

LIGHTER GUNS AND LOADS FOR TURKEYS, P. 70

GAME & FISH

MIDWEST

The Regional Outdoor Guide

GAFMAG.COM
MARCH 2022

TM

FISH ON!

**3 KILLER
RIGS FOR
ICE-OUT
WALLEYES**

**SOLVE THE MARCH
BASS BITE**

**MUSCLE UP GIANT
BLUE CATS**

**GOOD GUNNING:
YOUR INTRO TO
CROW HUNTING**

**TALK TURKEY:
5 ESSENTIAL CALLS
TO MASTER NOW**

**EARLY BIRDS:
HUNT 'HUSKER
GOBBLERS
THIS MONTH**

REGION ROUNDUP

- DALE HOLLOW SMALLIES
- MINNESOTA EELPOUT
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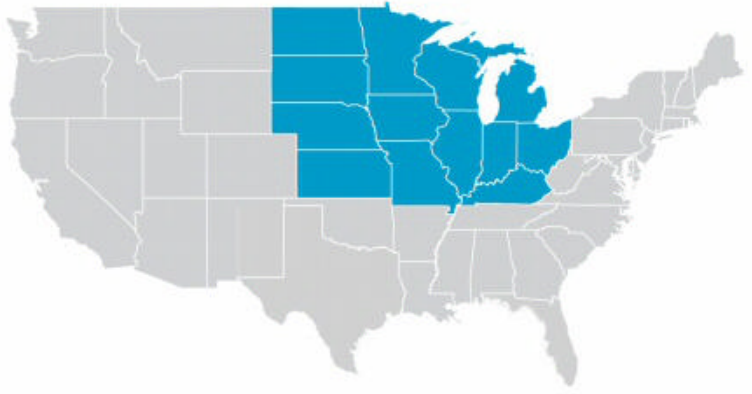




GAME & FISH

The Regional Outdoor Guide

MIDWEST



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CONTENTS
MARCH 2022

48

HOW-TO

38 MURDER MYSTERY

Learn one expert's secrets to putting more crows on the ground.

By Josh Dahlke

48 PROBLEM SOLVING

Early spring poses many challenges for bass anglers. We have the solutions you need to catch fish.

By Keith Sutton



36

44 BEAT THE BLUES

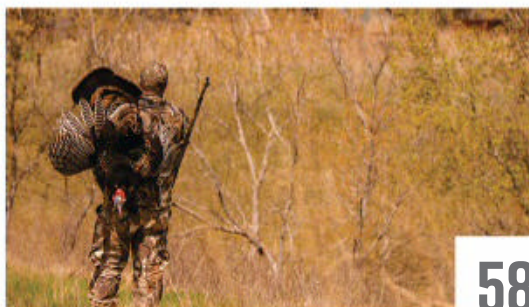
Go toe-to-toe with trophy-class blue catfish on the Midwest's big rivers this month.

By Keith Sutton

54 SPEAK EASY

Communicate with turkeys like a pro this season.

By Tony J. Peterson



58

34 AROUND THE MIDWEST

Snows, smallies, slabs and more are on the March menu.

By Brandon Butler

FIELD SKILLS

36 TERRIFIC TRIOS

Tie up these three-way rigs to hook more springtime river walleyes.

By Dr. Jason Halfen

DESTINATIONS

58 GO WEST

Head to western Nebraska this month for an early chance at bagging a gobbler.

By Joel Nelson



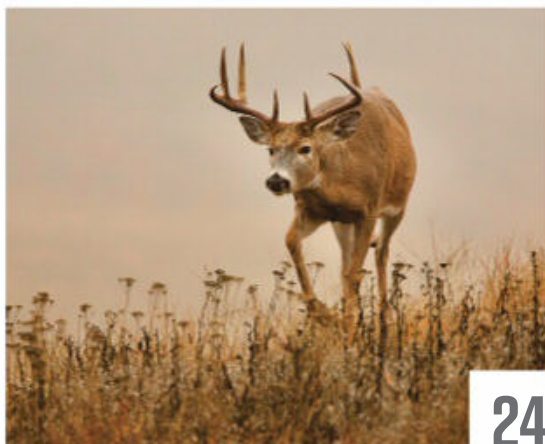
10



14



16



24

FEATURES

24 DREAM SEASON

The author and his friends went 13 for 13 on bucks in Kansas last season. They did some things right, but how much was luck?

By Craig Boddington

62 MAINE EVENTS

Landlocked salmon are the major draw, but smallmouth bass and lake trout fill out the ticket in the Grand Lake Stream area.

By Bryce M. Towsley

GEAR

70 BUYER'S GUIDE

Thanks to high-density loads and easy-handling shotguns, smaller may be better when it comes to the ideal turkey setup.

By Game & Fish Staff

76 RANGE REPORT

Some components of the new Mossberg 940 Pro Waterfowl were developed in competitive shooting, which makes this one slick shotgun.

By Brad Fenson

IN EVERY ISSUE

04 EDITOR'S LETTER

08 MOON TIMES

80 RITES

DEPARTMENTS

10 SHOOTING

More manufacturers are using carbon fiber to build lightweight, precision hunting rifles with superb balance.

By Richard Mann

16 DO-IT-YOURSELF

Put together a compact medical kit—and learn how to best use its contents—to treat injuries outdoors.

By Adam Heggstaller

14 FISHING

Bass anglers look forward to the spawn, but can pulling fish off their beds hurt the local population?

By Dr. Jason Halfen

18 CONSERVATION

Some wildlife managers claim trail cameras can disturb big game, but hunters argue otherwise.

By Andrew McKean

62



GIVE US YOUR BEST SHOTS

Most of us have a camera with us 24/7 these days. We take hundreds, maybe even thousands, of photographs in a year. I think we've come to appreciate them less because of it. When is the last time you studied a pic on your phone? Came back to it a couple hours later or the next day for another look because you enjoyed gazing at the object or scene or moment in time it captured?

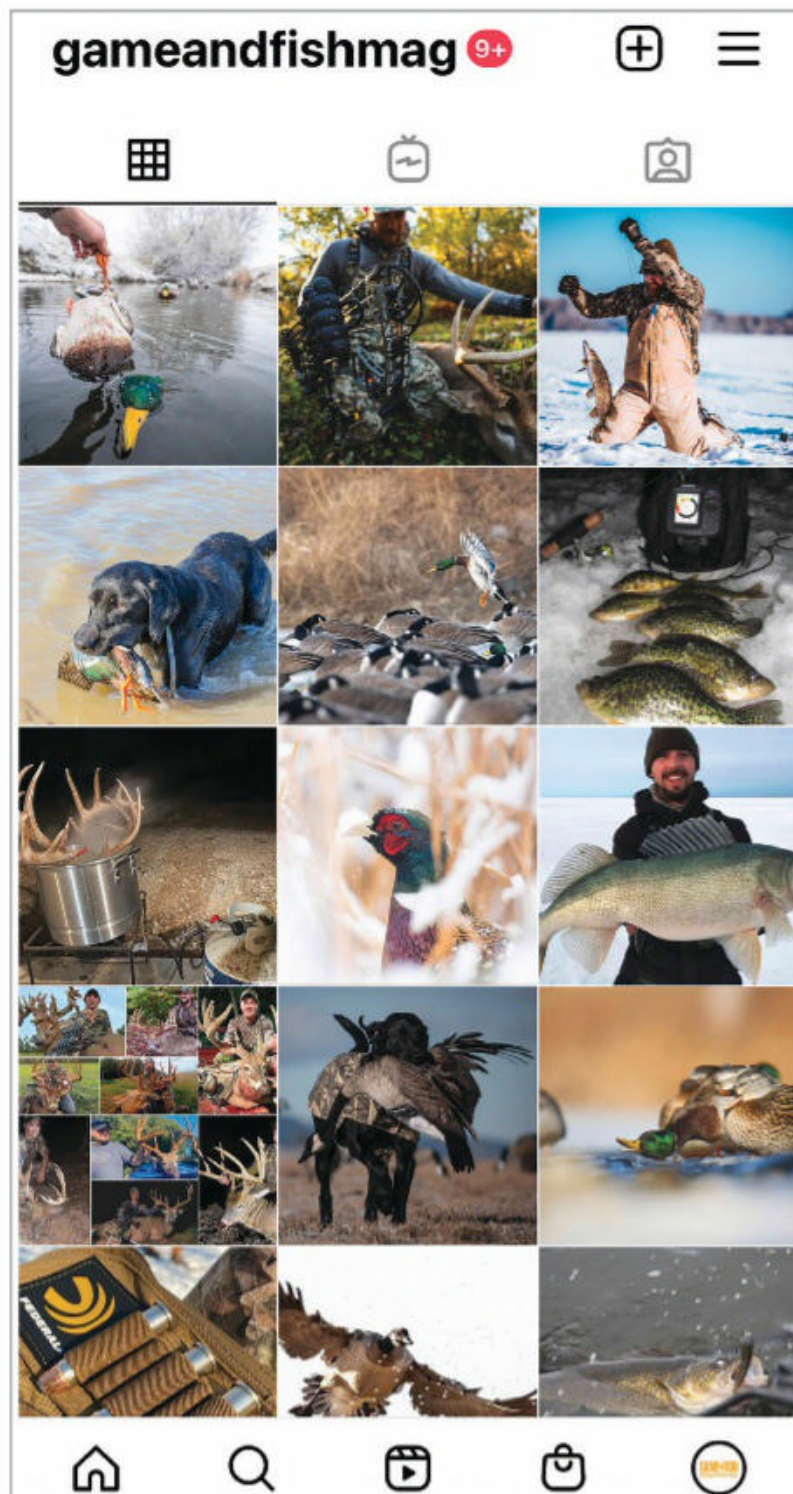
Hunters and anglers have good reason to take photos. The places where we pursue game and fish are oftentimes spectacular, and we want to remember what the lake looked like when the sun came over the ridge or how red the maples were the day two grouse fell to the gun in two flushes. But we also should have plenty of reason to admire photos taken by our fellow hunters and anglers. It's a way to celebrate our passions, lands and wildlife. It's a way to celebrate our successes and traditions.

I was reminded of this when I received a letter from Anthony Baugh of Missouri. Anthony is in his mid-30s and has been reading *Game & Fish* since he was a kid. He emailed me because he had a question about a special photograph. He wrote:

"I was going through some old stuff I saved and came across my May 1996 issue. My father had sent in a picture of me when I was 6 years old and had caught a 6-pound channel cat. Just this last year my 5-year-old daughter caught her biggest so far, which happened to be a 6-pound channel. I have a picture of it, and I was wondering if you still do the Camera Corner. I know she would be as excited as I was when my father told me to look through the new issue, and to my surprise, there I was!"

While we no longer run Camera Corner on these pages, the *Game & Fish* Instagram page is the perfect place to share photos among readers. Simply follow @gameandfishmag and tag us in your photos of success. We'll share them with our followers. Give us your best shots, and be sure to look for Anthony and his daughter. They both caught nice catfish.

Adam Heggenstaller
Editorial Director



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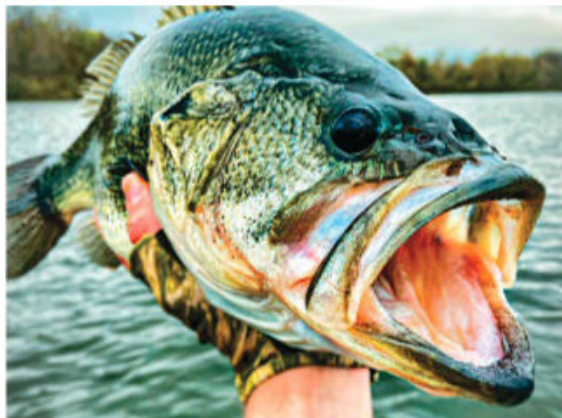
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SPRING FORWARD FOR TURKEYS

From preseason scouting to late-season strategies, check out our turkey articles for helpful advice. Find them in the Hunting pulldown menu.



LATEST FROM VEGAS

The annual SHOT Show returned to Las Vegas in January, featuring the latest rifles, shotguns, ammo and more. See our reports for the scoop.



IT'S ALWAYS CATFISH SEASON

When it comes to cats, we have everything from baits and rigs to destinations and tactics covered. Look under the Fishing menu to study up this spring.

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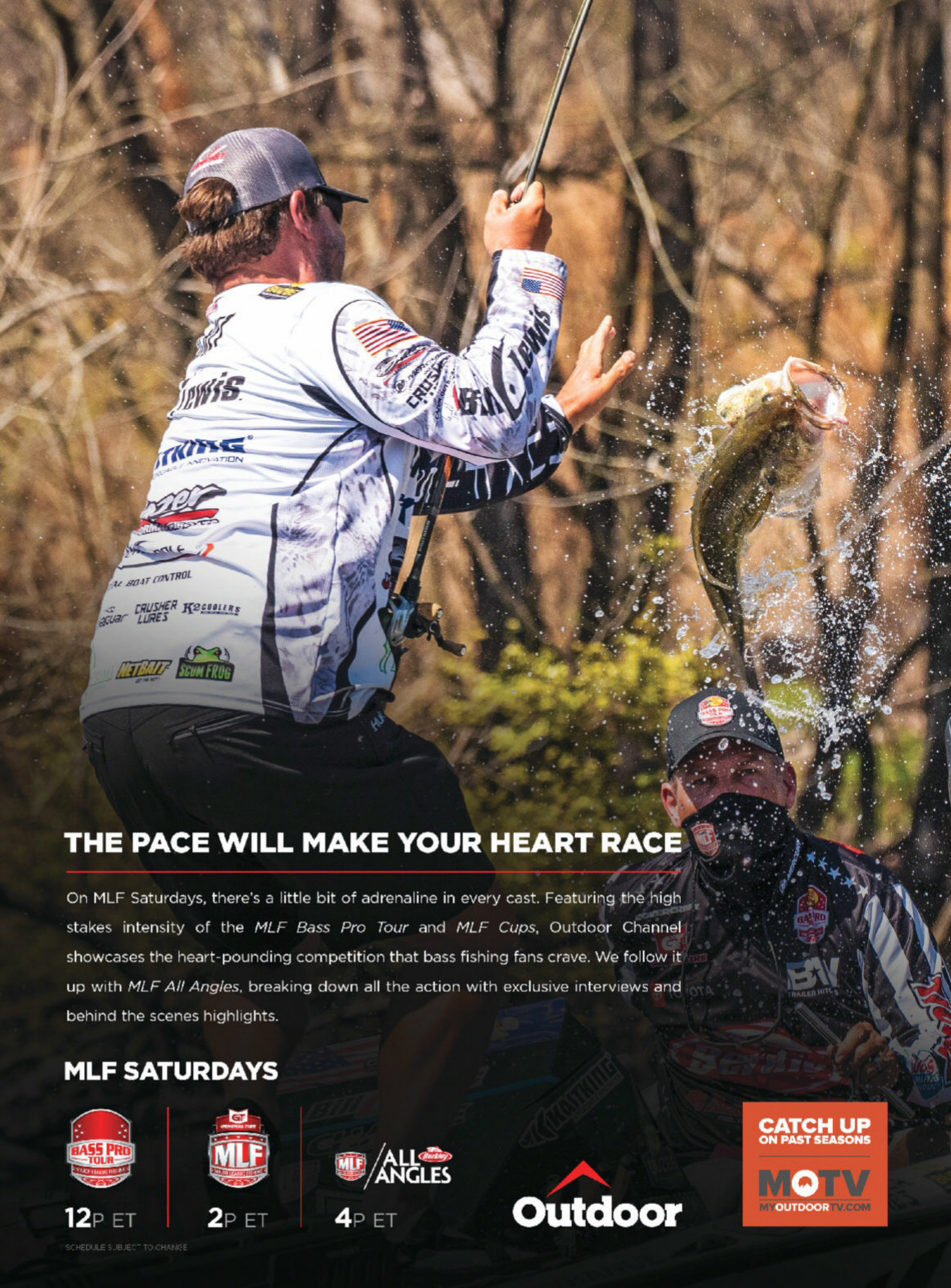
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THE PACE WILL MAKE YOUR HEART RACE

On MLF Saturdays, there's a little bit of adrenaline in every cast. Featuring the high stakes intensity of the *MLF Bass Pro Tour* and *MLF Cups*, Outdoor Channel showcases the heart-pounding competition that bass fishing fans crave. We follow it up with *MLF All Angles*, breaking down all the action with exclusive interviews and behind the scenes highlights.

