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(see page 47, #1)

Hardknocks - Making Wood Work For You

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JOURNAL



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**Reading Open Water | Choosing & Using Deep Divers
River Bottom Hogs | Lower Laguna Madre Variety
To Wade or Not To Wade | Bullets for Boars
Creative Techniques That Benefit Whitetails**

COASTAL & LAKE FORECASTS | TIDE & SOLUNAR TABLES

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May 2014

ERIC CASTANEDA, HOUSTON, TX

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Courtesy of the artist
Calvin Carter and Collectors Covey.
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Editor's Insight | Bill L. Olson

SEASON OF CHANGE

How many times in a year do outdoors enthusiasts refer to it as a time of transition, or change? We think in terms of movement from one pattern or period of "predictability" into another. That progression presents the challenge.

In life we go through these periods dealing with challenges. It is what makes us grow. Eight years ago a personal experience challenged me and left me wondering how to proceed. A loss had occurred and I was the survivor. The path was uncharted, a new approach had to be developed. The months and years that followed created an opportunity for growth.

I have long touted the outdoors as my "sanctuary." I lean heavily on my faith in God to get me through difficult times because I am promised I will not have to bear more than I am capable, or my abilities can handle. It is the outdoors where I retreat, to recover and renew my belief in myself and be close to the one that created the masterful vistas in which I play. One of the ways to learn about yourself is through experiences we have while in pursuit of our outdoor passions.

Some might find it strange that personal challenges can be unraveled in the out-of-doors. My belief is it is unpressured times that help us think more clearly and find solutions. When we try, or are forced to try something different we grow. If we repeat the same thing over and over again, even if successful, there is no growth. We remain in a static state.

Given the weather events of this year it seems we have been, and will continue to be challenged to figure out how to succeed when pursuing the game we hunt, or fish we try to catch.

Now as things start to moderate or to ease up, the opportunity to succeed improves. While struggling with difficult times, we tried new things, or reevaluated how we approached a new situation.

When the "old" ways don't work, a new approach is the best chance of being successful. Our knowledge of what will or will not work increases, and now we are armed with new knowledge that could well be successful as conditions improve.

Many hunters lament this time of year because they contend there is nothing to hunt. This issue proves that position as incorrect. If it is not new ways or thoughts on how to do, it could well be equipment or habitat that provides new knowledge that become tools for future success.

Many look forward to better fishing in May. This year, I think the first part of the month will see conditions that will make us rethink, or tweak our presentations, before things will click.

These outdoor scenarios don't need to be over evaluated or over thought. While we may be at the top of the food chain, we acknowledge the species we pursue as having "home field advantage." They make a living there every day. We venture upon their turf or waters to test our skills and grow.

Sometimes we learn more quickly by sharing this with others, either as a partner, participant, teacher or student. The old saying of "two heads are better than one," comes to mind.

We stay after the answers to success in the outdoors just as we pursue those same answers in our personal life. Stay after it, look to sound well-grounded reliable sources and the transition from where you are today, to where you will be tomorrow will be fulfilled.

Until next month: *Pursue All of Your Outdoor Activities in a Safe and Ethical Manner.*

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Seatrout 5-Fish Bag Limit, Guadalupe River Trout Conservation Rules Adopted

Expansion into the Texas coastal bend of special harvest regulations on spotted seatrout, and harvest modifications to the state's only year-round freshwater trout fishery have been approved by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission.

As part of the 2014-15 Statewide Recreational and Commercial Fishing Proclamation, the Commission adopted rules to extend a 5-fish bag limit currently in effect in the Lower Laguna Madre up the coast through the Highway 457 bridge near Sargent with a five-year sunset date. The Commission modified the original proposal to set the possession limit on spotted seatrout for the area from the Lower Laguna Madre to the Highway 457 bridge twice the daily bag limit (10 fish in possession).

The Commission also approved a temporary 2-year closure of oyster harvest at a 54-acre oyster restoration site on Half-Moon Reef in Matagorda Bay, and a 2-year temporary closure of seven restoration sites in East Galveston Bay.

In other changes to saltwater fishing regulations, the Commission extended the two flounder per day bag limit restrictions currently in effect for the month of November into the first two weeks of

December. During these first two weeks of December, however, harvest would be allowed by any legal means.

For freshwater, the Commission approved changes to the rainbow and brown trout fishery along a section of the Guadalupe River below Canyon Reservoir establishing a 12- to 18-inch slot length limit with a five-fish daily bag limit, harvest by artificial lures only, and only one trout over 18 inches could be retained. The new regulation zone would begin 800 yards downstream from the Canyon Dam release and extend downstream to the easternmost Highway 306 bridge crossing.

The Commission also granted authority for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Executive Director to impose temporary prohibition of alligator gar fishing in specified areas to provide additional protection during spawning activity. Closures would be invoked in a selected area, limited to no more than 30 days, and occur only in areas having an active moderate flood event with water temperatures within an optimum range for alligator gar spawning.

In other freshwater fishing regulation changes, the Commission adopted the

following:

- Texas/Louisiana Border Waters (Toledo Bend Reservoir, Caddo Lake, and the Lower Sabine River in Newton and Orange Counties): regulations for blue and channel catfish changed to no minimum length limit and a 50-fish daily bag limit in any combination, of which no more than five blue or channel catfish 30 inches or longer could be retained.
- Tradinghouse Creek Reservoir: the special limits for freshwater lakes where red drum have been stocked are removed and regulations revert to statewide length limits (20-inch minimum length limit, 28-inch maximum length limit, and harvest of up to two red drum 28 inches or longer per year with trophy drum tag). Bag limit remains at three.
- Lake Kyle: regulations changed to catch and release (no harvest) of channel and blue catfish, largemouth bass, or any sunfish species.
- Canyon Lake Project #6: Harvest regulation for channel and blue catfish changed to no minimum length limit and a five-fish daily bag and anglers restricted to only two poles.
- North Concho River from O. C. Fisher

Cover Art

RETRO!! For long time TOJ subscribers you will notice a similar look to this month's cover from days gone by. The full image of a piece of wildlife or sporting art was the way we looked for years as opposed to the cropped detail from a piece of art we have used in recent years.

The reason for this "old school" look is to so we can present the newly approved and released 2014 Texas Saltwater Stamp by popular Texas artist Calvin Carter. Quite simply there was no way this great image of speckled trout going after shrimp could be enlarged, and cropped without "destroying" the painting.

When told of the *retro* look Carter was excited and said, "That is the look of Texas Outdoors Journal I grew up with. I am pleased to once again be on the cover of this great magazine, and appreciate their sensitivity to the integrity of my artwork."

Warmer weather means speckled trout will be chasing shrimp and other bait. Look for bird activity to point the way to some great catches this month.

For more information on the 2014 Texas Saltwater Stamp Print and other works of art by Calvin Carter visit Collectors Covey at www.collectorscovey.com, or call (800) 521-2403, or contact your local wildlife and sporting art dealer. 🌟🌟



Dam to Bell Street Dam and the South Concho River from Lone Wolf Dam to Bell Street Dam: Anglers restricted to using two poles.

- Recreational anglers who fish with jug lines will be allowed to use floats of any color except orange. Commercial anglers will continue to be restricted to using orange-colored floats.

All changes take effect Sept. 1, 2014. 🌟🌟

New Restaurant Opens at Galveston Yacht Basin

Boaters, anglers, and landlubbers have a new on-the-water gathering place to take a break and grab something to eat with the opening of The Launch Waterfront Eatery, a new grill and bar at the Galveston Yacht Basin. "The Launch" is located at the marina's boat ramp.

"The Launch" is the latest in the overall renovation and new master planned development of the Galveston Yacht Basin. On July 4, 2013 the new dry stack opened that provides boaters full valet services. The location of the Galveston Yacht Basin puts anglers in the middle of the action for this huge upper coast bay system, as well

as easy access to the Galveston jetties and Gulf of Mexico.

The dry stack has fork lift capabilities to pick up crafts over 40 feet long and store them. Wet slips, fuel, and transient slips are also available.

The menu at The Launch consists of burgers, chicken sandwiches, shrimp or fish baskets, and salads. Beer and wine are also available. An open air, covered seating area is available at an elevated location above the tackle store. This provides a great view of activities in the Yacht Basin, and Galveston Channel/Harbor area.

For more information visit Galveston Yacht Basin at www.galvestonyachtbasin.com or call (409) 765-3000.

For information and menu on "The Launch" Waterfront Eatery, search for them on Facebook, or call (409) 765-3088. 🌟🌟

Drone Use Barred in Boone & Crockett Records

Trophies scouted or taken with the assistance of drones/unmanned aerial vehicles are not eligible for entry in Boone and Crockett records, the Club announced on March 26. "These highly

sophisticated, remote-controlled aircraft have no place in fair-chase hunting," said Richard Hale, chairman of the Club's Big Game Records Committee. "The Boone and Crockett Club stands with state wildlife agencies, the Pope and Young Club and hunter-conservationists everywhere who are discouraging the use of drones in hunting."

In the early 1960s, the Boone and Crockett Club barred trophies taken with use of aircraft. "Spotting or herding game from the air, followed by landing in its vicinity for the purpose of pursuit and shooting" was deemed unethical. The Club's policy spawned regulations in Alaska and elsewhere designed to protect the integrity of hunting and conserve game.

Hale said Boone and Crockett is always on alert for new technologies that could erode the time-honored traditions of fair chase. Fair chase is defined by the Club as the ethical, sportsmanlike and lawful pursuit and taking of any free-ranging wild, native North American big game animal in a manner that does not give the hunter an improper advantage over such animals. 🌟🌟

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The spring and early summer months are when many Texans spend their quality time enjoying the weather, smelling the flowers and — if they want to be able to hit those grey ghosts of fall — honing their wingshooting skills.

While professional instructors may vary on their means, motivation and measures to help improve a shooter's skills, they generally agree on one thing — getting back to the basics is the key to perfect practice.

Former National Sporting Clays Association Chief Instructor Gary Greenway regularly made a point to tell his students that one of the basic foundations for a successful wing shooter was to slow down.

Several years ago when he was watching this outdoor writer attempt to handle a fast rabbit target, Greenway gathered the other students in the shooting class together and said: "Ralph is hitting the target most of the time, but he is working too hard to do it."

“Here is Ralph,” he said as he tightly held his shotgun and rushed a shot at one of the rabbits. The target shattered, but his effort to move the shotgun and swing through the rabbit was obviously excessive.

“Being tense and being fast will work — sometimes — but you are expending too much energy. Slow down, be smooth, and you will still break the target. The difference will show at the end of the day when you won’t be so worn out that you can’t hit anything,” he said.

His advice holds true whether a shooter is working on his clay target skills or attempting to better his bird average. Be smooth, think smooth and stay smooth to do the same thing the same way every time and shooting success will be easier than you can imagine.

A common theory in the instructor business is that during the process of skill improvement, most students will retain about 90 percent of what they do; about 30 percent of what they see; about 20 percent of what they hear; and about 10 percent of what they read.

That means hands-on experience with a shotgun is the most important part of being able to improve a shooter's ability to hit



Warm weather trigger time on clay target courses like this mother-daughter team shooting at a San Antonio Gun Club skeet field can be good practice for fall bird hunting if the shooter and instructor focus on the basics.

targets. Nothing works better than sending lead down range and watching clay targets break or a bird fall from the sky.

Since most shooters do not have the opportunity to practice on live birds, the clay target ranges are the most common locations for spring and summer practice sessions.

While clay target games such as skeet, trap and sporting clays all have their good points and bad points as far as practicing for hunting situations, the main goal should be learning to handle targets that



The five-stand set up at the Karnes County Lonesome Dove Fest provides excellent clay target practice for bird hunting to the thousands of hunters who participate in the annual event held on opening weekend of the South Zone dove season.

most closely simulate the flight of birds.

Remember that in clay target games, the target is always decelerating. The moment the target leaves the arm of the trap, gravity starts slowing it down. Birds use their wing muscles to counter gravity and are generally accelerating or maintaining their speed.

This difference requires a shooter to adjust leads in order to hit the birds where they eat and not where they sit. Tail feathers knocked out of a bird that continues to sail off in the distance are often a noticeable reminder of this rule.

Wildlife biologists have clocked mourning doves and white-winged doves at sustained speeds of about 40-45 miles per hour (even faster in a tail wind) while most clay targets are released at about 30-40 miles per hour and are slowing down by the time the shooter can engage the clay.

A smooth swing, rather than a jerky motion, is even more essential for downing birds than it is for breaking clays. An off-center hit on a clay target will still result in an "x" on the score sheet, but a bird that is slightly injured in the edge of a pattern can often disappear into the distance.

Shooters should also be aware that while the clays in the air may be speeding through the sky at 40-45 miles per hour, the shot from a fired shell is traveling at



National Sporting Clays Association Level III Instructor Mo Parsons offers some quality wing shooting suggestions to help shooter Víctor Pool with some incoming targets during an August bird-hunters' league practice session at the San Antonio Gun Club.

about 600 miles per hour. That cloud of lead will overtake a fleeing clay or bird every time, if the shooter had done his or her part in putting the barrel in the right place.

Dan Moseley, a NSCA Level II shotgun instructor and concealed carry instructor based in San Antonio, has found many clay shooters make the mistake of not practicing their follow-through or their second shot opportunity that is often necessary for bagging a bird.

"If a shooter misses the first shot, they need to stay on that bird," he said, explaining his advice to practicing wing shooters. "There is about a 75 percent chance they will connect with a good second shot."

Normally on a clay target field, the rule is one shot for each clay in the air, but with the consent of the range owner, shooters practicing their bird hunting skills will often be allowed a double tap opportunity.

"I like to have the shooters use the move, mount, shoot method, with a low gun as if they were in the field. That is the best practice for bird shooting," he said.

As he points out, one of the key pieces of instructor advice is for the bird shooter to focus on taking one target at a time. That can be pretty tough when flocks of doves are bearing down on a shooting position, but it is essential in making hits.

The better you see the bird — try to focus on the head and not the flapping wings or tail that can draw you off target — the better chance a shooter will have in making a hit. A shooter's eyes are naturally attracted to motion, such as the flapping

wings, and a successful hunter will recognize and overcome the diversion.

Another key to success in practicing on clays for future bird hunts is to move your eyes before you move the barrel of the shotgun.

A shooter should have the barrel of the shotgun in close proximity to the target line, but should not move the barrel until his or her eyes are clearly focused on the target. Moving both the eyes and the barrel at the same time can cause the shooter to focus on the moving barrel rather than the moving target. Normally, this results in a miss rather than what should be an easy hit.

As a final suggestion, spring and early summer are also the best time for a shooter to try out a new smoke pole if their veteran shooting tool just does not seem to do its job.

While the most popular field shotgun on Texas flyways and fields each fall is a 12 gauge pump-action — fueled in part by the pump's economical price tag — shooters might try to experiment with an over and under or a 20 gauge to see if their target busting skills can be improved.

In general, an over and under will have less felt recoil than a pump-action because



Incoming targets just clearing the trees are perfect practice clays for shooters spending a little range time in order to become better hunters when fall season birds are in the air.

of its design, and a sub-gauge shotgun with lighter loads will also cut back on shoulder shock.

Shooting should be a fun game, and getting a bruised shoulder or cheek from an afternoon of shooting is not much fun. By giving a better balanced, lighter kicking shotgun a try during the off season time, a shooter might just be able to impress his or her shooting buddies when the birds are in the air during the fall. 🌟🌟🌟

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Wade or Not to Wade

The discussion rages of the Pros and Cons of getting wet or staying in a boat when fishing for trout and red.

Story and photography by Robert Sloan

The difference between fishing from a boat, or wading is like night and day. Simply put, one is wet the other dry. Or better yet, while fishing from a boat you are insulated from things like getting hit by a stingray or worse picking up the flesh-eating virus known as *Vibrio Vulnificus*.

Up until about five years ago wading was the go-to option for thousands of anglers along the Texas coast. But something has happened. Fishermen are reluctant to get out of the boat. Why? Who knows.

"I've been wade fishing for trout and reds for decades," says Matagorda Bay's Capt. Charlie Paradoski. "In fact I go back to wade fishing with Rudy Grigar. That's the only way we ever fished. That was back when we fished out of Port O'Connor, and later the Chandeleur Islands. Up until about five years ago about 99.9 percent of my customers wouldn't stay in the boat. It's just the opposite now. I can't figure out why either."

The wading jag can come and go. If there are lots of fishing reports about waders taking big trout more anglers are

willing to wade. For example, back about 15 years ago catches of big trout on Sabine Lake began to surface. And it didn't take nearby Galveston guides long to move their customers over to Sabine Lake, located on the Texas/Louisiana border. Back then wading was non-existent on Sabine. But when all those Galveston waders began catching numbers of big trout on Sabine, the locals didn't waste too much time gearing up to wade either.

Within a year or so after that, word of big trout being caught by waders on Lake Calcasieu in southwest Louisiana began to spread. Next thing you know waders from everywhere descended upon this big trout Mecca like shoppers to a gigantic sale.

I was talking to tackle manufacturer Ken Chaumont of Egret Baits the other day and the topic turned to wading vs. boat fishing. He has spent many years fishing on Calcasieu.

"Years ago there was nobody wade fishing on Calcasieu," says Chaumont. "Then Texas anglers drifted over here, next thing you know we've got waders everywhere. But even at that, I and a lot



The great thing about fishing from a boat is that you have all the amenities of home.



Noise made by boaters is a major factor that works against them. Just recently I had a couple of customers on my boat that didn't have a clue about spooking fish. They were slamming storage compartment lids and walking with lead feet on the deck. All of which will spook wary trout and redfish in just about any situation. Conversely, a wader moves along as quiet as a church mouse.

One thing is certain about fishing from a boat – trolling motors will definitely spook fish. I run a 22-foot Mowdy with a bow mounted 101-pound

There is nothing like wading a thigh-deep flat and returning to the boat with fish on your stringer, but don't wade without a net.

of other anglers, never got out of our boats, and we still caught big trout. Why? Because we were quiet. We would, and still do, drift into an area, stake out the boat, and fish every inch of that water thoroughly."

The one big advantage waders have over boaters is that they can slowly and thoroughly fish every inch of productive water without spooking a potential target trout or red. However, when boaters use the Power Pole approach they can do pretty much the same thing waders do.

I do a lot of guiding out of Port O'Connor. That's where the clear water begins on the Texas coast and goes all the way down to the Texas/Mexico border. That's where waders have a distinct advantage over boaters. On gin clear flats trout and reds have a tremendous amount of visibility. They are much more wary than trout that you'll find in the waters from East Matagorda Bay and on northward up to Galveston and Sabine Lake.

thrust Minn Kota trolling motor. It'll definitely run fish off.

What I'll almost always do is bump troll, as in turning the troll motor on, then off. It's used to maintain a specific drift in conjunction with wind and tide. It's an excellent option when fishing shallow flats.

While making a bump-troll drift I'll be quick on the Power Pole when a fish is hooked up. That allows me to thoroughly fish a "hot" area.

The great thing about fishing from a boat is that you have all the amenities of home. You're high and dry, beverages are at arm's reach, and you can sit down, relax and fish in comfort.

When wading you've got to take all the necessary gear with you. That includes lures, a rod and reel, water, a net, pliers, stringer and some sort of stingray-proof gear on your legs. While wading you've got to watch out for rays, jellyfish and sharks. And, most importantly, you've got to be able to grab, unhook a fish and string it

while not dropping your rod and reel. It's a juggling act to be sure.

But here's the deal. When wading you are on your own. It's total escape from the real world, and amazingly quiet. It's you and the fish. In the angling world there is nothing like wading a thigh-deep flat and returning to the boat with fish on your stringer.

The first step to wading is comfort. And a big part of that is a comfortable wading belt, and wading shoes. Aside from that you'll need a good hat that offers plenty of shade on the face. Khaki used to be standard attire for wading the flats, surf and bays. That's all changed. Quick-dry and lightweight clothing is now the norm.

I don't leave the boat without my favorite wading belt. It's a Foreverlast G2 pro wading belt that's fully adjustable with back support. It's loaded with gear that includes pliers, a removable tackle box, rod holder, 15 foot stringer, drink holder and a snap for my Foreverlast lightweight floating net. By the way, never head out on a wade without a net.

Capt. Jim West, a veteran guide on East Galveston Bay, used to never wade with a net. That is until he lost a double digit trout at hand.

"I always thought nets got in the way



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

For years big trout like this nine pounder were caught from Lake Calcasieu while drifting and they are still being caught today.

until that moment," says West. "Since then I keep one with me on every wade."

Another major part of your wadefishing outfit centers on your feet. There are all sorts of wadefishing boots to choose from. Some of the most popular are booties that zip up just over your ankle. They offer zero protection from a stingray hit. You want boots that offer protection to just below your knee caps. I use Redhead snake proof boots that zip up the side. They are stingray proof, lightweight and easy on, easy off. They take the worry out of suffering from a nasty stingray wound.

Another major fear factor associated with wading is getting the flesh eating virus known as Vibrio Vulnificus. While working as an outdoor writer for newspapers and magazines for the past 34 years I've done a number of stories on this awful disease. Here's what I've learned. When in doubt, wear a pair of lightweight, stocking foot waders. I wear Simms ultralight waders that are easy to put on, and very durable. They can be used as chest waders, or folded down to the waist. If you have an open wound or abrasion wear waders. If you get cut, circle the wound with a waterproof pen. If it



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

There are places and times when it is much easier to drift, like along a mud/grass shoreline.

turns red and the redness moves outside the circle, within an hour or so, get to a Hospital Emergency Room ASAP.

