigs in the timber is a proven producer. Look to Indian and Wolf creeks, where you'll want to fish in the channels. Drop your baits off the edges, into the channel for best results.

Sand bass fishermen should focus on the area known as the "Hayfield." You'll also want to look to the main lake ridges. Look for the birds to give you an idea where to begin. The Lantana Lodge point and "Marina hump" should see plenty of action, as will the "sand bass flats."

Catfish will also use these areas so the catfisherman should beef up the gear and give it a go. Crappie can usually be found around the state park cove, around the bluffs and rocks.

AQUILLA — Aquilla is a small lake very near Lake Whitney. With the excellent fishing and bigger size of Whitney it tends to overshadow Aquilla.

That's both a good thing, and a bad thing. Bad because many people will never try Aquilla, venturing to Whitney instead. Good because if you DO make the journey to Aquilla, you should have very little company on the lake!

Look to the deep flats in the dam area, and "Three Points" for blue catfish. Cut bait or live shad will be the ticket to a bite. Crappie will hold over the dam, and the many brush piles that are there. The 1947 Bridge is also a perennial slab producer. Work towards the east and the timber. Jigs in red/yellow or yellow/black are good choices, as is the tried and true minnow on a crappie rig.

As for sand bassin', you'll probably do best around the Snake Island and Triplett Point areas. Spoons and slabs, lipless crankbaits and tailspinners will catch these fish.

COOPER (Jim Chapman) — A sure-fire way to catch December hybrids on Cooper is to fish the old borrow pits using the dead sticking technique. Tin white or chartreuse and add a chartreuse plastic. Drop it straight down on the borrow pits and let the motion of the boat provide the action.

Deep diving crankbaits and slab spoons can also produce in December. I like to add a tube jig plastic, slipping it over the spoon. This allows me to change colors quickly and easily while also making the slab softer to the touch. When on a finicky bite that can encourage the fish to hold on longer. I only do this on



PHOTO COURTESY OF TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

TPWD's winter rainbow trout stocking program on area lakes and ponds across Texas gathers momentum in December. This is a "put-and-take" program that will run through March.

very sunny days however, as the plastic will reduce the natural flash from the spoon.

LAKE 'O THE PINES — On LOP, channels will be key. This may be one of the best winter crappie lakes in the state and many guides move their business there each winter from wherever home is the rest of the year.

The first thing most will tell you is that you need to fish the channels, humps, points and drop-offs. In other words, structure changes. Once located, you can simply drift a crappie jig across the structure, or use your trolling motor to troll over the structure. Keep your bait just off the bottom, and cover water. You'll want to keep those baits in 20-25 feet of water.

Lake 'O the Pines is another of those special regulation lakes. From December first through the last day of February, there is no minimum length limit and all crappie caught must be retained. The year-round limit is 25 per day in any combination.

The best way to keep up with all of these regulations is to keep a copy of the TPWD Outdoor Annual in your tacklebox, boat, and truck, or get the app, which will give you all the regulations on your phone.

I prefer the hard copy book for two reasons. One, I am old school. And number two, there may not always be cell reception in some of the out-of-the-way places I hunt and fish. And the game warden is unlikely to accept, "My app wouldn't load on my phone!" as an excuse!

Well there you have it — December fishing options and tactics. I hope

everyone has a wonderful Christmas, a Happy New Year and a wonderful time fishing. Please be safe, and we'll see you in 2019! **T★J**



By Matt Williams

NACOGDOCHES - Like many lakes around eastern Texas, Lake Nacogdoches caught some water during an abnormally wet October. The lake level jumped about 16 inches, but remained close to a foot low by the time November rolled around.

Things are set up for some great winter fishing this year. The grass came through summer in excellent shape, but should be going dormant as water temps begin to chill. The same is true for fields of lily pads, which will be reduced to fish-holding "stubble" in short order.

The only thing that might make it better at this point is if the lake were to go ahead and fill up, preferably at gradual rate as opposed to overnight as the result of a gully washer. A gradual rise would allow the water to remain fairly clear, whereas a flood would turn things muddy. A full lake also would put a three foot

window of open water on top of the grass.

Winter is a great time to throw moving baits around submerged grass beds and the conditions at Lake Nac should be perfect to do it. Even though water is cold, good numbers of fish will be remaining shallow if there is grass for them to relate to and feed around.

One of the best baits you can bring to the table over the next few months is a Rat-L-Trap or some other lipless crankbait in a crawfish pattern of reddish, brown or orange hues. The key is to throw the bait over the grass and work it at a pace just fast enough to keep it ticking the top of the vegetation on the way in. Baits in the 1/2 to 3/4 ounce range generally work best. Some other good bait choices around winter grass include a flat-sided square bill, Chatterbait, swim jig, spinnerbait and swim bait.

Grass can be found up and down the lake, but some best stuff will be at the lake's upper reaches in the vicinity Loco Creek and up the Yellow Bank arm. Flats towards the back and in the mouth of Pine Cove also will be worth a look too.

In addition to the grass bite, there also will be some good numbers of fish to be caught on hard bottom structure along channel swings as well as the old pipeline crossing near the dam. Most of these fish will be small, but there will be lots of them. Best bets will be Carolina rigs, deep cranks, shaky heads and football jigs.

Lake Nac also produces good numbers of crappie this time of year, mainly around brush piles situated in 20-plus feet of water from mid-lake south towards the dam. Most anglers rely on live shiners for bait, but jigs can work equally well at times.

PALESTINE - When winter rolls around at Lake Palestine, crappie fishermen always gravitate towards the State Highway 155 Bridge crossing. There, they target schools of the succulent pan fish around bridge support pilings and the cross members that connect them

"The fishing can be excellent at times," says fishing guide Ricky Vandergriff. "Sometimes you'll find them suspended about 18-20 feet down around that second cross member. Other times they may be a crank or two off bottom."

Shiners and small jigs are main orders of the day for winter slabs. Given the choice, Vandergriff says he'd rather use a jig.

"I'll go to shiners if I have to, but jigs are a lot more fun," Vandergriff said. "I love to feel that "thump" when a crappie grabs it as it falls slowly through the water column."

Assorted jig colors will work. Vandergriff is the most fond of blue/white and smoke. "Any color that simulates a shad will get you bit," he said.

Bass fishing action also can be really good at times. Vandergriff says the best patterns will vary with area of the lake.

Down south, where the water is deeper and typically clearer, he prefers to target boat docks in three to eight feet using moving baits like a Shimmy Shaker bladed jig or a square bill crank bait. A Texas rig plastic could be ticket if the fish aren't in the mood to chase.

"The best docks will usually have brush around them," Vandergriff said.

The water is often off-color to muddy at the lake's north end. That's where the guide likes to use of a jig/craw plastic pork chunk combo or a Texas rig creature, mainly targeting wood cover along the edges of Kickapoo Creek as well as the Neches River.

LIVINGSTON - Lake Livingston guide Randy Dearman says late fall bass fishing can be highly unpredictable, mainly because water conditions have a history of changing with the drop of a hat this time of year.

The main concern, says Dearman, is water clarity.

"The fishing is always best when the water level has been stable for a while and the water is fairly clear," Dearman said. "It can get pretty tough when the water gets muddy, particularly once the water temp drops in the low 50s."

Dearman says the best December fishing almost always takes place in relation to creek channels up and down the lake in water ranging three to six feet. The best places to look are defined channel swings, especially those with a few stumps or maybe lay down log or two.

"Livingston doesn't have any grass to speak of, so wood is mainly what the fish relate to," Dearman said. "It's not uncommon to catch two or three feet fish off the same stump."

Many of them will be fat, too. Dearman says the fish have been feeding heavily on shad the past couple of months leading up to coming winter. Plus, the female bass are developing their ovaries in preparation for

the upcoming spawn. The first activity could get underway as early as mid-February if water temperatures get right at the upper reaches of the lake.

Early the month the water should still be in the low 60s or upper 50s, so the fish should still be pretty active and willing to chase a moving bait. Spinnerbaits and square bills are Dearman's go-to baits. If the fish want something slower he'll make the switch to a jig or Texas rigged craw.

Now also is the time when gangs of white bass will begin staging for their annual spawning trek up the Trinity River. Dearman says anglers should look for fish to be setting up along isolated sandbars along the edges of the river in close proximity to the bottleneck.

They'll be schooled up and you can work on them pretty good once you find them," Dearman said.

CONROE - Hats off to Hudson Simmons. In September, the 10-year old angler from Cypress reeled in 55 pound, 9 ounce blue catfish at Lake Conroe while fishing with Chris Edwards of Catch A Trophy Guide Service.

Remarkably, the big fish ate a tiny jig tipped with a threadfin shad and the young angler managed to land it using ultra light spinning outfit rigged with small diameter line.