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2P ET



4P ET


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SUN		MON		TUE		WED		THU		FRI		SAT	
20		21		22		23		24		25	LAST Q	26	
am	pm	am	pm	am	pm	am	pm	am	pm	am	pm	am	pm
1:54	2:18	2:42	3:06	3:30	3:54	4:18	4:42	5:06	5:30	5:54	6:18	6:42	7:06
to	to	to	to	to	to	to	to	to	to	to	to	to	to
3:54	4:18	4:42	5:06	5:30	5:54	6:18	6:42	7:06	7:30	7:54	8:18	8:42	9:06
27		28											
am	pm	am	pm										
7:30	7:54	8:18	8:42										
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9:30	9:54	10:18	10:42										

MARCH 2022													
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6		7		8		9		10		11	FIRST Q	12	
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20		21		22		23		24		25	LAST Q	26	
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27		28		29		30		31					
am	pm	am	pm	am	pm	am	pm	am	pm				
6:54	7:18	7:42	8:06	8:30	8:54	9:18	9:42	10:06	10:30				
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8:54	9:18	9:42	10:06	10:30	10:54	11:18	11:42	12:06	12:30				

APRIL 2022													
SUN		MON		TUE		WED		THU		FRI		SAT	
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										—	12:06	12:30	12:54
										to	to	to	to
										—	2:06	2:30	2:54
3		4		5		6		7		8	FIRST Q	9	
am	pm	am	pm	am	pm	am	pm	am	pm	am	pm	am	pm
1:18	1:42	2:06	2:30	2:54	3:18	3:42	4:06	4:30	4:54	5:18	5:42	6:06	6:30
to	to	to	to	to	to	to	to	to	to	to	to	to	to
3:18	3:42	4:06	4:30	4:54	5:18	5:42	6:06	6:30	6:54	7:18	7:42	8:06	8:30

The moon's phases are listed as New, First Quarter (First Q), Full and Last Quarter (Last Q). Times listed represent the peak activity times for game and fish each day.

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DAYS

GOOD
DAYS

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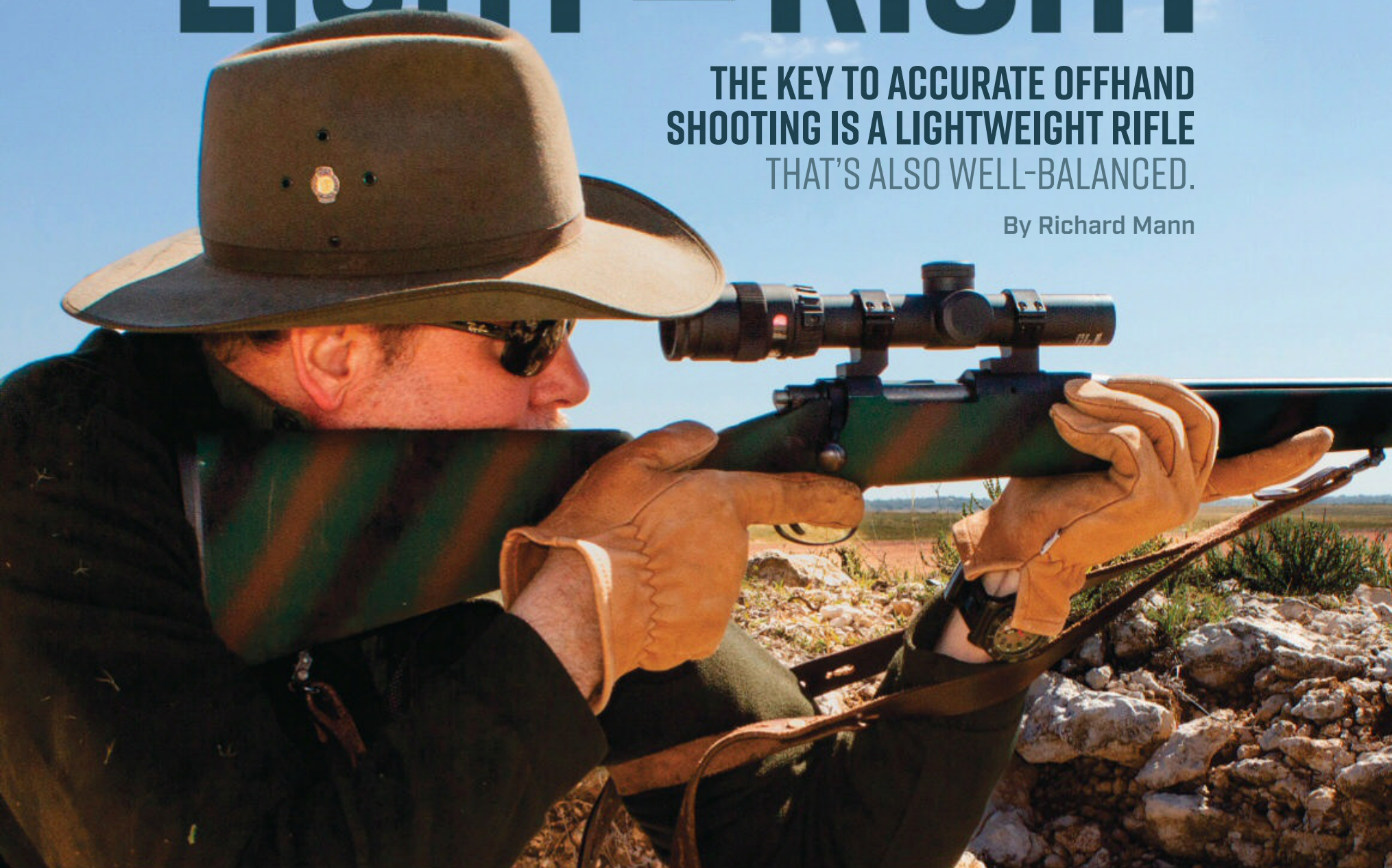
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LIGHT IS RIGHT

THE KEY TO ACCURATE OFFHAND SHOOTING IS A LIGHTWEIGHT RIFLE THAT'S ALSO WELL-BALANCED.

By Richard Mann



The great gun writer and backwoods hunter Townsend Whelen once wrote, “A man will travel farther, hunt over more country, have a better chance of coming on game, and be in better condition when he does if his weapon is light.” This is undisputed fact, but most hunters seem too obsessed with shooting precision to worry much about rifle weight. It’s also easier to build heavy rifles that shoot well, and they cost less.

Many hunters, particularly those who are targeting whitetails, hunt from their backsides in blinds, shoot houses or treestands. They are stationary for the most part. In those situations, rifle weight is of little consequence. However, for those who trek deep and hunt “off their

hind legs,” as my friend John Barsness says, rifle weight matters.

New Ultra Light Arms (NULA) made the first honest attempt at building a lightweight hunting rifle, introducing the Model 20 in 1985. Model 20 rifles not only tip the scales at either side of 5 pounds, depending on particulars, but also shoot with benchrest precision. More importantly, they set a standard for lightweight hunting rifles that manufacturers have been attempting to meet ever since.

One of the things that makes a NULA rifle so special is its balance. The balance point is right at the front trigger-guard screw, between your hands. This maximizes the rifle’s handling and shooting qualities, and it brings these two aspects, which can sometimes work against one another, into equilibrium.

Balance is often overlooked when it comes to hunting rifles. Rifles that are butt-heavy tend to be easier to get on target quickly. The Winchester Model 94 is a perfect example. Rifles like this are favored by brush hunters or others who tend to jump-shoot deer. They afford quick action but are notorious for delivering less-than-stellar offhand accuracy, especially at distance.

Muzzle-heavy rifles tend to be easier to hold on target. The finest examples of this are early, long-barreled, traditional muzzleloaders, but the Remington Sendero comes to mind as well. With more weight forward of your support hand, the rifle becomes easier to stabilize. At the same time, however, muzzle-heavy rifles can seem unwieldy; handling them is sometimes like holding

RICHARD MANN (ABOVE)

The NULA Model 20 weighs about 5 pounds, and its balance makes it easier to shoot accurately than a heavier rifle.



a curtain rod with a mad cat attached to the far end.

Because butt-heavy rifles seem lighter than muzzle-heavy rifles, hunters often believe all light rifles are hard to shoot accurately. I'm sure you've heard some old-timer comment that if your rifle is too light you won't be able to hit anything. Actually, the heavier a rifle, the harder it is to hold steady. Point an 8-pound-plus rifle at a target and hold it there for 15 seconds. Now do the same with a 6-pound or lighter rifle. You'll quickly understand the old cliché, "If you hold long, you hold wrong." Experienced hunters know that holding a common (heavy) rifle very long magnifies the wobble.

The key to accurate offhand shooting—the kind hunters need—is a light rifle that's also balanced. Fortunately,

modern rifle manufacturers are starting to figure this out. We've recently seen a host of lightweight hunting rifles introduced, and not only do they shoot very well—many come with accuracy guarantees—they're also well-balanced.

Some of these rifles blur the lines between a traditional hunting-style rifle and

the more modern precision long-range rifle. This is now possible because of advancements in the production of carbon-fiber-reinforced synthetic stocks, the use of carbon-fiber-wrapped barrels and a better understanding by manufacturers of what modern hunters are looking for in a rifle. Here are several leading the way.



BERGARA PREMIER MOUNTAIN 2.0

Weighing between 6.2 and 6.4 pounds, the Mountain 2.0 is outfitted with an AG Composites stock made solely of carbon fiber. This rugged, lightweight stock is produced by the same company that built the stock for the Barrett Fieldcraft rifle, which was largely based on the NULA Model 20. Bergara (bergara.online) has made of name for itself as a manufacturer of fine-shooting rifles, and the Mountain 2.0 is not an exception. The rifle is chambered for popular big-game cartridges such as the 6.5 Creedmoor and even the .28 Nosler. It's well-balanced and ideally adapted for backcountry, hind-legs hunting. Prices range from \$2,150 to \$2,250.



NOSLER MODEL 48 AND MODEL 21

Nosler offers three rifles that are right on the cusp of what can be considered lightweight. Both the Model 48 Long-Range Carbon (\$3,285) and Model 48 Mountain Carbon (\$3,235) feature carbon-fiber stocks and carbon-fiber-wrapped barrels. They tip the scales right at 7 pounds with 26-inch barrels, and they have impeccable balance. The newest rifle from Nosler (nosler.com), the svelte and well-balanced Model 21 (\$2,795), has a carbon-fiber stock with more traditional lines and a steel barrel. Its weight varies depending on chambering, but a .308 Win. comes in at 6.8 pounds.



SAVAGE MODEL 110 ULTRALITE

Savage rifles have always had a reputation for fine accuracy, but with the 110 Ultralite the company adopts a trend in rifle manufacturing mostly used by high-end custom manufacturers. By using a carbon-fiber-wrapped barrel from Proof Research on the 110 Ultralite, Savage (savagearms.com) is able to reduce weight substantially. This rifle weighs only 5.8 pounds with a 22-inch barrel. In comparison, the 110 Hunter with its common steel barrel is 25 percent heavier. The carbon-fiber-wrapped barrel provides the rigidity of a bull barrel without the weight. Wonderfully balanced for offhand marksmanship, the 110 Ultralite is a steal at \$1,649.

A man with a beard, wearing a wide-brimmed hat and a vest, is sitting on a large log in a forest. He is looking off to the side. In the background, there are trees and a stone fire pit with a kettle on it.

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A surprising introduction from a company known for mostly tactical-type firearms, the Waypoint does a great job of meshing features of the precision rifle with those of a traditional hunting rifle. Its vertical grip, detachable box magazine and high comb make it well-suited for precision shooting, but its light weight and balance beg hunters to carry it deep into the timber. Springfield Armory (springfield-armory.com) offers the Waypoint with a traditional steel barrel, a version that weighs about 7 pounds. However, it's also offered with a carbon-fiber-wrapped barrel that reduces weight by about a quarter pound. Price: \$2,394 with a fixed carbon-fiber stock and \$2,527 with a carbon-fiber stock that's adjustable.



WEATHERBY MARK V BACKCOUNTRY 2.0 TI

Another company to embrace the carbon-fiber-wrapped barrel is Weatherby, but it also offers an extremely lightweight rifle with an all-steel barrel. The Mark V Backcountry 2.0 Ti (\$3,449) weighs less than 5 pounds, even in magnum chamberings. The rifle's combination of a titanium action and a slender, but long, steel barrel keep weight down while maintaining good balance. A carbon-wrapped-barrel version (\$3,849) is also available. With either version, the incredibly light, 20-ounce carbon-fiber stock results in a rifle that will shoot from ridgeline to ridgeline and will let hunters carry it the same distance just as easily. 

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"This knife is beautiful!" — J., La Crescent, MN



It was a perfect late autumn day in the Northern Rockies. Not a cloud in the sky, and just enough cool in the air to stir up nostalgic memories of my trip into the backwoods. This year, though, was different. I was going it solo. My two buddies, pleading work responsibilities, backed out at the last minute. So, armed with my trusty knife, I set out for adventure.

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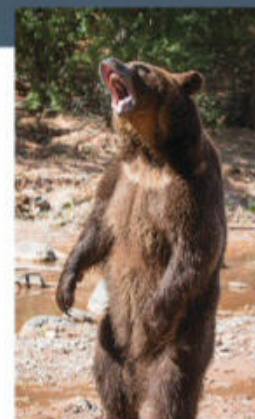
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Well, what I found was a whole lot of trouble. As in 8 feet and 800-pounds of trouble in the form of a grizzly bear. Seems this grumpy fella was out looking for some adventure too. Mr. Grizzly saw me, stood up to his entire 8 feet of ferocity and let out a roar that made my blood turn to ice and my hair stand up. Unsnapping my leather sheath, I felt for my hefty, trusty knife and felt emboldened. I then showed the massive grizzly over 6 inches of 420 surgical grade stainless steel, raised my hands and yelled, "Whoa bear! Whoa bear!" I must have made my point, as he gave me an almost admiring grunt before turning tail and heading back into the woods.

Our Grizzly Hunting Knife pays tribute to the call of the wild. Featuring stick-tang construction, you can feel confident in the strength and durability of this knife. And the hand carved, natural bone handle ensures you won't lose your grip even in the most dire of circumstances. I also made certain to give it a

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TO CAST OR NOT TO CAST

STUDIES SEEK TO DETERMINE THE IMPACTS OF FISHING FOR SPAWNING BASS.

By Dr. Jason Halfen

Targeting largemouth and smallmouth bass while they are on their spawning nests is an exceptionally popular, if somewhat controversial, early-season pursuit. Bass are fervent nest guardians, protecting their eggs, larvae and fry from a myriad of predators, including crayfish, panfish, gobies and even other bass. As a result, anglers that locate spawning beds can frequently trigger reaction strikes from bedding bass, making the nest susceptible to predation during the angling process. Bass anglers from coast to coast know that we can easily catch bass while they are on the beds, but the question is, should we?

The importance of bass fishing as a recreational pursuit, as well as a driver of considerable economic activity, has focused the attention of fisheries scientists

across North America on the question of targeting bass on their beds. In recent years, a number of published studies have documented the impact of fishing for bedding bass, at the local level of individual nesting sites as well as on populations as a whole. Consider what the science says about the practice of fishing for bedding bass.

A study by researchers at the University of Illinois, conducted with largemouth bass in southern Ontario, addressed the question of how angling pressure impacts nest fidelity, or the repeated use of a nesting site by bass from one season to the next (“Potential consequences of angling on nest-site fidelity in largemouth bass” by W.M. Twardek, A.D. Schultz, J.E. Claussen and others; *Environmental Biology of Fishes*, volume 100, issue 5). Scientists

found that high catch-and-release angling pressure on male bedding bass caused those fish to exhibit significantly reduced nest fidelity in future spawning cycles compared to fish that were caught and released only once.

While fish captured only once returned to their original nesting site 87 percent of the time during the next spawning season, fish caught multiple times returned only 27 percent of the time. Moreover, while nearly 97 percent of fish captured only once remained on the nest and completed parental care activities during the next spawning season, bedding bass subjected to high angling pressure completed those activities less than 6 percent of the time. These scientists concluded that, “angling nesting bass may cause them to avoid previously used nest sites and instead search for



Largemouths spawning in shallow water are easy targets for anglers, but should these fish be left alone for the good of the local population?

alternative sites during future reproductive seasons. This human-induced impact on nest site choice may impact the future reproductive success of those largemouth bass.”