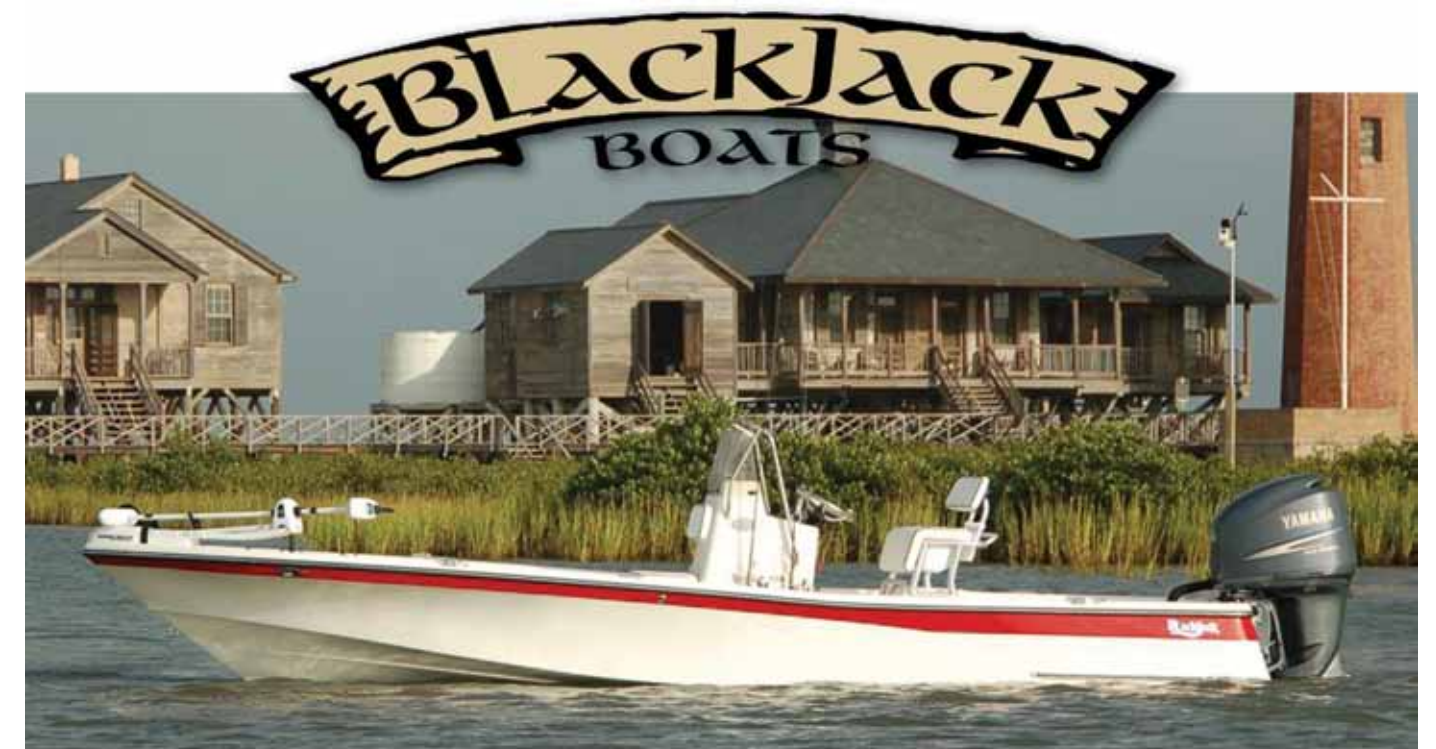
Getting into wading might sound like a lot of work and effort. It is, until the first time you "suit" up and slip over the side of the boat. It's an absolute blast and

total escape from the real world. I've been wading for close to five decades, and the adventure of it all is still there.

Then again, why get out of a perfectly good boat?

The debate and discussion continues.

T★J



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BlackJack 224
By Bill Kenner





FOCUS – Guide to capturing good photos

They say a picture is worth 1,000 words.

I don't know about all that. But I will agree there is no substitute for a good photo when it comes to preserving a precious fishing or hunting memory. Whether it is a youngster's first perch, dad's first double digit bass or kid's first deer, nothing tells the story like an 8 x 10 of good quality.

Thanks to the advent of point-and-shoot digital cameras, attaining professional grade field photos is not near as difficult as it once was. These user friendly cameras allow you to record a series of images and review them on the spot, in a matter of seconds. If a picture is lacking something with composure or the exposure is incorrect, you know it before it is too late. Simply delete the bad shots and snap more.

That was not the case with the print

and slide films I cut my shutter finger with. Back then, walking away from a photo shoot or assignment sometimes meant waiting several days to see the final results. In fact, I can remember a time when the turn around time on a roll of Kodachrome slides was about two weeks.

While the gear we use to take pictures has improved dramatically over the last decade, the basics of the art remain unchanged. To get good quality field photos, you either need to put some thought into it ahead of time or be real lucky.

There are several tricks to getting quality pictures of happy anglers with their trophies. Here are some things to keep in mind before clicking the shutter.

- Double check your camera settings. Use the slowest ISO setting possible for the available light. If you are shooting digital, make sure the camera is set to

give you the highest resolution possible. While shooting on low resolution will allow you to squeeze more images onto a flash card, it will greatly reduce the quality of enlargements.

- SmartPhones vs DSLR: Lots of folks are using phone cameras these days. In fact, I'd say probably 90 percent of the pictures I receive from fishermen are taken by point and shoot phone cameras.

The more expensive smart phones are capable of taking casual photos worthy of enlargements, but I am a much bigger fan of digital DSLR's, because they provide much greater versatility as playing with focal lengths, exposure, etc..... Placed in capable hands, a DSLR can produce professional-grade results that cannot be achieved with a smart phone camera.

- Don't rush. Take the time to pinpoint a good location, position the subject

properly and shoot plenty of frames from different angles. One or two photos will invariably stand out from the rest. The best fishing photos are those that depict the fish and angler in a pleasing setting in clear focus.

- Pay attention to light. Whenever possible, always shoot with the sun at your back. Backlight can at times produce dramatic results — just be sure to shoot multiple images at different exposure settings. This is called "bracketing."

The best natural light occurs early in the morning and late in the evening, when the sun is low on the horizon and its rays are soft and golden. The worst light occurs during the middle of the day, when the sun is directly overhead and casting harsh shadows and hotspots on the subject.

In extremely bright conditions, try to position the subject in a shaded area and use a fill flash. The flash will give the picture some "pop." Plus, it will help eliminate distracting shadows around the subject's

eyes, or those created by the bill of a cap. With the proper exposure, field flash also helps create a uniform blend of lighting between the subject and the background.

- Avoid distracting poses. In most cases, the main emphasis of a fishing picture is the fish itself. Keep that in mind when positioning the fish and the angler. Lip and grip photos are the most common. Try to position the fish in a way that it

- Background is everything. Always try to avoid busy backgrounds created by bushes, trees and other junk. Neutral backgrounds consisting of water or blue sky are especially nice.

I have shot dozens of angler portraits over the years. One of my favorites depicts a good friend holding a couple of solid bass amid a grassy backdrop. It took a little time and effort to prepare for that photo shoot, but the end result was worth it.

- Props can be a good thing, so long as they are used sparingly. Positioned correctly, a fishing pole, tackle box or

outboard engine can add a nice touch and make a good photograph even better.

- Poor composition can kill an otherwise good photograph. One of the most common blunders I see in field photos is too much distance between the camera and subject. Move in close. Use of a telephoto lens will create a shallow depth of field and place heavy emphasis on the subject. **T&J**

“While the gear we use to take pictures has improved dramatically over the last decade, the basics of the art remain unchanged.”

doesn't get lost in a cluttered background.

If the fish is an extremely big one, particularly a largemouth bass, it is a good idea to hold it horizontal with some support under the tail. This reduces the amount of stress placed on the lower jaw. I sometimes instruct my models to support the fish with a single index finger placed just in front of the anal fin rather than fully gripping the tail.



Proper depth of field that highlights the subject, plus a neutral background help make this well composed photo “pop.”



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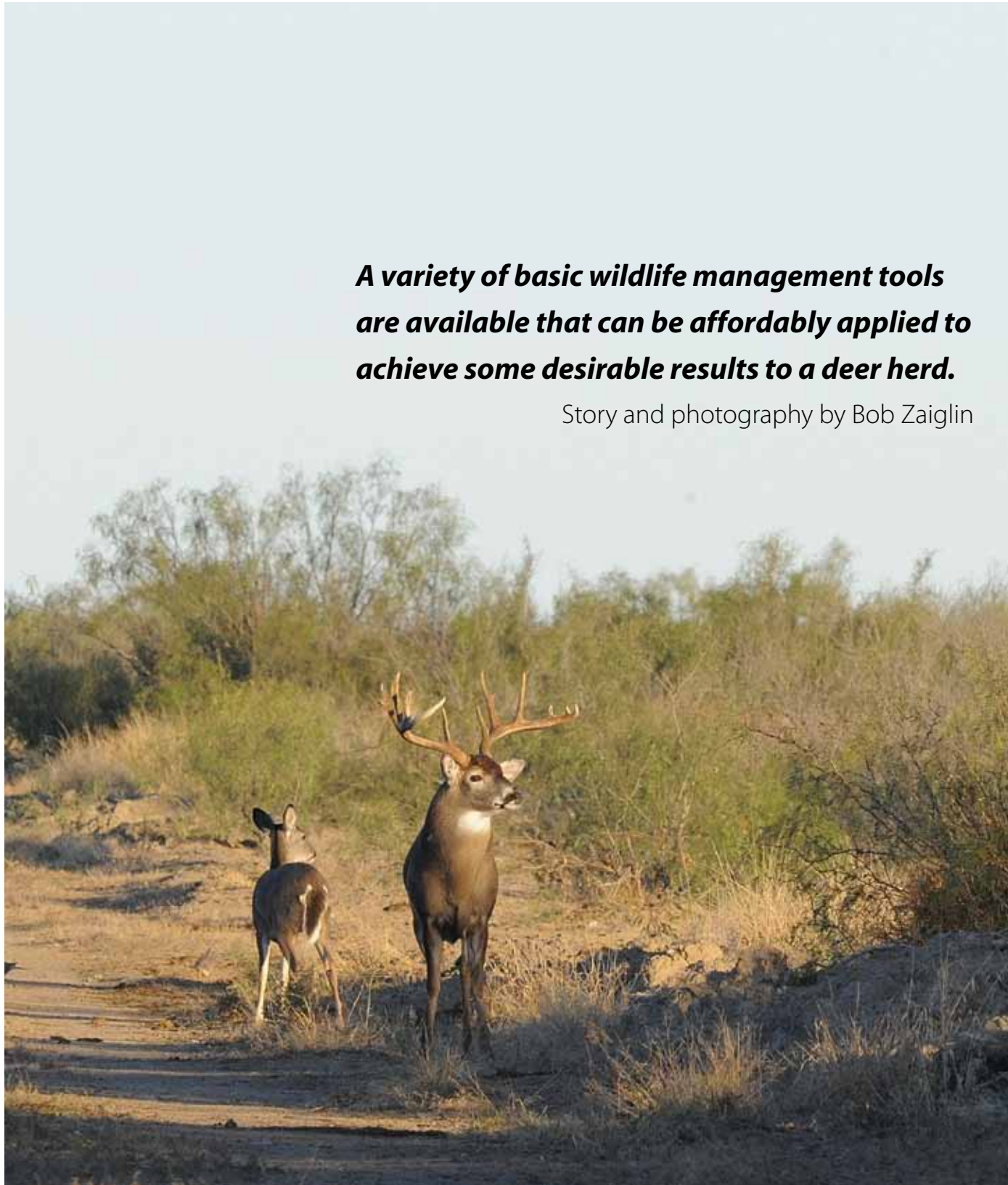
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Creative Techniques

A variety of basic wildlife management tools are available that can be affordably applied to achieve some desirable results to a deer herd.

Story and photography by Bob Zaiglin



that Benefit Whitetails



Managing a deer herd to an optimal level can be exorbitantly expensive, but it doesn't have to be that hard on one's bank account, particularly on small landholdings. And since the present average ranch size in Texas is approximately 500 acres, a variety of basic wildlife management tools are available that can be affordably applied to achieve some desirable results.

Prior to the application of management, it's important to review the three

prerequisites of deer management often referred to as a three-legged stool — age, nutrition, and genetics. It's also important to point out that although all three are important and rely on each other, the age factor has the greatest impact on just how big those antlers can get.

For example, a particular buck with the right genetic makeup on an optimal diet will no doubt support a desirable-sized rack, but it must be able to live long enough to do so. In other words, when the desirable genetic component

is missing or nutritious forage is limited, the stool leans, but if that deer is removed by a hunter prior to its maximum antler-producing years, the stool collapses. That's how important age is when it comes to antler size, and more importantly, it is the only factor that sportsmen have total and affordable control over. And since sportsmen make the ultimate management decision when it comes to pulling the trigger, nothing can eclipse the impact of the age factor more than the hunter's willingness to provide



The structure of small affordable water catchment such as this pond provides all wildlife water over an extended period.

those young bucks an opportunity to live a longer life when it comes to antler size. However, there are a number of basic tasks that can be conducted to improve one's chances of seeing a quality buck on their property.

Wildlife management is not complicated; it is actually quite basic. Aldo Leopold stated that wildlife management could be successfully applied using simple tools such as the cow, fire, and the ax. What he was referring to is the fact that basic habitat management is the cornerstone to managing all wildlife.

If you have ever hunted deer in a pine forest, it probably wasn't long before you realized that most of the deer spent their time in cut-over areas and not within the open understory that characterizes a mature pine forest. Why deer gravitated to disturbed sites was simply because a diversity of low-growing palatable plants and trees were developing in the cut over areas, and more importantly an exceptional food source was not only within reach of the animals, but afforded them some protection at the same time.



The unattractiveness to collateral species such as hogs makes cottonseed a feasible alternative to supplemental feeding with a pellet that oftentimes must be fenced.

Now I am not suggesting that you clear-cut your farm, ranch or lease, but I do suggest that small areas one hundred yards long and 20 to 40 yards wide be thinned. With a small ax or hand saw, a few of the taller trees can be felled in order to allow more sunlight to hit the opened understory in order to facilitate the germination of various grasses and forbs that often remain dormant for years without the appropriate conditions. By doing so, the nutritional aspect of a deer's diet is positively impacted, and the regrowth provides them more screen or protection cover, which makes the disturbed area even more attractive to deer.

In the maze of thorn scrub in South Texas, a small chain saw can be employed to establish narrow shooting lanes that diverge away from one's blind like spokes of a bicycle. The resulting regeneration becomes extremely attractive to deer, oftentimes establishing the lanes as mini travel corridors.

Clearing pathways leading to one's favorite deer stand represents a furtive pathway to the blind. For example, I had deer blinds established on the edge of a number of food plots in South Texas that could be approached by walking through the field. But by doing so, deer that arrived earlier than expected were disturbed. To circumvent this problem, I would chain saw a pathway to the blind that afforded me the opportunity to view any of its occupants without interrupting them. If a significant number of deer, particularly bucks, were in the field, I could then enter the blind once they were preoccupied feeding. By establishing these pathways, it afforded me the opportunity to check out several fields in a morning or evening. In other words, it increased my hunting efficiency because some fields attracted more deer than others at various times of the day.

To the sportsmen interested in attracting and retaining deer on their property, a sanctuary could be established using the aforementioned tools. This is simply an unhunted area that over time is manicured to the point that it becomes extremely desirable to deer, and its attraction to deer can be enhanced by the addition of water or a food attractant.

Soil disturbance is equally as important as thinning vegetation, and it can be accomplished by something as simple as

dragging a railroad tie behind a pickup truck, tractor or a four-wheeler.

The bottom line is any disturbance to the environment results in a reversal of the successional development of the herbivory. The importance of this reversal in plant development is the fact that plants in their early successional stages are more palatable and generally contain more crude protein, thus are extremely attractive to deer. While disturbance generates diversity, fertilizer insures it. Spot fertilizing can be

used for everything from augmenting acorn production to developing a hefty robust plant community. So whenever you are disturbing the balance of nature by conducting a select cut, thinning, or disking, don't forget to at least investigate the impact fertilizer could have on enhancing it even more.

Whenever fertilizer is employed to benefit the vegetation, nitrogen is involved. Supplementing deer, particularly bucks, with the antler supporting elements of phosphorus and calcium,

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Although windmills are an important source of water for wildlife, they can be enhanced by solar pumps.

however, is another matter, particularly since bucks are unable to obtain enough of these two valuable antler-building minerals in the later stages of the antler-growing period. To supplement these valuable minerals that are often less than freely available in a deer's forage, I recommend the establishment of natural mineral licks. Sportsmen are aware of the attraction deer have to natural salt licks, but seldom do they think about providing deer, particularly bucks, a natural source of minerals required

most for antler growth.

For years I have tested soil on different ranches to measure or at least determine the presence of calcium and phosphorus. Amazingly, I found calcium and phosphorus to vary greatly, sometimes changing dramatically, only a few paces apart. Understanding the critical role these minerals play in antler size, I began to test ways to provide deer more of these entities. What I discovered was that the distribution of a nitrogen-lacking fertilizer into a shallow five-inch deep hole

was an easy and economical method of compensating bucks with minerals that were often in short supply.

What I originally used was 0-20-20, which meant that in a 100 lb. allotment, 20 pounds of both calcium and phosphorus were present. This mineral, distributed in a shallow five-inch hole two to three feet in circumference, was almost immediately attractive to Hill Country deer, but not so for those South Texas bucks, that is until they became aware of its presence. In other words, some deer herds took a longer period of time to acquire an interest in the natural mineral resource.

Another project that can be conducted outside the hunting season is to position tripods, tree stands, or deer blinds based on the prevailing wind. In other words, if you have a favorite place to hunt, develop several positions from where you can hunt the area without diluting the area with human scent.

Feeding deer can be cost prohibitive, but supplementing their diet with a high protein source could prove extremely beneficial to the animals. One ideal source of nutritional supplement is cottonseed. It not only contains a high amount of digestible protein, it is generally not utilized by collateral species such as feral hogs. As a result, a feed station providing cottonseed does not require a hog proof fence around it, which reduces cost significantly, thus more cottonseed dispensers can be distributed, making them more available to deer.

Water is imperative to the survival of all wildlife. Windmills and submersible wells are ideal water producers, but are expensive. One method of establishing a water source is to build a water guzzler which is nothing more than a v-shaped roof capable of delivering water to a holding tank which distributes it to a water trough. In areas void of water, a guzzler is an ideal way to attract and hold deer on your property.

A variety of creative techniques can be employed to make one's particular piece of deer turf not only attractive but beneficial to whitetail deer. But regardless the improvements, one must remain realistic as to the outcome. No one, regardless the amount of money they spend, can consistently harvest big deer, but the harvest of a mature buck you helped to develop is truly a big deal. **T&J**

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Lake Roundup

CENTRAL TEXAS

By John Jefferson

Here we are in the middle of a drought that won't quit, we're following a winter without end, **Lake Travis** is only 38% full, and yet people are catching fish like mad – and big fish, at that!

Make that Record Fish! And one of those was an *I told you so*. Forgive me for saying that – yes, even gloating over it — but if you read this column in the March issue of TOJ for this year, you might recall that I prophesied that little **Lady Bird Lake**, that step-child to **Lake Austin**, would someday soon produce a bass large enough to enter in the Toyota ShareLunker program. To make that elite team, a bass has to weigh 13 pounds or over.

I'm so not often right that when it happens, I want to mention it. And it has happened, although a little sooner than even I suspected.

On March 18, Ken Leonard, of New Braunfels, was fishing Lady Bird, that diminutive 416 – acre water body that meanders through downtown Austin, separating the North Austin business, residential and university communities from the free state of South Austin, when he caught Toyota ShareLunker 556. The 13.0-pound fish took his three-inch River to Sea swim bait at 1 p.m. The fish was 25 inches long and 20.5 inches in girth.

The fish is the first ever ShareLunker from Lady Bird Lake. The previous heaviest fish reported from the lake weighed 12.13 pounds. The lake is better known for the rowing teams that work out on

it, numerous kayakers and canoeists, the bats that live under one of its bridges and as an occasional scenic diversion for runners and walkers on the hike and bike trail that are temporarily out of t-shirts to read. You don't hear it mentioned very often in conversations about big bass.

Oh, some know it has good fishing, but access and restrictions keep it under the radar. It may be the most regulated lake in Texas, but I'm not complaining about that. In a university town, it's a nice reprieve from the *circus of the Americas* that takes place on Lake Austin with its unending water parade of big boats turning gasoline into noise.

In its wisdom, the City of Austin has enacted regulations for Lady Bird Lake prohibiting swimming, bathing, wading, or going into the water, except to rescue another human. Guess that leaves dogs out. It's also illegal to fish from any bridge, dive from or jump off any bridge, or operate a gas powered motor vessel without city permission. I like that one, but some think it makes Bird a useless body of water where fishing is concerned. But in a sanctuary city like Austin, it could easily become one big bathtub were it not regulated.

But that's not all. You can't even have water bomb (balloon) fights on or toward the lake or sleep in your boat between dusk and dawn or overnight. That last part sounds a little redundant, but so does the City Council, at times. And since it wasn't warm afternoon in the 70s when I dozed off for a few minutes in my canoe, I guess I was somewhat legal. At least nobody launched a water bomb at me.

Electric (trolling) motors are OK, but before any ingenious reader develops an electric motor capable of water skiing behind, those motors are restricted to no more than five horsepower.

There is bank fishing almost all the way around the hike and bike trail, and who knows, you might even find a sack full of gold like one couple claimed. I once found a cashless cash register in it. Unimproved boat ramps are located on the north shore at Festival Beach and



PHOTO BY JOHN JEFFERSON

The white bass have completed their spawn and returned to deeper water in the lakes. Try a Blakemore Road Runner jig like the one pictured, and fish it deep, unless you see a school breaking the surface.

behind the Holiday Inn Hotel just west of I-35. One additional ramp for lightweight boats is located across Stephen F. Austin Street from Austin High School. Several of us have launched float boats at Red Bud Island, just below Tom Miller Dam, and that seems to be permissible. Just watch where you step; it's a dog park, nowadays.

Don Gordon guides Bird, and has a strong but legal electric motor on his boat. He doesn't charge for kids, and can be reached at (512) 704-7793. He'll put you on fish.

If you're a paddler, but up the creek without a craft, [Zilker Park Boat Rentals](#) is located on Barton Creek, just east of Barton Springs Pool in Zilker Park, and rents canoes and kayaks.

While March is typically the peak month for catching big bass, cold weather keeping water temperatures low apparently has slowed the movement into spawning areas. Wind and rain have also kept many anglers off the water. Recent



PHOTO COURTESY MARCOS DE JESUS, © TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT

Dr. Bryan Townsend of Austin caught this 3.71-pound, 17-inch Guadalupe bass from the Colorado River below Austin February 1. The fish is the new state record and may qualify as a world record.

catches are probably an indication the pattern is changing.