The fish was plenty big enough to crush the current Conroe junior angler record of 38.75 pounds set in 2011 by Julianna Mize. In late October TPWD issue a Junior Angler Water Body Record was awarded for Simmons' blue catfish.

Fishing guide Butch Terpe says he wasn't the least surprised to hear around the trophy catch.

"Conroe has some big blues," he said. "You don't hear about a lot of them being caught, but occasionally somebody will hook one and manage to land it. Everything has to go just right to land a 50 pound catfish, especially on ultra-light tackle."

Terpe specializes in fishing for whatever happens to be biting best at the time. During late fall, he said it's hard to beat catfish.

"We always catch a lot of good eating size channel cat at Conroe, but it seems like the quality always gets better during fall once water starts cooling down," he said. "Instead of catching a bunch of one to two pounders, we catch more numbers of two to three pounders, sometimes a

little bigger. It's like that every year."

Terpe does the majority of his cat fishing over baited holes in water ranging 18-22 feet deep. He lures the fish in with cattle range cubes and then exploits them using a cheese dip bait on a sponge hook.

When it comes to largemouth bass, December typically marks the beginning of the big fish season on Conroe. Lunkers are feeding up to stack on weight in preparation for the coming winter and females are developing their ovaries.

Terpe thinks there will still be quite a few fish prowling the shallows this month that will hit assorted baits fished in relation to docks, rocks and any shoreline vegetation that flooded last October when the water level reached pool level for the first time since July. Among his favorites are bladed jigs, spinnerbaits and square bill cranks. He'll switch to Texas rigged watermelon worm or Senko when the fish aren't in the mood to chase.

"You will also have some fish holding away from the bank around brush piles in 12-18 feet of water on points and old pond dams," Terpe said. "Carolina rigs and crank baits will be the best choices out there."

TOLEDO BEND - It's been a tough fall on Toledo Bend thus far without much vegetation in the water to speak of to help position the bass. Fishing guide Tommy Martin is hopeful that cooler water temperatures of November and early December will help turn things around.

"If it doesn't we've definitely got something wrong," Martin said. "The fishing was way off during September and most of October. It started to pick up late in October and hopefully that trend will continue."

Martin says December is typically a month with lipless crankbaits and square bill cranks rule in the shallows. The best bite is usually found in the backs creeks in water ranging two to five feet deep. With the absence of grass, most of the fish will likely be relating to wood this December.

If the shallow bite does materialize, Martin thinks it will hold on until water temperatures dip to around 55 degrees.

Once that happens he says the fish will drop off in the channels or make the move to old road beds, timber lines and other structure well away from the banks.

"That's when they'll get more into their winter patterns and we'll start catching fish on spoons and jigs," Martin said.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRIS EDWARDS

Hudson Simmons with his new Texas Junior Angler State Waterbody Record blue catfish that weighed 55 pound, 9 ounce he caught on light tackle while fishing with Chris Edwards of Catch A Trophy Guide Service.

"It'll be that way until late winter and early spring, when water temperatures starts to warm up the fish start moving back towards the shallows during the pre-spawn."

December also has history for producing excellent crappie fishing along the Sabine River at midlake provided the lake level remains fairly stable and clear.

"It'll kill the bite if we get a bunch of rain that stirs up the water and creates bunch of current," says fishing guide Stephen Johnston.

One of the best known areas is the "Chicken Coop", located at mid-lake near Newell's Fishing World. The river channel makes several sharp bends around the 'Coop and fish tend to stack up along steep bluff banks in relation roving pods of shad. Good electronics are a key tool required to find and stay with the fish, Johnston said.

SAM RAYBURN - It was a wet October in eastern Texas, but it didn't impact the water level on Sam Rayburn very much. The lake was still pushing three and a half feet below normal as October gave way to November. More importantly, the grass (hydrilla) was in great shape with green stuff showing up in 8-10 feet of water in places.

Texas Parks and Wildlife fisheries biologist Todd Driscoll of Brookeland says things are set for some outstanding fishing from now right on through spring.

"December is when we always start seeing some big bags caught at 'Rayburn,"

Driscoll said.

There will be a variety of ways to catch them, too. Driscoll says anglers can fish away from bank on hard bottom structure in 15-25 feet or fish shallow around the grass.

"So long as they have grass there are a lot fish that won't leave it, even when the water gets cold," Driscoll said.

As always, one of the best baits a bass angler can tether to his line this time of year is a 1/2 ounce Rat-L-Trap or Yo-Zuri Rattlin' Vibe in some sort of crawfish pattern. Chrome or gold are two other colors to always have handy.

The lipless crank will work best when fished over the top of submerged grass. Most takers come calling when the bait ticks the grass and suddenly tears free. It's called a reaction strike.

Some other good choices Driscoll pointed to are square bill crank baits, jerk baits, Chatterbaits, spinnerbaits and swim baits.

Away from the bank the biologist thinks deep diving crankbaits, Carolina rigs, spoons and football jigs will be the main deals around ledges, points, brush piles and drop offs where you are able to pinpoint schools of fish using your electronics.

Crappie fishing tends to be sporadic during the winter months, but the results can be outstanding when you hit things just right. This is especially true up the Angelina River arm of the lake around the Highway 103 Bridge and farther north. **T&J**

MID SEASON DUCKS



Ducks regularly feed alongside geese and are more confident in finding safety in these areas. When this scenario comes together hunters can bag limits of ducks plus a pile of geese in the same hunt.

Successful waterfowl hunters will adjust techniques that adapt to changing conditions to achieve continued success.

Story and Photography by Nate Skinner

For Texan duck hunters, the last month of the year means one thing — the second split, which is the longest stretch in the regular season, has arrived. North Zone shotgunners will get the first crack at slinging steel this month as the season reopens in this portion of the state on December 1st. Waterfowlers hunting in the south zone will have to keep safeties engaged until their second split begins on December 8th.

This may be motivation enough for some to set up decoy spreads on ponds north of Interstate 10 in order to cash in on an extra week's worth of days to hunt. The other option would be to hunt in the High Plains Mallard Management Unit where duck season is also open every day during December.

Regardless of where they choose to chase feathers, duck hunters will have to adjust their strategies and adapt to the birds' behavior as the season wears on. Aside from the days that the season has been closed in the North and Central Zones, the ducks have been experiencing hunting pressure since the beginning of November in the Lone Star State. Add to that the shot filled skies waterfowl have flown through in Canadian Provinces or northern states since birds left their nesting area and they have seen just about every trick in the books.

The good news is that at this point in the year, there are typically plenty of birds available for hunters to pursue in a variety of geographic locations in the state. Fooling them can be an arduous task at times. However, when effective techniques are employed in the right locations, beautiful straps and abundant memories become inevitable.

One way to overcome the effects of a variety of consistent hunting pressure is to target areas off the beaten path. Some of the best holes that remain untapped by crowds are the many stock ponds and cattle tanks that are littered across interior portions of the Lone Star State.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Waterfowl Program Leader, Kevin Kraai, claims that these small bodies of water are quickly becoming the largest freshwater feature in Texas and the largest waterfowl refuge on our continent.

"Ducks can access these ponds and escape immense hunting pressure, while finding ample amounts of food and lush,

winter habitat," he explained. "Stock ponds and cattle tanks are wintering more and more ducks each year, and they are sending the birds back to their breeding grounds fat and healthy."

Kraai states that a single pond by itself only serves an extremely small number of ducks. It's the fact that there are hundreds of these small impounds across the landscape that makes them so vital. Collectively they compose a vast amount of acreage that provides waterfowl with prime habitat away from the masses of shotguns.

Gaining access to one of these honey holes can be easier than one might think. I've found that most of the time, landowners with properties containing duck attracting tanks have very little interest in the birds that are wintering there. With the exception of properties that are leased for deer hunting, many landowners are willing to allow responsible and respectful hunters to pursue the ducks on their ponds, especially if they are offered compensation. In situations where deer hunters are involved, a lot of times duck hunters will be welcomed once deer season comes to a close.

When approaching and talking to landowners, hunters should be up front with their desires and be willing to abide by any rules or stipulations the individual may present them with. While hunting on someone else's property it is always important to try to leave the area in a better condition than the way it was originally encountered. Pick up all fired shotshell hulls as well as any trash, and treat the land, waterfowl, other wildlife and livestock with the utmost respect. By all means leave gates and gaps as they were found.

Setting up on a small tank or pond for a duck hunt is as simple as the sport gets. In most situations, hunters will be able to drive their trucks or ATV right

up to the hole. A minimal amount of decoys will be necessary and often times half a dozen to a dozen will get the job done. Once the decoys are tossed out, all waterfowlers have left to do is put the wind at their backs, hunker down in a make shift blind or vegetation surrounding the pond, and get ready for some incredible decoying action.

Hunting in areas where the birds do receive steady pressure isn't all that bad. In fact, the one positive aspect that comes out of being surrounded by other groups of shotgunners is that this usually helps to keep the birds in the air and moving. Coastal rice prairies west of Houston are a prime example of locations that can provide phenomenal shoots amongst hoards of happy hunters.