Throughout their range, smallmouth bass are also popular targets when they are shallow and on the beds. Researchers from Ohio State University examined the role of catch-and-release angling in Lake Erie smallmouth spawning success, with a particular emphasis on the impacts of invasive round gobies (“Round goby predation on smallmouth bass offspring in nests during simulated catch-and-release angling” by G.B. Steinhart, A.M. Marschall and R.A. Stein; Transactions of the American Fisheries Society, volume 133, issue 1). Using extensive underwater video observations, these scientists found that smallmouth bass are very effective

at guarding their nests from predation by round gobies. However, as soon as a male bass is removed from the nest, round gobies quickly move in to consume both unhatched eggs as well as hatched smallmouth bass larvae.

Remarkably, this study determined that gobies can consume an average of 2,000 eggs from a nest before the guarding male returns and can completely consume all smallmouth bass offspring from an unguarded nest in as little as 15 minutes. “If the number of surviving smallmouth bass embryos drives adult population size,” wrote the researchers, “managers should consider angling regulations that reduce interference with nesting males, thus limiting the deleterious effects of the round goby.”

A summary report by researchers at the University of Florida examined the pursuit of bedding bass from a larger, population-level perspective (“Bed fishing for Florida bass” by J.S. Hargrove and J.D. Austin; University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Extension EDIS, volume 2018, number 3). These scientists noted that the impact of angling on the success of individual bass nests has been recognized for almost 60 years, with predation being the primary cause for nest failure when a guarding bass is angled away. At the same time, these researchers argued that population-level impacts of fishing for bedding bass may be minimal, based on three key observations.

First, high percentages, often approaching 80 percent, of angled bass are immediately released. Second, a significant fraction of bedding bass on any given lake receives no angling pressure

due to challenging habitat or water clarity. Finally, individual fish may spawn again during the same cycle to replace a failed nest. These researchers concluded that, “it appears possible that the impacts of catch-and-release angling for bedding bass may negatively impact individual nest success. However, under many circumstances these changes will not elicit negative effects at the population level.”

For most of us, the decision to target bedding bass is highly individualized; in other words, each of us needs to make the right decision for ourselves. Knowing what the science has to say, there are several easy ways to minimize your impact on bass spawning success should you decide to target bedding fish this spring.

First, use artificial lures only. A deeply hooked bass that gobbled a juicy night-crawler or lively minnow has a much lower chance of survival than a fish lip-hooked by an artificial jig or soft-plastic offering.

When you catch a bass, immediately release it at the capture location. Hauling a fish around in a livewell prior to releasing it at a distant location virtually ensures low survivability of eggs, fry or fingerlings that may be produced in that nest.

Finally, after you catch a couple, move on. If you locate an area with a high density of nest sites, consider leaving after catching a couple of the bass bedding there. It will leave a significant percentage of nests undisturbed, helping to minimize your impact on that local population. Forcing yourself to search out new locations will also expand your knowledge of productive spring fishing spots and help make you a more complete angler. 



Using artificial lures and promptly releasing a spawner at the catch site helps minimize nest predation by getting the fish back to its bed.

GET YOUR KIT TOGETHER

ASSEMBLING A COMPACT MEDICAL KIT
TO CARRY OUTDOORS CAN
SAVE THE DAY—AND MAYBE YOUR LIFE.

By Adam Heggenstaller



It wasn't exactly a medical emergency, but the piece of bark that had somehow worked its way into my right eye had the potential to make my day a disaster. I was more than a mile from my vehicle, a turkey was gobbling and the morning had showed great potential until my dominant eye teared up and began to feel scratchy. I blinked and blinked, but the bark or leaf or whatever it was wouldn't come out. Luckily, I had a small bottle of saline solution in my first-aid kit, and a few blasts rinsed the debris from my eye. I didn't kill the gobbler that morning, but at least I was still able to hunt.

Of all the things we carry into the woods or onto the water with us, a small medical kit should not be forgotten. If I plan to be out for more than a few hours, I take one. It's not that I am accident-prone; I just want to be prepared to keep an injury from ruining the day.

Wilderness first aid is a deep subject, and reading this article isn't going to prepare you for a major emergency in the backcountry. To respond properly to a situation like that requires knowledge

and training (which I encourage you to get). However, having several simple first-aid items at hand can prevent you from having to cut an adventure short—or worse.

TOOLS

- Small scissors for cutting fabric, tape
- Tweezers for removing splinters, thorns
- Cotton swabs for applying ointment
- Latex or nitrile gloves
- Dental floss
- Space blanket

MEDICATIONS

- Aspirin, acetaminophen and ibuprofen
- Antihistamines such as Benadryl, Zyrtec and Claritin
- Antidiarrheal medicine
- Lip balm
- Burn gel

BANDAGES

- Sterile adhesive bandages in various sizes
- Sterile gauze pads in 2- to 4-inch sizes
- Roller bandage in 2- or 3-inch width
- Steri-Strips
- Athletic tape
- Moleskin

CLEANERS AND WASHES

- Hand sanitizer
- Spray bottle of antiseptic such as povidone-iodine
- Saline solution
- Triple antibiotic ointment
- Alcohol wipes

Prepackaged first-aid kits are common and inexpensive. However, many times I've found the premade kits are missing things that I want to have and are stocked with some stuff that I don't want to carry. With a little thought, it can be better to assemble a specific kit to meet your own needs rather than relying on general supplies. Or, start with a premade kit and adapt it to your situation or trip.

My goal for a med kit of this nature is to include the essentials but keep it around a pound. Organize the items in a small zippered pouch or dry bag, something that's easy to stuff in a pack or even a large pocket. The kit's items can generally be grouped into four categories: tools, bandages, cleaners and washes, and medications. I offer the list here as a guide based on my kit, but you should adapt it to your own needs. Consult with a medical professional—I am not one—before taking any medications or applying topical treatments.

Hopefully you don't have to regularly use your med kit. It's a good idea to



Blisters are a common ailment and they are easily treated—as long as you have supplies on hand to take care of the affected area.

check its contents at least once a year to replace expired medications and to make sure all its contents are intact and useable. Burn-gel packets have a way of becoming punctured by tweezers and tablets get crushed when your kit ends up at the bottom of a heavy pack.

Finally, learn how to make the most of the items in your kit. Anyone who hunts, fishes or spends time outdoors should have basic first-aid training. There are a number of good first-aid manuals and apps to learn from, too, but don't wait until you have an injury to do it. 

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PHOTO FINISH?

THE ECOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL ARGUMENTS FOR INCREASINGLY RESTRICTING TRAIL-CAMERA USE IN SOME WESTERN STATES COULD HAVE FAR-RANGING SIGNIFICANCE.

By Andrew McKean

Eric Thompson laughs at the notion that the trail cameras he uses on his Missouri farm give him an advantage over the white-tail bucks he loves to hunt.

“I’ve been dabbling with trail cams since their resolution got good enough that I could tell the difference between a deer and a raccoon,” Thompson says. “I’ve used pretty much all the brands, and the one thing they have in common is they give me an unnaturally high expectation that I’m going to kill a big buck.”

Deer that consistently show up on Thompson’s cameras in the summer and early fall vanish once hunting season starts. Bucks that demonstrate high fidelity to patterns captured by his cameras go nocturnal, or they start deviating from their habits when crop harvest ends or shooting begins.

“I used to plan my whole season around what my cameras told me,” says

Thompson. “Now, I use them mainly to catch trespassers and maybe show me if new bucks are in the neighborhood.”

But Thompson’s neighbor can’t imagine hunting without cameras. Sid Camilo says everything he knows about deer has been either learned or confirmed through cameras. To him, any notion that deploying his two-dozen cameras, some of which transmit images to his phone over a cellular network, equates to cheating is ludicrous.

“They are scouting tools, same as if I walked around in the woods and looked at scrapes and rubs,” says Camilo. “I think they make us smarter hunters, not necessarily better hunters.”

But these Missouri hunters’ perspectives are at odds with a growing number of Western wildlife regulators, who claim that trail cameras represent an unnatural—and unacceptable—intrusion into hunters’ relationships with the animals

they pursue. In some of these states, trail-camera use has been severely restricted or outright banned.

TRAIL-CAM ABUSE

Exhibit A in the case against trail cameras for Western hunting is a widely circulated photo from Arizona. It’s a post driven into the ground near a remote water hole, and on the post are at least 20 trail cameras, all gazing sleeplessly at the spot where animals drink.

On the basis of that and similar photos, plus testimony from hunters who raised concerns over the use of technology to pursue game animals, Arizona’s Game and Fish Department (AZGFD) in 2018 banned cellular-enabled cameras, or cameras that transmit images wirelessly to a recipient. And last June the commission banned all trail cameras “for the purpose of taking or aiding in the take of wildlife, or locating wildlife for the



Arizona, Nevada, Utah and Montana all prohibit the use of wireless image-transmitting trail cameras by hunters during big-game seasons.

purpose of taking or aiding in the take of wildlife.” The ban, which includes “passive” cameras, took effect Jan. 1.

With that measure, Arizona joins Nevada, which in 2018 prohibited trail cameras during hunting season on public land and banned all cellular cameras from July 1 through Dec. 31 annually. Utah, too, is getting in on the action, banning the use of trail cameras to harvest or to aid in the harvest of big game on both public and private land, and also prohibiting the sale of images from trail cameras. Nevada authorities have reported that photos revealing the dimensions and location of trophy big-game animals have sold for upwards of \$5,000.

What all three states share is relatively arid public land, and one of the bases for trail-cam restriction is to minimize human disturbances around these vital water resources. The AZGFD listed “the high (and growing) number of trail

SACRED STONE OF THE SOUTHWEST IS ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION



C.

Centuries ago, Persians, Tibetans and Mayans considered turquoise a gemstone of the heavens, believing the striking blue stones were sacred pieces of sky. Today, the rarest and most valuable turquoise is found in the American Southwest— but the future of the blue beauty is unclear.

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cameras on the landscape and water sources” and “potential disturbance to wildlife of frequent visits to set/check trail cameras” among the factors considered in enacting the ban.

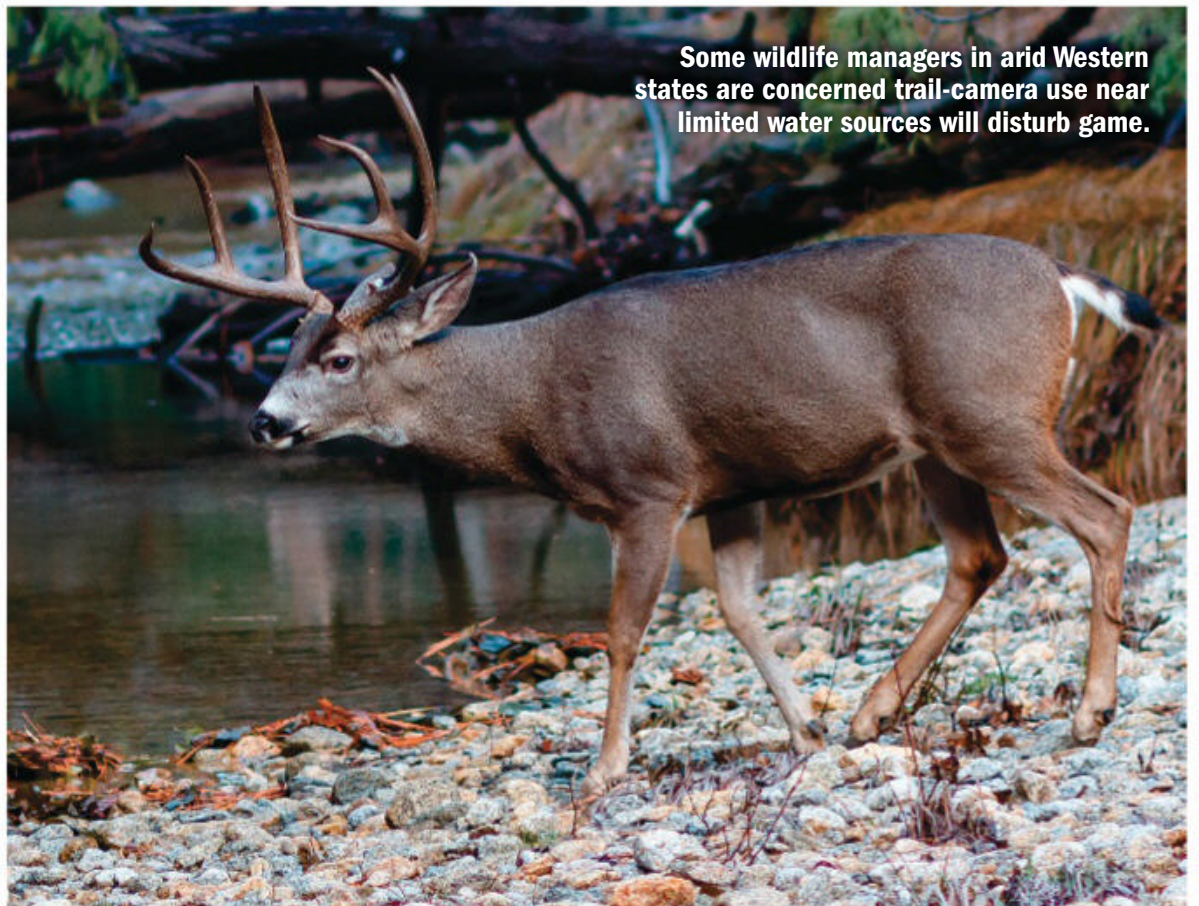
FAIR-CHASE CONCERNS

Meanwhile, the “referees” of hunting have weighed in on the use of technology to aid in the pursuit of big-game animals. The Boone and Crockett Club, which maintains official big-game records of animals taken under fair-chase conditions, notes that “technological advancement in hunting equipment is a natural progression of our desire to be successful and effective in ethically harvesting game. At some point, these technologies can displace a hunter’s skills to the point of taking unfair advantage of the game.”

Boone and Crockett notes that, like night-vision, rangefinding riflescopes, drones, or thermal-imaging devices, transmitting trail cameras are a violation of fair-chase ethics, and animals taken with their aid will not be accepted in the official records of the club. “Trail cameras can be a helpful tool in game management and selective hunting,” the Boone and Crockett Club states. “The use of devices that transmit captured or live images from the field back to the hunter crosses the line of fair chase.”

But some Western hunters question the situational validity of restrictions on trail cameras. Some suggest that transmitting cameras are actually less disruptive to game movements than passive, or non-transmitting card-based cameras, which require users to physically check on a fairly frequent basis. Others claim that cameras are an ethical way to ensure hunters pursue mature animals that are past their reproductive prime. More hunters note that, given the spotty cell service in most areas of the rural West, transmitting trail cameras are non-functional and therefore not worthy of further discussion or distinction from non-transmitting cameras.

Then there’s the practical issue of whether cameras actually give hunters an unfair advantage. In an interview with *Petersen’s Hunting*, Moultrie Mobile Marketing Manager Mark Olis questioned whether transmitting game cameras give hunters an unethical opportunity to kill targeted animals.



Some wildlife managers in arid Western states are concerned trail-camera use near limited water sources will disturb game.

“It’s not as simple as sitting around camp, getting a photo of an animal on your phone, and then walking over the hill to shoot it,” said Olis. “Wild animals don’t stand still. Images can take minutes to transfer to a cell phone and considerably longer in areas with poor cell coverage, if they even transmit at all.”

PATCHWORK RULES

States handle the issue of cameras in various ways. Montana originally banned all cameras during active hunting seasons, but later amended the rule to apply to transmitting cameras. Utah’s Wildlife Board polled its constituents about a range of options that would outright ban all cameras during hunting seasons, would ban transmitting cameras on public land, or would ban the sale of images generated from remote cameras.

Specifically, the initial rule that the Wildlife Board requested input on regarded a proposal that would ban the use of transmitting trail cameras between July 31 and Jan. 31, which roughly corresponds to big-game seasons in the state. During that time frame, people would not be able to use trail cameras to “either locate or attempt to locate big game” but carved out allowances for people who use remote cameras to monitor trespassers or who are engaged in “active agricultural operations.”