More big fish news

A 3.71-pound, 17-inch Guadalupe bass caught from the Colorado River below Austin appears to qualify as a new state and world record in several categories.

Dr. Bryan Townsend, of Austin, was fly-fishing with guide Shea McClanahan on Saturday, February 1, when he landed the record state fish of Texas. The previous state record Guadalupe was caught by Austin fishing guide, Allen Christenson, Jr., and weighed just over three pounds. That record held up for years.

TPWD Inland Fisheries biologist Marcos De Jesus assisted in transporting the fish to the Cabela's in Buda, where it was weighed on a certified scale. DNA testing confirmed it was pure Guadalupe bass.

Townsend elected to donate the fish to TPWD for display at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens. It can be seen in the dive tank.

"The Colorado River below Austin, from Longhorn Dam to La Grange, has

been a special bass fishery for many years," said De Jesus. "Productive waters and excellent habitat have helped support a healthy black bass population composed of largemouth and Guadalupe bass. Recently, aquatic vegetation exploded all over this river segment. Flood events in October flushed a lot of it downstream, making it easier to fish."

De Jesus noted that many large Guadalupe and largemouth bass are caught by anglers every year from this stretch of river. Guadalupe bass in the two- to three-pound range are frequently reported on fishing guides' web pages. Reports of 50 to 100 fish trips are not uncommon.

Townsend's fish qualifies as the new state and water body weight and water body and state fly-fishing records. It may qualify for International Game Fish Association world records as well. Way to go,

Doc! As feisty a fighter as a Guadalupe is, I can only dream of that much fun. River bass are that way.

But wait; there is one more recent record fish out of our waters! On March 10, Kent Bowen reeled in a 50.74 blue catfish from Lake Austin. He caught it on cut up perch (sunfish), and later released the fish back into Lake Austin after it had been officially weighed. By so doing, he qualified for the catch and release record. And he didn't miss the overall lake record of 56.55 pounds by much.

Capt. Bruce Shuler, who guides several Central Texas lakes, says now's the time to fish. Due to the long, cold winter, some bass are still on beds in shallow water. He says use a black or blue lizard for 'em. He also suggests using white spinner baits with chartreuse skirts and silver blades on clear days; gold on cloudy days. He'll also fish topwater baits, very slowly. 🌟🌟

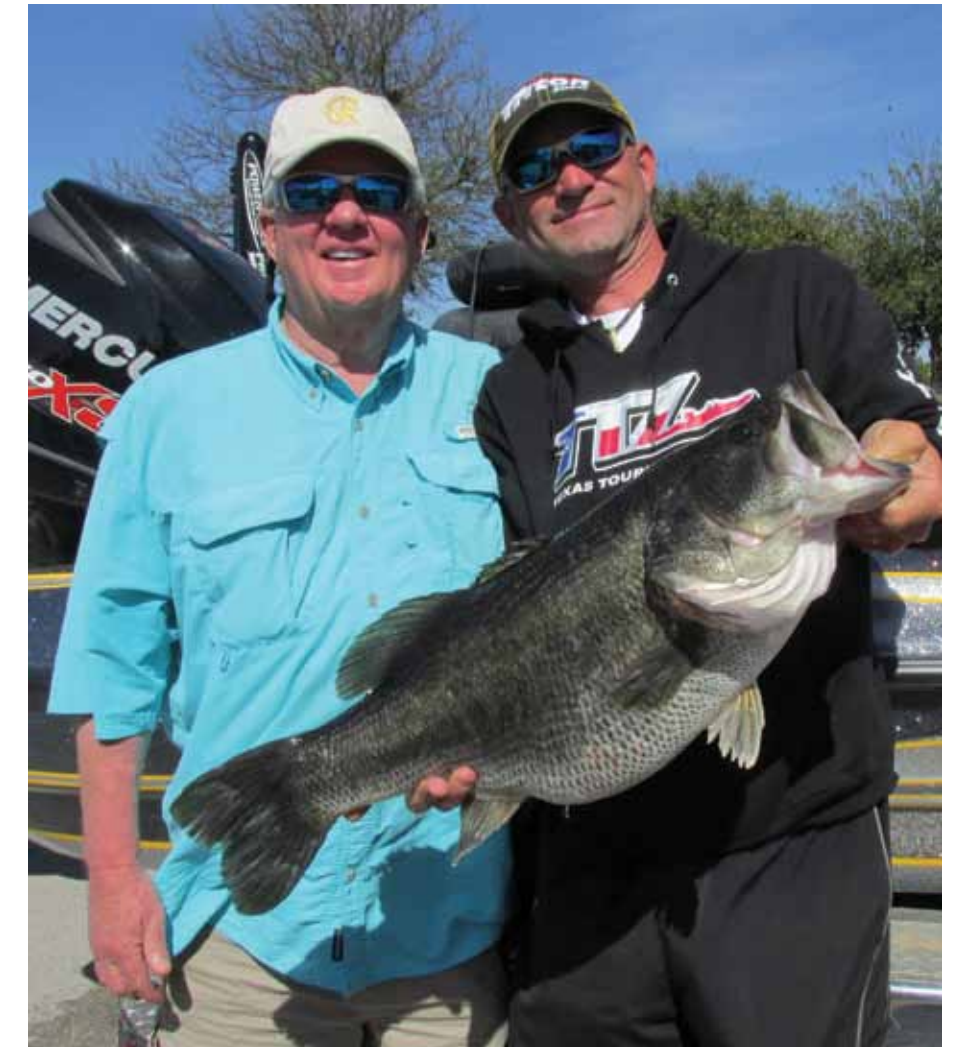


PHOTO COURTESY RYAN FONTANA, © TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT

Ken Leonard (left, with guide Charles Whited) of New Braunfels caught Toyota ShareLunker 556 from Lady Bird Lake in Austin March 18. The fish weighed 13.0 pounds and was 25 inches long and 20.5 inches in girth.



Reading Open Water



Find bait, slicks, or birds and there is a good chance to get "bowed up."

How many anglers have found themselves preparing for a fishing trip, with the expectations, predictions, and game plans made, only to find their so-called hot spots looking completely different than what was expected. Whether it is a new bay being explored or extremely familiar waters, the days leading up to the outing found most astute fishermen really "doing their homework."

Tide and solunar tables were examined to determine major and minor feed periods, charts containing specific structure locations had been studied, and GPS coordinates pinpointing exact areas that should be teeming with hungry fish were

noted. Despite these efforts, the looks from the bow at the first stop display a desolate bay, void of life, as the air begins to reek with a stench of being skunked.

It's happened to most of us. Plans had been made to really stick it to them, but then things really fall a part. We wind up with sore rears and a dumbfounded look, wondering, "What in the world happened?" Sometimes it's just inevitable and Mother Nature wins, making those really memorable days of "catching," that much sweeter. Sometimes a little more attention paid to a few specifics would have brought about a change of an approach. This change would have resulted in bent

rods rather than going home whipped.

It all boils down to reading the water. As the saying goes, "ten percent of the fishermen catch ninety percent of the fish." You can bet that ten percent is quite literal when it comes to understanding what's happening on the surface.

As the Texas Coast enters into summer's warming trend, open expanses of deeper water, typically from three to eight feet, within our bays will be full of aggressively feeding schools of fish. Some areas may be shallower or deeper depending on the bay system, but nearly all will be stacked with fish on the move. Speckled trout and redfish will take precedence among other species in terms of most angler's preferences, but flounder, drum, sheepshead, and gafftop will also roam these waters in search of food.

Finding a good bite can be fairly easy when a concentration of fish is in a known location — but this involves some looking around. Simply anchoring smack-dab in the middle of a popular, charted "hotspot" won't guarantee a solid bag, and such a blind approach will often send an angler home empty handed. Looking for signs and comparing them with the current tidal activity and their relation to surrounding structure is what creates a successful approach that can be used throughout the summer.

The essence of reading open water is defined by the basics — the usual "fishy" signs. These include a plethora of things to look for on the water's surface with the main three being bait, slicks, and birds.

Looking for bait is probably the easiest of the three, and simply involves finding stretches of water holding visible baitfish activity near the surface. It doesn't mean that one or two flipping mullet pinpoint the "X" in which to cast. The amount of bait in an area and the kind of bait present can be very important. Additionally, the activity or state that the bait is in can help show whether there are fish nearby as well.

For example, are their rafts of mullet darting and swirling on the surface? Are their swarms of shad boiling out of the water? These kinds of activity would make anyone stop and fish an area. On the other



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Reading open water and finding slicks helped this angler pinpoint where the fish are feeding and where to cast.

hand, a few large mullet lazily flopping in and out of the water, seemingly without a care in the world would be grounds to keep searching for fishier water.

A change in bait activity can show a change in fish behavior as well. Imagine a surface covered with slow moving swirling mullet. Then all of a sudden they go down and are no longer basking on the surface. Chances are it's because a predator has moved in and the fish are now being eaten.

Finding bait is also the most important of all the signs because it is the sole reason fish are found in a given area. Captain Tommy Countz of Matagorda says bait is the number one thing he looks for when drift fishing. "If I had nothing else to go off of and was fishing a new area completely blind, I'd find some active baitfish and start there," he says.

Once a stretch of water containing some bait activity is found, slicks can

The Most Accurate Tide Gauge:

Tide charts and tables can give anglers predicted times in which the current will be moving and in what direction, but there is no more accurate tide gauge than on the water observations. Knowing what the tide is doing at that very second, in the exact location being fished can make or break a trip. It's as simple as looking at a crab trap buoy, channel piling, PVC pole or other surface structure and seeing the direction and speed the water is moving. This observation indicates how and where an angler needs to set up when targeting specific structure. ★

narrow down the area that needs to be targeted. Slicks are created by feeding fish gorging themselves and then regurgitating, creating "oil like" slicks on the water's surface that have a sweet smell, similar to watermelon. Finding small or fresh slicks is best, and it is important to remember that the slick becomes elon-



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boats Discover New Waters
By Bill Kenner





When sign, structure, and tidal movement are put together —reading the water produces success.

gated and drifts along the surface, blown by the wind, meaning the fish that created it are upwind. One fresh slick is a start, but locating several fresh slicks in a row shows anglers where an actively feeding school is located.

Looking for where and what direction these fresh slicks are popping also shows which direction the school is moving. Fish tend to feed into the current and along the surface, there is wind driven current, so don't be surprised when slicks continue to

show up further upwind of the original one.

Captain Tim Young of Galveston uses a technique of watching how slicks are oriented to find fish on Trinity Bay. "Almost always, the line of slicks seems to quarter into the wind, and that's the direction the fish are moving," he says. "You've got to use the trolling motor to stay with the school, casting ahead of the newest slick so your bait stays in front of the moving fish."

Birds can be used to find areas containing bait at long distances, and sometimes key in where schools of fish are feeding. Using binoculars, anglers can scan the horizon for seagulls, terns, and pelicans hovering or diving at the surface. This may not mean feeding fish are directly under them, but it does mean there is bait in the area, because that's what the birds are eating. Seagulls constantly diving or working in the same area typically pinpoint a feeding frenzy. A cast under the diving birds will render an immediate bite.

Combining "fishy" signs with structure and tidal movement is what reading open water is all about. Structure in these deeper expanses across open bays creates a haven for fish to feed from. It attracts



The author with a solid five pound trout caught over an oyster reef in six foot of water.

baitfish and acts as a current barrier which fish like trout and reds use to create an ambush point to attack their prey.

For example, the upper coast is littered with many significant mid-bay oyster reefs. These reefs are located below the surface and draw tons of baitfish. Trout and reds position themselves on the down current side of these reefs, feasting on baitfish funneled down and off the edge of the reef by the tide. On the middle or lower coast, the same situation will happen with a grass bed or sand bar. Fish will feed on the down current side, using the current and the structure to create an area where they can easily ambush prey.

Therefore, knowing the current tidal movement and locations of structure helps anglers read the above surface riddle. As mentioned earlier, fish will tend to feed into the current, so finding the "fishy" signs on the down current end of some structure can be the ticket to figuring out the open water pattern. As tides switch, so will the location of feeding fish, in relation to the structure.

"If the tide is pulling out, fish will tend to stack up further off structure like an oyster reef," Countz explained. "If the tide is coming in, the fish will often be found right on top of the structure."

As the fishing heats up, open water stretches await all anglers up and down the Texas Coast. Don't let a preconceived game plan prevent a successful day on the water. Look for signs and make adjust-

Sitting Birds Still Mean Feeding Fish

When birds are working a stretch of water, the bait they are chasing eventually goes down and the gulls can be found sitting in the water as if they were resting. This however does not mean fish have left the area. Many times, the fish have just gone down and a deeper presentation will

still draw strikes.

Captain Randy Foreman says he stays on a line when drifting birds long after they have quit diving. "Sooner or later the fish are going to come back up," he says, "but until then I can still catch them with a slower, deeper retrieve. ★


ments on days when things don't happen according to plans. Study charts and tide tables, and keep your eyes peeled for the

pattern the surface is willing to reveal. You just might find yourself reading the water and catching fish. ★★



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River bottoms are perfect habitat for wild hogs holding shade and water to keep cool, along with plenty of forage.

Texas rivers are as diverse as the landscapes around them. All Texans are drawn to them, including hunters. River bottoms teem with wildlife. They provide excellent habitat – water, food and cover. Whitetail deer have long called these areas home just as songbirds, gamebirds and other wildlife also enjoy these water course sanctuaries. However native wildlife isn't alone. Years ago a destructive, invasive critter

moved in and found these riparian areas a perfect place to call home. Wild hogs are a year round target for hunters across the Lone Star State, and river bottoms are prime locations to find them. Too hot to fish? Hunt hogs. A favorite big game or bird season is over? Hunt hogs. All tagged out and looking for some added fun? Go after wild swine. The same habitat that is so attractive

to Texas native game also makes excellent hiding holes for feral hogs. If a hunting lease or ranch includes river bottom access, there are some obvious signs to look for to confirm hog activity. Tilled up, pushed around and turned over ground — hogs love to shove their snout in the dirt. This digging, a hard-wired behavior referred as rooting, is done in search of food. The feral hogs in



Modern sporting rifles in .223 are a good choice for shooters set up in open areas covering known escape routes.

Texas share genetics with the European wild boar. These animals have an incredible sense of smell and the domesticated variety are used by farmers in Europe to search for truffles underground.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department biologist Brett Johnson says rooting is more pronounced in the fall and winter as plant life browns from the cold. Hogs can't digest the dead plant matter, and they respond by rooting the ground for any easy sublevel snack: plant roots, shoots and assorted grubs are the favorites. However, caution is advised when traversing these areas turned over by hogs afoot, ATV, or vehicles as some rootings can reach three feet deep in softer soils.

Wallows and rubs are two other signs that indicate hogs call a particular river bottom home. Johnson points out that feral hogs do not have functional sweat glands and can die when stressed by the heat. As a result, they seek out shade and mud holes known as wallows. These dished out sludge baths help hogs regulate body temperature. Like a dog rolling on the ground to scratch an itch, pigs wallow to stay alive in the Texas heat. Caked from tusk to toe, the mud starts to dry and itch. Hogs then rub on stationary objects like fence posts and feeder legs to remove stuck on mud and insect parasites.

If your property or hunting lease has river bottom access you are in luck as this is a prime area to look for wild hog sign. However, if you don't have a lease or own land there are public hunting grounds around

the state that provide access points near Texas rivers. One example is the Guadalupe Wildlife Management Area in Refugio County. This WMA offers feral hog hunting from February to June. Come armed with a bow or shotgun, wear blaze orange and

leave the bait at home. The Texas Locator Map of Public Hunting Areas, published by TPWD, shows every public hunting ground with the detailed seasonal information. Once confirmed that hogs have made a home along a brushy creek or river

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Rootings are a sure sign that hogs are actively working an area.

bank there are a number of tactics that can help bring home the bacon. Many hunters camp out in stands used during deer season watching distant corn feeders. Others use hunting dogs to locate and bay pigs — then get up close and personal for

the coup de grace.

However, there is an alternative method that takes the right mix of knowledge, while playing the wind and shooting skill — a hog push. This method is similar to a deer drive used in other parts of the

country. Hunters position themselves along known escape routes while others push hogs from their midday nap.

The first step to a successful hog push is finding where the hogs live. Hunters should locate thick pockets of brush with deep shade. Low spots that hold water and create hog wallows are a bonus. These cool confines are ideal bedding areas. Hogs often use the same places to enter and exit the brush creating trails that indicate frequent use. Wallows are easy to identify as hogs sleep on their side and create dished out beds.

Location of daytime bedding spots is significant, but the success of a hog push hinges on knowing the preferred escape routes. Like other wildlife, hogs move along certain topographic and environmental features. Scout the land adjacent to known bedding sites for these travel paths. Tree or brush lines allow hogs to move under cover. Low lying swags in the land act as funnels, perceived as safer than wide open, flat fields. Man-made structures like fence lines can also influence the path of panicked pigs.

Before taking to the field, devise a plan with safety as the primary concern. Using a Google Earth or overhead map to assign locations and shooting angles or lanes will keep everyone safe. Always identify the target, what's behind it and the path shots will take. If there is ever a doubt pass on any questionable shot. Wear a blaze orange vest and cap. Plus the use of two-way radios or cell phones will keep hunters in contact with each other and on the same page.

Split the hunting party into two groups: the pushers and the shooters. The shooters stand guard with an eye on

the exit locations and escape routes. If hogs react to the pressure applied by the pushers, they'll come out running, at the very least at a steady trot. They don't like human activity or scent invading their brush filled living room.

Shooters should be prepared to encounter moving targets, and pigs can pedal. Texas A&M Agrilife Extension has found wild hogs can move at nearly thirty miles per hour.

Low magnification or open sight modern sporting rifles (ARs) with high capacity magazines give the escape route shooters the best chance for success. If a large group of hogs is encountered pick out one hog at a time. Once out in the open, hogs tend to move in a line. Always lead and swing with the target working from the back of the pack to the front. If the leader of the line is taken out first the other hogs tend to scatter.

Once the shooters are in position the pushers will enter the brush and work to pressure the hogs into leaving their protected home. The pushers must enter with the wind in their face. Remember, hogs have an extremely sensitive nose. Biologist Johnson says hogs have been known to detect smells five to seven miles away. Play the wind correctly, or the push is over before it begins.

Pushers should be prepared to encounter pigs at close range. Short barreled shotguns with buck shot are ideal.

If a hog push moves the majority of pigs out of a certain brush patch, kick back and wait. River bottom habitat is beautiful and alluring. It will surely attract another sounder of hogs for another chance at success. ★★



Well constructed bullets loaded in high capacity magazines provide plenty of fire-power to take down wild hogs and help control their population.



Modern sporting rifles in .223 with high capacity magazines are a good choice for shooters set up in open areas.



Success, as another hog goes down to a well planned and executed hog push.

TPW Commission Approves Expanded Mule Deer, Extended Squirrel Hunting Seasons

At its March 27 public hearing Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission approved expanded mule deer hunting in several counties and extended squirrel season across parts of East Texas.

An archery-only open season and 16-day general season for mule deer in Knox County, and a nine-day general season for mule deer in Castro, Hale and Lubbock counties will be in effect for the 2014-15 hunting seasons. The mule deer season had previously been closed in these counties. The Commission also clarified that use of antlerless mule deer permits would not count against a hunter's county bag limit, nor require an antlerless mule deer tag from a hunting license. In addition, the use of the permit was extended to be used in archery season with archery equipment only.

The Commission also approved extending squirrel hunting season in 51 East Texas counties to the end of February and permit the use of air rifles meeting minimum standards of 600 fps (feet per second) muzzle velocity, fired from the shoulder (no handguns) and having projectiles of at least .177 caliber. The Commission also eliminated bag and possession limits on squirrel in 12 counties in north-central Texas.

In other Commission action, effective for the spring 2015 season, turkey

hunters in East Texas can use mobile technology for mandatory reporting of harvested Eastern turkeys. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is developing a mobile app and a web-based harvest reporting form to facilitate the process electronically.

In addition, a provision prohibiting possession of firearms while hunting deer or turkey during an open archery season has been removed. Lawful archery equipment remains the only means authorized to take deer or turkey during archery season.

Also, the Commission clarified that holders of a valid Texas Lifetime Hunting License must still acquire and use tags annually where tagging of harvested game is required.

The Commission also shortened by one month the current year-round open season for desert bighorn sheep and eliminated the requirement of a landowner affidavit for skulls and horns found in the wild. Persons who find desert bighorn sheep skulls or horns and wish to lawfully possess, must still notify the department within 48 hours and make arrangements to have them plugged.

All regulation changes take effect Sept. 1, 2014. ★

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HARD KNOCKS

Next month, June 2, marks the 82nd anniversary of a legendary cast that produced what many consider to be the most legendary fish in freshwater fishing records kept by the International Game Fish Association: The Perry Bass.

Weighing 22 pounds, 4 ounces, the fat fish from Telfair County, Georgia (Montgomery Lake) was caught way back in 1932 by a local farmer named George

Perry. For more than 77 years, Perry's fish stood alone as the heaviest largemouth bass ever documented anywhere in the entire world. In the meantime, the story has been told and retold countless times by big bass chasers all over the planet, the majority of which would probably be tickled to catch a fish only half as big.

Not surprisingly, the cast in question has close ties to wood cover, reportedly a lay down tree. Bass of all sizes feel safe

around wood. Plus, it provides good cover for bass to hide and wait for unsuspecting baitfish to swim close. Simply put, it is a good spot to fish.

The way the Perry story goes, he and a friend, Jack Page, were fishing from a homemade boat the day he caught the world record bass. The anglers were reportedly working their way down a shoreline when Perry noticed a disturbance next to a large tree lying near the water's edge.

Perry's next move came natural. He chunked a bait at the commotion hoping to draw a strike. Needless to say, it worked.

One can only imagine the fight that Perry had on his hands as he wrestled with such a huge fish, especially since he was using tackle seriously inferior to what we fish with today. He evidently handled things pretty well, though.

That alone should make you ponder the guy's bass fishing prowess. Obviously, he was pretty darned handy with a fishing pole. Equally important, he had sense enough to recognize a golden opportunity to catch a fish when he saw the water boil against the fallen tree.