Captain Kevin Roberts is a hunting guide that follows the ducks to their typical wintertime haunts along the prairies near Eagle Lake, Lissie, Rock Island, Garwood, and Bay City. He confesses that one of his biggest keys to success as the season wears on is scouting and being able to stay mobile rather than locked in to one specific area.

"The first ingredient to a successful



Some soft feeding chuckles combined with the use of a whistle is a deadly formula for working ducks into the spread.



Texas waterfowlers can travel to the east to enjoy excellent shoots for mallards and other ducks out of pit blinds in the freshwater marshes of southwest Louisiana.

hunt is being in an area that contains a decent concentration of birds,” he stated. “I extensively scout large stretches of rice prairie in the afternoons prior to every morning hunt I conduct. If I don’t find the amount of birds that I’m looking for in one area, I’ll move on to the next until I find a place inundated with waterfowl. Having access to properties in a variety

of locations helps ensure that I’ll have an excellent honey hole to take my hunters to day in and day out.”

Once Roberts discovers an area chock full of ducks, he will create a game plan to set up as close to the exact spot that he found them holding in.

“I’m going to set up on the X,” he confirmed. “Sometimes this means

Travel East During The Split

The freshwater marshes of southwest Louisiana offer Texans an excellent opportunity to continue to hunt ducks in the Mississippi Flyway while seasons are closed in the Central Flyway in the North and South Zones of the Lone Star State. The season in this neighboring region to the east overlaps with Texas’ seasons, with the first half running from November 10th through December 2nd.

Big Lake Guide Service is a premier outfit in the area that offers hunts out of pit blinds in their private marsh just east of Calcasieu Lake. Swarms of teal usually provide the first shot opportunities at first light during these hunts. They are typically followed by mallards, pintails, gadwall, widgeon, and canvasbacks later in the morning. Hunters can also expect an opportunity to bag some specklebellies and snow geese from the pit blinds.

The second half of duck season in this portion of southwest Louisiana runs from December 15th, 2018 to January 20th, 2019.

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getting down and dirty instead of sitting in a comfortable blind. Some of the ponds I hunt do have permanent blinds on them, but at this point in the season the ducks can become blind shy. If the birds seem to be concentrating on a portion of the pond far away from the blind, then I’m going to use some natural vegetation to conceal my hunters in that specific area.”

Roberts also claims that it is not uncommon to shoot both specklebellies and snow geese while hunting ducks in his hot spots along the rice prairies.

“I’ve had some of my best shoots for pintails and a variety of other ducks while laying in a spread of goose decoys,” he added. “When we have ducks hanging out in a flooded field adjacent to a levee with a dry field below it, using a white spread

can be extremely productive. The ducks feed alongside the geese daily, and they have a lot of confidence in finding safety in areas with concentrations of geese. When this type of scenario comes together under the right conditions, hunters can bag limits of ducks and a pile of geese in the same hunt."

From now until the end of the season, waterfowl hunters should begin to adopt a "Keep it Simple" motto or mentality. This is especially important when it comes to decoys and calling. At this point in the game, the birds have seen hundreds, if not thousands of decoy spreads since they left their northern breeding areas, and there's no telling how many high balls they've heard from a variety of duck calls.

Decoy spreads should appear natural in relation to the area that is being hunted. Overdoing it can ruin a hunt. Avoid using several robotic, motion decoys, and reduce the size of the spread as the size of the water body being hunted decreases.

Subtle calling techniques will help finish ducks that are giving the decoys a look. Soft feeding chuckles combined with the use of a whistle can be a deadly formula. And by all means, when the birds are locked in with their wings cupped, put the calls down.

The challenges that follow the mid portion of the season can make successful hunts that much more rewarding. The best waterfowl hunters will evolve with each passing week, and turn the grind into a smash. **T★J**



When it comes to decoy spreads keep it simple. Overdoing it can spoil a hunt.



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December is also a crapshoot when it comes to guessing the weather from one day to the next along the Lower and Middle Texas Coast. Temperatures can swing from the low 80s to freezing. Some years the temperature never drops much below autumn-like conditions. However, given the cooler than usual fall, it is a reasonable expectation that winter will arrive before New Year's.

The Lower and Middle Coast areas also received an abnormally high amount of rain during late summer and fall. While the freshwater served to flush bays in these regions, heading into winter, there is no cause for concern, as any negative impacts from the freshwater runoff on fishing has long since passed. As of press-time for this issue, all the bays along the Lower and Middle Coast were in good shape.

Fishing was also reasonably good throughout the fall, although anglers did lose more days on the water than usual due to foul weather. So, back to the opening sentence – winter weather is always unpredictable in South Texas. But, when the conditions are right, anglers should expect some outstanding days on the water during December. **T&J**



Fishermen in the South Padre Island/Port Isabel area usually have a bit of a different winter experience than the rest of the Texas coast. As the southernmost bay, the Lower Laguna Madre typically avoids some of the harsh winter weather experienced elsewhere on the coast. This means that anglers can often experience some shallow water fishing even in the winter months. Guides such as Capt

Austin Camacho are adept at finding fish on the flats on all but the coldest winter days.

During December, schools of keeper size speckled trout will be holding along the channel edges and over the deeper flats. Free-lining live or D.O.A. Shrimp is the best way to target these fish. Larger trout will be found on the shallow mud flats behind the ICW spoils and along the west shoreline. These fish can be caught with big topwaters, slow sinking plugs and soft-plastics.

Redfish will move between the skinny flats and the deeper channels. During warm spells, expect to see spot tails cruising the flats adjacent to deep water. When the water turns cool - or the tide drops out – anglers pursuing redfish should focus their efforts on the channels that drain the flats. Although reds are difficult to sight-cast too when they are stacked in channels, the action can be fast and furious when they are found. Soft-plastics and GULP! are good choices for reds regardless of where they're found. If they are on the flats, spoons are very effective as well.

Snook, mangrove snapper, speckled trout, sheepshead and black drum will all be common catches in the Brownsville Ship Channel during December. Usually, the fishing in the Ship Channel gets better as the weather gets colder. This area is also relatively protected, making it a good spot to fish on windy winter days.

According to Capt. Steve Ellis at Port Mansfield's Get-A-Way Adventures Lodge, December can be very productive given the right conditions.

"We have fronts coming through a lot more often starting in December," said



PHOTO COURTESY OF KEITH ALBERS

Christmas came early for 12 year old Cayla Celine Albers, now known by her family as "Miss C.C.A." when she caught this big 8 pound, 4 ounce, 31 inch long Nueces Bay speckled trout in July to win the 2018 CCA S.T.A.R. Middle Coast Teen Trout Division. Winter trout fishing on the middle and lower Texas coast is known for producing trophy speckled trout like this in the winter time as well.

Ellis. "But, this is also when you can kind of start patterning when the fronts are coming and schedule the days you want to fish around the fronts.

"Fishing can be really good in December, but the fishing pattern is starting to change. Early in December, we'll still have some pretty good flounder fishing in the East Cut. Actually, when the fronts blow the water out of the bay, those little guts along the East Cut will concentrate all kinds of fish – flounder, redfish, speckled trout, and black drum. When the tide drops out, the edges of the East Cut and all those little channels really hold a lot of fish. Of course, this year, they will be dredging the East Cut during December, so we don't really know how that will affect fishing. But, if it's still fishable, it's probably worth a shot.

"If we get a few warm, sunny days, we'll see plenty of redfish up on the flats. But, they won't be too far from deep water, so you really want to focus on the flats that run along channels. There will be some big trout on the flats as well. In fact, December is really when we start catching some of our biggest trout each year. Those big trout will be on those muddy bottom



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

The Brownsville Ship Channel is a go-to place for a variety of gamefish, including snook in the winter time. The Ship Channel also provides protection on windy days.



When redfish are stacked in deeper channels, the action can be fast and furious when they are found.

flats next to deep water – like between the spoils and the ICW.

"In generally, the fish are going to be more lethargic and won't move as far to hit a bait in December. So you need to slow your retrieve and make more casts in an area to be sure and cover every inch of water.

"Topwaters can be really good, especially on the calmer days after a front.

Big plastics and slow sinking plugs work good, too. And, of course, on clear, sunny days, spoons are still good for redfish on the flats."

Anglers fishing Baffin Bay can expect to find good numbers of trout around the deeper rock piles. On warm, sunny days, redfish will still be found on the flats adjacent to deep water. During December, the bite along the ranch shorelines should

also start picking up.