More than 60 percent of some 6,000 Utah hunters surveyed about the trail-cam rules said they oppose the use of transmitting camera footage in real time during the hunting season. The board then voted to prohibit all trail cameras, including both transmitting and non-transmitting devices, for hunting purposes between July 31 and Dec. 31. It also placed prohibitions on the use of night-vision devices during hunting seasons.

Few states in the Midwest, South or East have any restrictions on trail cameras. Partly, that’s a product of relatively little public hunting land and abundant private land, where hunting methods tend to be fairly unfettered.

That brings us back to Missouri hunter Sid Camilo, who says he uses cameras more for management purposes than for hunting. “I think there’s a perception that trail cams are kill devices,” he notes. “I have cameras up 365 days a year, and I’ve learned more about deer and wildlife behavior through my cameras than any other way. They show me when deer are hitting various food sources, when they’re shedding antlers and when they’re fawning. Do I use them during hunting season? Absolutely. But to me, their biggest value is knowing how wildlife uses my land. If I lost that ability, I’d say I’d be losing 75 percent of my enjoyment as a deer hunter, which is seeing deer and all sorts of wildlife the rest of the year.”



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HAPPY DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN

The Latin inscription surrounding the gladiators reads: "Happy Days are Here Again" (*Fel Temp Reparatio*). You see, at

the time these coins were designed, the Emperor had just won several important military battles against the foes of Rome. At the same time, Romans were preparing to celebrate the **1100th anniversary** of the founding of Rome. That's why this joyful inscription was added – to mark these momentous occasions.

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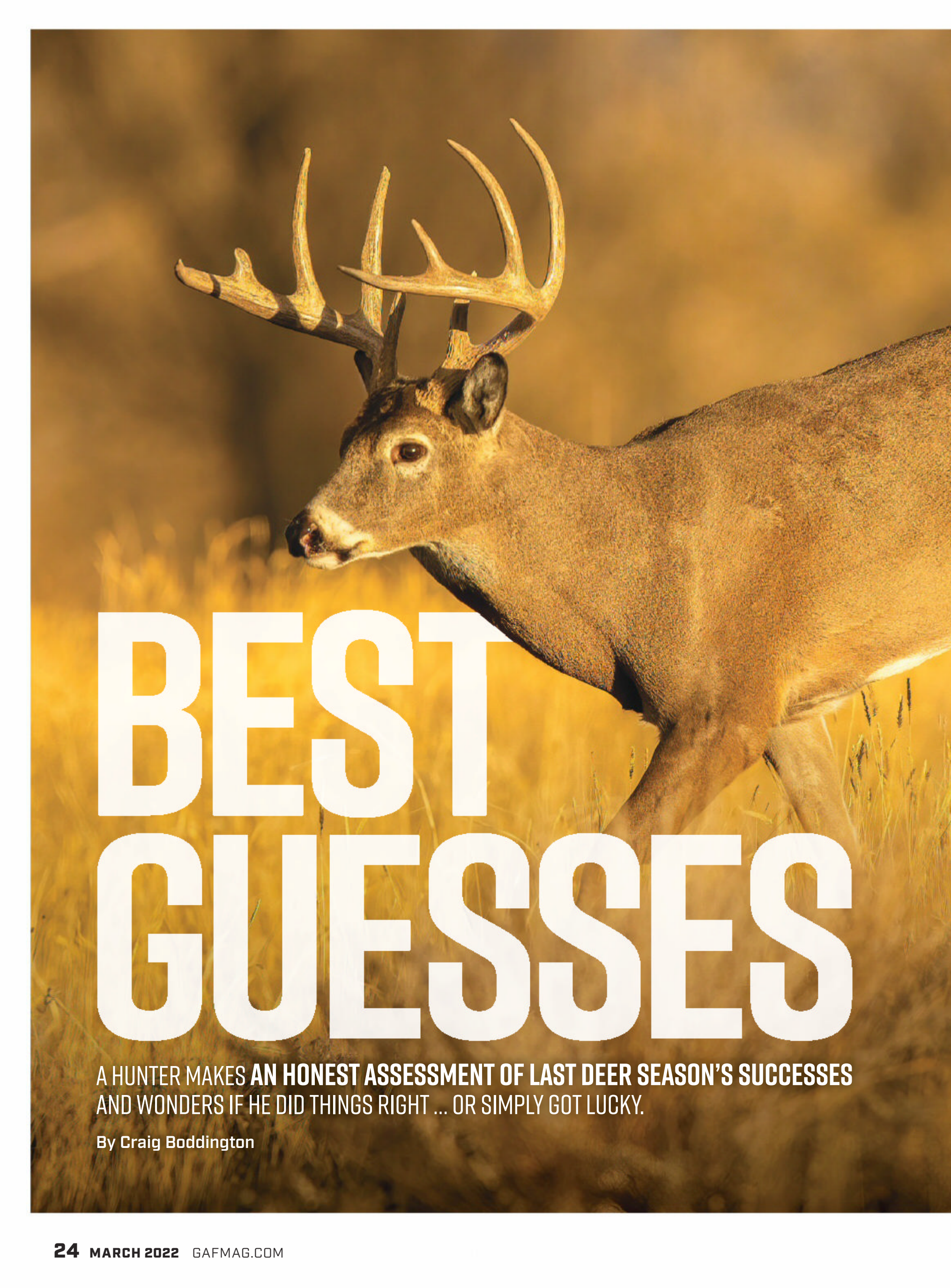
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BEST GUESSES

A HUNTER MAKES AN HONEST ASSESSMENT OF LAST DEER SEASON'S SUCCESSES
AND WONDERS IF HE DID THINGS RIGHT ... OR SIMPLY GOT LUCKY.

By Craig Boddington



SHUTTERSTOCK

I've had a Kansas farm for 15 years. For the past decade, neighbor Chuck Herbel and I have pooled our properties and operated "Timber Trails" whitetail hunts. We have a lot of deer and a high buck-to-doe ratio. I'm convinced the population has increased over time, and I think our buck numbers have gone up.

The state's 2021 rifle season spanned the traditional 12 days, and in two rotations of six, our 12 hunters took 12 bucks. I took an "ugly" cull buck to make it 13 for 13. A few seasons ago, I would have said such results were impossible. It may never happen again, but our 2021 season was so exceptional—without ideal weather—that it's worth examining. Whitetail rut movement being so random, was it blind luck or did we do some things right?

We hunt in or around thick timber from a couple dozen stands, mixed between two-person ladder stands and Texas-style tower stands. For the hunters who prefer not to climb ladders, or in nasty weather, we have other spots. We think all of our stands are well-sited.

In all stand hunting, the longer one is willing to sit, the better the odds; bucks are not taken lounging in camp! That said, few have the patience to sit all day. I don't, so I understand.

The big questions are: What to shoot? What to pass? We play it simple. Our rules are no rules when it comes to size and age. You like a buck, take the shot. Don't expect to see any given buck more than once; you can't stockpile whitetails.

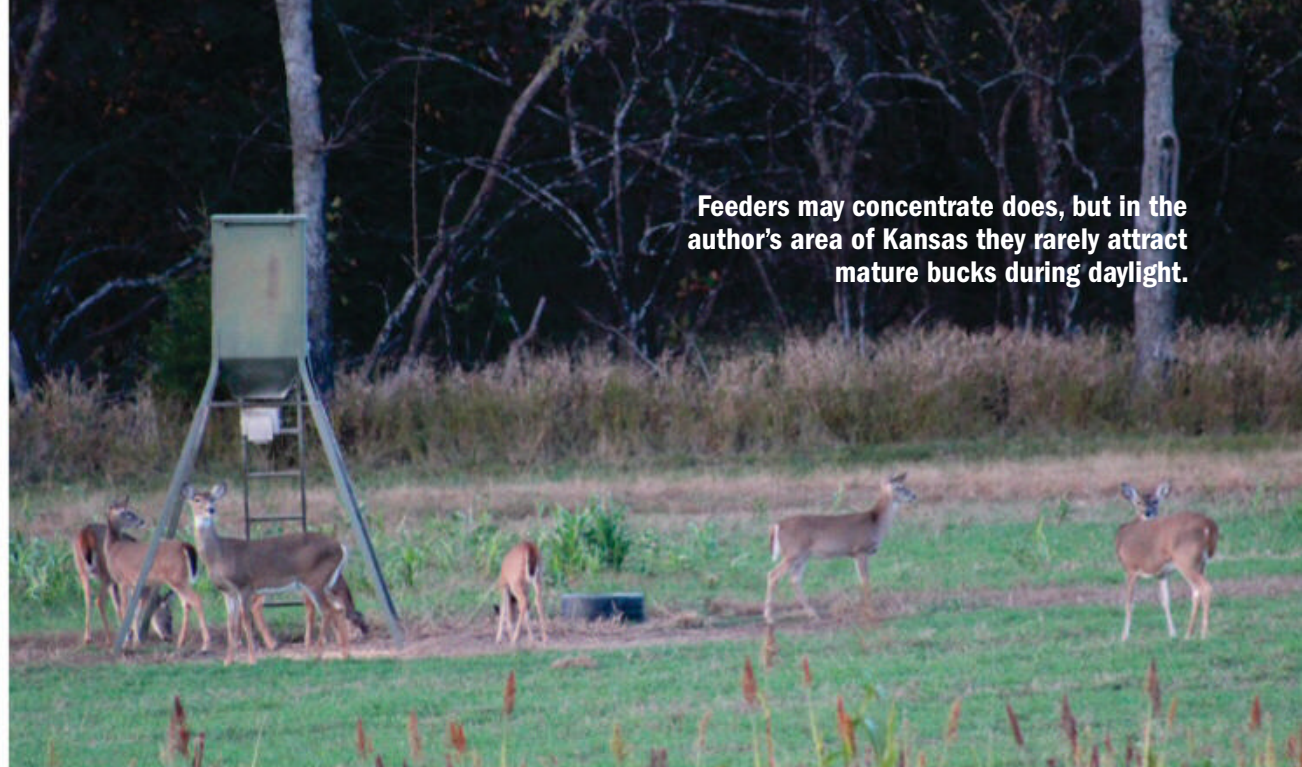
Some of our hunters are experienced whitetail hunters, others are not. I show them local antlers, and we talk about signs of maturity. The game is to look for grown-up bucks and try to avoid precocious 2 1/2-year-olds. It's easy to describe the indicators but not always easy to recognize them with unfamiliar deer in strange woods.

Today, we probably have enough deer that no mistake is a cardinal sin. We have nice bucks, but I don't want our hunters holding out for something that might not exist. Despite what you may hear, Kansas does not have a Boone and Crockett buck behind every tree. Monster bucks are taken in our county, but we have few giants. We also have genetically inferior bucks that need to go. Kansas is a one-buck state, so it's difficult to manage bucks for size.

We're hoping our guys take time to look for a big body with a heavy neck, bit of a belly, thick antler bases, Roman nose. I weep privately when a young buck with promise is taken. Secretly, I rejoice when, either by design or miscall, a buck with weird antlers or mismatched points is taken. That's the kind of buck I try to put my tag on, and it's OK if somebody beats me to him. We have no minimums, extort no penalties and subject no one to ridicule as in, "Why did you shoot that?" Been there, don't like the pressure. We just ask our hunters to be patient and take a hard look.

In a December season at the tail end of the rut, there will be broken points. There were in '21, but the crop was mostly good, solid bucks: 8-, 9- and 10-pointers. Two bucks stand out in my mind that could have been bigger and older. This is going to happen under our "hunter's choice" rule, but these bucks carried antlers too small to be the age they were.

Age distribution was good. It's hard to be sure, but most appeared to be 4



Feeders may concentrate does, but in the author's area of Kansas they rarely attract mature bucks during daylight.

1/2 or 5 1/2 years old with no obvious 2 1/2-year-olds. My buck was a large-bodied 3 1/2-year-old, a tall fork-horn without eyeguards, a good cull.

The only weird thing: daddy and granddaddy went missing! We've never taken a net 170 B&C whitetail, but in recent seasons we've usually taken a couple of bucks that tip into the 160s. In the mix, we also take older deer, 6

1/2 years old and up, and at least one obviously downhill old-timer. In size and age, such deer were missing from the 2021 harvest.

Nobody has a lot of bigger, older deer, but we saw some last year that were not taken, plus a lot of bucks that needed "one more year." Some of these were probably taken, but known older and bigger bucks didn't show up.



Off-season work includes building and placing new stands, and moving others to areas where deer frequent.

CRAIG BODDINGTON (2)



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THE WEATHER FACTOR

Neighbor Chuck runs cattle, and we take hay from the open country on my ground. We aren't always thinking about deer season, but sporadic preparation is done year-round. Between '20 and '21, we cut a couple of new trails through thick timber, allowing access to a couple places we'd always wanted to hunt.

This meant building new stands, and every year we shift a few. On my place, I have a major east-west creek south of the largest food plot. In order to reach the food plot, deer have to cross it, but with flooding, it changes every year. We try to find the major creek crossing and get a treestand to cover it. The '21 spring was very wet; it was early fall before I found the major crossing and we got the Creek Stand in place.

In smaller food plots, we rely on winter wheat with some turnips, clover and rye. On my big food plot, deer seem to like it best when we have strips of milo for supplemental cover. When it works, the deer love to bed in the thick stuff. I've sat in a big tower blind, glassing the edges, and seen bucks stand up in the milo then come out to nibble new green.

Last year, I got the milo seeded in late spring as it was starting to rain, barely before the field got too soft for the tractor. Perfect ... but then no more

rain for a month. The milo failed utterly, second year in a row, because there was not enough moisture at the right time.

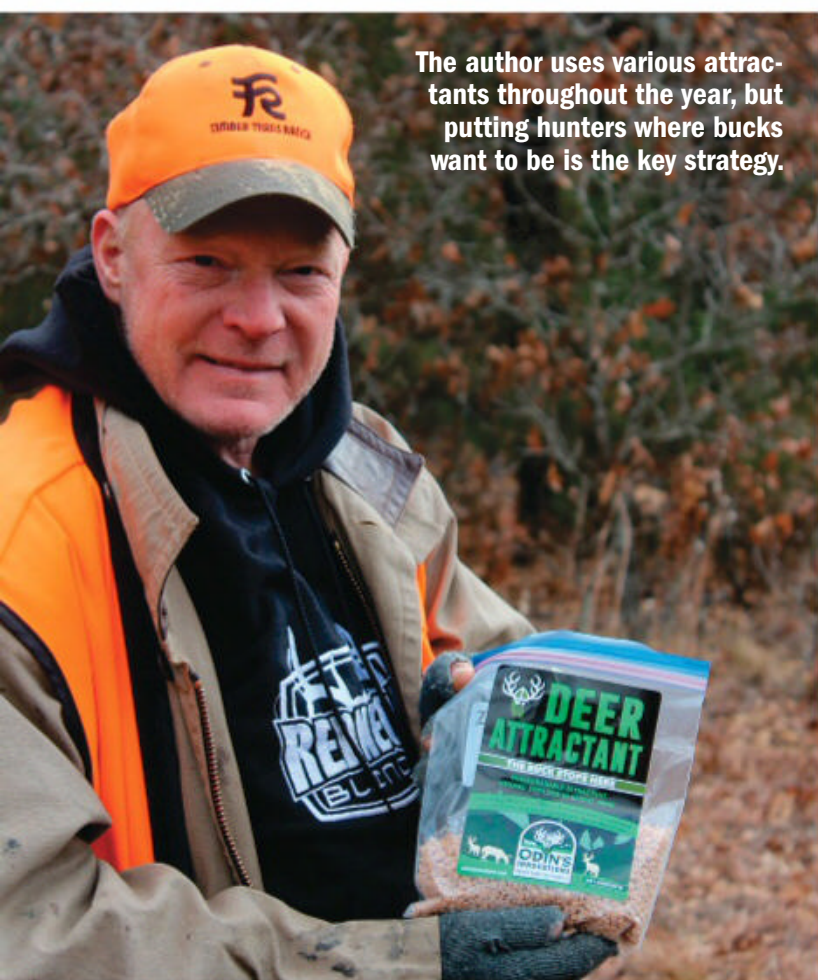
Our '21 food-plot story gets worse. We fertilize, but soil testing told us we needed to add tons of agricultural lime. Couldn't get it; the local quarry was closed due to COVID. We didn't get fertilizer in until much too late to do any good. As deer season approached, our cocktail of wheat, turnips and clover was growing, but the big food plot wasn't what it should have been.