There is no telling how many other bass have been caught around lay down logs and other wood cover since that grand day more than eight decades ago. Or how many will be caught there in the future. But one thing is for certain. So long as there are bass, they will relate to wood when it is readily available.

As earlier mentioned, bass are pretty much "object nuts." They like to hang around boat dock pilings, lay down logs, bushes, stumps, etc..., because it gives them a sense of security. Plus it offers a good hideout for ambushing bluegills, shad, minnows and other prey, along with shady shelter from bright sunlight.

Here is a summary of some of the most popular types of wood cover found in Texas waters followed by a few tips for fishing around them:

DOCKS, PIERS and BOAT SLIPS

Boat docks, boat houses and piers will attract fish year-round. On some lakes, particularly those that lack aquatic vegetation, fishing around boat docks may be one of the most preferred ways to fish for bass.

Bass love to hold tight to support pilings, but they will also will gang up around man-made brush piles staged on bottom by property owners. The brush naturally

*Making wood work for you,
bass just love woody structure.*

Story and photography
by Matt Williams





Boat docks are excellent cover for bass, and the older the dock the more productive it can be.

attracts baitfish such as shad and perch, which in turn lures in the largemouths.

Just about any dock will hold bass. As a rule, the older the dock, the more likely it is to hold fish consistently. The theory is older docks will have more algae grow-

ing on them, which means more baitfish. Plus, older docks are more likely to have a surplus of brush accumulated around the perimeters.

Something else to consider about docks and piers is water depth. Structures built on

points and shorelines in close proximity of an abrupt drop off and creek channel swing can be particularly attractive for bass.

There is really no limit of ways you can catch fish around docks. But certain tactics, and bait styles, will sometimes work better than others.

Often times, the key to catching bass off docks is to place the bait as tight to the pilings or as far underneath the dock as possible. Most anglers will use a Texas rig or jig for this, but it is also a very dangerous spot to skip a frog or topwater if you've got the guts to try it.

Docks also are good places to throw shaky heads and drop shot rigs as well as moving baits like spinnerbaits, chatterbaits, crank baits and even Alabama rigs. As a rule, moving baits are highly effective when retrieved right along the edges of docks when bass are suspended out away from docks or when they are in the mood to chase.

The more proficient you are at casting, pitching and flipping, the better you'll do in this arena.

Having good electronics on your boat also can be a boon around docks. Using Lowrance StructureScan or Humminbird Side Imaging you can actually idle in front of the boat docks and look beneath them to tell which ones are occupied by fish or have brush beneath them. This can go a long way towards weeding out unproductive docks from productive ones.

GO NATURAL

Just about every lake has its share of lay

down logs, stumps and/or standing timber. Some may be more plentiful than others from one lake to the next. All three provide bass with suitable hang-outs such as mangled limbs, gnarly root systems, etc. As illustrated by the Perry bass, natural wood will attract big fish and small ones, alike.

Wood found in shallow water can be especially productive during late spring. Even though it is post spawn, there will still be a lot of fish in skinny water guarding fry and even dining on their own on occasion. Now also is when bream move shallow to spawn, often around stumps, logs and shallow cover.

Weedless baits are heavily preferred pitching and flipping tight to wood for obvious reasons, but this is also a good place to go to work by casting a frog, buzzbait or even a square bill crankbait.

Fish as tight to the wood as possible. Crash the bait into it if you can. Often times, this is what triggers the strike.

When fishing around a lay down log, be sure to make numerous casts to it from different angles. Often times that is what it takes to trigger a strike from a fish that is holding super tight to the wood or one that is reluctant to chase.

It can also help to try different baits with varied presentations before giving up on a fishy-looking spot. If dragging a Texas rig or jig doesn't work, try burning a spinnerbait or crawling a crankbait as tight to the cover as you can get it.

BASS IN THE BUSHES

Some lakes offer abundant stands of

willow bushes, buck brush, huisache and mesquite that are super attractive to bass. Bushes can be a viable pattern year-round, so long they are found in water with sufficient depth — three feet or more.

As a rule, bush patterns get lots of attention during the spring months, when water levels tend to be high and there are lots of fish in the shallows. Just the opposite normally occurs during the summer and fall as water levels decline. When water levels fall out of the bushes, the bush bite goes away with it.

Long casting around bushes will work, but most anglers consider it a close quarters affair that is best attacked with worms, jigs and other baits that can be tossed right in amongst the confines of a bush with the least worry of getting hung up. Not only is it a fun way to fish, but it can be super productive, as well.

Location can sometimes have a huge bearing on which bushes will hold bass and which ones won't. As a rule, isolated bushes on main lake points, secondary points, near channel breaks and other types of structure will be more prone to hold fish than will a large group of bushes found along straightaway shoreline or an open flat with no definitive changes in contour nearby.

Next time you visit your favorite bass lake take a look around and see what is available in the way of wood cover. It's not always the ticket to tight lines, but it certainly can be under the right set of conditions. **T&J**



Wood found in shallow water can be especially productive during late spring. Even though it is post spawn, there will still be a lot of fish in skinny water.



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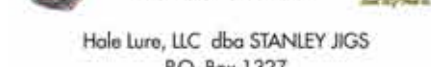
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May is when Lower and Middle Texas Coast fishermen can expect to see a steady, warm water fishing pattern emerge. With the onset of the consistently warm weather, anglers begin bagging a wider variety of species. Inshore anglers will be covered up in redfish and speckled trout, in addition to black drum, sheepshead and flounder. Taking on more of a subtropical feel, mangrove snapper will also be active from Port Isabel to Port Aransas. Along the Lower Coast, snook will also be making their way back in the bay.

The passes of the Lower Coast should welcome the season's first tarpon by the end of May. These fish typically show first at the mouth of the Rio Grande, then begin systematically appearing at passes further up the shoreline as the fish migrate northward.

As the nearshore water begins to clear, anglers can also expect kingfish to begin showing within a reasonably close boat ride. Along the beachfront, warmer temperatures mean speckled trout should start making their way into the surf, where they will be joined by Spanish mackerel and jack crevalle. By month's end, a variety of shark species will also be within range of surf casters.

So, while May is still a "transition" month, anglers can expect that transition to continue on a straight line trajectory,

as even the latest of fronts has already passed and water temperatures will be consistently rising as May wears on. ★★



Port Isabel guide Capt. Gencho "JR" Buitureira says fishing in the Lower Laguna Madre is fairly simple and straightforward during May.

"In May, we usually don't have to work too hard to find fish," said Buitureira. "There are plenty of places that will produce during May, so it's kind of a matter of picking a spot based on the weather and how you want to fish."

"Really, in a lot of ways May is a continuation of April. There will still be plenty of trout out front of Port Isabel in May. And, as long as the wind is not too heavy, we'll start out throwing topwaters for big trout on top of bars. If there is no wind or a really light wind, I like to go up north along the ICW. The

trout will be thick along the edges of the channel. Flounder and black drum will also be holding along the channel edges up there.

"Another thing you can do is hit the shacks up north for drum and trout. If you've got a slow moving tide and little wind, you can also fish the old causeway. You want to have some water moving if you fish around there, but you don't want the current to be too strong."

"Usually during May, I'll also use cut skipjack and fish the potholes on Gas Wells for redfish after we get our trout or after the wind picks up. You can also jump to the west side and fish south of Cullen and do the same thing. Usually we catch plenty of skipjack while we're fishing for trout. So, I'll save some and use them for cut bait. Or, I'll take some fresh mullet and use them."

"We also fish the color changes a lot in May. If you are bait fishing along the color change, go to the dirty water side. If you are lure fishing go to the clean water side or fish right on the color line."

"There are really a lot of different things we can do during May. The good news is, there are plenty of places holding fish so we can always find some productive water."

The guides at Port Mansfield's Get-A-Way Adventures are expecting big things



Capt. Allen Sifford will fish the west shoreline of the Land Cut on windy, as well as calm days.

in May. After extensive renovations over the winter and early spring, the lodge is back up and running and welcoming anglers. Those fishermen making the trip to Port Mansfield can experience a wide range of angling adventures. The speckled trout bite will be hot, with most fish in three to four feet of water. Most fish will be relating to grass, so potholes and the outside edges of grass beds will be best. Redfish will be moving up onto the sand flats during May. There also will be plenty of reds around the ICW spoils north of town. May is also the time when Spanish mackerel, kingfish and tarpon begin showing up around the jetties lining the East Cut.

Corpus Christi guide Capt. Allen Sifford of Fish On Guide Service says that Coastal Bend anglers will also have plenty of options during May.

"We have a lot going on in May, but really the biggest thing is that's when we start croaker fishing," said Sifford. "Once our croaker get big enough, I'll switch over to croaker for bait. That's usually around the second week or so of May."

"Early in the month, I'll be wading and throwing topwaters, mostly around the reefs in Nueces. But, if it's windy, I'll fish the grass lines and drop offs. Later in the month, I'll start concentrating on the backside of Baffin."

"Another option in the early part of May is the Land Cut. We can usually catch some really good trout in the Land

Cut until after the full moon in May. When I'm fishing the Land Cut, I fish the west bank. I start out throwing topwaters. Then, later in the morning I start fishing deeper with Bass Assassins."

"During May, the redfish will be schooled up on the flats in the Upper Laguna. If we have a lot of boat traffic — especially on busy weekends — those fish will either move off the flats or be

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Look for some quality speckled trout to still be caught in May on the bars in front of Port Isabel.

very skittish. In that case, you need to look for them along the drops or along parts of the shoreline where boats can't run. If you find an area like a fence line or a point, you'll find redfish holding real tight to it. Also, if you go onto the flats later in the afternoon after things

have settled down a little, you'll find a lot more fish on the flats.

"Overall, I'm looking forward to some excellent trout fishing in Nueces and Baffin and some great redfishing in the Upper Laguna. I think May's going to be a good month." **T&J**



May also signals the start of "croaker season" in the Aransas area as the vast majority of trout fishermen switch from shrimp and plastics to croaker as their bait of choice for speckled trout. And, May is a good time for trout fishing in the area, as most of the waters around Aransas Pass and Port Aransas will be holding good numbers of trout between now and Memorial Day. Most notably, Nueces, Aransas, and Corpus Christi bays will all have plenty of fish this month.

The majority of the trout will be found over mid-depth flats and along the drops. Later in the month, the fish will be found around the deeper structure like mid-bay reefs and platforms.

Redfish, on the other hand, will be in the shallows throughout the month. There should be plenty of reds on the flats and along the shorelines where they can be taken with topwaters, spoons or cut bait.



Port Mansfield's East Cut will turn on in May with a variety of fishing including speckled trout being caught.



Estes Flats as well as other shallow water areas around Aransas Bay will give up some redfish in May.

Anglers are also likely to run across schools of black drum on the flats and should keep a sack of shrimp handy just in case.

Trout fishing takes top billing in the Rockport area during May. And, as is

the case along much of the Texas Coast, croaker will become the bait of choice in the weeks leading up to Memorial Day. Anglers can expect to find trout all the way from the mid-bay areas of Aransas

Bay down to the Land Cut. Bird activity will point the way to fast action for "keeper" size specks.

And, according to Capt. Ray Burdette, there will still be some big fish caught in May. Burdette says these giant trout will often be mixed in on the flats, just as they were in April. Anglers targeting reds will find plenty of them up on the flats, as well as along the edges of the flats and over the drops. Soft-plastics, GULP, live shrimp, crabs and cut mullet will be top redfish baits this month. Black drum will also be schooling on the flats in May. Fresh dead shrimp can produce fast action when fishermen come across schools of black drum on the flats.

According to Capt. Jim Garrison of Redfish Roper Charters May is a prime month to tangle with trout in San Antonio Bay.

"In May, I'll usually be fishing reefs in San Antonio Bay for trout," said Garrison. "In fact, I'll be out on the reefs every day the wind allows. I'll be working the current and working all around each of the reefs until I find a fish. Once I find the fish, I'll sit there with a popping cork with

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PHOTO BY BILLY OLSON

Mangrove snapper will be additions to anglers catches on the lower and middle coast this month.

either plastics or shrimp underneath. If I'm using plastics, it's usually going to be a curly tail GULP grub in either chartreuse, lime green or pink. If we're fishing with

shrimp around the reefs, we'll also pick up quite a few drum.

"If it's windy or if we're chasing reds, we'll get in the back lakes or along pro-

tected shorelines and work cut mullet or crabs using a slip sinker. We'll just throw 'em out on the bottom and wait for redfish to bite.

"Again, I'll be fishing a lot in San Antonio Bay, but in May, I'll fish the whole Seadrift area — I'll be spending some time in Shoalwater and other bays in the area. Usually, May is a real good month, especially if we have light winds." ★★

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Charm of the Texas Coast

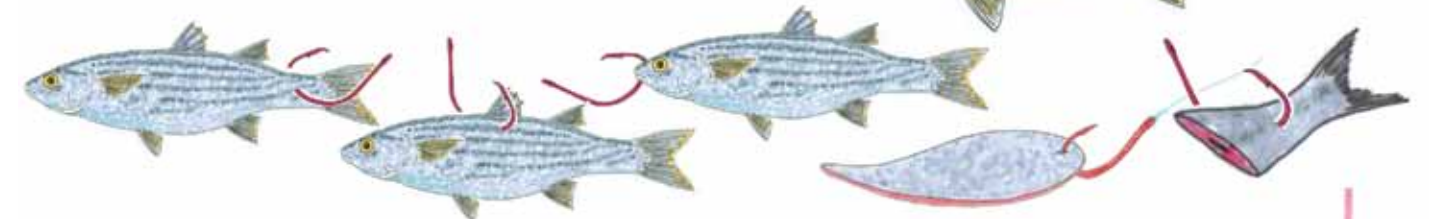
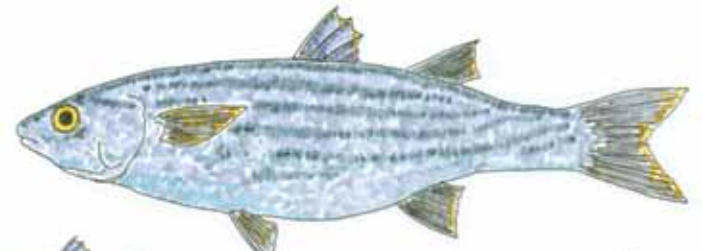


Drifting mid-coast flats even on windy days can reward an angler with redfish.

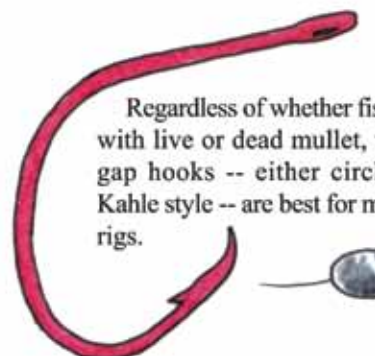


May is for Mullet

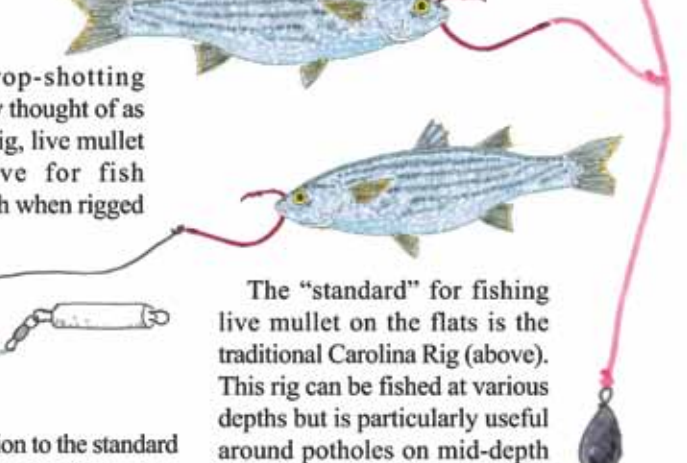
May is for mullet... That could easily be the refrain of Texas inshore anglers this month. While mullet are year-around prey items for predator species such as speckled trout, redfish and flounder, during late spring these iconic baitfish become one of the most versatile natural baits available.




Mullet can be hooked a variety of ways -- whether fishing them live or dead. Live mullet can be tail-hooked, hooked under the dorsal (back) fin or lip-hooked. Mullet "strips" can be fished like an artificial jerkbait, while "chunks" of mullet can be run through with a hook and fished on a variety of rig.



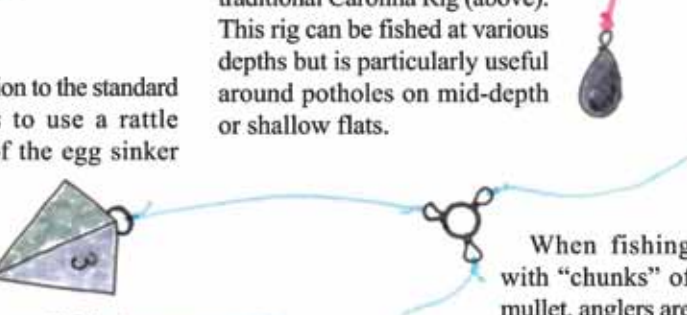
Regardless of whether fishing with live or dead mullet, wide gap hooks -- either circle or Kahle style -- are best for mullet rigs.



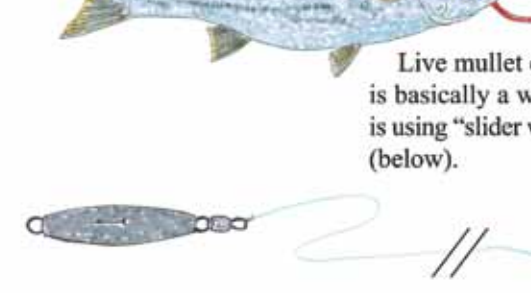
Although drop-shotting (right) is normally thought of as an artificial lure rig, live mullet can be effective for fish suspended at depth when rigged this way.



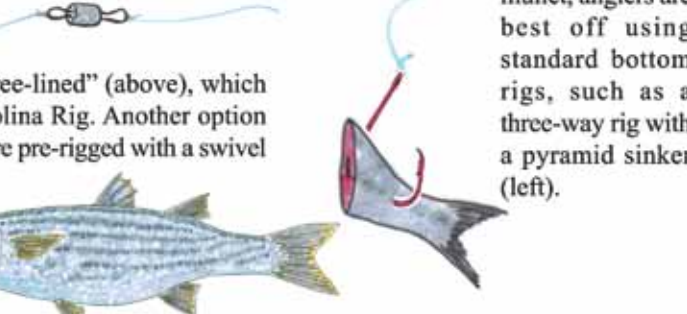
One modification to the standard Carolina Rig is to use a rattle weight in lieu of the egg sinker (above).



The "standard" for fishing live mullet on the flats is the traditional Carolina Rig (above). This rig can be fished at various depths but is particularly useful around potholes on mid-depth or shallow flats.



Live mullet can also be "free-lined" (above), which is basically a weightless Carolina Rig. Another option is using "slider weights" that are pre-rigged with a swivel (below).



When fishing with "chunks" of mullet, anglers are best off using standard bottom rigs, such as a three-way rig with a pyramid sinker (left).



Bullets for Boars



In New Zealand the wild boar is considered a great trophy. This big tusker, taken by the author's wife Carol, is a trophy in anyone's book.

When I first started hunting in Texas I was not interested in big whitetail deer, I wanted a trophy wild boar. I had heard how dangerous they were and how they could rip your legs open with a single swipe of their sharp ivory tusks. I was sold.

I booked a hunt with a hound hunter in Kerrville, grabbed my 451 Mag. revolver and took off for the Hill Country of Texas. Back in the early 80s, wild hogs were still a major trophy animal to pursue in the Lone Star State.

In my pursuit to satisfy my pig hunting passion a lot of time and money was spent hunting behind dogs with the hopes of finding a big boar on a four day hunting trip. That was 40 years ago and times have certainly changed since then. Now I am invited to hunt feral pigs because they are pests and are destroying the local golf course.

Over the last 40 plus years my wife, Carol and I have shot over 100 wild pigs and have shot them with nearly every type of firearm made. I still enjoy hunting wild pigs with a handgun but the AR-15 has become the gun of choice for most of the serious pig hunters.

Wild boars can be shot with any big caliber hunting rifle such as the 243 Win., 7mm-08 Rem., or the 30-06. But when using an AR-15, the odds of shooting more than once dramatically increases. Getting a quick second shot or even a third shot at a group of pigs becomes a given.

Now that Texas allows hunting with a suppressor, a hunter can get several wild swine before they know what is happening. When asked to go and eliminate rooting, destructive hogs, I try to do it at night with a suppressed AR-15 and night vision. The idea is to kill as many of the pests as possible before they destroy more land, yards, or greens on the golf course.

It has been estimated that feral hogs destroy more than 50,000 acres of land each day in Texas. When using an AR-15 in .223 caliber, the choice of bullet and where the shot is placed becomes very important.

When using the military 55 grain or 62 grain full metal jacket bullets the only place to shoot the pig is in the head. I

once shot a pig with an FMJ bullet. It went through the armor shield that protects the chest and killed the pig. However, I have seen too many of them run off and die a slow painful death.

I prefer to use a well-built hollow-point or soft point bullet that will go through the shield and expand inside, instantly killing the hog. I have used Barnes TSX, Nosler Partition, and Sierra Match-King bullets, all with great results.

I do believe there are better choices of calibers available for the AR-15's to hunt pigs. My favorite has become the 300 Black Out. Another good choice is the 6mm x 45 or the 6.8 SPC.

When shooting a suppressed rifle in the Black Out caliber, use the 220 grain Sierra bullet and try to only make head shots. If being quiet doesn't matter then a good 125 grain Nosler Ballistic-Tip bullet or any of the good factory 110 or 120 grain soft-points will work great.

In the 6.8 SPC caliber, I like the 110 and 120 grain bullets. The Winchester and Remington factory ammo shoots so well in my 6.8 that I have never taken the time to work up loads. In my old 6mm x 45, I use the 70 and 75 grain Ballistic-Tips and soft-point bullets with equally good results.

Now if I am going to hunt big boars, I will take a handgun. I have shot pigs with most every handgun caliber made and have had great results with most of the calibers larger than a .357 Mag. I have



AR15 calibers for pigs include (left to right) the .223 Rem, 6.8 SPC, and 300 Blackout with 220 grain and 125 grain hunting bullets.