Closer to Corpus, anglers should concentrate on the deeper waters around the JFK Causeway and areas such as the Humble Channel. The rigs will often hold fish as well during December, although there is typically a limited number of days in which the weather allows anglers to fish the rigs during winter due to blustery winds. **T★J**

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MIDDLE COAST



Early December will seem like fall fishing in the Aransas Pass/Port Aransas area, as well. Once December gets underway anglers can expect to still find plenty of redfish on the flats. The shallow water redfish action will hold until the temperatures turn bitterly cold. At that point, look for reds in channels and guts adjacent to the shallow flats. But, even then, they will often pop up on the flats during the midday hours or if there are a few warm days in a row.

Trout will be consistent along the channel edges as well as over the deeper grass flats. Fishermen working the grass should concentrate on the edges and



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPT. NATHAN BEABOUT

Captain Nathan Beabout says when he is fishing for trophy trout he always try to find what is different and fish that area, whether it is a dirty streak or a drop or anything else that makes that area different from the surrounding water.

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potholes. Deep reefs and shell pads will also be holding plenty of fish during December.

Soft-plastics and free-lined shrimp will be the best bets for consistent catches of speckled trout during December. When the water is off-color, anglers should pin live shrimp under a popping cork as opposed to free-lining.

Black drum will also be found in the deeper channels and sheepshead will be common catches around the reefs, giving Aransas anglers a couple additional target species in December.

Mud and shell are the key components for Rockport area fishermen looking for productive water during December. During warm spells, fishermen are likely to find both specks and reds over muddy flats where they can be taken with topwaters, slow-sinking plugs and soft-plastics. Regardless of the type of lure thrown, a slow retrieve is the ticket to tempting winter fish to strike.

Day in and day out during December, the most consistent action will be around the deeper shell reefs. Large

concentrations of speckled trout and a good number of redfish will be hanging around these mid-bay reefs all winter. Black drum and sheepshead are also frequent catches around the reefs during winter. Live or D.O.A. Shrimp or soft-plastic jigs are the best choices for catching good numbers of fish off reefs during winter.

When the winter tides drop out, look for redfish to be stacked up around the creek mouths and marsh drains, particularly on a falling tide. With an outgoing flow of water, redfish tend to hold in front of these drainages awaiting an easy meal. When fish concentrate in front of marsh drains, it is possible for anglers to catch easy limits without moving.

Seadrift guide Capt. Nathan Beabout of N&M Sportsman Charters says he has seen enough to convince him we may be in for a real winter this year.

“Well, the weatherman might be heading in the right direction this winter, with his cold and wet prediction,” said Beabout. “From what I can remember in years past, when we get fronts this strong in October and November, we are in for a cold winter.

“The thing I like about December and winter fishing is how the most perfect fishing days are not always the best weather days. Days when boat ramp parking lots are vacant, or have a handful of duck hunters out, those are some of my most memorable days on the water.

“With all the record rainfall over the past couple months, our bay system has gotten a good flush, lowering salinity levels and pushing tons of shrimp out of the Guadalupe Delta. Our bays have come alive in almost every area you fish. The bait is thriving and the fish are feeding aggressively.

“Some fisherman might know, while others just happen to be in the right spot at the right time, and never try to figure out why. The WHY, is what makes winter fishing so special. Now, what I call the WHY is a completely different article. Most all of my trips this time of year are based on finding the areas where many of these big fish will congregate. I will start, like every December booking trips not only in my home water of Seadrift, but in Port Mansfield as well. My Port Mansfield books are open from December 1 - April 30. Either location can offer up

some spectacular trophy trout fishing.

“Winter fishing has always gotten me the most excited about getting out there on the water, over any other time of the year. The same basic rules apply for fishing, locate the bait activity and give it a try. Depending on what area you are fishing in, if there is a pile of bait somewhere but the water is gin clear, maybe try to find a dirty streak adjacent to the bait, or even a drop off. In the gin clear stuff I always try to find what is different and fish that area, whether it is a dirty streak or a drop or anything else that makes that area different from the surrounding water.”

Port O’Connor area anglers can expect good fishing as well during December. Early in the month, fishermen may still find some fish over the sand and grass



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

After several warm days anglers will wade fish the flats and reefs out of Rockport for speckled trout and redfish.

flats. However, as the weather and water cool throughout the month, fish will begin to transition to muddy bottom areas. Fish will also concentrate around the deeper reefs during December.

When the tide drops – especially following a front that “pushes” the water out of the bay – look for redfish to be stacked up in deep holes and channels. **T★J**

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Christmas Stocking Suggestions

Tis' the season to be jolly and the hunter/gatherer on your Christmas gift list has thoughts of accessories dancing through their head. Let us look at a list of items and check it twice.

All outdoors folks love knives, but are not particularly thrilled when it comes to sharpening them, especially in the field when the usual portable sharpener is a small Arkansas whetstone difficult to use properly by most of us. Two new items will ease the pain.

The Knife Maintenance Tool from Columbia River Knife and Tool is designed by mechanical engineer Tom Stokes. This pocket/keychain attachable tool has a tungsten carbide field sharpener, ceramic honing edge, two fold out Torx drivers, flat head screwdriver and when times get tough a bottle opener. MSRP is \$29.99 from www.crkt.com.

A bit larger, but still pocket and pack portable, is the Work Sharp Pocket Knife Sharpener. The diamond sharpening plate and ceramic honing rod use built-in angle guides to create a sharp edge for field, home or shop use. The angle guide on the 320 grit diamond plate is 20 degrees and the guide on the ceramic rod is 25 degrees. The 5 ½ inch length is handy for some longer, wider blades. This tool comes with a lifetime warranty and comes from www.worksharptools.com for \$14.99.

Birchwood Casey has come up with a dandy pocket sized cleaning tool that eliminates the worry of having the proper length cleaning rod. The Bore Weevil is a fully retractable pull-through cleaning system that reduces contact with cleaning chemicals and allows cleaning without firearm disassembly. It comes with three Quick Attach Couplers that will accept any 8/32 thread cleaning brush, jag, mop or looped patch puller on the market.

To operate the Bore Weevil, open the action of your firearm, drop the tether through from the muzzle end and lock the length in place. Next, hook the Quick Attach Coupler with the brush, mop or jag attached to the tether and pull it through the bore. The easily adjustable length



Stay sharp with CRKT and Work Sharp and clean with the Bore Weevil.

can handle your handgun and shotgun as well. The Bore Weevil is \$43.30 from birchwoodcasey.com.

We can never have too many flashlights and the folks at Hybridlight live up to their slogan, "Bright Thinking." They have pioneered a whole array of solar powered mobile lighting and charging solutions including flashlights, lanterns, headlamps, and power panels. These products have many ways of being charged, plus they can be used to charge other stuff. Let's shine some light on two products tested.

The Puc Expandable Lantern/Charger is a portable lightweight lantern that doubles as a flashlight when collapsed. Water-resistant, it shines at 150 lumens for 40 hours of light on one full charge and the rechargeable lithium-ion battery holds a charge for seven years.

Multiple charging features include a Micro USB port for rapid charging and the built-in solar panel charges not only from the sun, but any light source. There is a USB port for charging mobile devices from The Puc. It measures 5.3" when opened as a lantern and only 2" when closed as a flashlight.

It weights only 7 ounces and includes

a fold-down metal hanger hook. Retail is \$ 34.95.

The Mammoth Multi Light/Charger is packed with attributes for the outdoors and under a hood. It's water resistant and the flashlight head provides 35 hours of light with 150-lumens and up to 18 hours as an area light with the LED panel at a bright at 400 lumens on a full charge lasting for seven years.

This one charges from a USB port, the any light source solar panel, plus there is a retractable 110/220 wall plug for rapid charging. The Mammoth can also be used to charge our mobile devices.

More versatility comes from a fold-down hanger, a rotating magnetic base and a 120-degree flexible head. All packed in nine inches and 8.5 ounces and a long lasting value at \$ 59.95. These and other light sources may be viewed at www.hybridlight.com.

The Vertx VaporCore Shooter Glove utilizes a mixture of materials to provide exceptional fitting and dexterous hand protection. Suede goatskin combines durability, strength, flexibility, comfort and a better sense of touch.

The poly stretch fabric with VaporCore

dries up to five times faster than similar fabrics and actively keeps hands cool. Articulated pre-curved fingers offer great fit and dexterity and construction features hammer bite protection.

Added benefits are a conductive middle finger and thumb for using touch screens. We can now shoot and still surf the internet. This glove is \$52.95 at www.vertx.com.

Awhile back I had the strange occurrence of termites eating several cardboard boxes of stored ammunition. I needed a way to safely store many loose rounds. Obviously I needed a safer way to store ammo in the first place. The obvious answer was products from Plano Molding and I went for an assortment of containers. These molded plastic boxes are long on tough.

The medium size Ammo/Accessory Box is roomy at 13.75 inches long x 7 inches wide x 8.75 inches high. The smaller Field/Ammo Box holds eight boxes of ammunition if you still have the original packaging. Both boxes feature water resistant o-ring seals, brass bailed latches, padlock tabs, and carry handles that fold in to recesses for stacking.