The short Kansas rifle season starts the Wednesday after Thanksgiving. It's a post-rut season, set in the 1960s when our deer were still rebuilding, with the intent to give bucks a chance to breed. The rut in our area seems protracted, usually starting about Nov. 10. With today's later autumns, the peak seems to be Thanksgiving week. This means some primary rutting activity during the first few days of rifle season if weather remains constant. In our area the secondary rut is very real, and the timing is right. During the latter part of our season, we often see the spectacle of several bucks in pursuit of one beleaguered doe.

Archery season is long and luxurious. We don't hit it hard, and we try to keep our woods quiet before rifle season. With that main event firm on the cal-

endar, we can't do anything about timing or moon phase. Can't do anything about the weather, either, except watch it and pray. Our deer seem to be fair-weather creatures. Too warm is awful, but too cold not much better; a sudden dip into the teens shuts our deer down! Calm and cool is perfect: a constant light breeze with low temps below freezing and highs into the 50s.

That's what we had through Thanksgiving weekend, and the rut was full-on. My heart sank as the forecast firmed up. At sunset on Tuesday, it was supposed to be in the 40s. That was fine, but overnight a warm front was going to hit. And so it did: On opening morning, it was above 60 degrees, warming to nearly 80 through the day. This was Dec. 1 in Kansas!



The author uses various attractants throughout the year, but putting hunters where bucks want to be is the key strategy.



CRAIG BODDINGTON

Mature bucks prefer to stick to the timber rather than showing themselves in the open—especially as the season wears on.



SHUTTERSTOCK

FIRST-WEEK WOES

I figured the weather would be the kiss of death for deer movement. In some ways, it was. I've never been able to ask a whitetail buck what he was thinking, but my guess is the ridiculous hot flash shut down the older bucks, in winter coat and worn out from the rut.

Actually, all deer movement slowed. I expect opening day to be at least a two-buck day; I know I better have the knives sharpened and the skinning shed ready. A few small bucks were seen among our six hunters, but no shots were fired opening day or the next. In recent seasons we'd been spoiled. It was depressing.

The forecast said the warm weather would be short-lived. With plenty of stands to pick from, we had options. Some stands are, admittedly, more consistent than others, but the ones we use the most have produced multiple good bucks. Some are wind-neutral, but many are wind-sensitive, so we watch wind closely. If the wind isn't right for some stands, we go to others.

Which stands to use is a guessing game performed ritually twice daily, once long before sunrise and then again at midday. The rites are generally conducted by Chuck and me.

You'll find this amazing, but partner Chuck is not a deer hunter. A retired homicide detective, he's a gun guy and a bird shooter, but he doesn't hunt deer. It doesn't matter, though; a lifelong Kansas farmer, he has amazing senses for stand placement and deer movement. Chuck and I make our decisions on the fly, based on wind direction, weather



A few of the author's stands are elevated blinds, which offer good views of the area and concealment.



Lee Newton kicked things off by taking a heavy-racked 8-pointer on the third day of the season.



Using a 6.5 Creedmoor, David Gibbs took his buck on the last afternoon of the season's first week.

and what we know ... which sometimes isn't much.

In assigning stands, we're aware that we're gambling with valuable hunting time. During the first day or two, we'll take more risk, maybe try a new stand or an old hit-or-miss stand that pays off when Lady Luck smiles. The first two days in '21 we guessed wrong across the board. Horrific.

We fought 180-degree wind shifts throughout the first week. It never got cold, but the third morning was much cooler. Lee Newton broke the ice with a big-bodied, heavy-racked 8-pointer. This was from one of our Redneck Blinds overlooking a clearing on a ridgetop. We call it Schoby Stand, after Mike Schoby, who took the first buck there 10 years ago. It's often our highest-producing stand and hard to overlook.

That evening, Kevin Perry took a nice buck at Below the Corral. Things were starting to come together, but we had just two days left in the first hunt and needed four more bucks.

In most years, my big food plot is good for three bucks. Last year, with wheat short and no tall milo, expectations were limited, but it's another place that's difficult to ignore. Early in the hunt, a mature, heavy-antlered 7-pointer was seen on the food plot. Knowing the field has nocturnal movement, we have stands in the surrounding timber. There were major scrapes on all trails and we gambled time on several of these stands, but not much was seen.

On the third morning, I took the Creek Stand, south of the food plot. About 9 o'clock I heard a splash to my left. Lord, there was a buck standing in a pool in the creek. Just a quick look through branches revealed a very mature buck with heavy antlers, a 7-pointer with one tine missing. I tried to get a shot, but it was too thick. The deer just walked away, probably to bed along the creek.

Our first week progressed, and Ryan Murray shot a 6-pointer that needed to go. Now we were down to the last evening, two bucks short.

Lee Murray (Ryan's dad) was alternating stands, but he's patient. Twice, at our Well Head Stand, he'd seen a big, high-racked 8-pointer come out just at dark. On his last sit, he made a perfect

shot on that buck with maybe five minutes remaining. (OK, he'd stockpiled that buck. Sometimes works, but don't count on it.)

That afternoon, I was on top of the ridge west of my barn, in a new stand in thick timber overlooking a spring-fed pond, dubbed Hidden Pond. About 4 o'clock, a nice 8-pointer came my way and we had a stand-off. You bet I thought about shooting him, but he was

too perfect to be my buck. When I last saw him, he was tipping over the ridge, straight north toward David Gibbs on Creek Stand.

I was glad I held off. Fifteen minutes later I heard a shot from David. The next morning, hunt technically over but the season open, Steve Bennett shot a nice buck, wrapping our first week. With the weather we had, it was success against all odds.

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The author has moved this box blind three times in 15 years to adjust to changing deer patterns.



The first morning of the Kansas season's second week started with a 10-pointer for Clayton Paul.

SECOND-WEEK STRATEGIES

Sometimes both weeks of rifle season are equal. More commonly, the second week is slower with the woods and inventory having taken pressure. However, depending on wind, weather and moon, the second week can be better. In '21, the second week was cooler, and we had the luxury of a dark moon. It was much better!

The primary rut shut down overnight when it got warm, but a week later we had amazing secondary movement. There were several sightings of multiple bucks chasing one doe. The finicky first-week winds settled down, staying mostly out of the north.

We had "saved back" critical stands, partly because the wind had been wrong. During the second week, with better wind, it was no holds barred! On County Road Stand, Clayton Paul dropped a fine 10-pointer with his .250 Ackley Improved. Sam Vona shot a nice buck with his 6.5x55. Awesome first morning; we were off and running.

Early on, with food plots not as lush as usual, I'd considered concentrating on timber stands. Good thought, but a lot of good hunters are uncomfortable in treestands. I can accept that, but our deer live in thick woods and enticing them into the open in daylight is difficult. We used treestands as much as possible.

Ryan Paul (Clayton's son) hunted a couple of stands and saw some bucks. He's young and strong, so I put him on the Ridge Stand, high in a tall tree. Great place, but that stand depends on the hunter. First sit, in a light rain, he took a fine 10-pointer, probably the second-best of the season.

Days after my encounter with the



Not all stands overlook food plots or open areas. The author has found some of the best locations are in the adjacent woods.



heavy-racked 7-pointer in the creek, Bill Umbstead shot that buck on the food plot at last light with his 7x57. Lord knows what else was running around there, but that buck was a no-brainer shooter, just missing a point. Bill knew what he was, deemed him old enough and big enough, and made a perfect shot.

Second-week success came next to Steven Eber, who shot a nice buck with his .257 Weatherby Magnum. Now it was Saturday morning and things were

looking good, but we had a bit of a complication. Tim Baugh wanted to take a buck with his dad's 6.5x54 Mannlicher-Schoenauer. Great rifle, but its open sights are a challenge in any whitetail woods. I put Tim on Sonne Stand. Sited as an archery stand, it was where friend John Sonne took our best 2020 buck.

It's tight country, a natural funnel below timber-cloaked rimrock, and a hunter must be still while on stand there. We had lots of options, but nowhere better for a

close encounter with open sights. Tim is a Western hunter and had never sat a treestand before, but he got the hang of it. He stuck it out, I crossed my fingers, and on Saturday morning he shot a great buck.

The top tier we didn't dip into is still there, but who knows if we'll see them in the '22 season. With whitetails, nothing is certain. All we can do is rely on sign, sightings and history. We watch the wind and weather ... and make the best guesses we can. 

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AROUND THE MIDWEST

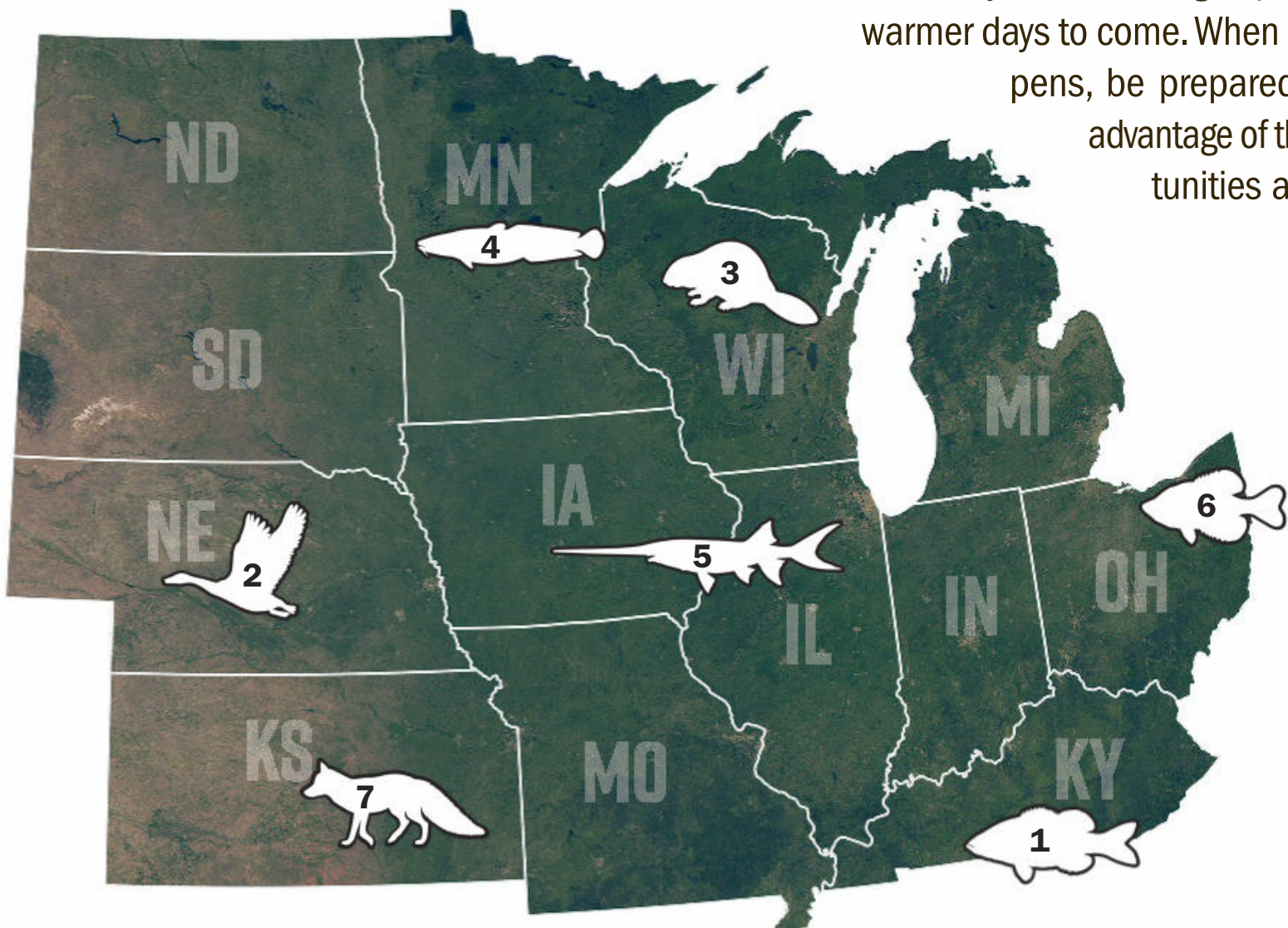
A SAMPLING OF THE REGION'S BEST HUNTING AND FISHING OPPORTUNITIES THIS MONTH

By Brandon Butler

Across the Midwest, March is very much a month of transition. It's the end of ice fishing in most places, while open-water fishing for bass and crappies can be excellent in many states, as can paddlefish snagging on lakes and large rivers.

On the hunting side, it's a final call to get turkey gear in order before seasons open. Meanwhile, light geese are still hitting the ground, and trappers across the region are collecting pelts. Houndsmen seeking a chase can also find it this month.

March usually offers a few glimpses of the warmer days to come. When this happens, be prepared to take advantage of the opportunities at hand.





DALE HOLLOW SMALLMOUTHS

Dale Hollow Lake, straddling the Kentucky-Tennessee border, produced the world record smallmouth in 1955. The 11-pound, 15-ounce beast set a bar anglers have tried to top ever since. The lake remains as likely a spot for the record breaker as anywhere, and now is prime time for lunkers. With March's colder water temperatures, a slow presentation is necessary. Jigs, swimbaits and soft plastics worked on or near bottom are go-to tactics now.



NEBRASKA LIGHT GEESSE

The Light Goose Conservation Order (LGCO) is a special season meant to reduce the number of light geese, which are harming critical tundra habitat. These birds, which include snow geese (both white- and blue-phase birds) and Ross's geese, receive lots of hunting pressure, and killing them is difficult. Smaller spreads can work, but light geese fly in massive flocks, and giant decoy spreads usually work best. In Nebraska, the LGCO runs all of March in all zones. In the central part of the state, check out Open Fields and Waters Program Lands. Through this program, 372,000 private acres are made publicly accessible, including 549 acres of ponds and lakes. Along the Missouri River, the 1,175 acres at Kansas Bend and the adjacent 854 acres at Peru Bottoms WMA are known producers.



BADGER STATE TRAPPING

Trapping remains a key aspect of conservation, providing population control of a number of furbearing species. In Wisconsin, aside from Zone D, beaver and otter trapping is open statewide through March. While there's no bag limit on beavers, only one otter per harvest authorization is allowed. If you want to learn to trap, do so under the tutelage of an experienced trapper. The Wisconsin Trappers' Association is a great place to start.



NORTHLANDS EELPOUT

Walker, Minn., is home to the International Eelpout Festival, though eelpouts are found throughout much of the state. These fine-tasting fish (also called burbot) are often targeted at night. Glowing lures—jigs with plastic bodies and spoons—do well. Lake of the Woods, Mille Lacs and Leech Lake have good populations of eelpout, as do other deep lakes. Eelpout are a rough fish in Minnesota, so there's no limit or season.



IOWA PADDLEFISH

Iowa paddlefish regulations are complex, but each spring anglers can pursue them with snagging equipment. The season is open all year on interior waters but differs on rivers. The Mississippi and Missouri rivers produce paddlefish below dams. The DNR also suggests the Iowa River from Coralville Lake to River Junction and the Cedar River from Cedar Rapids to Moscow. Read paddlefish regulations closely for daily and possession limits and specific rules for where you want to fish.



MOSQUITO LAKE CRAPPIES

Northeast Ohio's Mosquito (Creek) Lake is the second-largest inland body of water in the state. Crappies are found throughout the 7,000-plus-acre reservoir, but they start moving up from the depths into shallower water in preparation to spawn in March. With a 9-inch minimum length limit and a 30-fish daily limit, anglers who find willing biters can put a few nice bags of fillets in the freezer. Use sonar to search for fish around structure along old roadbeds. Small jigs and minnows under a bobber are go-to offerings.



KANSAS FURBEARER RUNNING

During the running season, furbearers cannot be killed or taken, but dogs can be turned into well-oiled machines. The thrill of the chase is alive and well, but this season is best used for canine training. Bobcats, opossums, raccoons, red foxes and gray foxes are legal to run. The season is open from March 1 through Nov. 8. Running is legal 24 hours a day, but it's illegal to carry a firearm or trapping equipment while running these furbearers.

☆☆☆ TRIPLE THREATS

THESE THREE-WAY RIGS ARE GO-TO SETUPS
FOR SPRING WALLEYES ON MIDWESTERN RIVERS.