There is nothing like hunting pigs with a handgun. A few of the good calibers to use include (left to right) 10mm, 41 Mag, 44 Mag, 45 Colt, 500 Linebaugh.

shot two big pigs with .357 Mag. and quit using it after bad results on both. I was using 140 and 158 grain bullets. If a 170 or 180 grain bullet had been used maybe I would have had better luck.

Any of the bigger Magnum revolvers from 41 Mag. to 500 Linebaugh will work great. The big heavy bullet will go right through the breast shield and smash up bone and vital organs as the bullet exits, killing the pigs almost immediately.

I have used hollow-point bullets, as well as semi wad- cutters, both with the same results. The heavier bullets just seem to be able to penetrate through both sides of the body of a larger than average pig.

Two other calibers that have worked well for hunting pigs are the good old 45 ACP and the 10 MM. I use a semi wad-cutter bullet with both calibers. They will cut right through both sides of a big boar leaving him dead in his tracks or with a good

blood trail to follow. I have even managed to shoot two pigs out of a large group several times using the semi auto pistols.

The biggest pigs I have ever seen in one group was when I was hunting in South Texas with my son. He was rattling in heavy brush in hopes a whitetail buck would come to the sound of clashing antlers when a group of 20 or more pigs came in on him. He emptied his 30-06 rifle and his .44 Mag. into the bunch, and ended up killing seven hogs. It was so thick and the sounder was so bunched up they didn't know what was happening or where to run. It did make for an exhausting day of cleaning and skinning. I will never clean that many pigs at one time ever again.




In other countries of the world hunting wild hogs is considered one of the best sports there is. A big Eurasian boar will make a great trophy. In places like Russia, New Zealand or Spain you can have the hunt of a lifetime when hunting these big pure-breed boars.

Just because wild hogs are so destructive and loathed in Texas doesn't mean you should not consider hunting them on your next hunt out of the country. It is just another hog hunting option. ★★


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FLOUNDER

In May anglers will target as many as six different tasty species on the lower Texas coast.

Story and photography by Danno Wise

May sees the transition from spring to summer in the Lower Laguna Madre. As a result, anglers are able to catch a wider variety of species over a greater expanse of water during the weeks leading up to Memorial Day. In fact, May is a month when fishermen can virtually “call their shot” when it comes to catching their favorite species by using their favorite lures, baits and techniques.

With anglers further up the coast getting ready for a possible five fish trout limit, May is another example of why Lower Laguna Madre anglers have not had a problem transitioning to the reduced speckled trout limits imposed on them a few years back. While trout are still a major part of most fishermen’s plans, there are plenty of other species to target and May is a prime example of that, with no fewer than a half dozen species being legitimate targets for Lower Laguna fishermen in the fifth month of the year. As a bonus for those “coastal salts” who like to take a few for the table, each of these species offers tasty fillets as well.

Even though May will see fishermen targeting as many as six different species in the Lower Laguna, some familiar species will still be at the top of the list. In fact, May offers some of the year’s best action for redfish and speckled trout. But, there are plenty of other species to pick up the slack if the redfish and trout action wanes or if anglers are just looking to do something different. And, since May’s usually pleasant weather makes staying for a full day bearable (enjoyable, even), having such a wide array of available species helps keep the day interesting.

VARIETY OF SPECIES

Redfish are pretty much everywhere in May. But, most anglers will be looking for reds up on the shallow flats. Since water temperatures are more stable in May, redfish are willing to go up higher on flats than they are during early spring. Since temperatures are more moderate than they are later in the summer months, the fish are willing to stay on the flats throughout the day. Another bonus to chasing

reds on the flats during May — when the spring winds inevitably kick up, the shallow water does not get near as rough as the deeper water in the open bay.

Like redfish, speckled trout can be found virtually everywhere in May — drops, sand pockets, shallow flats, deep flats, channel edges, under birds... Anglers can pretty much decide where they want to fish and reasonably expect to pull a few trout.

When the wind allows, anglers will

the bay (they will spread further north as spring turns to summer). So, areas like South Bay, Mexiquito Flats, the old causeway, swing bridge, Coast Guard Flats and Children’s Beach will be top spots for snook fishing during late spring.

The spring flounder run, as it were, is over by May. While the Lower Laguna Madre has never been a flatfish factory, there are catchable numbers of flounder present during late spring. As May gets underway, flatties are back in their usual haunts, but are a little more aggressive than they are later in the summer. So, late spring represents one of the best opportunities to add a flounder or two to a box of fish on the Lower Laguna.

Mangrove snapper will practically be swarming in May. Fish will be active around just about every structure in the bay, including range markers, the causeways, swing bridge, docks, pilings and bulkheads. There will also be plenty of mangroves around the jetty rocks this month. Not only is May a good month to catch a lot of mangrove snapper, it is also a good month to catch some really big mangroves, which provide a great fight and good fillets.

Another Laguna Madre resident that spent most of the early spring around the jetties lining the Brazos Santiago Pass, sheepshead will be taking up positions around a variety of structures in the bay. Fishermen should look around the old and new causeways, as well as docks lining the channels feeding into the bay and the ICW Shacks up north. Believe it or not, sheepshead are also fairly common sights on the east side flats during May, giving anglers yet another sight-casting target.

Another species that generally ends up on ice shortly after finding itself on the other end of an angler’s line, black drum are a fairly easy target in May as well. Keeper-size black drum can be found throughout the Lower Laguna during the fifth month. Areas as wide ranging as Gas Well Flats, the South Bay Channels, and the ICW Shacks will have good numbers of black drum hanging around in May.

BAITS, RIGGINGS & TECHNIQUES

May is also a month that affords



PHOTO BY BILL L. OLSON

Snook, like this one caught by Ralph Winingham will have made their way from the Brownsville Ship Channel back into the bays.

still find plenty of “solid keepers” on bars and spoils in front of Port Isabel. The flats from South Bay all the way up to Unnecessary Island and beyond will also be holding trout. And, as May wears on, more and more specks will begin stacking up along the channel edges in anticipation of summer’s warmer water temperatures.

By May, the area’s population of snook will have made their way back into the bay after wintering in the Brownsville Ship Channel. While anglers will find plenty of linesiders on flats, the fish will mostly be concentrated on the southern end of

anglers the opportunity to fish “the way they want to.” That is to say, just about any natural or artificial bait can produce results during the weeks leading up to Memorial Day. Being able to use a variety of baits and lures to catch fish makes May a perfect time for anglers to “experiment” with tackle uses and techniques beyond their “go-to” selections.

Live shrimp can almost always produce fish, but they are particularly effective in late spring. Spring is always a time when fish are feeding on shrimp and this year, thanks largely to an unusual influx of fresh-water during the winter and early spring that has resulted in a better-than-average shrimp hatch, that is particularly true.

Live shrimp under popping corks can produce well on mid-depth and deeper flats, while freelining live shrimp around structures can produce a smorgasbord of catches this time of year. Tail-hooked live shrimp can also be used for sight-casting or hitting potholes on the flats.

By late spring, pinfish are found in virtually every pothole on the flats. In fact, swarms of “piggies” are common sights in sand holes. And, they are common targets for speckled trout, redfish and snook. Anglers can use live pinfish freelined around potholes to take any of those three species.

When redfish become finicky, cut pinfish can do the trick. Some anglers also like dragging a pinfish beneath a cork behind the boat while drifting and actively casting lures or baits in front of the drifting vessel.

To no one’s surprise, mullet are a year around forage item for speckled trout, redfish, snook, flounder and mangrove

snapper. Live finger mullet are good for most everything in the bay. Larger mullet can be cut or chunked and fished on bottom for redfish.

Because of the moderate water and air temperatures, topwater plugs can be productive all day long in May. And, because most species are relatively freshly hatched, “Jr”-size plugs tend to be more effective this month. Super Spook Jrs are perhaps the most commonly thrown topwater plugs during late spring, but a variety of other plugs work well also. When the water is churned up, Pop Rs and prop baits are good choices. When it is slick calm, floater/divers like Cordell Redfins and Bomber Long As are good options.

All types of soft-plastics can produce good results during May. On calm days when the water is relatively clean, straight-tail plastic jerkbaits work well. On windier days or in off-color water, paddletail baits work best.

“Hybrids” like the Down South Southern Shad are good “every day” baits in May — to be used with normal conditions of moderate wind and green water. If glass minnows are present, as they often are during late May, small grubs or baits such as the Hogan Rat Tail Worm are good choices.

Silver, gold or copper spoons — just about anything that flashes can produce good results over the flats of the Lower Laguna Madre

as the water warms in May. When fishing over grass flats with clear or green water, spoons are a great way to cover water quickly while looking for specks and reds.

In short, May is an exciting time to fish the Lower Laguna Madre. A wide variety of species are available in various parts of the bay. And, these fish can be caught on any number of baits and lures. Add to that the typically pleasant May weather and anglers would be hard pressed to find a better time to be on the water. **T★J**



May is one of those months when you never know what you might catch on a particular lure. This monster flounder hit a topwater lure.

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Lake Roundup

NORTH TEXAS

By Brian Hughes

May in Texas is the last best month to fish. By that I mean the temperature is usually still mild enough to be pleasant throughout the entire day, as opposed to later in the summer when the heat can be brutal by 11am.

May fishing is usually still shallow-water oriented so moving baits like spinnerbaits and "Traps will still work which makes it a little easier to connect with the fish. Later, you'll have to start looking to deeper structure to find the fish. Bass will hit May topwaters throughout the day, especially if there is a little cloud cover or a grassbed to hide in. After May you can pretty much count on the topwater bite to end as soon as the sun gets up high enough to shine directly on the water.

May is also excellent for catfishing. Depending on the water temps, early May should find catfish winding up their spawn and looking to put a feed on. So what and where do we fish in May?

TEXOMA — Having recently set a new record for Black Crappie, I asked Dan Barnett about the crappie fishing on Texoma. "You really need to know where the brush, and other cover, is to do well on this lake," he said. "Lake Texoma is so barren when it comes to natural cover, other than rocks, that anything people plant, like Christmas tree piles, will hold the crappie."

The only exception to this is during the spawn when the crappie will run shallow to reproduce. The rest of the year you'll find all you want if you can locate brushpiles.

"I know where a lot of brushpiles are

because I've been on the lake so long," he said. "If you're new to the lake I'd suggest you check all the boat docks you can, and mark the ones with brush. Then turn around and start working them individually with jigs and minnows." Start around 10 feet deep in May, but be ready to adjust your depth a little up or down depending on the water temperature.

"You'll eventually connect with the fish that way, and that will tell you the depth to use for the whole lake," he continued. "Now you can eliminate those brush piles that are too shallow or too deep and focus on the ones that will be most productive."

Texoma is probably best known for its world class Striped Bass fishing and Dan had a banner year early this season, "We had one of the best years for big stripers I've seen in over thirty years on the lake," said Barnett. "It was truly unbelievable, especially when you consider how low our water level is right now."

Lake Texoma is suffering through some of the lowest water levels in the history of the lake and opinions vary as to the reason. Without dwelling on the subject too much, some think it has nothing to do with the drought, but is due to water sales from the reservoir to the nearby major cities.

As to the stripers, "You can start our day with the Red Fins on top in super shallow water, just to see what will happen, but that's really wishful thinking," he said. "The topwater bite for big fish has usually played out by May"

Certainly by later in the month, Barnett has moved on to live bait for the people that want to come out and catch a limit of keepers without too much work, "This is the perfect time for the kids, ladies, and corporate groups to come out have some fun, catch a limit, and get back in by noon." Speaking of kids, Dan wants to remind folks that kids 12 and under fish free, with their paid adult guardian.

May is also excellent for big smallmouth, "Early to mid-May is when I suggest my clients come out for the smallies. They'll hit topwaters and crankbaits along the bluffs. Free-lined shad on circle hooks will work as well, if you want to put in

the effort to catch the shad." By put in the effort Dan means up at 3am, and throwing a cast net to catch the perfect sized threadfin shad.

FORK — May on Lake Fork will find the bass still spawning for at least the first two weeks of the month. "Many of our bass will spawn twice," says Mark Stevenson, "Some of the best fish we catch all year are these second spawners early in May."

Start your day in 3-5 feet, throwing topwaters like a Yellow Magic or buzzbait, flukes or Senkos in shad colors or even small, shallow diving crankbaits. Once that bite plays out, go a little deeper to the 5-8 foot range.

"This is where I probably spend most of my time in May," he said. "We'll use the mini Carolina rig and crankbaits off the points, and this is a good way to catch a double digit fish." Another favorite technique for this depth range is to fish a Senko around fresh pads just emerging. "I'll use shad or watermelon/red or some shades of green," says Stevenson.

For the later part of the month Mark will move out around the 10-15 foot mark with either a Texas rigged worm or a jig. "I like a black/blue or black/brown, sometimes green pumpkin jig, and for worm colors I'll use plum, red shad, or again, green pumpkin."

May will also show the first of the schooling bass. "Be sure and keep a few of the squarebill 4-5 foot, diving crankbaits from Academy handy, as well as swimbaits like the LFT Magic Shad Boot Tail in watermelon/red with the shad belly for those schoolies."

The crappie fisherman at Fork will find all the fish you can catch at the bridges. Use your minnows and jigs and try to get them near the supporting cross-members for best results. They're not going to be deep just yet, but more in the mid-range depths of 10 to 15 feet. If you don't want to hang out with the crowds at the bridges you can try the same depths but on timbered points.

When asked for any final comments Stevenson said, "All-in all, May is very consistent, and a great month to be on Lake Fork."

ATHENS — Lake Athens really put itself on the map this year with the ShareLunker fish it gave up during the season. If you somehow missed it, ShareLunker fish are bass 13 pounds or larger that are donated to the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center to be bred and studied. The offspring are released back into Texas lakes, upping the potential for more huge bass to be caught.

TPWD's own press release explained why Athens gave up two of these giants, the biggest caught in 25 years. In the release, TPWD fisheries biologist Richard Ott said the following: "Lake Athens has been stocked frequently since 2003 with fry, fingerlings and in some cases adult pure Florida largemouth bass. Any or all of these stocking events could have contributed the genetic potential to produce 13-pound fish. The fact that the first fish caught this year was positively identified as a pure Florida suggests that it could have been a fish produced at the hatchery from our hand-selected brood stock. If it had been one of the adult surplus brooders, it would have still carried an electronic tag identifying it as such."

Ott also noted that Lake Athens is currently enjoying what he called the "Goldilocks Effect" of "just right" aquatic vegetation growth. "Over the past five to six years there has been a proliferation of several species of native aquatic vegetation that is providing optimal conditions

for the fish and for anglers catching these fish," he said. "Too little vegetation and bass recruitment suffers due to predation; too much vegetation coverage reduces growth rates. Every extra year it takes a fish to grow to trophy size is another chance for natural mortality to remove that fish from the population. Finally, there is an element of luck. It is important to look at all the factors above and realize

that many stars have to align to produce a ShareLunker ...or two."

The fact that both of these fish were caught during the winter months (December and January) in twelve to fifteen feet of water indicates they were pre-spawn fish. That doesn't mean you can't catch a big fish in May. Lake Athens is a relatively small lake and it has only one bridged road over the lake. When people say they are



Anglers heading to lakes in the northern and western portion of the state should call ahead to check on lake conditions. Low lake levels at Lake Ray Hubbard render this ramp unusable.

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Johnny Summers, Jr., of Pottsboro releases the 2.93-pound black crappie he caught March 13 back into Lake Texoma.

fishing “under the bridge” they usually mean they have gone under the bridge to the big, shallow water, bay-type area, on the other side of the bridge from the boat ramp.

This area has seen a huge growth of hydrilla in the past few years and it just screams out for a Ribbit Frog in May. I really like the white frog and I’ll dip just the feet in chartreuse dipping dye for a little flash. Drag it across the top and “puddle” it through the open spots and you should get some pretty explosive strikes.

“Traps and spinnerbaits in shad colors should also work around the edges if you’re willing to put up with the occasional mess. I will also use the Senko in the five inch size, watermelon/red and sometimes the four inch in bubblegum around this grass. The many boat docks will also hold fish if the water is deep enough.

You’re really looking for at least eight feet of water and I prefer to see 10. At that depth the bass seem to be comfortable using the shallows around the dock to feed. A trickworm in blue glimmer is my go-to for working alongside, and between, the docks. For the close-up work in, around and under the dock I’ll go with a 3/16ths ounce jig in black/blue or green pumpkin and a small Gene Larew craw trailer, in a matching color.

LAKE ‘O THE PINES — Lake ‘O the Pines in May will be a fantastic place to be. Crappie will have spawned and set up shop on the brush and bridges and can be caught on both jigs and minnows. I prefer

jigs only because it’s a little easier to work a single jig around the brush pile, which is where I prefer to look for crappie.

If you like the bridges then the two-bait crappie rig is hard to beat. The 155 Bridge is probably the most popular for crappie fishing because it is the largest. Bass fishermen will find good topwater fishing and a good spinnerbait bite throughout the

month, fishing the east side of the lake in the timber.

I want to spend just a few words on the drought I mentioned when doing the Texoma report. Parts of the state, especially the west and northern sections are in a terrible drought. Some may not realize just how bad the situation is at this point.

From a fisherman’s point of view, if you’re planning on travelling to a lake in the northern third or western half of Texas, it would be a good idea to call ahead and check on lake conditions including boat and bank access. It would be a shame to show up at the lake and NOT be able to reach the water. ★★



By Matt Williams

TOLEDO BEND — Toledo Bend is chock full of big blue and flathead catfish, but you wouldn’t know it by most fishing reports filed by folks in the know during

the month of May.

“In a normal year, May is when the blues and flatheads do their spawning and the bite slows way down,” says Charlie Shivley at Bill’s Landing. “It’s almost like they pull a disappearing act. It usually gets tough then. It will be interesting to see what happens this year, because everything has been running behind schedule as far as the spawn goes.”

Shivley says the crappie at the upper reaches of T-Bend seem to take a break during May, as well. “A lot of them scatter in the timber and they can be tough to find,” said Shivley. “There will be a few fish around brush piles at mid-range depths, but overall they can be pretty hard to find.”

That’s not the case down south and at mid-lake, where post spawn crappie can be sacked up in big numbers using jigs around outside grass lines. The key here is to use your electronics to locate the deeper grass lines near the mouths of spawning pockets, then cover water until you locate the fish.

Many anglers rely on the strolling technique to target crappie this time of year. The key is to use the trolling motor to maneuver the boat at a slow speed and keep the bait moving right along the edge of the grass bed. When you catch 2-3 fish out of a particular spot, spin the boat and really work the area over. Where there are a few crappie, there may be an army.

Bass fishing can be equally good and you can catch them assorted ways from shallow to medium-depth ranges. “There are still going to be plenty of fish shallow, and a lot of them are probably still going to be on beds,” said fishing guide Harold Allen. “We had an unseasonably cold winter this year and that caused these fish to run behind on the spawn. You’ll still be able to catch some sight fishing, or you can go after post spawn fish.”

Allen suggests working slow moving plastics over shallow flats and points down south for bedding fish. There will also be some post spawners milling around the shallows that will hit buzz baits, topwaters and frogs. Otherwise, the guide suggests probing mid-depth ranges with a crankbait, jig or Texas rig plastic.

PALESTINE — Lake Palestine fishing guide Ricky Vandergriff says May always brings a mixed bag of opportunities for anglers of all kinds on his home lake. Black bass, crappie, catfish and white bass will all be active and willing this month, but

you’ll need to fish for each species differently in order to score. Here’s his advice for each one:

Black Bass: Vandergriff says bass will be in a post spawn pattern, but fishing should be good. Early in the day he suggests working shallow on points and shorelines near spawning flats using a Senko, Shimmy Shaker or spinnerbait. Areas with cover situated close to deep water can be especially good. Later in the day the guide will switch to a Carolina rig plastic or crankbait and target points near drop offs in 10-15 feet of water.

Crappie: No secrets, here. Brush piles are going to be holding lots of post spawn fish. Vandergriff likes brush in 14-16 feet of water. He says white jigs and shiners can produce equally well at times. Given the choice, he prefers to catch them on a jig.

Channel Catfish: A couple of patterns will be working. One of Vandergriff’s favorite ways to go after a mess of friers is tossing livers around boat docks in shallow water. If that doesn’t pay off, he will move to main lake humps in 15 feet of water and soak a glob of punch bait or a night crawler on the bottom. Baiting the

area with soured grain or range cubes will increase the odds of getting bit.

White Bass: With the spawn now complete, white bass should be actively feeding on main lake points. Vandergriff will go after the fish early in the day by targeting shallow water with crankbaits and Rat-L-Traps. Once the sun gets up he will switch to a slab spoon and target the nearest drop where the point falls into deeper water.

NACOGDOCHES — The water level at Lake Nac refilled to full pool in March and things are in great shape. While there could still be a few bass bedding in skinny water early in the month, my guess is the spawn will pretty much be wrapped up by now.

Even so, there should still be quite a few up shallow guarding or feeding on fry around flooded hay grass, reeds and other stuff that grew during the extended period of low water. They’ll be pretty aggressive, too. So you should be able to catch them on assorted moving baits like spinnerbaits, crankbaits, buzz frogs and Chatterbaits or with a slow mover like a Texas rig, wacky worm or weightless Senko. Flipping also could be a viable pattern in places where it has never been a player before, as some

of the terrestrial vegetation can be found in water as deep as 5-6 feet.

Fishing around lily pads with buzz frogs, hollow body frogs and buzz baits also should come into play this month. The best stands of pads will be situated on points or along channel breaks in water ranging 2-4 feet. Pads in deeper water will hold fish, too. But you’ll probably need to switch to a Texas rig, jig, swim jig or maybe even a shaky head to get at them.

Deeper grass flats in 12-14 feet of water adjacent to the main creek channel also could be holding some fish this month, depending on how quickly the hydrilla bounces back after the winter. Cold weather combined with winter flights of coots knocked the grass a lot farther back than normal this year. For best results, fish tight to the channel with a Texas rig, jig or maybe a drop shot rig. In shallower water, topwaters like a Zara Spook, Pop-R or buzz bait will be worth a try, especially early in the day or under overcast skies.