For safe travel with a hunt's worth of cartridges I acquired one 20 round Medium Rifle Ammo Case and one 20 round Large Rifle Ammo Case. Their large line of storage and transportation products are at www.planomolding.com.

Books are always a welcome choice for the holidays. No one has to be an active reloader to appreciate the wealth of information in the Speer Handloading Manual Number 15. This new edition is Speer's largest volume yet, featuring updated recipes with the latest propellants for more than 120 legacy cartridges, as well as data for 13 new cartridges, including 204 Ruger, 6.5 Creedmoor and 300 Blackout.

Of special interest is the history of these cartridges, guest articles by professional shooters, ammunition basics like parts of a cartridge, troubleshooting techniques and more in almost 1,000 pages. This Manual Number 15 is available at Amazon and other outlets for around \$35.00.

The shooters go to book is the Blue Book of Gun Values now in its 39th Edition. This book should be sold by the pound as this new edition has 2,512 pages of the most accurate information and up-



Ammo storage is available from Plano Molding and illumination from Hybridlight.



The Blue Book of Gun Values and the Speer Handloading Manual are nice holiday additions to any reference library.

to-date values for modern firearms and many major trademark antiques.

Over 1,700 manufacturers and trademarks are listed with brief histories whenever possible. Almost 23,000 models are individually listed and described. There are over 500,000 up-to-date values provided.

Serialization charts have been expanded, allowing more years of manufacture to be determined on

individual makes/models and the 80-page color Photo Percentage Grading System has been revised, making firearms grading even easier and more accurate, because the value of any firearm is based on condition. The 39th Edition of the Blue Book of Gun Values is available for \$49.95 in book form or \$39.95 on a flash drive at www.bluebookofgunvalues.com.

Happy shopping and Merry Christmas. 🌟🌟



Lake Roundup

SOUTH TEXAS



By Danno Wise

Shockingly, South Texas received true fall weather before Halloween this year. Additionally, most lakes scattered over the South Texas region received their share of fall rains during October, which boosted already rising water levels. The rainwater influx coupled with the cooling air temperatures and shorter days resulted in dipping water temperatures. As a result, it seems as if the fish really will be in a winter pattern by the time winter begins on December 22.

For the fish on South Texas lakes, it is the cold weather, not the calendar, that triggers the transition to the winter pattern. In order to be successful, fishermen must adjust where and how they target fish. The good news is winter weather can actually simplify the process of locating bass by concentrating the fish in a relatively small area. Once the fish are found, it is a matter of getting the right lure in front of them. More often than not, the combination of the right location, right lure and correct presentation can result in outstanding catches during December.

COLETO CREEK – Victoria bass pro Dennis Lala says Coleta Creek fishermen should be in for some good action in the year's final month.

"Fishing on Coleta is usually pretty good in December," said Lala. "More often than not, our fish start getting ready to spawn by mid-December. It really just depends on the weather, but usually December is a really good month for us.

"We'll still have some pretty good

topwater and shallow water action in December. Like most of South Texas, you never really know what to expect as far as weather in December. On really warm days, we'll also get a good bite on spinnerbaits worked over the points and against the shorelines and flooded timber.

"Usually though our best method of catching these fish during December has been dead-sticking Berkley Sinking Minnows or flukes. Watermelon/red is almost always our best color. We'll throw those baits either unweighted or with just a little BB split shot at the most. Sometimes I like to put a little BB on the front so the bait falls nose down, just to change it up a bit. But, basically, you don't want to move that bait much – just let it fall. Sometimes the fish don't want any action on the lure.

"During December, I'll stay mainly on the points. I'll just move from one point to the next. Most of the time, you'll pick up fish on almost every point.

"If the power plant is pumping, that is another option. That hot water discharge will be good for hybrid stripers during the winter. You can catch fish on spoons, crankbaits, big minnows and shiners.

"There will also be some good catfish action around the discharge. You can catch yellow cats on live shiners. Blues and channels can be caught on shrimp and Canadian nightcrawlers. A lot of guys will set a couple rods out the back of the boat on bottom for catfish, then fish the front of the boat with crankbaits and spoons for stripers until a catfish bites.

"You can also catch some black bass around the discharge as well, especially once the weather gets cooler. You can really catch a lot of different stuff around that discharge, which makes it really fun to fish. And, that fishing just gets better as the weather gets colder."

MEDINA – It is really no mystery as to where the fish will be on Medina during December, according to Jim Gallagher of Jim's ReBait Tackle.

"December is pretty straight-forward on this lake," said Gallagher. "Our fish typically go deep when it gets cold. We actually got a pretty decent front in

mid-October, so things started cooling down and we're right on schedule to see our bass in a winter pattern starting in December. This means fishing main lake points and fishing slow.

"If we do get a few warm days, you might be able to get a few fish up shallow, but otherwise, you need to fish slow and deep. Even if you find them up shallow, you need to fish slow. This means using small cranks or floater/divers – anything you can work slowly. When the fish are deep, you're usually looking at vertical fishing – jigging spoons, drop shot rigs – that sort of stuff."

"You also need to remember that fish aren't feeding as aggressively in winter. Sometimes it seems like they feed every other day or so, but you've got to figure out when that day is. Then, you've got to figure out what they'll eat. During winter, this lake can be really tough. But, if you hit it right, it can be good."

CHOKO CANYON – Choke Canyon, bass will also be settling into a winter pattern as December gets underway. Once the weather turns cold, anglers should start looking for bass up river. With the recent rise, the river should be more productive than in recent years.

Over Labor Day weekend Choke was 28.66 feet low. As of the last couple of days in October the lake had risen to about 15 feet low and was still on the rise. That means there will be lots of newly flooded brush and vegetation to fish.

Most of the fish will be holding in 10 to 15 feet of water along the drops. If it gets especially cold, look for fish to fall off into the deeper river channel, but in moderate weather they'll be holding along the drops, ledges and edges. Anglers should also focus on areas that have standing timber along the old river bed. Texas-rigged plastics and deep diving crankbaits will account for most of the fish caught in the river during December.

If the temperature remains warm, the fish will move shallow along the banks. Look for fish to be holding in areas with muddy bottoms and flooded brush. Spinnerbaits work well for covering water when the fish are found shallow. Bear in

mind, once these fish move shallow, they will remain there until post-spawn so long as the weather and water temperatures don't drastically drop.

The annual white bass run usually begins in late early December or January. When the fish move into the river, they'll keep working higher until they reach the shallows. Most years, good concentrations are first spotted around the Highway 99 Bridge. Once anglers find schools of fish, they can follow them up river over the successive days and weeks. Prior to running up the river, good concentrations of white bass will be found concentrated in the main lake as they prepare to enter the river. Whether in the lake or the river, most white bass will be taken on small jigs and downsized lipless crankbaits.

FALCON—Falcon Lake is known for producing giant largemouth bass and the next few months really are trophy bass season time on this border impoundment. Starting in December, anglers looking for double-digit bass on Falcon should focus on main lake and secondary points on the lower end of the lake. Crankbaits and jumbo soft-plastics are among the best weapons when hunting trophy bass on Falcon. Heavy tackle is a necessity when fishing for big bass in Falcon's flooded brushy areas, which often produce some of the season's biggest fish.

Fishermen who are just looking to catch a lot of bass can find numerous two to three pound fish on the shorelines. Unless temperatures drop unexpectedly low, fishermen will still be able to catch plenty of bass on spinnerbaits, shallow cranks, plastics and jigs along the brushy shorelines throughout the lake. On warm, sunny days, there's even the possibility of some surface activity in these shallower areas. **T★J**



What a difference a month can make — particularly on lakes in West Texas and parts of the High Plains. Last month's area forecasts were filled with "ifs" and fortunately many of those silent prayers were answered.

December fishing is dictated by the weather and it looks like the last month of 2018 will end with an additional caveat of lake level. The general rule this time of year is to watch the water temperature, follow any rising water and fish newly flooded vegetation, particularly areas close to even deeper water. Here are more specifics for this region.

AMISTAD — As of Labor Day weekend, "Big Friendly" was over 37.5 feet low. At the end of October and beginning of November the lake was about 28 feet low, and was continuing a slow rise. That math says this popular border impound has come up about nine and a half feet.

Even with the cooler fall weather it looks like Amistad is on track water temperature wise. Through the month of December look for temperatures to fall from the mid-70s and by end of year vacillate either side of the 70 degree mark.

With falling water temperature black bass will be on a big time feed. Crankbaits, topwater lures, jigs and soft plastics are good choices depending on where you are fishing. The best advice is to cover water and once a fish is caught, slow down and thoroughly fish an area.

Also use soft plastics and jigs to thoroughly fish flooded vegetation. Plus fish rocky slide areas as temperatures continue to chill.

Striped bass should be back in front of the dam after their annual spawning run up the rivers. Big topwater lures or magnum Rat-L-Traps are good options.