By Dr. Jason A. Halfen



In the spring, many anglers flock to major rivers throughout the Midwest to enjoy bountiful walleye runs. During these times, throngs of aggressive walleyes charge upstream and flood relatively shallow waters as part of their annual spawning rituals. Over time, savvy river rats have honed their presentation skills to keep baits in the walleyes' narrow strike zone, despite the heavy currents carrying winter's snowmelt and early spring rains downstream. Several of these finely tuned river walleye rigs have become time-tested and trophy-walleye-approved setups that Midwestern guides and professional anglers consistently use to put trophy-caliber fish in the boat. Below are three top rigs to consider using in your own spring river fishing.

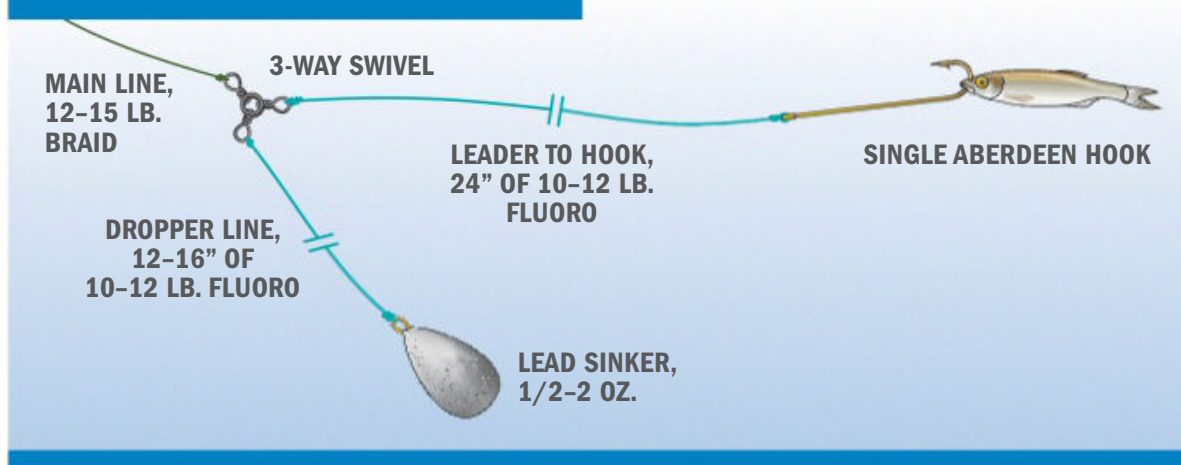
THE WOLF RIVER RIG

As a child of the 1970s, growing up in the urban jungle of Chicago, the Wolf River Rig was the first river-specific fishing rig that I ever encountered. On a spring trip into the relative wilds of eastern Wisconsin, we grabbed a few of these venerable, pre-packaged rigs to fill a pail with walleyes and white bass from—you guessed it—the Wolf River.

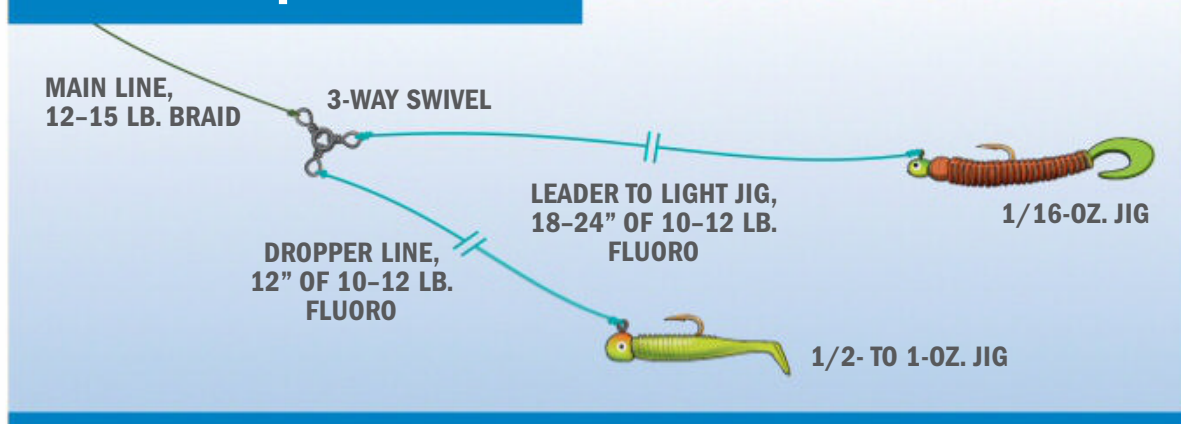
The Wolf River rig is a simple fishing system. Built around a 3-way swivel, it consists of a leader that runs to a single hook (frequently a long-shank Aberdeen hook) and a lead weight in the 1/2- to 2-ounce range to anchor the rig on the bottom. By adjusting the length of line between the weight and the 3-way swivel, anglers can present a bait closer to—or farther from—the bottom. Likewise, by fine-tuning the leader length between the swivel and hook, anglers can provide the bait with more—or less—freedom to swim and sway within the current.

After all these years, there are still plenty of times when a simple 3-way rig like the Wolf River rig can provide big advantages. I like to fish them during the early pre-spawn period when river water is running cold and relatively clear. In these instances wary fish often respond best to live baits fished with relative finesse. I'll usually dress the Aberdeen hook of a Wolf River rig with a lively minnow and position the rig along well-defined current seams and upstream of obvious obstructions like log piles or

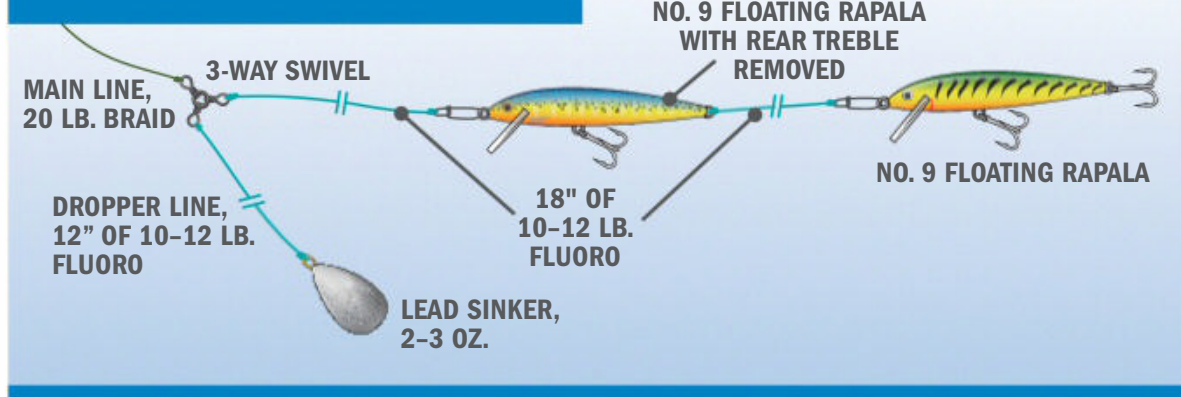
WOLF RIVER RIG



DUBUQUE RIG



DOUBLE RAPALA RIG



wing dams. With a handful of 3-way swivels, a spool of 10- to 12-pound-test fluorocarbon leader, a package of Aberdeen hooks and a collection of sinkers, you can quickly construct your own Wolf River rigs to suit your current river conditions.

THE DUBUQUE RIG

I have a Dubuque rig tied up on every trip I take to the Mississippi River from the fall through the spring. This fishing system perfectly fits my style: It allows me to present a pair of baits in tandem—at two different depths—at speeds ranging from a dead stop to a steady upstream troll. In my opinion, there are few more

productive ways to locate active fish and get them in the boat.

A 3-way swivel is once again at the heart of the Dubuque rig. In this case, however, the dropper line that was connected to a heavy weight in the Wolf River rig is now tied to a jig. Usually this is a 1/2-ounce jig, but you could go up to 1 ounce depending on current speed. The leader line that ran to a plain hook in the Wolf River rig is now tied to a light jig, usually 1/16 ounce.

Dress these two jigs differently. I like using a 3- to 4-inch boot-tail soft-plastic bait on the heavier bottom jig and a 4-inch ringworm on the lighter top jig. Experiment with these, baiting one

jig or the other with a live minnow or compact plastics with different profiles until you discover what fish like.

The Dubuque rig is best presented from a boat moving slowly upstream. Deploy enough line to have the lower jig touch the bottom, and as you move forward, raise the jig to allow it to swim off the bottom. Repeatedly tilt the rod tip back toward the boat to ensure that the lower bait contacts the bottom regularly. Also, adjust the amount of line that you're pulling to keep the Dubuque rig in the strike zone. My favorite way to fish this rig is along well-defined current seams where I can work the boat side-to-side across the seam and sample the fish holding on either side of it.

THE DOUBLE RAPALA RIG

As the water warms in spring, walleyes become more responsive to simple stickbaits, like classic Rapala floating minnows, pulled upstream on 3-way rigs. An easy way to present these baits is with a version of the Wolf River rig. Simply replace the Aberdeen hook with a cross-lock snap and connect that to a No. 7 or No. 9 Original Floating Minnow from Rapala. Lots of colors work, with orange over gold, firetiger and hot steel being some of my personal favorites.

An enhanced version of this classic rig presents two Rapala lures in tandem, with one following the other. After attaching the first Rapala to the cross-lock snap, remove that lure's rear treble and split ring. To the metal hook hanger on the back of that lure's body, attach another length of fluorocarbon leader—typically around 18 inches long—and add another cross-lock snap. Now, clip on a second Rapala floating minnow and get that rig in the water.

Like the Dubuque rig, the Double Rapala rig is best presented from a boat moving upstream. I typically use weights in the 2- to 3-ounce range to keep lures close to the bottom. You'll notice that the two Rapala minnows have very different actions with this rig. The rear lure swims and wiggles as it would normally, whereas the forward lure's action is much subtler, being tethered to other objects in both the front and the back. With the Double Rapala Rig, you can mix and match color patterns, lure sizes and even positions within the rig—front versus back—to optimize your catch rates. 

BLOODY MURDER

EVER THOUGHT ABOUT HUNTING CROWS? TAKE SOME ADVICE FROM TODD GIFFORD, AKA “CROWMAN,” AND YOU’LL **PUT PLENTY OF THESE BLACK-WINGED BANDITS ON THE GROUND.**

By Josh Dahlke

Finding a good feed is your first order of business when crow hunting. A corn field will often attract a large flock, or “murder,” of crows during the first two hours after sunrise.



Want to join me for a crow-hunting camp?" my buddy J.J. asked with a smirk.

I laughed, certain that he was joking around with me.

"No, I'm serious," he continued. "It's awesome. We can hunt them just like ducks. They decoy and everything."

It occurred to me he was probably just looking for an excuse to get together and let our shotguns breathe. After all, it was July, and we were at least a month away from any legitimate bird-hunting seasons. I didn't blame him; I, too, was feeling the desperation of the off-season doldrums.

When he told me the plan was to join an expert crow hunter who goes by the name of "Crowman," I was ready to call his bluff. Yet, a couple weeks later, we were set up on the edge of a cornfield close to a crow roost. The sun was at our back, crow decoys were staked out 20 yards from the field edge and a home-brewed electronic caller lay nestled amongst them. Meanwhile, Crowman, aka Todd Gifford, was using a hand call to spark a conversation with some early-morning crows that had become active with the rising sun. Soon, a couple of these birds appeared over the green sea of corn and glided toward our decoys. We filled the sky with pellets and the birds crumpled.

"Yeah!" Crowman screamed. "Reload. I'll go pick 'em up. Can't have dead bodies in the spread."

The action continued for an hour before tapering off. That's when Gifford busted out the "jukebox" and unleashed the deafening chorus of Johnny Stewart's classic "Fighting Crows" soundtrack. A mass of crows swarmed quickly to the sounds, giving us just enough time to empty our guns.

Thankfully, we don't all have to be as devoted as Crowman to find fun and success while crow hunting. Crows provide an excellent way to improve your wingshooting skills, test new gear and double down on hunting opportunities while scouting for other game. Grab some basic tools and tap into proven advice from Crowman, and you'll be on your way to a good time.

SCOUTING AND PATTERNING

When searching for crows that will come to calls and decoys, first find them on a morning feed. Food sources often vary

by season, and many times if you pattern crows on a grain field they might be eating bugs rather than the crop itself.

According to Gifford, birds often hit alfalfa early in the year then switch to corn. He says crows usually feed from sunrise to roughly two hours after sunrise, so be out at first light to scout. He also recommends staying away from roosts and not hunting crows in the evening unless you're pass-shooting. This tactic typically involves finding consistent flyways along river corridors and intercepting traveling birds. Gifford goes for broke with this quick-and-dirty technique, immediately busting out his e-caller to tempt passing birds a little closer. If you try this, be ready, because the action often will be fast and furious.

THE SETUP

Staging for a crow shoot is no different than in waterfowl hunting: It's all about realism, finding a reliable hide, setting up on the "X" and making every shot count. For hides, Gifford suggests avoiding fake blinds. He wants his cover to be perfect, and for that, he says, you need natural brush. Ensure, too, that crows can't see you from any angle. Without a good hide, Crowman says, you've got nothing.

With decoy placement, mimic the arrangement of birds you've already scouted on a feed. If all the birds you've seen are feeding in an open field, follow suit. If they're feeding on the edge of a standing cornfield, consider attaching some decoys to corn stalks. Gifford

LETHAL WEAPONS

Shotguns and loads to waylay crows

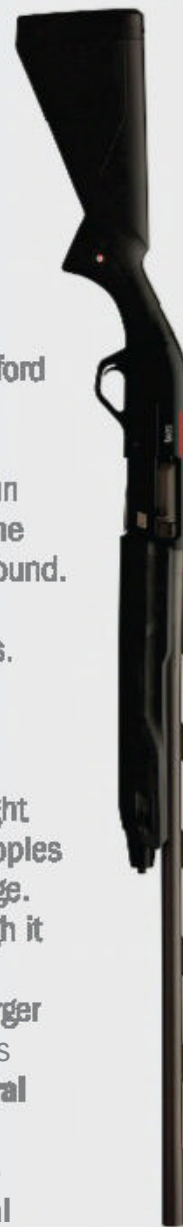
Despite their relatively small stature, crows can take a beating. Hard-hitting loads and a reliable repeater are necessary for knocking birds dead and capitalizing on follow-up shots. I've shared countless crow blinds with Gifford over the past 5 years, and we've tested several shotgun and shotshell models from some of the most reputable manufacturers. We've experienced everything from total gun failures in sub-zero temps to ammo that hardly knocked the dust off dodgy crows. At this point, we're done messing around.

Gifford's go-to shotgun is the semiauto **Winchester Super X4 (right)** in 20 gauge (\$999.99; winchesterguns.com). Mine is the **Savage Renegade Field (left)** with a 12-gauge bore (\$1,539; savagearms.com). Both guns reliably cycle shells and swing nicely.

Depending on the regulations where you hunt, you might also consider bringing along a rimfire rifle to dispatch cripples or kill birds that land on the ground outside shotgun range. This is entirely legal where we hunt in Minnesota, though it may not be the case everywhere.

On the ammo side, you want a heavy load with a larger shot size. Target loads and low-brass small-game loads won't cut it. Gifford leans on several varieties of **Federal 3-inch shells loaded with No. 2 or 4 pellets**. My 12-gauge performs well with **3-inch No. 4 or No. 5 loads**, and I've had great luck with the **Federal Hi-Bird** product family (\$16.99-\$18.99; federalpremium.com). As with any wingshooting rig, pattern

your shotgun and find the optimal choke-and-load combination for your setup.



Effective spreads should include 50 to 75 anatomically correct crow decoys, fully flocked if possible. Use varied head positions and arrange them as you've seen birds in the field.

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typically recommends a spread of 50 to 75 decoys.

He also stresses the need for realistic, anatomically correct, fully flocked crow decoys. He's used virtually all brands and varieties of fakes over the years, but he currently runs Final Approach's Last Pass line of dekes (\$60/3-pack with lookout, feeder and caller postures; fabrand.com). Gifford adds that you don't have to opt for the most expensive decoys, but you definitely want various head positions.