Crappie fishing prospects can be hit or miss. It all boils down to location. With the spawn behind them, the fish are going to move to the first available cover

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With a colder than normal winter, there could still be some big bass on beds on Toledo Bend Reservoir in May. Lance Wakeland of Fenton, Missouri, caught Toyota ShareLunker 557 from Toledo Bend Reservoir March 18. The 13.3-pound bass was 24.5 inches long and 21 inches in girth.

between shallow and deep water. Outside grass lines will be a player in areas where the hydrilla has grown sufficiently to hold fish. Otherwise, you will need to look to brush piles at mid-range depths.

SAM RAYBURN — We got some welcomed rainfall in eastern Texas earlier this spring and Big Sam caught a little water as a result. The lake was still about 2 1/2 feet below full pool and in great shape as of this writing.

If you're planning a trip to the big lake this month, you are more than likely going to be facing a post spawn situation. But that's not necessarily a bad thing, according to local fisheries biologist and tournament angler, Todd Driscoll.

"May bass fishing can be pretty darned good," said Driscoll. "That's typically when things get started out deep, but my guess there are going to be way more fish shallow than there will be deep."

Driscoll says assorted techniques and baits will work, but the surface bite could be tough to beat.

"May is prime topwater time on 'Rayburn,'" said Driscoll. "I like to fish deep as much as anybody, but I would imagine I'll be spending the majority of my time up shallow."

Driscoll says assorted surface plugs will produce. Pop-Rs, buzz baits and buzz frogs rank among his favorites. He'll throw them from the bank out to water that is 6-8 feet deep in areas where aquatic vegetation such as hydrilla, pepper grass,

hay grass and new growth lily pads are present.

"The key will be fishing around shallow vegetation and covering lots of water," Driscoll said.

May also is a good month for catching crappie on 'Rayburn. With the spawn complete, the fish should be gravitating

towards outside grass lines in about 12 feet of water at the south end of the lake, and to brush piles at similar depths and slightly deeper from mid-lake north. For best results, tempt them with a jig, Stanley Mini Wedgetail Runner or live shiners.

CONROE — May means post spawn for bass anglers on Lake Conroe. For fishing guide Billy Mills, that means getting off the bank and making use of his years of knowledge to get dialed in offshore hotspots.

"May is a month when I'll spend a lot of time keying in on brush piles, points, old roadbeds and pond dams," says Mills. "You will also be able to find a few fish around rip rap at the dam and at some of the bridge crossings, but I'll spend more time targeting the offshore stuff than anything else."

Mills says some of the best stuff is found in water depths of 10-15 in the mouths of major creeks. He likes to target underwater structure using a baby bass or Tennessee Shad pattern crankbait or a Texas rigged soft plastic.

If you are heading to Conroe to chase whites or thick shouldered hybrids, Mills advises coming armed with good electronics so you can locate schools of fish on deep, main lake points. He suggests looking for them in water that is about 20-24 feet deep.

"Vertical jigging with a spoon is a good way to catch them," Mills said. "But I also like to troll with a deep crankbait.

Earlier in the day you might find them a little shallower, say 8-12 feet on points, or along some of the rip rap and bulkheads feeding on shad."

Catfishing prospects can be pretty good throughout the month, as well. Fishing guide Butch Terpe says the best way to sack a limit is to bait a hole along the edge of the San Jacinto River channel or around the FM 1097 bridge crossing using soured maize or range cubes. Assorted stink baits and punch baits will work, as will liver, night crawlers and shrimp.

LIVINGSTON — Lake Livingston expert Randy Dearman of Onalaska has been chasing bass on this 90,000 acre impoundment for more years than many TOJ readers are old. In other words, he knows the big lake like the back of his hand. More importantly, he has learned from experience where the bass go and how to pattern them during different seasons of the year.

Come May, Dearman says the fish are going to be in a post spawn mode. He'll look for fish in some of the same creeks and coves where he caught spawning fish earlier this spring, only farther out towards the main lake.

"There are going to be a lot of fish on points in the mouths of the pockets," Dearman said. "They won't necessarily be on visible points coming off the bank, either. Underwater points that you can find with your electronics can be really good. Chances are the fish in those types of places won't have been messed with as much. They'll be a lot fresher and easier to catch."

Dearman suggests targeting the post spawners in 2-6 feet of water around wood or any type of cover using shad pattern crankbait, topwater or buzz bait. If the fish won't chase, he suggests testing the water with a Texas rig plastic, jig or a shaky head. Areas flanked by a creek channel or deep water drop-off can be especially good.

"There will also be quite a few fish hanging around the boat docks on the main lake by now," Dearman said. "Crankbaits are my favorite around docks, but they'll also hit jigs and Texas rigs pitched into the shady areas, especially on really sunny days.

Dearman says the most productive docks are almost always located in close proximity to a channel swing or deep water drop off. ★★

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The Approach

Huge, powerful engines coupled with the desire to get to the spot in a hurry tempt anglers to roar and race right up to the place they think the fish are holding. By nature, marine creatures remain suspicious of any noise or motion that could threaten their existence. That's why the approach and initial presentation without the animal knowing you are there or is not on guard ranks as very important.

The practical aspects of approach begin before you get to the chosen area. If you're going to work a shoreline, you don't want to arrive on a course that will send a mountainous wake from your boat crashing into the sector you plan to cast or troll. Obviously, it pays to shut down some distance from the target area and either putt-putt the remaining distance or use an electric motor or pushpole. The shallower the water, the more important this becomes. And, if you plan to cover the same area a second time, run way offshore of it before you circle to the starting point.

Catching fish when a school is breaking on the surface seldom poses a problem until the second and third boats arrive. Chances are they'll race right up to the fish and start casting or trolling. It's not unusual to see boats drag baits right through the middle of the school, eventually putting the fish down since the only sanctuary they have is water depth.

If you are the first boat and no other craft are around, the best technique is to ease well in front of the school, shut down, and let the fish swim to you. After you hook a fish, wait for the school to pass before you start your engines again. When there are other boats, the proper approach is on the seaward side of the school. Stay away from the fish until you get slightly ahead of them, but not directly in front of the main body. That way, you can cast in front of the school. If you are trolling, drag your baits on the fringes of the school, but not through the main body.

In many instances, fish do not want to leave the sanctuary and protection of the school to pursue an offering moving counter to and away from the direction the main body is taking. Instead, they may veer off, but they still want to be moving



If you're going to work a shoreline, you don't want to arrive on a course that will send a mountainous wake from your boat crashing into the sector you plan to cast.

in unison with the school. Not all the fish are tightly packed. Some will stray just a bit and those are the ones you want. The longer you can keep your boat and others away from the main body of the school and engines barely running, the better your chances of keeping the fish on the surface for a considerable period of time.

Offshore trollers looking for billfish often see a fish or two on the surface. The best technique is to keep the boat away from the fish while you parallel their course. Use enough throttle to ease ahead of them. Once they are well behind the trolled baits, swing the boat and the baits in front of them and slow just enough so



Once a meaningful approach to fishing is focus upon, the catch rate will begin to climb.

the fish swim into the baits and discover them. The last thing you want to do is pull the baits from behind the fish so that they know something is wrong and dive.

Shorebound anglers face their own set of challenges. If you wade, the rings of water radiating outward as you take each step sounds the alarm. They quickly sense the disturbance and displacement of water and know something threatening is taking place. When you wade, move as slowly as possible to minimize the ripples.

Even on land, your steps send sound waves and vibrations into the water as you approach the edge of the estuary. Fish often respond by moving away from the shore and into deeper water. The key lies in walking softly as if you were stepping on egg shells and then hang back a few steps when you make your first cast. For some reason, most of us want to stand as close to the water as we can when fishing from shore. Keep in mind, too, that fish can see movement, especially when you lift your arms and the rod to cast.

Surf fisherman tend to muscle up to the breaking waves and cast seaward as far as possible, often ignoring the fact that oversized fish are in shallow water almost up to the sand. This is another example of standing back just a bit and casting systematically in a semi-circle that starts up the beach and moves around until the last cast is parallel to the sand on the downward side.

Every beach has channels where the water runs parallel to the sand and then in or out depending on the tide. Locating these channels often leads to spectacular fishing.

When fishing reefs, wrecks, or bottom structure of some types, it's important to recognize that the species that seek this cover spend their lives at or near the bottom. When there is a reasonable current or the boat is drifting, it takes practice and skill to keep your offering on the bottom. You want a sinker that is just heavy enough to reach bottom, but not so heavy that it hangs there. The trick is to develop a feel

by lifting the rod slightly and letting the sinker drop back. If the water is not too deep, you'll feel the sinker hit bottom. In deeper water, the key is to watch the line. As you lift the rod and lower it, the line will go slack for an instant if you are on the bottom. If you are not on the bottom, you have to let out more line until the sinker touches. This approach is critical if you want to catch bottom species.

Too many anglers ignore the importance of a meaningful approach to the fish. Once you focus on it, your catch rate will begin to climb. ★★

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Choosing and Using Deep Divers

Recently it occurred to me, as I made my way through the local tackle outlet, choosing and using the right deep-diving crankbait can be an overwhelming task. I didn't say choosing "A" crankbait, that's easy enough. With 10 aisles of baits in a dozen different colors I counted (using a quick average per hanging hook, hooks per shelf and so forth) a minimum of 25 thousand crankbaits were available for purchase.

If you eliminate the shallow baits like the topwaters and Traps, you're still left with about 15 thousand. Using a factor of five to account for duplicate baits, there are still at least three thousand choices for the angler to navigate.

Faced with this challenge, many anglers might give up and fall back on their Carolina-rig, or some other trusted deep-water technique. That's too bad because not only is deep-crankin' a fun way to fish, it can put a lot of bass in the boat when the fish are on deep structure, which is most of the summer in Texas.

Some anglers are concerned that crankbaits can be expensive, and losing them is costly to the bottom line. I can't really argue with that. However, with a little practice and experience, not nearly as many baits will be lost as one might think, even in the thickest cover. Plus, a good plug-knocker will pay for itself in retrieved baits.

Let's start with the most fundamental determinants to bait selection, action, depth and color.

All else being equal, baits with a longer bill on the front will dive deeper than shorter ones. Another factor in depth of dive is the location of the line tie. A line tie further forward on the bill will give you less dive, (and a wider wobble, or action), than one closer to the body.

Why is action important? Because when fishing summer waters with higher temperatures and a little stain to it, a wide wobble will displace more water, vibrate more, and get more attention. Conversely, in a cold water situation a tighter, less obtrusive wiggle, which can be worked at a much slower speed to get the same amount of action may be preferred.

Another quality of action is the buoy-

ancy of the bait. How fast does it rise when there is a pause in the retrieve? This will be important when fishing heavy cover such as submerged timber and trees, or when fish are especially finicky.

In heavy cover a fast rise is helpful in that when the bait hits a tree limb during the retrieve a brief pause will allow it to rise far enough to clear the limb when the retrieve is resumed. A slower rise will obviously require a longer pause. That is the reason a slow-rising bait works so well on finicky fish, when the retrieve is stopped the slow movement will often aggravate the fish into biting.

Action, however good, will not catch fish if the bait is not put in front of them. That means the first criteria for bait selection is depth. How deep does the bait need to run?

I would suggest a tackle box hold baits that will cover everything from eight to 10 feet, all the way down to 25 feet. Most baits today have some indication on the packaging or in the name as to the depth the bait should reach. How deep do you think a bait called a DT6 might go? What about a DD22? If you said 6 feet and 22 feet you're following right along.



One aisle at a local retailer is loaded with a variety of crank baits in various sizes, colors, and depths they will achieve.

However, this is just an approximation. Most baits will get pretty close to the stated depth, especially those designed for relatively shallow water.

When dealing with deeper diving baits there are factors that will affect the outcome of this test, most notably the pound test of the fishing line and casting distance (or more appropriately retrieve distance), as well as the tackle being using.

Let's say there is a bait that to be used at the 25 foot level. To ensure that it is reaching 25 feet you may have to use 12 or 15 pound test line.

If fishing heavy timber this may be too light for the job at hand. A switch to a bait designed to dive 25 feet may be necessary in order to hit 20 foot with say 17 pound test line.

The reality is each bait needs to be tested to get a "real-world" working depth with the tackle and line being used. Doing that requires the angler to know the exact water depth and then trying to see if the bait hits bottom. All of this is very labor intensive if you don't do the work you could be wasting your time, and of course the money spent on baits.

I use a measured 20 foot rope to test



The author carries a variety of shallow and deep diving baits that cover a variety of fishing options.

bottom depth on a calm day, and then try baits first with 17 pound test line, then 20. The reason such heavy line is used is because I fish these baits in stands of heavy timber. If I were using them at Texoma where timber is scarce, I would test on 8, 10, and 12 pound test.

If the bait touches bottom I'll feel it and actually mark the bait with an indelible marker with the depth number. If it digs in really hard I know it may go deeper and can test at 25 feet. If it doesn't touch at all I know I need to move back to 18 or even 15 feet. As each bait just grazes the bottom I have my max depth for that bait/line combo.

I fish all but the shallowest divers on the same rod design, with two different lengths. A fiberglass rod designed specifically for crankbaits is used. The actions are medium-heavy and the lengths are 6'6" and 7'. The shorter rod is for all but the biggest, deepest divers, like the DD22 or the new Strike King XD, a true giant in freshwater crankbaits.

I use Abu Garcia Ambassador reels because they hold a mile of line, and I

stick with the same 20 pound test on both outfits. By using the same dedicated set-up I know my results will be the same every time these baits are fished. Additionally I remove any variables like line diameter from the equation. As mentioned, shallow divers, the ones designed to work in six feet or less like the Rapala DT6 or Manns 1 Minus, are much less affected by line size so I usually throw them on the same rod I use for bigger spinnerbaits.

When choosing bait colors you can see from the photos I stick with a few basic colors — shad, fire-tiger and citrus colors, black/gold-brown type colors, and of course, red. I'm either looking to imitate the shad

base, imitate crawfish or stand out in stained water. When fishing clear water I try to pair a natural shad color with a tight wobble pattern for a more subtle

approach, while in dingy water I would use a firetiger or chartreuse type color on a bait with a wider wobble to really get the attention of the bass from further away.

So far quite a few baits have been discussed that cover the various depths and conditions. They have been tested, and now it's time to go to the lake and catch fish — right? Well, yes and no.

Like anything in life there is another level to aspire, if you want to invest the work. Go to the nearest swimming pool and throw the baits there. This will allow you to see exactly what they do under water. Sometimes the packaging can be misleading, and you'll choose a bait only to find out it's not doing what was expected. While you usually can't return it to the store for that reason, you can mark it and go back to find one that does perform the task required.

Once committed to fishing these baits an angler needs to stick with it even if they don't produce fish right away. Fish in heavy cover, like timber, so the bait can be felt striking the trees. This will teach when to pause, and resume, the retrieve. Fish over sandy, muddy and rocky bottoms to learn the different feel they have.

Finally get a "plug knocker" of some kind to help get those baits loose when they hang up —and they will hang up eventually, no matter how careful you are. So just accept it and move on. When you get the hang of it you'll be glad you did! **T&J**



Red is a popular color choice for crankbaits as it imitate crawfish.

CoastWatch | Danno Wise

Along the Upper Texas and Louisiana coasts, May will mean warmer water temperatures. Although the transition won't be quite as early or as dramatic as what Lower Texas Coast fishermen experience over the next few weeks, by month's end water temperatures should be over the 70 degree mark and continuing to rise.

Of course, along the Upper Texas Coast in particular, 70 degrees is somewhat of a magical number as it usually triggers speckled trout fishing in the surf. While beachfront fishing generally doesn't get going in earnest until June, consistently warm weather and calm wind during May can trigger an early beachfront bite.

But, even without surf fishing action, there will be plenty to keep anglers busy in the bays, lakes and bayous across the region. Speckled trout will be working

the shallows early in the month before transitioning into mid-bay regions later in May. Throughout the month, most bays across the region will have good bird activity, with anglers usually boxing easy limits under flocks of gulls.

Redfish will also be active. Back lakes, marshes and shorelines will be good spots to target spot tails. There will also be decent numbers of reds around jetties and along the beachfront. Flounder, too, will be easy targets, especially over the first two weeks of the month as they are completing their spring "run."

Later in the month as the water continues to warm and clear, Spanish and king mackerel should be making their way closer to the beachfront. Depending on how fast the offshore waters warm, the offshore season can begin in earnest

by Memorial Day, with anglers targeting amberjack and wahoo in addition to kings. (As a reminder, Federal Red Snapper Season doesn't open until June 1, but anglers can be "gearing up" for the season during May). A variety of shark species will also become available to fishermen plying near-shore and beachfront waters during May.

The biggest drawback during May is the increased boat traffic. Actually, crowds don't really come into play except on weekends during this fifth month of the year. But, by the end of the month summer will be in full swing — officially. Unofficially summer activities kick off over Memorial Day Weekend and summer crowds won't be far behind. May is a great time to take advantage of the last days of sparse boat traffic for those who can spend a day on the bay during the middle of the week. ★★



Matagorda guide Capt. Tommy Countz of Tommy's Guide Service says May means

fishing West Matagorda Bay for him.

"I like to fish West Matagorda Bay in May," said Countz. "Usually, I like fishing the east side of West Bay, wadefishing for trout. The only thing that will really change that is if we get a lot of rain and we have a lot of freshwater runoff. If that happens, it can actually concentrate the fish, which is a good thing. You just need to move down a little bit and fish closer to the pass.

"We have a real good early morning topwater bite in May. So, I usually like

to start the day with topwaters. Once the topwater bite cools off, then I'll move to plastics. But, because it's not too hot in May, there's some days when you can catch fish on topwaters all day long.

"May is also a good time for guys who want to fish with bait to go into the lakes off the ICW and fish for redfish. And, we have some good reefs on the north end of West Matagorda Bay that also have some good fish on them during May."

May is a month that provides too many options at times, says Freeport-based guide



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By May, fishing around the old concrete ship, Texas City Dike, and Bolivar Peninsula should be back to normal after the oil spill that occurred in mid-March.

Capt. Mike Segall of Reel Threel Charters, who fishes both inshore and offshore.

"May is when we start having everything bust open," said Segall. "Sometimes it can be hard to decide what you want to do because so much is available.

"I'll still be fishing for redfish and trout in the Intracoastal and in Bastrop Bay. And, I've been catching trout at the jetties since March, so that is another option. Plus, the water's warm enough already for us to have some trout in the surf. So, if the water cleans up, I'll also fish for trout along the beachfront.

"When the water starts clearing, we'll also start seeing Spanish mackerel and kingfish move in close. We'll also have ling moving in. Starting in May, we always check around the marker buoys and posts, and around the close rigs for ling.

"One of my favorite things to do in May is fish around the jetties or just a little ways offshore for big bull redfish and shark. People usually only think about bull reds during late summer and fall, but they're hanging around just offshore all year long. Usually, we'll find them in between 30 and 40 feet of water this time of year. Generally, we'll fish cut shad for them.

"While we're fishing for bull reds, we'll also hang into quite a few sharks. Most of the time we're catching three to four foot blacktips. But, we also see quite a few larger blacktips and bull sharks, too."



PHOTO COURTESY CAPT. GREG VERM.

Big redfish should still be around the Galveston and upper coast jetties this month.

"If we get a few calm days, I'll be running offshore in May. We've already been catching some good kingfish. In May, we'll also spend some time looking for AJs (amberjack) and wahoo. Again, everything really starts busting open for us in May. And, remember, Federal Red Snapper Season opens June 1. So, May is a pretty exciting time to be fishing in our area."

Galveston guide Capt. Greg Verm of Fishing Galveston TX Guide Service says May will see weather patterns stabilize and fishing becoming much more consistent.

"The weather becomes much more stable in May," said Verm. "Specifically, we have a lot less wind in May than we did in April. Since we'll have more light wind days in May, the water quality is usually a

little better and we have more options as to where and how we can fish.

"Usually, speckled trout fishing along the jetties gets going in May. A lot of people think those fish don't show up until June or July. But, they are already out there, we just need the right conditions to be able to catch them. There will also be quite a few slot-size reds around the jetties. For the most, we will be free-lining live shrimp and live croakers, fishing for speckled trout.

"The back lakes will be loaded with reds and flounder along with some speckled trout during May as well. Live shrimp under popping corks will be the way to go in the back lakes. This is also a good option if we do get a little higher winds. Flounder fishing is good during May and

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PHOTO COURTESY NATE SKINNER.

The Galveston, Sabine, and Freeport jetties will all be good options in May for speckled trout.

flounder gigging on oyster reefs will be getting good as well.”

May means shrimp and bird activity, which means great fishing, according to Sabine Lake guide Capt. Randy Foreman.

“In May, we should see the start of the shrimp migration,” said Foreman. “That means the birds will start working. Most of this activity will take place from the south end to mid-lake. And, the fishing will be best on a falling tide. We should have good, active birds through the entire month of May.

“But, I won’t always be fishing under the birds. I’ll still be fishing over mussel beds and shell flats. If we have moving water, we’ll be looking for eddies along the shoreline. But, if the birds are in the area, we’ll check out what’s under them.

“I mostly throw glow/chartreuse Southern Shad. This is almost all I use on sunny days. But, if it’s cloudy, I’ll switch to a Red Shad Southern Shad.”

“Although we are usually catching trout under the birds, there will be redfish under the trout that are working under the birds.



A Vudu shrimp under a Mauler or rattling float is a good combination when fishing the birds.

If you want to catch redfish, you have to get beneath the trout to catch them. For those fish, I use a 1/2 or 3/4-ounce Terry’s V-Dog spoon with a yellow bucktail. I let the spoon drop straight down to the bottom. Once that spoon is on the bottom, I just ‘slow-roll’ it, just like slow-rolling a big spinnerbait for bass.

“Flounder fishing should also be good in May. Our prime spring flounder season is usually the last couple weeks of April and first couple of weeks of May. This year should be no different. I expect to catch a lot of flounder the first couple weeks of May.