Catfish will still be feeding close to shore. The best depth will be from 12 feet to the bank.

O.H. IVIE — Anglers around Ballinger that frequent this popular bass lake have received a nice surprise since Labor Day weekend. Back then Ivie was 44.5 feet low. At the end of October the lake had come up over 21 feet and was still on a rise. The lake has not had this much water since the latter part of August 2010.

With the additional water there are plenty of places for bait to hide and bass to seek their next meal. In early November

the water temperature ranged either side of the 70 degree mark.

Focus on flooded vegetation with even deeper water nearby. Fish Rat-L-Traps, spinnerbaits and crankbaits. After several days of bright warm weather try topwater lures or chatterbaits. Around larger vegetation fish a jig or Texas rigged worm.

As the water temperature continues to fall, look for bass to simply slide into the nearby deeper water. There crankbaits, short-leader Carolina rigs and even Senkos will be good options to fish just off the drop-off.

BROWNWOOD — "Full" or actually a little over a foot over full at the start of November. This reversal of fortune has all occurred over the past couple of months. Through most of October 2018 the lake was about seven and a half feet low. Then the rains came and the lake filled up again.

Anglers should dust off notes from December 2016. That is the last time the lake had this much water in it.

With the additional water and flooded vegetation look for fishing to be good until the temperature pushes bass to deeper depths. Crankbaits, Rat-L-Traps, spinnerbaits and jigs are all good options depending on where you are fishing.

Crappie should be around brush piles in water 12-15 feet deep. The challenge will be finding the brush piles at the right depth. **T★J**

HIGH PLAINS



By TOJ Staff

Lakes in the High Plains caught some water, but not like what was experienced further to the east. The exceptions are Lake Stamford that was just under three feet high as of late October.

Lake Coleman is another lake that filled up during October rains. As of early November it was about a foot and a half high. **T★J**

TOP Winter Weather Coastal Baits

While fishing on the Texas coast can be outstanding during December, the final month of the year also generally serves up a number of bad weather days. When the weather makes it impossible to spend time on the water, anglers are well served to spend time in their tackle rooms, taking stock of what they have and making sure they have plenty in their tackle box for the upcoming year. It is also a good time to consider filling any voids in their inshore arsenal. While the selection of available lures is at times overwhelming, there are some basic types of baits that every Texas saltwater fishermen should have in their box.

Top Water Plugs - Every inshore anglers needs a topwater lure in their box. Popular models include Bomber Badonk-A-Donk, MirrOlure She Dogs, Top Dogs and She Pups, Heddon Spooks and DOA PT-7. These are often the go-to plugs for big trout, but redfish are also likely to inhale topwater plugs under the right conditions.

Floater/Divers - A somewhat forgotten lure type, floater/divers such as the Cordell Redfin were once considered THE bait for big trout - especially in Baffin, Laguna Madre and Lower Laguna Madre. They still work, especially in calm conditions. In addition to the Redfin, Bomber Long As and Smithwick Rogue are good choices.

Slow Sinking Soft Plugs - The Corky, created right here in Texas, set the standard for this type of lure. One of the most effective big trout baits during cold water conditions, slow sinking slow plugs are a must-have for any big trout seekers. These baits come in a variety of body styles and take some patience to work, but the payoff is usually big!

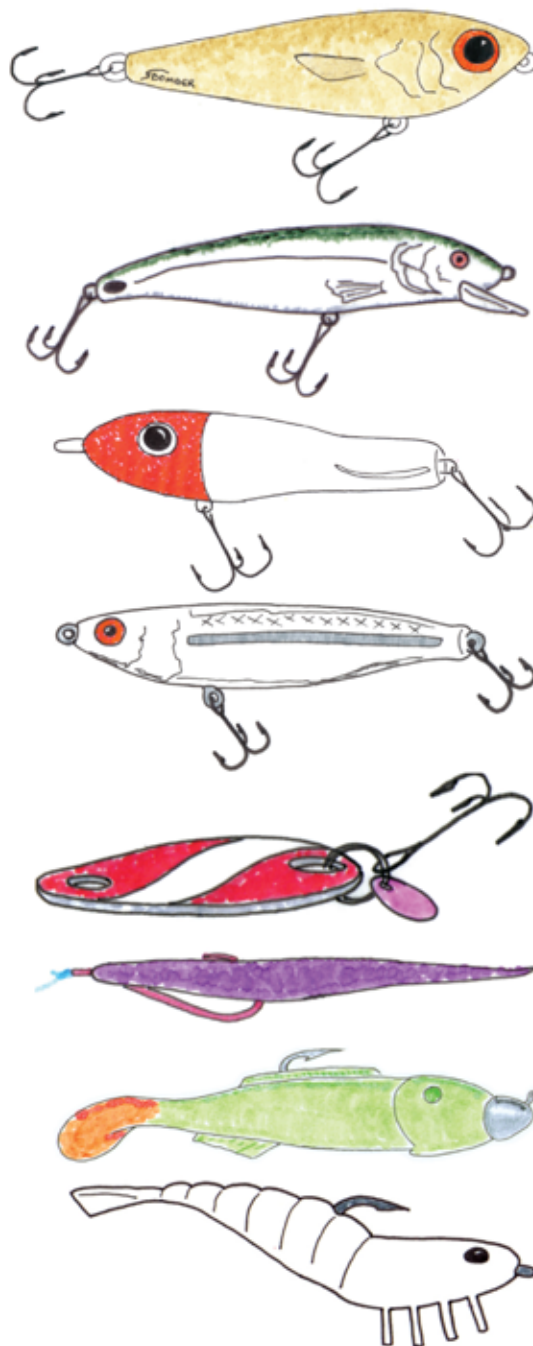
Slow Sinking Hard Plugs - Effective when fish are finicky, these baits offer a bit of flash in clear water conditions that most soft plugs do not. Additionally, models such as the MirrOlure MirrOline are often unbeatable when fish are focused on glass minnows.

Spoons - No saltwater tackle box is complete without an assortment of spoons. Weedless spoons are deadly on redfish on the flats, while single hook models like the Johnson Sprite are great choices when chasing speckled trout in the surf.

Soft-plastic Jerkbait - Considered a go-to lure in clear water conditions and/or when fish are a bit finicky, soft-plastic jerkbaits are the ultimate finesse lure and can be rigged on a weedless hook or jig head. DOA CAL Jerkbait, K-Wiggler Ball Tails and Norton Sand Eels are all effective.

Soft-plastic Paddletails - The standard "all purpose" bait, paddletails can be used in a variety of ways and are great for covering lots of water. DOA CAL Shadtails and YUM Mud Minnows are modern favorites, but classics such as the H&H Cocahoe and Norton Bull Minnow still work as well.

Artificial Shrimp - Once thought of as too realistic to work, artificial shrimp such as the DOA Shrimp and the myriad of imitations are deadly effective on specks and reds whether free-lined, jigged or fished under a popping cork.



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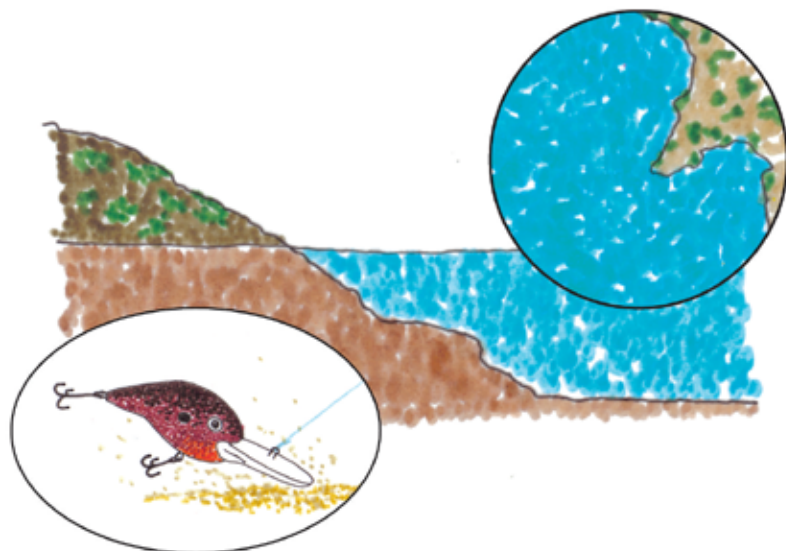
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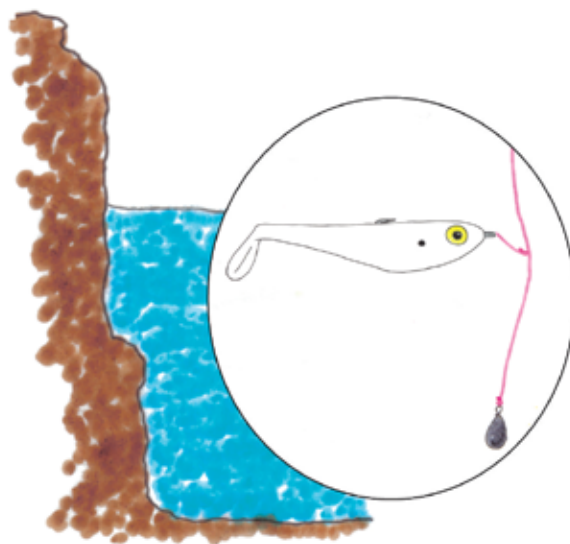
Cold Weather Bass Patterns & Strategies

As winter sets in, many freshwater fishermen across the Lone Star State feel as if it's time to put their rods in the closet until spring arrives. However, just because the air and water turns cold doesn't mean it's time to stop fishing. In fact some of the state's largest bass have been taken during the coldest periods of the year. But, although plenty of bass can be caught during the winter months, anglers definitely need to alter their strategies. In general, winter is the season that requires anglers to pay attention to deep water structure.