THE MORNING SHIFT

After decades of scouting and killing more than 10,000 crows, Gifford has the birds' morning routine down to a science. He says it usually starts with a single bird coming in to scope out the feed. This might be an antsy juvenile or a wise old scout. That bird either commits to the spread and hail calls the rest of its buddies or, if it's skeptical, it might land on a tree or irrigator in the distance to get a better look before committing. To Gifford, it doesn't matter whether that bird commits or not because he can typically coax in the other birds with calling.

The calling routine is simple. First, start by using a mouth call and lay down some hail calls as a way of telling the other birds that another crow is already at the feed. Then, transition into some feed calls. After that, Gifford just starts

mixing it up to shoot for realism. The first crows that come to your calling will probably be from the main roost—the birds you scouted on the feed. If you're looking for a good call to buy, Gifford has been working closely with Rocky Mountain Hunting Calls (buglingbull.com) on a signature series of hand calls, which should be available online by the time this article is published.

Morning crows typically come in small waves while you're blowing the hand call, but eventually it'll be time for an e-caller. After crows stop responding to hand calling, Gifford cranks up his FoxPro wireless electronic caller hidden amongst the decoys. He recommends the Bob Aronsohn Crow Sound Pack (\$40; gofoxpro.com), produced by the legendary crow hunter whom Crowman refers to as "The Crowfather." Once you go full-bore with the e-caller, expect waves of action from the remaining primary mob of crows, plus any others lurking within earshot.

After their morning routine and feeding, Gifford says crows usually go rest for a while or start patrolling. He adds that birds tend to commit better to your spread after these first flights. So, if you're patient, you can often finish a lot of them later in the morning. Just be ready, because they'll often come in silently. 



WHY HUNT CROWS?

If left unchecked, crows can cause problems for landowners, especially those with farming interests.

Most people, including Todd Gifford, refuse to eat crows. So, what's the justification for shooting them? No different than hunting predators or varmints, crow hunting can be a contentious topic, but it's driven by management objectives. Nearly every aspect of wildlife management is designed to balance human interest with the stable conservation and health of any species.

In the case of crows, they cause an enormous amount of crop damage. Corn is a key target for hungry crows, and a mob, or "murder," can wipe out thousands of dollars of the valuable crop in a single season. These intelligent birds target the tips of corn before it reaches maturity, and the cobs rot from even minor exposure.

During a recent hunt on a new property, we showed the corn damage to the landowner and he couldn't believe it.

"I had no idea that crows did this," he said. "You guys can kill as many of them as you want!"

Todd Gifford typically starts each morning with a hand call. He'll do a few hail calls, then some feed calling, before finally switching to an e-caller when crows stop responding.

JOSH DAHLKE (2)

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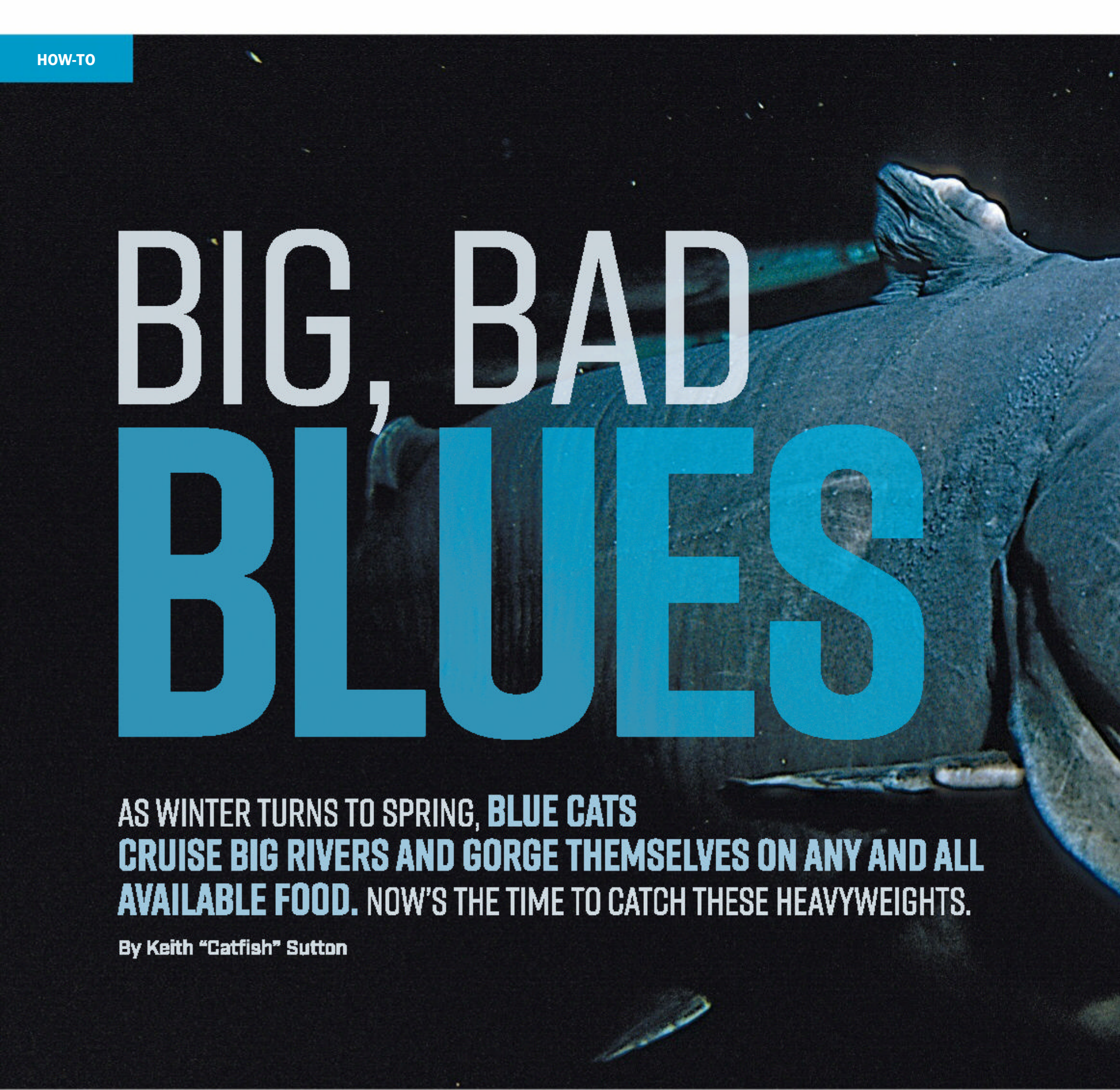
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BIG, BAD BLUES

AS WINTER TURNS TO SPRING, BLUE CATS CRUISE BIG RIVERS AND GORGE THEMSELVES ON ANY AND ALL AVAILABLE FOOD. NOW'S THE TIME TO CATCH THESE HEAVYWEIGHTS.

By Keith "Catfish" Sutton

Until you've experienced it, nothing can really prepare you for facing the astonishing power of a trophy-class blue catfish. Once hooked, these big brutes can fry drags, break rods and snap line like it's sewing thread. One 50-pounder I once hooked slammed me into the boat's gunwale so hard I had bruises for weeks. A really big one can pummel an angler till his arms tremble and his legs turn to Jell-O.

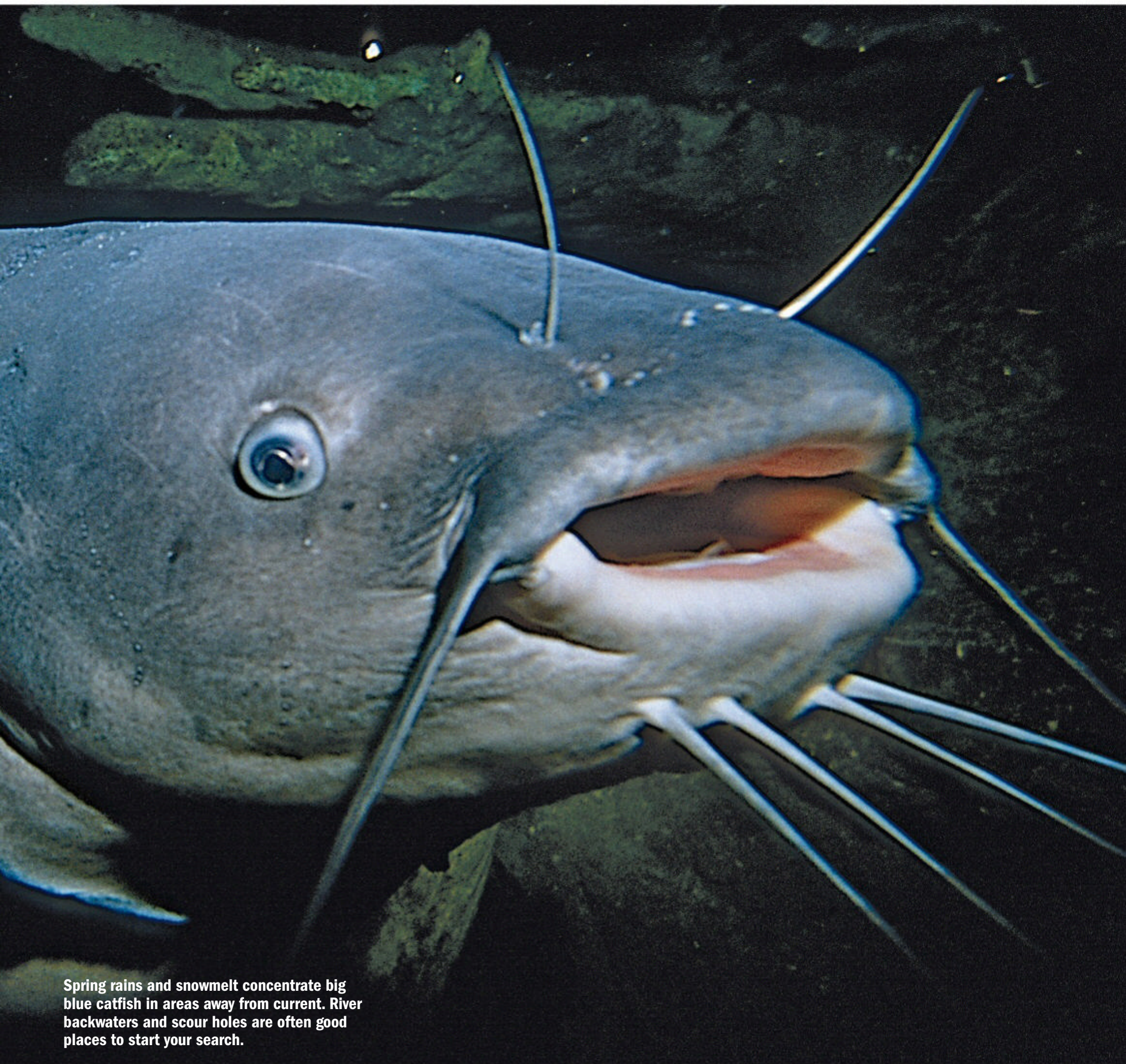
Most anglers have a fascination with big fish and want to do battle with them. In the Midwest, with a few exceptions, not many freshwater gamefish rival a truly large blue catfish. And March is a prime time for catching these whiskered giants, especially in the big rivers flowing through the region. Fish the right bait in the right place at the right time in a sprawling, fast-moving river and you'll find them. You'll have to land one topping 60 or 70 pounds before anybody starts

batting an eye in some areas, but that's always a distinct possibility.

WHY NOW?

Generally, catfish that were slow to bite throughout much of winter start responding more quickly to anglers' offerings as we transition to spring. There are several reasons for this.

First, the water temperature is rising due to longer days and warm spring rains. As a result, catfish feeding activity



Spring rains and snowmelt concentrate big blue catfish in areas away from current. River backwaters and scour holes are often good places to start your search.

increases substantially with each passing day. This is also the pre-spawn period, so catfish are gorging themselves on forage to add weight that will carry them through the summer reproductive cycle when very little is eaten. The sluggishness and reduced rations of winter leave fish with a burgeoning hunger. With rising temperatures stimulating their metabolism, cats are now almost constantly prowling for shad, herring, carp and other favored forage to satisfy their appetites.

An influx of water from heavy spring downpours and snowmelt this month also swells many rivers. The resulting increase in current concentrates blue cats in areas where they can escape the excessive flow—scour holes, creek channel edges, river backwaters and the like. Higher fish densities mean better catches for savvy cat fans who know where to find them.

In summary, late-winter/early-spring cats are active, hungry and concentrated

in dense schools—a great situation if you're trying to hook one.

TARGET AREAS

In many respects, blue cats behave more like striped bass than other catfish species. Shad, herring and other schooling baitfish comprise most of their diet, and like stripers, they follow the baitfish wherever they go. It makes sense then that to catch river blues, you, too, must follow the schools.

Big schools of baitfish congregate in well-oxygenated tailwaters of big-river dams, which makes these prime spots to fish where available. Cast your rig into the grooves of slower-moving water between discharge areas and let it sink. Then, lift the weight and allow the current to wash your rig downstream a few feet. Let the weight down again and repeat the process. Doing this allows you to cover a big area, and cats have a chance to detect the bait and take it.

When fishing outside tailwaters, look for river blues holding near deep, open-water structures that break the current. The edges of river channel drop-offs produce many trophy fish, as do deep edges of gravel and sand bars, undercut banks near outside bends and deep holes adjacent to wing dikes. Use a fish finder to zero-in on easily definable channel edges, as well as subtle drops and ledges. These are catfish magnets, and in late winter you're likely to chart a dozen or more fish near each structural feature.

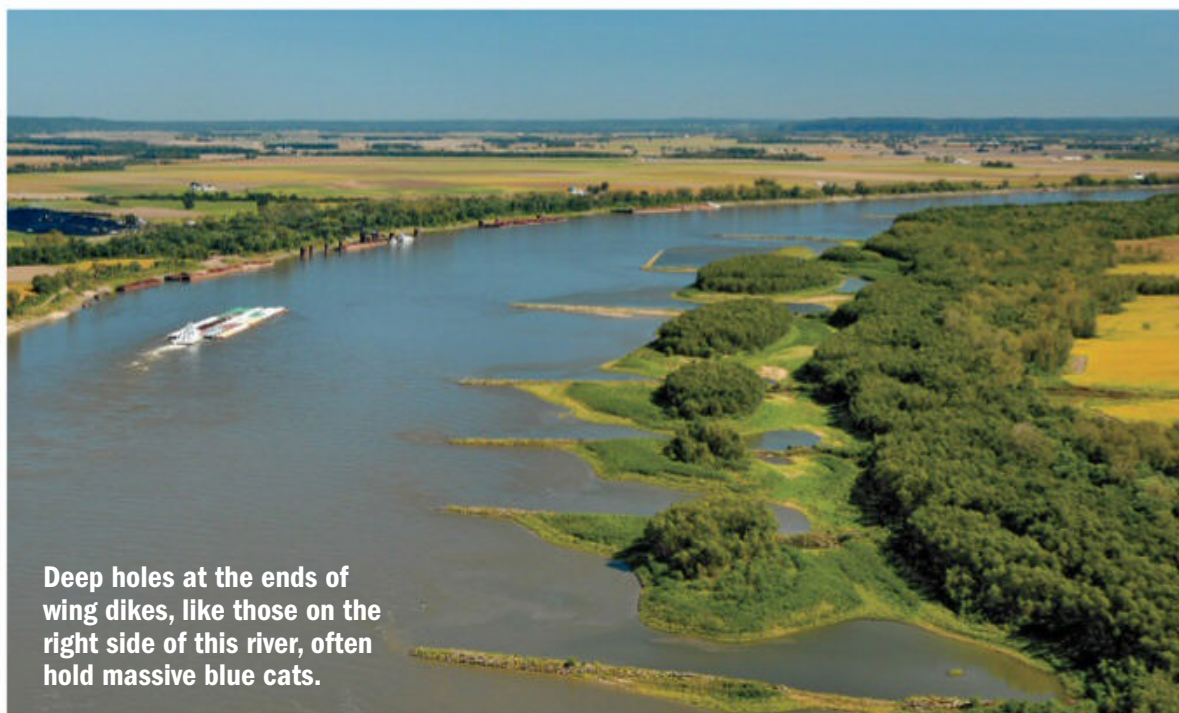
SOLID SETUPS

When it comes to the gear necessary for landing these hard-fighting brutes in heavy river current, bigger is better. Use 7-foot-plus, medium- to heavy-action rods with soft tips for detecting bites and heavy butts for strength. Go with big, large-capacity baitcasting reels and heavy line (50-pound-plus). Similarly, fish large sinkers (4 ounces and up) and hooks (4/0 and up). Also, regularly check everything to ensure all items are functional and ready to handle big fish.