“When I’m fishing for flounder, I’ll concentrate on the points and humps along the Sabine Channel or the points and bayous along the Louisiana Shoreline. And, again, I’ll focus on the eddies when I can find them. The best fishing will be on an incoming tide. I’ll use the same baits I use for trout, but I always cover my lures with ProCure Gel when I’m fishing for flounder. I think that scent gets the flounder to hold on to the bait a little longer, which makes it easier to hook. 🌟🌟

LOUISIANA COAST



Anglers in Lake Calcasieu can expect to see some big sow specks pulled from

Big Lake this month. May is the month when the heaviest fish have been caught from Lake Calcasieu. This May should produce plenty of trophy fish as well. Reefs in three to five feet of water will be holding the largest concentrations of fish. Early in May, the biggest fish are usually found on the southern end of the lake. As the month wears on and the water continues to warm, sow specks are usually spread across the entire lake.

Fishermen looking for trophy trout should stick with topwater, slow-sinking or suspending plugs. If they choose to throw soft-plastics, larger 5-inch models are the best choices. Fishermen looking to fill a cooler with “keepers” should stick with smaller (3 1/2 inch) plastics and/or live shrimp.

Anglers looking for redfish should concentrate on the shorelines, where schools of reds will be roaming throughout the month. A good number of reds will also be found in the marshes during May. Spoons and small soft-plastics are the best bets for reds, although topwater action is possible as well. Those tossing topwaters should stick with “Jr” models.

As is often the case, May sees anglers fishing out of Venice facing a variety of in-shore and offshore options. On the inshore side, the water temperatures will have risen sufficiently enough to see speckled trout and redfish action kick into high gear. Trout will be found in areas like the Burias Canal, Redfish Bay and Blind Bay.

Trout will also be found around the shallow water rigs beginning in May. The rigs in 8 to 15 feet of water are the best bet for trout. Once the trout show at the rigs, they usually remain there through summer. Often times in May anglers will find redfish mixed in with the trout. However, good concentrations of redfish will also be found in the marshes and back lakes, as well as in areas like Yankee Pond and the Wagon Wheel.

Offshore, there are a couple outstanding options as well. The prime option is chasing tuna around the deep water floating oil platforms. Tuna up to 50 pounds will be common catches around the “floaters” during May.

Once the water temperature warms above 80 degrees, blue marlin will begin showing up as well. And, for the growing number of dedicated swordfishermen in Louisiana, May has proven to be one of the year’s better months. 🌟🌟

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The AR-15 has proven to be the most flexible semi-automatic rifle/carbine platform on the planet. The constantly growing list of accessories we can screw-on, clamp, or exchange by removing a pin or two attests to that fact, and all in an easy to carry and maneuver package averaging around seven pounds. As if that were not enough, we can quickly change caliber by replacing the upper that contains the bolt, receiver, barrel, forestock, etc. This is accomplished by simply pushing out two pins and removing the upper assembly from the lower. The lower receiver has the buttstock, pistol grip, magazine housing and trigger/hammer group.

The list of upper assemblies available in various caliber options from various manufacturers that will fit the AR-15 .223/.556 lower receiver is surprisingly extensive. The available calibers include: .22 Long Rifle, .204 Ruger, 6 X 45mm, 7 X 45mm, .25 X 45 Sharps, .300 Whisper, .300 AAC/Blackout, 7.62 X 39 Russian, 5.45 X 39 Russian, .30 RemAR, 9mm Luger, .40 S&W, .45 ACP, 10mm Auto, 6.5 Grendel, 6.8 SPC, .458 SOCOM and .50 Beowolf. To function in the semi-auto mode all require magazine conversions and some require buffers made for the specific caliber. Complete uppers range from around \$450.00 to over \$1000.00 depending on the caliber.

Add to the list monsters like .338 Lapua, .408 Cheytac, .416 Barrett and .50 BMG (Browning Machine Gun). These behemoths are usually bolt action single shots. The Zel Custom Tactilite T2 bolt action model has a side feeding magazine and their setup is in the \$2,000.00 range at www.tactilite.com.

At this point I must admit I am sure to be missing some available calibers while others have been developed while this article was written. Plus, a craftsman like Kerry O'Day of MG Arms could create any number of custom upper

assemblies. See www.mgarms.com.

First, take a look at the current .223 upper to set a base line. A popular round is a 55 grain full metal jacket bullet leaving the muzzle at 3240 feet per second with 1280 foot-pounds of energy. Starting with the big boomers the .50BMG launches a 750 grain bullet at 2815 f.p.s. and generating over 13,000 ft.-lbs. of muzzle energy. I for one do not need to prove my manhood by touching this one off above a lower receiver weighing around two pounds. But, "different strokes," and if you can afford the upper you can afford the ammunition.

Saving money on ammunition while enjoying hours of practice is the reason to consider the .22 Long Rifle upper that

"The AR-15 has proven to be the most flexible semi-automatic rifle/carbine platform on the planet."

sells in the \$500.00 range. The ammo cost helps pay for the upper while allowing practice with the same weight and dimensions as the host .223. There are dandy AR .22 rifles available from the likes of Smith & Wesson, Ruger and Mossberg for a little less money, but they weigh a pound or two less. Another option is the CMMG .22 conversion kit for around \$200.00.

The pistol caliber uppers for the 9mm, 40 S&W, .45 ACP, and 10mm Auto open up many opportunities. The vast bullet choices have great applications for hunting, self defense and options for less penetration in a home defense situation. The cheaper ball ammunition, when available, makes for fun practice and plinking with barely noticeable recoil.

The .204 Ruger has become the darling of varmint hunters. It was developed in a partnership with Ruger and Hornady from the .222 Remington Magnum. Hornady's catalog lists a 32 grain polymer tipped V-Max bullet that screams out at 4225f.p.s. and shoots flat

out to nearly 300 yards. Yes, the .223 is a superb varmint cartridge, but we are looking at options.

The .300 Whisper was developed and pioneered in 1992 by the wizard, J.D. Jones of SSK Industries. Jones is renowned for his decades of work on subsonic ballistics. He has developed "Whisper" cartridges ranging from 6mm to .50 caliber. The 300 Whisper is a highly efficient cartridge based on the 221 Remington Fireball case, necked up to 30 caliber. The subsonic load from Hornady pushes a .208 grain polymer tipped A-Max boat tail bullet at 1020 f.p.s. with very little recoil. This is the only tipped subsonic factory load on the market and perfect if we go through all the hassle to acquire a silencer. Their 110 grain V-Max load travels at 2375f.p.s. and is a good choice for low recoil hunting.

The 6.8 mm Remington Special Purpose Cartridge was developed by Remington Arms in collaboration with members of the U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit as a possible replacement for the 5.56 NATO. It is based upon the .30 Remington cartridge and falls between the 5.56 NATO and the 7.62 NATO in bore diameter and muzzle energy which makes for an interesting compromise. For those that hate the metric system the 6.8mm is the same diameter as the .270 Winchester. Remington lists a 115 grain jacketed hollow point boattail bullet in their Express Rifle lineup leaving the muzzle at 2800 f.p.s.

So many choices with more on the way. Most of the above can be researched and acquired from Brownells at www.brownells.com. Complete uppers may be purchased and mailed to your location. The lower receivers must be transferred through a licensed gun dealer. Also, there are interchangeable lowers for the .308/7.62 platform, but that is another article. **T&J**



Pushing out two pins allows the upper assembly to be changed out from the lower receiver.

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Lake Roundup

SOUTH TEXAS



By Danno Wise

May is truly a warm weather month. Unlike summer or winter, when temperature extremes are the norm, during May the water isn't hot enough nor cold enough to push fish onto deep structure. As a result, there will be plenty of fish caught from shallow water on lakes across South Texas.

Of course, May is also a transition month, bridging the seasons of spring and summer. By the end of the month, fish will be transitioning to deeper structure, settling into a summer patterns.

Typically, May also sees plenty of spring showers, which can bring some relief to Texas lakes, many of which have seen their lake level a little on the low side. This year, most South Texas lakes had already gotten at least some much needed rain over late winter and early spring. With any luck, the "wet" trend will continue and the area lakes will rise a few feet before summer.

Finally, May is also the final month before summer crowds cover up South Texas lakes. Most Texas public schools let out for summer break at month's end, sending swarms of people to every body of water in the state. As a result, local lakes that fishermen have had to themselves for the past several months will be full of anglers as well as jet skiers, water skiers, sailboaters, joy riders, swimmers and other water sport enthusiasts beginning in June. But, for now at least, serious fishermen have the lakes to themselves.

COLETO CREEK — Bass pro Dennis

Lala says May is a great time for anglers to ambush bass as they are starting to settle into a warm water pattern.

"In May, we'll start seeing our bass getting into a warm water pattern," said Lala. "This means we'll have a topwater bite, but it will be really early.

"Noisy baits like the Frenzy Popper should produce good early in the morning around the points. You can also get some good action on a buzzbait. However, that topwater bite usually doesn't last long once the sun comes up. If you get an overcast day or something like that, they may stay on the topwaters a little longer, but usually it's over pretty early. Early in the month, you can get a few hours out of it. But by the end of May, the topwater bite usually doesn't last much past first light.

"After the topwater bite turns off, you can still work around the points with spinnerbaits. Most of the fish will be along the sides of the point, not right on it. So, concentrate on the sides along the drop-offs. Any fish still hanging around the points will usually whack a spinnerbait.

"Once the sun is up high, mid-to-

late-morning, I usually start working the outside edge of the grass. Most of the time, your best bet is usually a Carolina-rigged worm, lizard or soft-plastic jerk bait on the outside edge of the grass. The worms you can rig straight or wacky style. I prefer throwing a Power Jerkshad.

"I like fishing a short Carolina rig, using a 1/4 ounce or 7/16 ounce weight. The clearer the water, the more I like that watermelon color. But, I will also use a Texas rig with a 3/16 ounce weight," Lala said. "I'll throw it right up on the grass and let it fall off. And, this is also the time of year when the fish are concentrated. So, if you catch one throw right back in the same area because there's probably another one with them – especially when they're on the grass. And, since they are stacked up pretty good, you don't want to waste a lot of time getting a fish to the boat. Get them in and get another cast off as quick as you can. Sometimes you can catch as many as four or five in a row.

"We'll also have some good crappie fishing in May. Usually, small jigs and live minnows work best. Catfishing will be good, too. Lots of catfish will be caught on



During the middle of the day look for South Texas anglers to do well around deeper water structure, points, and hydrilla beds.

prepared bait, shrimp and nightcrawlers."

MEDINA — Medina is still low on water but Jim Gallagher of Jim's ReBait Tackle says May is a time when anglers willing to put in the effort can be well rewarded.

"May is usually a pretty good month to fish Medina," said Gallagher. "Actually, May is right in the middle of one of the most productive periods of the year for us – late April through the middle of June. It's one of those deals where, the water is warm enough for the fish to be active, but not so hot that it pushes the fish too deep. In fact, I always say May is a month when anybody can come down here and look good. During the summer and winter, the fish are really deep and you have to know what you're doing. But, right now, you can usually get a pretty good topwater bite. You don't have to fish real slow and you can catch fish on baits that folks are use to throwing on other Texas lakes.

"But as usual, this is a small bait lake, even when you are throwing topwaters. For whatever reason, big topwater baits just don't work on this lake. Spit'N Images and Pop' Rs are typically good topwater baits here. But, just about any topwater will work so long as it's not too big. During May, you can usually expect a pretty good topwater bite early in the morning.

"After the topwater bite is over, you need to look around the main lake and secondary points. We usually catch most of our fish around main lake points, but this time of year secondary points and creek channels can also be real good."

"You can also do well on white bass during May if you are opportunistic. This month the whites and hybrids will be schooled up all over the lake. You just kind of have to keep an eye out. There's really no telling where they'll pop up. But, if you can spot a school, you can have some really good action."

CHOKE CANYON — May will see most of Choke Canyon's signature hydrilla beds emerging from the lake waters. By the end of spring, the grass will be at or near the surface, but it won't be densely matted over as it is later in the year. With the grass close to but not on the surface, anglers have an excellent opportunity to work topwater plugs over the grass beds. Most of the time, Choke Canyon bass prefer noisy topwater lures like buzzbaits and Pop Rs. Stanley Ribbit Frogs are also effective and, since they are weedless, can be worked over the beds regardless of how

matted they become. They will become even more valuable as spring turns to summer and the grass beds become matted on the lake's surface.

During the first few weeks of May, the topwater bite can last most of the morning. As the water gets warmer nearer to Memorial Day, the topwater bite will begin to shut down earlier in the morning. But, anglers can expect at least an hour's worth of surface activity each day throughout May.

In the middle of the day, anglers should look for fish to be holding on deeper structure. The outside edges of the grass beds will hold quite a few fish, as will humps, tank dams and points. Texas rigged plastics, crankbaits and jigs are the most effective tools for probing these areas. Again, early in the month, fish won't be extremely deep. But, as the month wears on, expect the fish to begin backing down to deeper structure. By the end of May, bass will be in a full summer pattern.

FALCON LAKE — As is the case on other lakes across South Texas, fishermen on Falcon can expect good topwater action early in the day. Noise-producing lures such as Pop Rs and buzzbaits will produce plenty of action along the shorelines during the early morning and late evening hours. Anglers also stand a good chance of tangling with a decent size largemouth while throwing surface baits on Falcon this month.

When the surface bite subsides, fishermen should continue working around the flooded brush. Spinnerbaits and crankbaits are effective when worked along the outside face of the flooded brush. Jigs and Texas rigged plastics can be worked back into some of the denser portions of brush. Anglers specifically looking for big bass should throw "jumbo" plastics.

Later in the month, anglers should spend more time concentrating on points, ledges and deep structure. Deep cranks, jigs, lipless cranks, creature baits and jumbo soft-plastics all produce plenty of big bass over deep structure in Falcon. During the balance of the day, anglers are best served working points, ledges and deep structure with worms, jigs and deep-diving crankbaits.

In addition to black bass, hybrid stripers should be consistent on the lower end of the lake, while catfish should be steady in the upper reaches and in the river itself. **T&J**

WEST TEXAS



By TOJ Staff

Anglers in West Texas will still be dealing with the lingering effects of a longer and colder than normal winter. Not that cold or even cool weather will still persist, but rather patterns will still be running behind schedule due to the winter effects.

If this forecast rings true then this region could well see black bass still on beds through the first part of the month of May. With many of the lakes possessing clear water, look for deep spawn patterns to persist through May and on into June. Additionally, on lakes that are lower than normal, look for deep water to be slower to warm than water on the flats.

Until heavy rains and runoffs hit watersheds in this region look for bass activity to be concentrated closer to the river and creek channels. Use of electronics to identify ledges or available flats will be where fish will congregate to spawn and even recover once they move into a post spawn pattern.

Anglers will do well to cover water with spinnerbaits and Rat-L-Traps. Once fish are found then switch to Texas rigged worms or jigs to work over bedded bass.

For post spawn bass crankbaits worked around any woody vegetation will be productive. Also fish those same edges of creek and river channels with medium and deep diving crankbaits.

One final suggestion across the region will be to try the "Ivie Drift" on flats with water 25 feet deep and deeper. This continues to be effective where it was made popular on O.H. Ivie and has shown signs of success on other reservoirs as well.

Here are more specifics for this fifth

month of the year.

AMISTAD — Some anglers believe this popular border impound is in a constant state of spawning somewhere on the lake. The winter of 2014 may have stymied those efforts until last month when the warmth of April encouraged fish to get serious about their annual procreation.

During the start of May look for bass to still be spawning around the mouths of the creeks and rivers that empty into this reservoir. With the ultra-clear water, don't discount deeper depths, particularly where there is a flat, or deep water structure.

The good news is this lake is holding some 20 plus feet more water than it was the same time one year ago. However the water temperatures as of early April is running a full 10 degrees colder than the same time in 2013.

In the main lake, particularly where there is large expanses of flats try setting up a deep water drift similar to what was made popular on O.H. Ivie. Fish water 25 feet deep and deeper with Carolina rigged 10" Berkley Power Baits or similar large soft plastic worms.

Set out buoys in which to remain oriented. Make a drift, dragging the bait behind the boat. Once a drift is completed, then set over a few feet or yards and make another drift.

For post spawn bass look for main and secondary points to hold fish. Depending upon how much water is drawn down for agricultural needs, or if heavy rains happen to fall and provide a rise in the lake level, this time of year becomes a challenge for anglers to stay on top of fluctuating water. It will either be falling, or rising based on the latest weather to hit the area.

Striper anglers will see these big brutes settling into their summer pattern of working the deep water in front of the dam. Keep eyes peeled for surface commotion, or watch electronics looking for schools of fish, or bait balls.

Catfish anglers will see these fish moving up to more shallow water as their spawn continues. Best depths will be in water 10 feet to the bank. A variety of live, cut, and prepared baits will entice fish to bite.

O.H. IVIE — This will be an interesting spawning season for this big bass producing lake. Back in February this lake saw water temperatures that dropped

into the upper 30s. By early April conditions had warmed to the mid-to-upper 50s. That is over 10 degrees cooler than the same time one year ago.

Then there is the continued loss of water that further concentrates fish near the deeper creek and river channels. As of early April Ivie was about 46 feet low — 10 feet lower than one year ago.

With the cooler water temps and less water fish are still going to spawn. However the options for areas to spawn are becoming fewer.

Look for flats, ledges, or areas holding any available structure as places fish will go to nest and deposit their eggs. Look for females to be on beds and thoroughly work the areas with jigs and Texas rigs.

Later in the month post spawn fish will leave these areas, but not move far. Rat-L-Traps, crankbaits, and topwater lures will attract plenty of attention.

Once the warmth of May has truly set in, try long drifts over deep water flats. Use the large 10" Power Baits rigged Carolina style. Drag this rig behind the boat. This is a fairly slow and methodical way of fishing, but has been proven over the years to be very effective on big trophy class bass. This deep water bite could well last into June given the conditions experienced this year.

BROWNWOOD — This popular lake has a little over a foot more water than one year ago, and is about five to six degrees cooler at the start of April. By May look for conditions to remain fairly stable. If spring rains fall across the water shed look for rising water to stimulate a good bite on topwater lures as well as for jerkbaits or small crankbaits fished around and under boat docks.

By May the spawn should be winding down. There may be a few fish early in the month still on beds, but for the most part bass will have slipped to slightly deeper water near structure.

Crappie anglers will find papermouths either up shallow or starting to make their way to deeper brush piles. Small jigs or live bait are both good options. Egret baits Mini Wedgetail is an excellent small spinnerbait to fish for crappie when they are in shallow water.

Catfish anglers will also see these fish in more shallow water. A variety of live, cut, and prepared baits fished around any shallow woody structure should find fish. **T&J**

HIGH PLAINS



By TOJ Staff

Dismal conditions continue to persist for many of the lakes in this region. Until some heavy rains fall for an extended period of time look for many lakes to continue to be large "mud puddles."

The glimmer of hope is the prediction of a return to an El Nino weather pattern that will create more opportunities for rains. The other are the words spoken by TPWD Inland Fisheries Director Gary Saul recently during an interview on Texas Outdoor News radio. He said, "plans are in place to help lakes, and their fisheries in the Panhandle and western parts of the state to recover as quickly as possible once lakes have started to refill. All we need is some heavy rains."

Until then the best option remains Lake Allen Henry. Even though low, there is plenty of water in the deep canyons of the river and creek channels.

Look for black bass to be on beds or moving off of beds through the month of May. Lipless rattling crankbaits, spinnerbaits, and medium diving crankbaits are all good options to find and catch fish.

For fish still on beds use Texas rigged creature baits, and jigs. Any available structure, ledge, or flat will be attractive areas with the potential to hold fish. **T&J**

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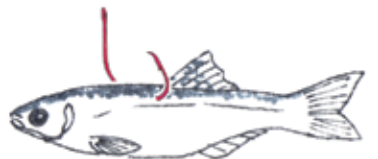
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Fishing Minnows

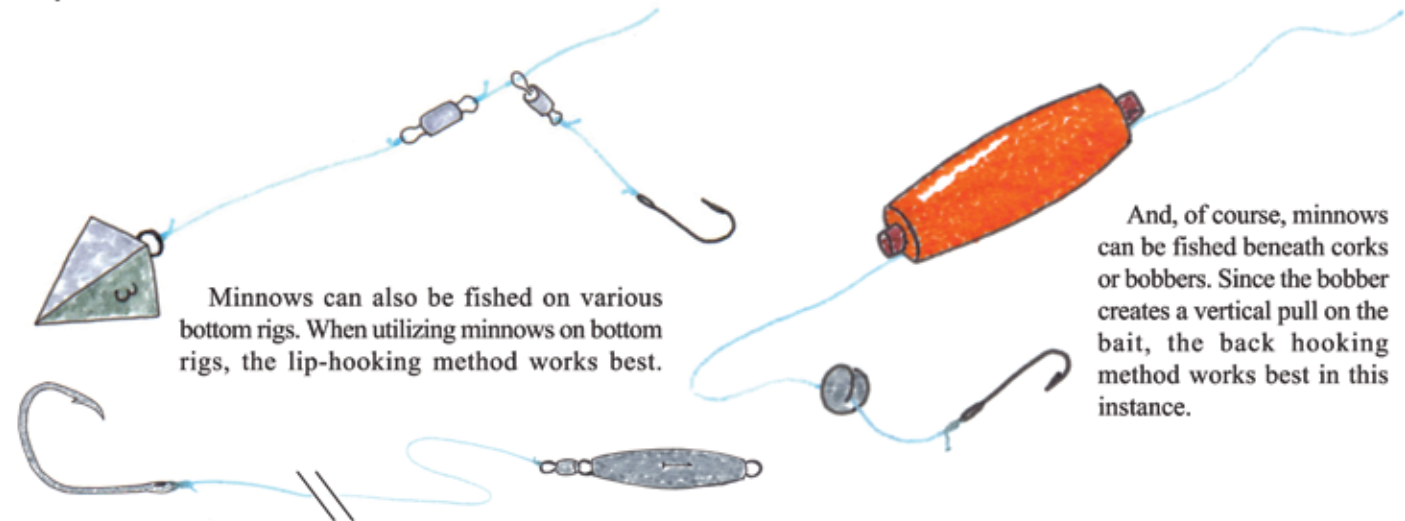
By late spring, minnows are filling every body of fresh water in Texas. Ponds, streams, creeks, rivers and lakes are all full of recently hatched (and growing) minnows of various varieties. And, everywhere there are minnows, there are predator fish eating minnows. As a result, May is a great time for fishermen to catch a mixed bag of fish while "soaking minnows."