Points are great transition areas for bass. Virtually every lake in the country has some type of main lake or secondary points. Points are essentially peninsulas that extend into the lake. Some points have portions exposed above the water's surface, while others are completely submerged. In both instances, anglers are likely to find several different depths along the length of a point. The key to working points is to find out what depth bass are holding at. One of the best baits to use while prospecting points is a crankbait. These baits can be retrieved slowly at depth, which is necessary when trying to tempt lethargic winter bass.

Ledges, bluffs and cliffs can also hold bass during the winter months. Sheer drops such as these are perfect for vertical fishing techniques. Drop-shot rigs and jigging spoons are among the most productive vertical fishing techniques. The face of rocky ledges and bluffs can be particularly productive during the afternoon hours on sunny winter days. This is because the heat absorbed by the rock will radiate into the water, offering a slight temperature change. When fishing vertical structure, determining the depth the fish are holding at is also crucial. This is relatively easy to do when using vertical fishing techniques - always start deep and slowly working higher in the water column until the fish are located.



Underwater structure such as humps, old tank dams, road beds or manmade structure such as barrels or tire piles can also hold fish during the winter months. Fish will typically hold tight to this bottom structure. Jigs and Texas- or Carolina-rigged soft-plastics are perfect for pulling bass off submerged structure. Just remember winter bass are usually fairly lethargic, so a slow, methodical retrieve is best.

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Holiday or Anytime Shooting Safety

Christmas holidays means a time for family and friends to take to the field to partake in a variety of hunting traditions across the Lone Star State. Any time a firearm is handled gun safety must be paramount and that awareness increases during this holiday season. Nothing can ruin forever the joy of time afield than a firearm accident that injures or kills.

Even for the most veteran hunter it is a time to review the Commandments of Gun Safety. The National Rifle Association's 10 Commandments include: 1) Always keep the gun pointed in a safe direction; 2) Always keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot; 3) Always keep the gun unloaded until ready to use; 4) Know your target and what is beyond it; 5) Know how to safely use the gun; 6) Make sure the gun is safe to operate before using; 7) Use only the correct ammunition for the gun; 8) Wear eye and ear protection as appropriate; 9) Never use alcohol, over-the-counter drugs or prescription drugs before or while shooting; 10) Store guns so they are not accessible to unauthorized persons (children).

There is another Commandments that states: Don't rely on the safety. By following the first three Commandments above this one is covered.



In Texas deer hunting reigns supreme and there are situations in the field that should be address to assure hunter safety. This includes getting in and out of a hunting stand. Whether it is a pop up ground blind, tripod or elevated box stand, enter and exit the stand with the firearm unloaded.

Many times hunters will enter their stand alone. Even at this time, when there is no one else around, protect yourself by keeping the gun unloaded until safely in the stand.

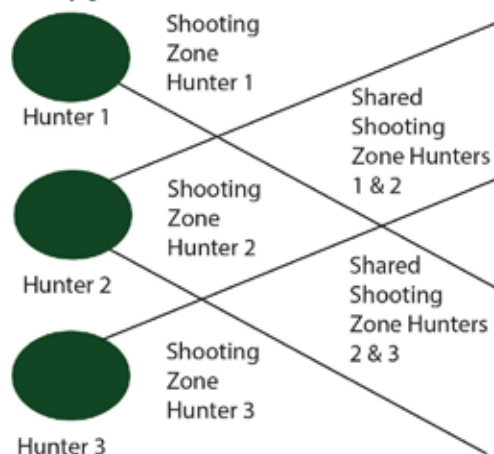
Whether hunting deer, quail, dove, ducks or other game there are times a fence needs to be crossed. Unload the firearm and then cross through, over or under the fence. Then reach back to retrieve the unloaded firearm.

If hunting with others, unload the firearms and let another hunter hold the gun until you have safely passed through the fence or obstacle. Then your firearm and your hunting companion's firearm can be safely passed over the fence.

Upland bird hunters and waterfowlers need to practice gun safety and observe safe zones of fire. This can be done by simply discussing and agreeing to where each hunter will restrict a shot being taken.

Goose hunters will rise from a laying or sitting position to take a shot. The primary focus should be making sure the muzzle of a firearm does not point at any time in a direction that could endanger a fellow hunter.

If at any time something appears in your peripheral vision — be it man, dog, or something unknown — **DON'T TAKE THE SHOT.** There is not any game animal worth accidentally shooting someone.



When hunting with young or inexperienced hunters make sure to keep them safe and others safe from them. It is best for the mentoring hunter to unload and put down their firearm to assure that gun safety is obeyed by the new hunter.

When quail hunting through thick brush communicate with each other so everyone knows where the other is located. This will prevent shots being taken in that direction.

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THROUGH DECEMBER 9,

Mule Deer general season, **Trans-Pecos**, 19 counties. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

THROUGH DECEMBER 9,

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

THROUGH 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.

THROUGH 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.

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 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.

THROUGH 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.

THROUGH 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.

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 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.

THROUGH 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.

THROUGH 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.

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,

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

THROUGH FEBRUARY 24, 2019,

Chacalaca season, four Rio Grande Valley 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, 2019,

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

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Calendar items to:

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Pkwy North

Houston TX 77043

Fax: 713.957.3996

Email: toj@airmail.net

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.

DECEMBER 1 — DECEMBER 30,

Pheasant season, **Panhandle** 37 counties. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

DECEMBER 1 – JANUARY 27, 2019

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

DECEMBER 1 – JANUARY 27, 2019

“Dusky Duck season, second split. **North Zone**. 139 counties. For more information consult the TPWD Out-

door Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

DECEMBER 8 – JANUARY 27, 2019

Duck regular season, second split, **South Zone**, (54 counties). For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

DECEMBER 8 – JANUARY 27, 2019

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

DECEMBER 15 – JANUARY 20, 2019

Sandhill Crane season, **Zone C**. (51 counties). Migratory Game Bird Stamp & Federal Sandhill Crane Permit Required. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

DECEMBER 14 — JANUARY 21, 2019,

Dove, Late Season, **South Zone**, 32 counties. For more information

consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

DECEMBER 18 — JANUARY 31, 2019,

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

DECEMBER 21 — JANUARY 14, 2019,

Dove, Late Season, **North Zone**, 105 counties. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

DECEMBER 21 — JANUARY 14, 2019,

Dove, Late Season, **Central Zone**, 138 counties. For more information consult the TPWD Outdoor Annual, website, or call (800) 792-1112.

DECEMBER 25,

Christmas — All of us with Team TOJ wish each of you a very, Merry Christmas

DECEMBER 31,

And all the Best in the New Year 2019.