Most often, when fishermen think of fishing with minnows, they think of shiners suspended beneath bobbers. While this technique is productive, there are other ways to get results while fishing with minnows as well.



The three most common ways of hooking minnows are (L-R) through the tail, through the lips and through the back. For freelining, hooking through the tail works best, as the minnow can be allowed to swim toward or even into cover, then gently be pulled back away from the cover.



Minnows can also be fished on various bottom rigs. When utilizing minnows on bottom rigs, the lip-hooking method works best.

And, of course, minnows can be fished beneath corks or bobbers. Since the bobber creates a vertical pull on the bait, the back hooking method works best in this instance.

While a variety of species will take live minnows during spring, the most common catch include black bass, crappie, white bass, blue catfish and channel catfish. Where they are present, smallmouth, striped and hybrid bass will also readily eat minnows, as will alligator gar and yellow catfish.



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Outdoor Calendar

THROUGH MAY 11

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

THROUGH MAY 25

Palmetto State Park 2nd Annual Photography Contest, Palmetto State Park, *Gonzales*. Youth: Up to 17 years old and Adult: 18 and older. Each category will have a 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winner and prizes. Photos must have be properly identified and taken within the bounds of Palmetto SP and during the contest period. Each person is allowed to submit up to three photos. Digital photo submissions only and cannot be edited or altered. Photos containing people will be disqualified, unless a signed Photo Release is provided. All Park Rules & Regulations must be adhered to at all times. All submitted photos become the property of Palmetto SP and TPWD. Winners will be chosen and announced by June 15, 2014. For more information and rules call (830) 672-3266.

THROUGH DECEMBER 31

Nature Programs and Hikes, Brazos Bend State Park, *Needville*. At least 3 free programs and hikes every weekend, year-round. Programs also scheduled on some Fridays. Nature Center open Saturdays and Sundays, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm, Monday - Friday, 11:00 am - 3:00 pm. For more information call (979) 553-5101.

MAY 1

• **Central Houston Chapter Coastal Conservation Association fundraiser banquet, Houston.** For more information call (713) 626-4222.

• **San Antonio Chapter Coastal Conservation Association fundraiser banquet, San Antonio.** For more information call (713) 626-4222.

• **Fort Worth Chapter Coastal Conservation Association fundraiser banquet, Fort Worth.** For more information call (713) 626-4222.

• **Cottonwood Creek Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation fundraiser banquet, Frisco.** For more information call (972) 473-9190.

MAY 2

Mainland Chapter Coastal Conservation Association fundraiser banquet, Texas City. For more information call (713) 626-4222.

MAY 2

Texas A&M Chapter Coastal Conservation Association fundraiser banquet, Bryan. For more information call (713) 626-4222.

MAY 2-4, 9-11

Texas Outdoor Family, Cedar Hill State Park, *Cedar Hill*, Special Two Night Event , Learn a variety of camping, cooking, fire building, fishing, and other outdoor skills. Participants will need to bring their own food, plates, sleeping bags and personal items. For more information and reservations call (512) 389-8903.

MAY 2-4, 9-11

Texas Outdoor Family, Garner State Park, *Concan*, Special Two Night Event , Learn a variety of camping, cooking, fire building, kayaking, fishing, and other outdoor skills. Participants will need to bring their own food, plates, sleeping bags and personal items. For more information and reservations call (512) 389-8903.

MAY 3

• **Go Fish! Learn-To-Fish Event,** Eisenhower State Park, *Denison*. Take away a fishing fun pack and enter the drawing for prizes. Equipment and bait provided or bring your own. No license necessary. Adults must accompany children. Bring sun protection and water. Registration is 9:00 a.m. For more information and reservations call (903) 421-4984.

• **Greenwing Conservation Day, Brookshire.** Held in partnership with Greater Houston Greenwing Ducks Unlimited Chapter. Bring the family and enjoy a day of kayaking, fishing, archery, rifle shooting, rock climbing wall, nature crafts and more! Admission is 2 canned food goods per person for donation to Boys and Girls Country. Held at Dewberry Farm, 7705 FM 362, Brookshire, TX 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. For more information call (800) 792-1112.

MAY 8

Austin Chapter Coastal Conservation Association fundraiser banquet, Austin. For more information call (713) 626-4222.

MAY 9

Mid-Coast Chapter Coastal Conservation Association fundraiser banquet, Victoria. For more information call (713) 626-4222.

• **Houston Safari Club 2014 Sporting Clays Tournament,** Westside Sporting Grounds, *Katy*. 100 targets - 4 Man Teams. Trophies, Raffle, Lunch & Drinks. For more information and registration visit (713) 623-8844.

MAY 9 - 11

Toyota Texas Bass Classic, Lake Fork, Texas, *Quitman*. Visit vendor booths, exhibits and hands-on activities for kids and families. Held at the Sabine River Authority Headquarters at Lake Fork. This conservation-minded tournament showcases the great fishing on Lake Fork, innovative fishery management strategies and big name concert entertainment plus more. 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. For more information call (512) 389-4855.

MAY 10

• **Dripping Springs Chapter Ducks Unlimited fundraiser banquet, Dripping Springs.** For more information call (512) 496-8333.

• **Hopkins County Longbeards Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation fundraiser banquet, Sulphur Springs.** For more information call (903) 885-6237.

• **Kidfish & Playday,** Purts Creek State Park, *Eustace*. Free event provides instruction and opportunities for kids to learn to fish and play outdoors. Booths and activitie. The first 500 kids age 3-16 that complete the 5 Angler Education Stations will receive a free rod and reel. Fishing tournament starts at 9:00 am and goes until 1:00 pm for kids that want to participate. The Friends of Purts Creek and supporting sponsors of Brookshire's, Ozarka and Dr. Pepper will be providing a great day of enjoyment, a free lunch w/drinks along with a very large Anniversary Cake and punch provided at the Trophy Award Ceremony. Volunteer and sponsorship opportunities still available. For more information and reservations call (903) 425-2332.

• **Go Fish! Learn-To-Fish Event,** McKinney Falls State Park, *Austin*. Take away a fishing fun pack and enter the drawing for prizes. Equipment and bait provided or bring your own. No license necessary. Adults must accompany children. Bring sun protection and water. Registration is 9:00 a.m. For more information and reservations call (512) 751-5418.

• **Fishing with a Ranger,** Buescher State Park, *Smithville*. Learn the basics of fishing with a park ranger. Borrow a pole or bring your own. Loaner tackle available. Meet at the dam/canoe rental area. 1:00 - 2:30 p.m. For more information call (512) 237-2241.

MAY 10, 17, 24

Guided History Tour, Goliad State Park and Historic Site's, *Goliad*. History encompasses Native American culture, Spanish colonization with the construction of Mission Espiritu

Santo, and the site's restoration by the Civilian Conservation Corps. Join this historic journey of Mission Espiritu Santo and Goliad State Park on Saturday afternoons. 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. (361) 645-3405

MAY 14

Golden Triangle Chapter Coastal Conservation Association fundraiser banquet, Beaumont. For more information call (713) 626-4222.

MAY 14

Houston Chapter Ducks Unlimited fundraiser banquet, Houston. For more information call (713) 775-0423.

MAY 15

• **West Houston Chapter Coastal Conservation Association fundraiser banquet, Houston.** For more information call (713) 626-4222.

• **Comal County Chapter Ducks Unlimited fundraiser banquet, New Braunfels.** For more information call (830) 609-8172.

• **Alvin Chapter Ducks Unlimited fundraiser banquet, Alvin.** For more information call (281) 393-1100.

• **Greater Houston Area - Mule Deer Foundation fundraiser banquet, Houston** For more information call (713) 412-3067.

• **South Texas Chapter Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Big Game Banquet, San Antonio** For more information call (210) 386-5485

MAY 16 & 17

Open House and Youth Outdoor Education Day, Lake Brownwood State Park, *Brownwood*. Enjoy Lake Brownwood State Park - entry fees waived. Lots of fun and educational activities for the whole family. Friday, May 16 is geared toward school groups, but everyone is invited. Good field trip for class. Saturday, May 17 is Family Day. Same programming each day. Activities include: Kid fishing pond, OGT Wall of Shame, Buffalo Soldier Program, Frontier History, Guided Nature Hikes, Nature programs, , State Parks Wildland Firefighting Program with more events being added. Bring mountain bike, swimsuit or fishing pole and enjoy the park. 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Call (325) 784-5223.

MAY 17

Kid's Wilderness Survival, Mineral Wells State Park, *Mineral Wells*. This 2 ½ hour course is a fun way for kids to learn how to stay safe in the outdoors and learn what to do if they become lost. The course includes interactive games, demonstrations and a hike on a nature trail. The course requires kids accompanied by a parent, guardian or youth group leader. Reservations are required. Free with paid park entrance fee or State Park Pass. 8:30 a.m. -

11:00 a.m. Call 940-328-1171.

MAY 17

• **Go Fish! Learn-to-Fish Event,** Galveston Island State Park, *West Galveston Island*. Take away a fishing fun pack and enter the drawing for prizes. Equipment and bait provided or bring your own. No license necessary. Adults must accompany children. Bring sun protection and water. Registration is 9:00 a.m. For more information and reservations call (847) 780-6474.

• **Fishing 101,** Lake Whitney State Park, *Whitney*. Learn the basics of traditional fishing like tying a hook on a line, casting a rod and reel, identifying fish and demonstrating safe and responsible fishing through fun and engaging activities. All necessary equipment will be provided or bring your own. The program is free with valid entrance permit for the day. No fishing license is required. 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Call (254) 694-3793.

• **Predators and Prey,** Buescher State Park, *Smithville*. Details the important relationship between the predators and prey of Central Texas and examples of animals that make up this relationship. 7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. Call (512) 237-2241.

MAY 17-18, MAY 31-JUNE 1

Texas Outdoor Family, Huntsville State Park, *Huntsville*, Special Two Night Event, Learn a variety of camping, cooking, fire building, kayaking basics, fishing, and other outdoor skills. Participants will need to bring their own food, plates, sleeping bags and personal items. For more information and reservations call (512) 389-8903.

MAY 21

Laredo Chapter Coastal Conservation Association fundraiser banquet, Laredo. For more information call (713) 626-4222.

MAY 21-22

Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission Meeting, TPWD Headquarters, *Austin*. 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Call (800) 792-1112.

MAY 24

Corpus Christi Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation fundraiser banquet, Robstown. For more information call (361) 331-1227.

MAY 23-25

RED-FEST Austin, Music, Comedy and Outdoor Fun, *Austin*. Circuit of the Americas presents Tim McGraw, Florida Georgia Line, Jeff Foxworthy, Larry the Cable Guy, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Rodney Carrington, Big & Rich, Duck Dynasty, Kip Moore, Bruce Mitchell, Easton Corbin, Kellie Pickler, Craig Morgan, Justin Moore, Parmalee, Kenny Wayne Shepherd Band, and much more. Three day passes only \$99 now on sale. For more information visit redfest.com

MAY 30

Operation Game Thief Austin Area Clay Stoppers Shootout 2014, Texas Disposal Systems Exotic Game Ranch, *Creedmoor*. 50 target Lewis Class Scoring System. Prizes, Shooting Games, Raffles & Live Auction. For more information and registration visit www.ogttx.com or call (512) 389-43381.

MAY 31

• **Panola County Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation fundraiser banquet, Carthage.** For more information call (903) 754-4635.

• **Houston Chapter Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Big Game Banquet, Houston** For more information call (713) 607-6522

• **Go Fish! Learn-to-Fish Event,** Cedar Hill State Park, *Cedar Hill*. Take away a fishing fun pack and enter the drawing for prizes. Equipment and bait provided or bring your own. No license necessary. Adults must accompany children. Bring sun protection and water. Registration is 9:00 a.m. For more information and reservations call (972) 900-1296.

MAY 31-JUNE 1

Texas Outdoor Family, Blanco State Park, *Blanco*, Special Two Night Event , Learn a variety of camping, cooking, fire building, kayaking, fishing, and other outdoor skills. Participants will need to bring their own food, plates, sleeping bags and personal items. For more information and reservations call (512) 389-8903.

MAY 31-JUNE 1

Texas Outdoor Family, Inks Lake State Park, *Burnet*, Special Two Night Event , Learn a variety of camping, cooking, fire building, kayaking, fishing, and other outdoor skills. Participants will need to bring their own food, plates, sleeping bags and personal items. For more information and reservations call (512) 389-8903.

MAY 31-JUNE 1

Texas Outdoor Family, Ray Roberts Lake State Park, *Pilot Point*, Special Two Night Event, Careful Kayaking Workshop. Learn a variety of camping, cooking, fire building, kayaking, fishing, and other outdoor skills. Participants will need to bring their own food, plates, sleeping bags and personal items. For more information and reservations call (512) 389-8903.

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MAY 2014

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				H7:54A L1:46P H4:30P	L12:28A H8:45A	L1:08A H9:38A
				1.7 1.2 1.3	0.0 1.6	0.1 1.6
L1:50A H10:33A	L2:37A H11:25A	L3:30A H12:10P	L4:32A H12:44P L8:18P H11:42P	L5:44A H1:10P L8:16P H11:42P	H1:20A L6:57A H1:32P L8:23P	H2:34A L8:02A H1:50P L8:37P
0.2 1.5	0.3 1.4	0.4 1.4	0.6 1.4 0.9 1.0 7	0.7 1.3 0.8	1.1 0.8 1.3 0.7 9	1.2 0.9 1.3 0.5 10
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
H3:33A L8:58A H2:06P L8:59P	H4:24A L9:47A H2:20P L9:27P	H5:11A L10:31A H2:34P L10:00P	H5:58A L11:12A H2:50P L10:37P	H6:45A L11:51A H3:10P L11:18P	H7:35A L12:32P H3:37P	L12:03A H8:27A L1:19P H4:10P
1.3 1.0 1.3 0.3 11	1.5 1.1 1.3 0.1 12	1.6 1.2 1.3 -0.1 13	1.7 1.3 1.4 -0.2 14	1.7 1.3 1.4 -0.3 15	1.7 1.3 1.4 0.3 16	-0.3 1.7 1.3 1.4 17
L12:52A H9:20A L2:24P H4:49P	L1:46A H10:12A	L2:45A H11:00A L5:47P H8:42P	L3:52A H11:41A L6:32P H11:09P	L5:12A H12:17P L7:13P H11:09P	H1:06A L6:44A H12:48P L7:53P	H2:38A L8:11A H1:16P L8:31P
-0.2 1.6 1.3 1.4 18	-0.1 1.6	0.1 1.5 1.0 1.1 20	0.3 1.4 0.8 1.1 21	0.6 1.4 0.6 1.1 22	1.2 .08 1.3 0.3 23	1.3 0.9 1.3 0.1 24
H3:50A L9:25A H1:41P L9:08P	H4:48A L10:29A H2:06P L9:43P	H5:37A L11:24A H2:28P L10:17P	H6:21A L12:12P H2:48P L10:51P	H7:02A L12:56P H3:05P L11:24P	H7:42A L11:58P	H8:22A
1.4 1.1 1.3 -0.1 25	1.6 1.2 1.3 -0.2 26	1.6 1.3 -0.2	1.6 1.2 1.3 -0.3 28	1.6 1.2 1.3 -0.2 29	1.6 -0.2 30	1.5 31

JUNE 2014

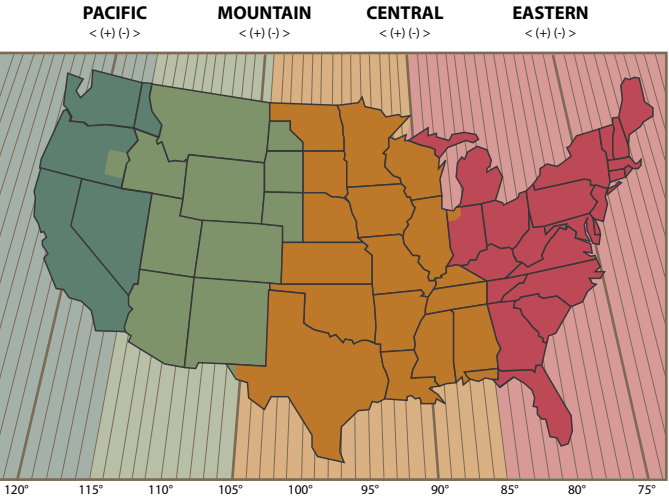
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
L12:33A H9:02A	L1:08A H9:42A	L1:46A H10:20A	L2:25A H10:54A	L3:09A H11:24A L7:19P H11:44P	L4:04A H11:48A L7:21P	L5:31A L5:18A H12:08P L7:34P
-0.1 1.4	0.1 1.4	0.2 1.3	0.3 1.3	0.5 1.2 0.7 0.8 5	0.7 1.2 0.5	0.9 0.8 1.2 0.3 7
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
H2:46A L6:51A H12:23P L7:55P	H3:41A L8:17A H12:37P L8:24P	H4:28A L9:22A H12:53P L8:58P	H5:11A L10:08A H1:17P L9:37P	H5:55A L10:46A H1:53P L10:19P	H6:38A L11:23A H2:39P L11:04P	H7:23A L12:06P H3:31P L11:52P
1.1 1.0 1.2 0.1 8	1.3 1.1 1.2 -0.1 9	1.4 1.1 1.2 -0.3 10	1.5 1.2 1.3 -0.4 11	1.6 1.2 1.3 -0.5 12	1.6 1.3 1.4 -0.6 13	1.6 1.3 1.4 -0.5 14

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



MAY 2014

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

JUNE 2014

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2:25P - 7:25P	3:20P - 8:20P	4:10A - 9:10A	4:30A - 9:30A	5:20A - 10:20A	6:05A - 11:05A	6:45A - 11:45A
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
7:25A - 12:25P	8:05A - 1:05P	8:45A - 1:45P	9:30A - 2:30P	10:20A - 3:20P	11:15A - 4:15P	12:15P - 5:15P

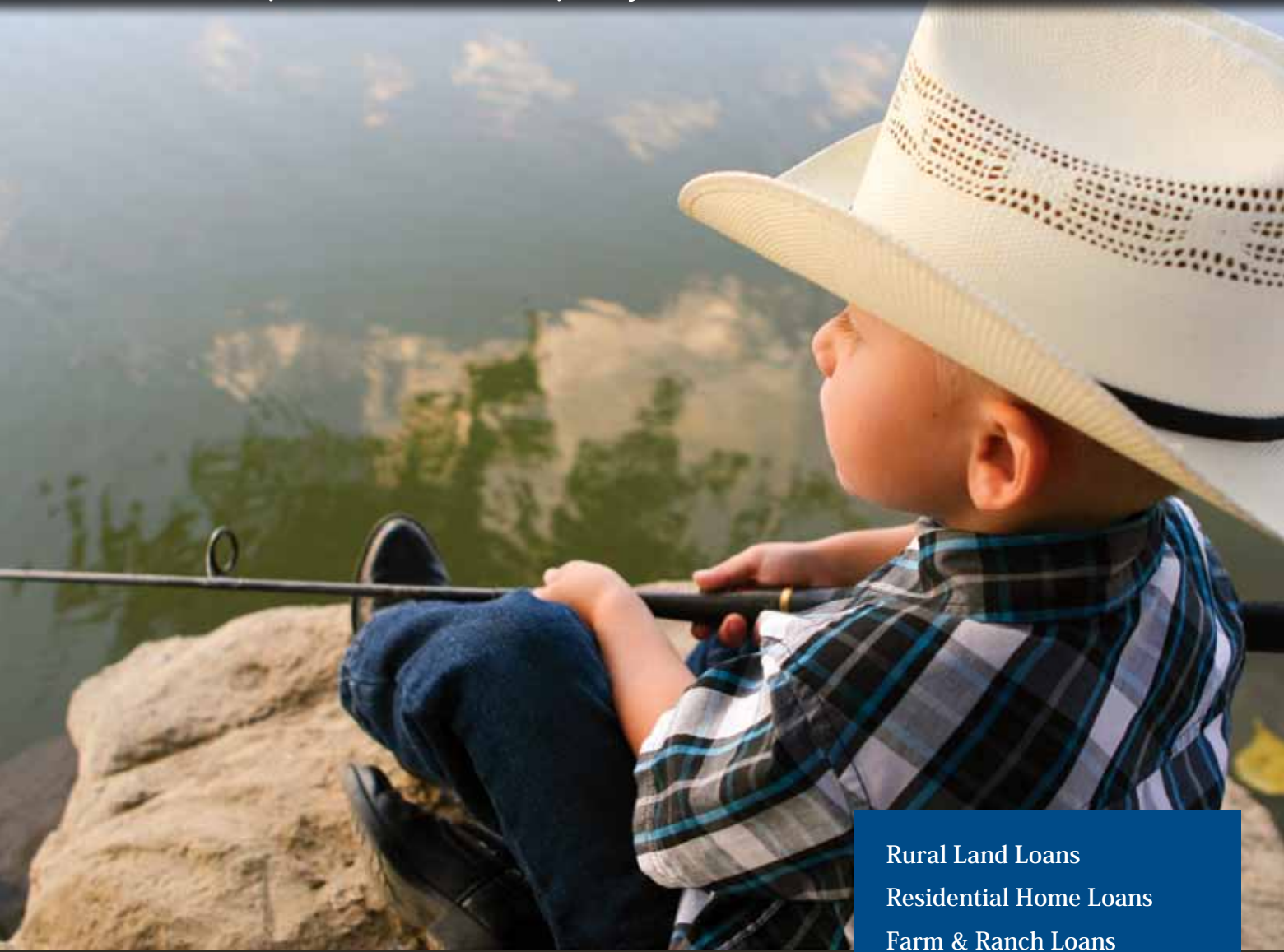
● BEST ☉ GOOD ☾ FAIR ○ POOR

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

Feeding Times by Dan Barnett have been proven by analysis of 124 - 3 day bass tournaments between 1967 through 1983 to be reliable and accurate in predicting wildlife feeding activity. The Feeding Times are not a cure-all. Weather and other environmental conditions affect wildlife feeding activity. Annual vest pocket books, which show all the major and minor periods, can be ordered by sending a check or money order for \$15.00 per book. For S&H, please add \$4.00 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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