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Tide Tables

DECEMBER 2018

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
L5:53A 0.0 H12:16P 0.7 L5:39P 0.5 H11:09P 0.9 30	L6:37A -0.2 H1:53P 0.9 L7:12P 0.6 H11:35P 0.9 31					L6:36 A 0.7 H11:34 A 1.0 L5:40 P 0.5 1
H12:12 A 1.3 L7:07 A 0.4 H1:14 P 1.1 L6:59 P 0.7 2	H12:37 A 1.2 L7:41 A 0.1 H2:33 P 1.3 L8:08 P 0.8 3	H12:58 A 1.2 L8:14 A -0.1 H3:36 P 1.4 L9:09 P 1.0 4	H1:18 A 1.2 L8:46 A -0.2 H4:30 P 1.4 L10:02 P 1.1 5	H1:35 A 1.2 L9:18 A -0.3 H5:17 P 1.5 L10:49 P 1.1 6	H1:48 A 1.2 L9:49 A -0.4 H6:01 P 1.4 L11:30 P 1.1 7	H1:57 A 1.2 L10:21 A -0.4 H6:44 P 1.4 8
L10:55A -0.4 H7:28P 1.3 9	L11:30A -0.3 H8:14P 1.3 10	L12:07P -0.2 H9:01P 1.2 11	L12:46P -0.1 H9:45P 1.2 12	L1:29P 0.0 H10:23P 1.1 13	L2:16P 0.2 H10:53P 1.1 14	L3:11P 0.3 H11:16P 1.0 15
L6:53A 0.4 H11:42A 0.7 L4:19P 0.5 H11:35P 1.0 16	L6:50A 0.2 H1:12P 0.8 L5:37P 0.6 H11:49P 1.0 17	L7:02A 0.0 H2:17P 1.0 L6:53P 0.8 H11:53P 0.9 18	L12:01A 1.0 H2:26A -0.2 H3:11P 1.1 L7:56P 0.9 19	L12:14A 1.0 L7:57A -0.5 H4:00P 1.2 L8:46P 1.0 20	L12:31A 1.1 L8:35A -0.7 H4:47P 1.3 L9:27P 1.0 21	H12:58A 1.1 L9:17A -0.8 H5:36P 1.4 L10:04P 1.1 22
H1:34A 1.2 L10:02A -0.9 H6:26P 1.3 L10:43P 0.8 23	H2:18A 1.2 L10:51A -0.9 H7:16P 1.3 L11:31P 1.0 24	H3:08A 1.1 L11:42A -0.7 H8:06P 1.2 1	L12:36A 0.9 H4:08A 1.0 L12:37P -0.6 H8:52P 1.1 2	L2:14A 0.8 H5:39A 0.9 L1:35P -0.3 H9:34P 1.0 3	L3:57A 0.6 H7:54A 0.7 L2:41P 0.0 H10:09P 1.0 4	L5:03A 0.3 H10:13A -0.2 L4:02P 0.2 H10:41P 0.9 5

JANUARY 2019

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		L7:17A -0.4 H3:09P 1.0 L8:30P 0.8 H11:53P 0.9 1	L7:53A -0.6 H4:03P 0.8 L9:33P 0.8 2	H12:12A 0.9 L8:27A -0.7 H4:47P 1.1 L10:21P 0.8 3	H12:31A 0.9 L9:00A -0.7 H5:25P 1.1 L10:49P 0.8 4	H12:52A 0.9 L9:32A -0.7 H5:59P 1.1 L10:47P 0.8 5
H1:19A 0.9 L10:03A -0.7 H6:31P 1.0 L10:37P 0.8 6	H1:48A 0.9 L10:35A -0.6 H7:04P 1.0 L10:50P 0.8 7	H2:16A 0.9 L11:08A -0.6 H7:38P 0.9 L11:28P 0.7 8	H2:38A 0.8 L11:42A -0.5 H8:12P 0.9 H8:44P 0.8 9	L12:30A 0.6 H2:50A 0.7 L12:16P -0.3 H8:44P 0.8 10	L12:51P -0.2 H9:13P 0.8 11	L1:29P 0.0 H9:36P 0.8 12

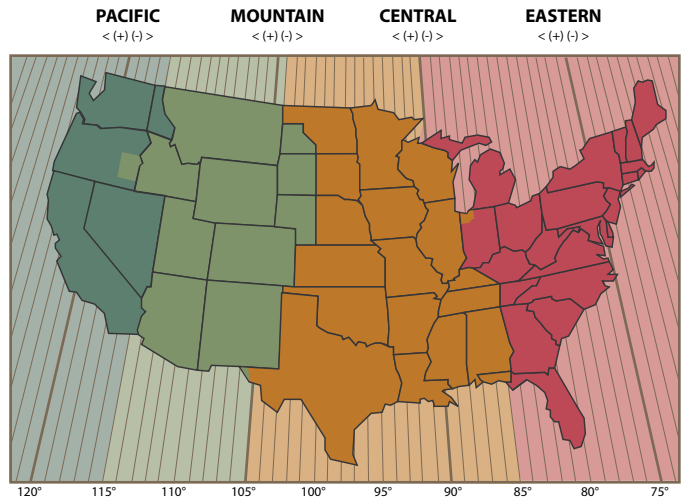
Times are for Galveston, Galveston Channel

TIME DIFFERENCES	High	Low
Calcasieu Pass, Louisiana	-2:14	-1:24
Sabine Pass Lighthouse	-1:46	-1:31
Sabine Pass Jetty	-1:26	-1:31
Sabine Pass	-1:00	-1:15
Mesquite Point, Sabine Pass	-0:04	-0:25
Galveston Bay ent. south jetty	-0:39	-1:05
Port Bolivar	+0:14	-0:06
Galveston Bay		
Texas City, Turning Basin	+0:33	+0:41
Eagle Point (1)	+3:54	+4:15
Clear Lake(1)	+6:05	+6:40
Morgan Point (1)	+10:21	+5:19
Round Pt., Trinity Bay (1)	+10:39	+5:15
Point Barrow, Trinity Bay	+5:48	+4:43
Gilchrist, East Bay	+3:16	+4:18
Jamaica Beach, West Bay	+2:38	+3:31
Alligator Point, West Bay	+2:39	+2:33
Christmas Point, Christmas Bay	+2:32	+2:31
Galveston Pleasure Pier	-1:06	-1:06
San Luis Pass	-0:09	-0:09
Freeport Harbor	-0:44	-1:02
Pass Cavallo	0:00	-1:20
Aransas Pass	-0:03	-1:31
Padre Island (South End)	-0:24	-1:45
Port Isabel	+1:02	-0:42

Tidal adjustments are not predictable for Port O'Connor, Matagorda Bay; Port Lavaca, Matagorda Bay; and Riviera Beach, Baffin Bay since they are driven by wind and weather. — NOAA

Fishing & Hunting Times

US TIME ZONES



DECEMBER 2018

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
30 ☉	31 ☾					1 ☽
5:40A - 10:40A	6:30A - 11:30A					5:55A - 10:55A
2 ☽	3 ☉	4 ☾	5 ☽	6 ☽	7 NEW ☽	8 ☽
6:40A - 11:40A	7:20A - 12:20P	8:05A - 1:05P	8:50A - 1:50P	9:35A - 2:35P	10:20A - 3:20P	11:10A - 4:10P
9 ☽	10 ☽	11 ☽	12 ☽	13 ●	14 ●	15 ●
12:00P - 5:00P	12:50P - 5:50P	1:40P - 6:40P	2:30P - 7:30P	3:25P - 8:25P	3:50A - 8:50A	4:40A - 9:40A
16 ☽	17 ☉	18 ☉	19 ☽	20 ☽	21 ☽	22 ●
5:25A - 10:25A	6:05A - 11:05A	6:45A - 11:45A	7:30A - 12:30P	8:15A - 1:15P	9:05A - 2:05P	10:00A - 3:00P
23 ●	24 ☽	25 ☽	26 ☽	27 ☽	28 ☽	29 ☽
11:00A - 4:00P	12:00P - 5:00P	1:05P - 6:05P	2:10P - 7:10P	3:15P - 8:15P	4:15P - 9:15P	4:45A - 9:45A

JANUARY 2019

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1 ☽	2 ☽	3 ☽	4 ☽	5 NEW ☽
		7:45A - 12:45P	8:45A - 1:45P	9:45A - 2:45P	10:45A - 3:45P	11:45A - 4:45P
6 ☽	7 ☽	8 ☽	9 ●	10 ●	11 ☽	12 ☽
12:45P - 5:45P	1:35P - 6:35P	2:25P - 7:25P	3:15P - 8:15P	4:05P - 9:05P	4:30A - 9:30A	5:20A - 10:20A

● BEST ☽ GOOD ☽ FAIR ○ POOR

Fish, game and all wildlife move in search of food in cycles relative to the moon's location to the earth. The time spans listed above are the prime times to start each day at and along each time zone meridian of longitude 75 degrees (Eastern) 90 degrees (Central) 105 degrees (Mountain) and 120 degrees (Pacific) during Standard time and Daylight Saving during the time it is in effect. To determine the feeding cycle time for best fishing and hunting in the area you plan to fish or hunt advance the sum of 4 minutes for each degree west and back up 4 minutes for each degree east. The next prime feeding cycle (not listed on the calendar) will be approximately twelve and one-half hours later. There are minor periods that occur between the prime or major periods. The minor periods are typically fair periods and last only about half as long as the prime periods.

Feeding Times by Dan Barnett have been proven by analysis of 124 - 3 day bass tournaments between 1967 through 1983 to be reliable and accurate in predicting wildlife feeding activity. The Feeding Times are not a cure-all. Weather and other environmental conditions affect wildlife feeding activity. Annual vest pocket books, which show all the major and minor periods, can be ordered by sending a check or money order for \$19.95 per book. For S&H, please add \$4.95 to an order of 1 to 4 books. Make check or money order payable to: Feeding Times. Send to: Feeding Times, P.O. Box 2240, Covington, GA 30015. After Oct. 1, please indicate book year. For questions or comments, you can call 404-373-7151.

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