When bank fishing or when fishing dam tailwaters where long casts are necessary, I switch to a 12- to 15-foot, medium-heavy- to heavy-action spinning combo like those used for surf fishing.

One of the best catfishing rigs for big rivers is a three-way rig with a circle hook and bell sinker. For the main line, use at least 50-pound test—preferably abrasion-resistant braided line—to tackle trophy-class blue cats. Tie the main line to one eye of a three-way swivel and add droplines 12 and 24 inches long to the swivel's other two eyes.

The 12-inch dropline is the sinker line and should be 20-pound mono so it breaks easily if the sinker snags in rocks. The 24-inch dropline is the hook line and should be the same braid as your main line. Tie a 5/0 to 12/0 wide-gap



Deep holes at the ends of wing dikes, like those on the right side of this river, often hold massive blue cats.

BLUE CAT BATTLEGROUND

Midwest whiskerfish fans should check out these renowned rivers for big blues.

Those looking to tangle with behemoth blues have plenty of location options throughout the Midwest. Big rivers run throughout the region, and many of them contain stretches offering truly phenomenal action for big blue cats. Plan a trip to one of these world-class waters for your chance at a giant.

KANSAS RIVER CATS

Formed by the confluence of the Smoky Hill and Republican rivers, the Kansas River runs east across a decent portion of the state, passing Topeka and Lawrence before reaching the Missouri River at Kansas City. It's a dark horse in the pack of blue cat hot spots, but don't underestimate its potential for producing trophy blues.

OVERLOOKED OSAGE

Missouri's Osage River deserves mention as well. The stretch from Bagnell Dam to the Missouri River near Jefferson City harbors numerous 50- to 75-pound fish. Seasoned cat men who fish there believe this river may harbor blues pushing the 150-pound mark. One veteran angler says he's released blue cats back into the river that weighed 101 and 121 pounds, and he claims to have hooked some bigger.

PRAIRIE STATE SLEEPERS

Illinois doesn't always get the attention it deserves when it comes to trophy blues. However, great fishing abounds in waters statewide, especially the Mississippi River in the west and the Ohio River in the southeast. These waters don't get the pressure seen on most Deep South rivers, so they're hotbeds for trophy-sized blues.

BIG MUDDY BLUES

Missouri's pole-and-line state record, a 130-pound former world-record blue cat, was caught in the Missouri River in St. Louis County in 2010. Several more 100-pound-plus blues have been caught in recent years, making this one of the nation's best waterways for giant whiskerfish. Action is good in Missouri, Kansas and Nebraska.

BUCKEYE GIANTS

Anglers have been regularly landing monster blues on the Ohio River in recent years. As a result, the Buckeye State has earned a place in the discussion of top trophy blue cat destinations. Blues to 100 pounds or more are always possible, and 50-pound-plus fish have become increasingly common.

circle hook on it, and a 1/2- to 4-ounce bell sinker (heavier in swifter current) to the shorter dropline.

This rig allows your bait to float above but near the bottom so cats can easily find it. Remember, when using circle hooks, don't set the hook with a hard snatch. When a catfish runs with the bait, just start reeling fast and you should hook the fish in the corner of the mouth.

Fresh, oily baitfish are the best baits for trophy blues, especially shad, skipjack herring or Asian carp. One that is live and wiggling will sometimes outperform cut bait. But in most situations, whole dead baitfish or baitfish sliced for cut bait are just as effective as live ones, so long as you use baits that were freshly killed.

Some anglers prefer to fillet baits and use strips of side meat. Others like cutting each fish crosswise into sections—head and tail or head, middle

and tail. All will work at times, but if one piece doesn't garner a bite, try a different one. Blue cats can be picky.

TOP TECHNIQUES

To catch blues holding along bottom channels, work your rig directly beneath a boat, keeping your line perpendicular to your rod tip. This increases sensitivity to strikes. Move along the drop-off using a trolling motor, wind or current to drift along the channel. When you find fish, work the area thoroughly, as several cats may congregate there.

If you're targeting a deep hole, expect blues to move about, gobbling up any food that drifts nearby. Anchor upstream, then cast to the hole and let the reel free-spool until the weight hits bottom. Work each hole thoroughly, top to bottom and front to back, noting where strikes occur. Concentrate on the most productive spots.

Keep in mind that big blue cats usually stay in deeper areas during sunny days and move shallow to feed at night and on cloudy days. Work your bait accordingly.

If you don't get a hit right away, don't get antsy. Big-river blue cats are like kids after fresh-baked cookies. They home in on the aroma and follow the scent trail to track down their treats. Their often-lethargic nature during this season requires extra patience. Give the bait plenty of time to do its job before moving it to a new locale.

HIT THE RIVER

During late winter and early spring, you have a better-than-average chance of landing a true leviathan—if you do your part. Use the right gear and baits, fish in the right spots and be ready for battle. If the stars align, you'll be in for the fish fight of your life. 

Work your rig directly under the boat, with your line perpendicular to your rod tip. Then, drift or troll slowly to cover the area thoroughly with a live, dead or cut baitfish.



TROUBLESHOOTING MARCH BASS

NO MAGIC FORMULA CAN ENSURE SUCCESS. HOWEVER, IF YOU KNOW HOW LARGEMOUTHS BEHAVE DURING UNFAVORABLE EARLY-SPRING CONDITIONS, YOU CAN TIP THE ODDS OF SUCCESS IN YOUR FAVOR.

By Keith Sutton





Bass often scatter and become unpredictable after heavy rains. Move around to find them. When you do, you'll have good success.

Your computer freezes up or behaves strangely. What do you do? You find a troubleshooting guide that helps identify the problem and how to fix it. You do the same when your car is making a funny noise, your lawnmower is acting up or your refrigerator's ice maker is on the fritz.

While the term "troubleshooting" most often applies to technology and mechanical devices, it's equally relevant to fishing, especially when bites get tough. When good anglers can't get largemouth bass to bite, they troubleshoot the problem. They rely on experience to determine why fish have lockjaw and then dig deep in their bag of tricks to find what works.

March is one month when the angler's ability to troubleshoot is particularly important. Changing weather and water conditions this time of year make fishing more difficult than easy. And when bass don't bite, quick workarounds are needed. Toward that end, let's identify some common challenges anglers face in spring, as well as their solutions.

THE PROBLEM: Too Much Prey

Say you're fishing a lake that was covered with snow for much of winter. Submerged weed beds died and decomposed due to a lack of sun. This has exposed forage animals like small sunfish and minnows, and bass are now gorging on the bounty. Because of this, fishing is difficult.

THE SOLUTION: Natural Swimbaits

In this scenario, fishing gets tough because easy prey is abundant. Bass become picky, and artificial lures are less likely to trick them. However, a natural-looking finesse presentation can still fool fish.

Few baits look more natural than a swimbait, so that's a go-to lure for any savvy angler in this situation. The key is matching its size and color to those of the most abundant forage. If you see lots of little perch, use a perch-colored swimbait 3 or 4 inches long. If bluegills or shad outnumber perch, go with a properly sized bluegill or shad pattern.

Pair the soft-plastic body with a 1/8-ounce jighead in water shallower than 5 feet deep. When deeper, increase to a 1/4 ounce. Fewer weeds mean fewer snags, so leave the hook point exposed to increase hook-ups.



After sustained light rain, work a spinnerbait through the upper part of the water column near small tributary creeks. The warmer incoming water should hold bass.

Cast the swimbait as far as possible and reel it in slowly—the slower the better. Hold your rod at a 10 o'clock position and ensure there's a bow in your line between the rod tip and where the line enters the water. When a bass strikes, don't rush. Pause until you feel the weight of the fish, then set the hook. This prevents you from pulling the lure away from a fish when it just has the tail in its mouth.

THE PROBLEM: Bright Sunlight

In this scenario, bass are moving into shallow water during part of the day as they prepare for spawning activities. The water is relatively clear, and the day is projected to be calm and bright with a cloudless blue sky. The most productive fishing times for big bass will likely be low-light periods in early morning or late afternoon. However, you're hoping to make the most of your time on the water. You want to find and catch bass, even when the sun is high.

THE SOLUTION: Seek the Darkness

Naturally, when too much light is present, find areas with less of it. Namely, look to deeper areas, spots beneath disturbed surface water and places below shady cover.

The first approach to this situation is fishing deeper water with deeper presentations from mid-morning until mid-afternoon. Aggressively feeding bass will still come up to strike, especially with lures you can work slowly, such as deep-diving crankbaits and soft plastics (worms, lizards, Slug-Gos) rigged with lighter weights.

Second, try windy shorelines. Wind often produces surface ripples, which help reduce light intensity in the water below. Those same ripples also stir up small invertebrates that attract baitfish. And where there are baitfish, there are sure to be predators like bass.

Consider shallow areas with shady cover, too. This might be manmade

cover—piers, docks or bridges—or natural cover, like vegetation, logs or brush. Pitching or flipping a weedless soft-plastic lure or jig-and-pig is a great way to fish such spots. Either tactic allows your lure to enter the water quietly and lets you work your bait longer in the shadows. If you're lucky, you might find a still-thriving bed of submerged vegetation like coontail or pondweed where bass enjoy perpetual shade, cooler temperatures and abundant forage. These tend to be real hot spots.

One additional suggestion for fishing shallow water on bluebird days is to experiment with various colors of soft plastics, including different two-tone baits with contrasting tails. One slight change often triggers more strikes because bass can see better and rely less on vibration and outline for prey identification. Be stealthy and make casts from longer distances to avoid spooking your quarry.

THE PROBLEM: Light Rains

Rain is a common factor in March fishing. In this case, a light rain has been falling for several hours, and the cover-filled shoreline shallows where you caught bass earlier in the day now seem devoid of fish. You can't buy a bite.

THE SOLUTION: Find the Flow

March rains are often several degrees warmer than lake water—warm enough that they can draw bass away from potential spawning sites to places like small tributary creeks where rainwater flows into the lake. The move from one locale to the other may be abrupt. You'll often know it's occurring when you see largemouths start chasing small baitfish around these smaller in-flow areas. Bigger tributaries, like rivers, also flush warmer water into the system. However, fish usually avoid these if the in-flow is too muddy or full of debris—as it often is in the spring.

Because warmer water stays on top of colder water, good lures for tributary creeks include small crankbaits and spinnerbaits you can work through the upper strata. Unfortunately, runoff activity rarely lasts longer than a couple days because the water gradually cools as it disperses and the bass slow down accordingly. That's a good time to move to the larger tributaries and try the same techniques if the water there has cleared.

COLD COMFORT

When March dishes out cold and rainy conditions, a quality set of outerwear can make all the difference.

In much of the Midwest, cold temperatures are an unfortunate reality of March fishing. Snow or rain are equally possible some places, and bone-chilling boat rides are often the norm. In these conditions, good outerwear can make fishing more enjoyable and safer.

The new **Huk Icon X Superior Jacket and Bib** (\$300, jacket; \$290, bib; hukgear.com) represent one such option. Both jacket and bib are 100-percent waterproof and windproof and incorporate body-mapped insulation to keep you dry and warm. Yet, both also remain breathable with their 20K waterproof/20K construction.

In the event of an accidental fall into the water, the jacket and bib both utilize float technology. Easily removable flotation inserts in the chest and back of the jacket and in the seat and legs of the bibs offer an added means of staying afloat should the worst occur—though anglers should absolutely still wear personal flotation devices.

Both garments sport fleece-lined pockets for warming hands. The jacket's two-piece hood and internal cuff gussets further protect from wind and rain, while 10 pockets with magnetic pocket flaps provide safe storage for gear. If the sun should come out and the temperature warms, the bib's leg zips offer easy removal to keep comfy in changing conditions. —Drew Warden



THE PROBLEM: Rising Water

Here, light showers have turned to storms, and the downpours have caused water in your favorite bass lake to start rising quickly. This seems to have given bass a severe case of lockjaw.

THE SOLUTION: Seek and Destroy

When water levels increase—especially when they do so quickly—bass often scatter. This makes it harder to find them. More and more cover areas flood, giving fish access to new territory, and bass seldom stay concentrated in any one spot. Instead, most will be suspended and moving around like nomads. Normal fishing patterns go out the window.

So, keep moving until you find some of these scattered fish wandering and gorging on the abundant food stirred up in the system. Keep a fish finder on; when you see suspended fish, toss out a marker buoy and fish the area thoroughly. Pinpointing these roamers isn't always easy, but remain patient and cover lots of water. Eventually, you'll zero-in on a roving school that can turn a dismal day into a good one.

When the water level peaks and stabilizes for a few days, look for bass suspended and holding tight to offshore cover. Fish know the water will soon drop away from the banks; their instincts tell them to seek deeper water until things settle down. Try fishing jigs, worms, deep-diving crankbaits and big spinners slowly, and work each bit of cover thoroughly.

When abundant forage is present and bass are passing up other baits, consider a swimbait. Cast it as far as possible and reel slowly.



THE PROBLEM: Super-Clear Water

Later in the year, you'll be able to catch bass in beds of lush green aquatic vegetation. But right now, in March, those weed beds are gone. In fact, all vegetative growth, including the countless micro-organisms that cause water to be dingy during warm months, is at a minimum. The lake you're fishing is clearer now than at any other time—so clear that bass are spooky and you're finding it hard to get a bite.

THE SOLUTION: Be a Magician

This situation can be especially frustrating, but if you approach clear-water fishing properly, you should still be able to score consistently. In clear water, bass can see your offerings and will readily chase lures. If they can also see you—and the less realistic aspects of your offerings—then you have an issue. This isn't

Vegas and you're no David Copperfield, but you need to put on your best disappearing act. Or you simply need to fish at times that offer less visibility.

First, wear clothing with shades of blue or gray that blend in with the sky. When practical, use thinner line to make presentations harder to detect. Go with 8-pound mono instead of 15, for example, or try a skinny braid instead of a thick monofilament. It's also best to make long casts, staying well away from any cover you're fishing to avoid spooking fish.

Similarly, if you're trying to remove any evidence of fakery, why not consider a natural bait? Crayfish or shiners work great in clear-water conditions, largely because there is nothing phony for bass to observe. If you're set on using artificials, stick to smaller versions and utilize a faster retrieve. This gives bass less time to inspect them and make their decision.

If stealth tactics aren't working during the sunniest portions of the day, fish the darker times. Limited-light periods are often very productive on clear waters. When the sun's high, bass move to deep, shady areas to avoid bright light. But in the early morning and late afternoon, light penetration is minimal, and bass move into forage-filled shallows to feed. Cloudy days are good, too.

PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

Do March bass pose unique challenges to anglers? Absolutely, they do. However, with the right tactics and a bit of determination, all can be overcome.

Just do a little troubleshooting. Identify the problem you're facing, land on a solution and then apply it. There are few things more satisfying as an angler than solving problems that others can't. 

In spring's bright sunlight, bass often seek refuge in shallow cover, such as brush, logs or vegetation. Pitching or flipping a jig-and-pig is a great way to access and tempt these fish.

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TURKEY TALK



**ANYONE SERIOUS ABOUT BAGGING A GOBBLER THIS SPRING SHOULD
KNOW THESE FIVE VOCALIZATIONS—AND WHEN TO USE THEM.**

By Tony J. Peterson

LINDA FRESHWATERS ARNDT (MAIN); LEE THOMAS KLOS THE RAW SPIRIT (RIGHT)



If a gobbler is traveling with a hen, hit them with some cutts. These sounds provoke aggressive responses from hens. If she comes in, the tom should follow.

When I started turkey hunting as a clueless 14-year-old, the loudest voices in the expert turkey space all said the same thing: Yelp three times and shut up. Those were the dark ages of turkey hunting. Since then, we've learned just how conversational the wild birds can be—and how deep their vocabulary really is. To be a consistently successful turkey hunter, you need to understand this proclivity for conversation and know how to interact with turkeys accordingly.

YELPS

If you can't yelp, you can't call turkeys. This call functions to serve several purposes. The ladies use it to keep track of one another (gobblers too, just less frequently). Hens also use it to rope in a randy gobbler, and a good series of yelps often leads to other calls as intensity ramps up.

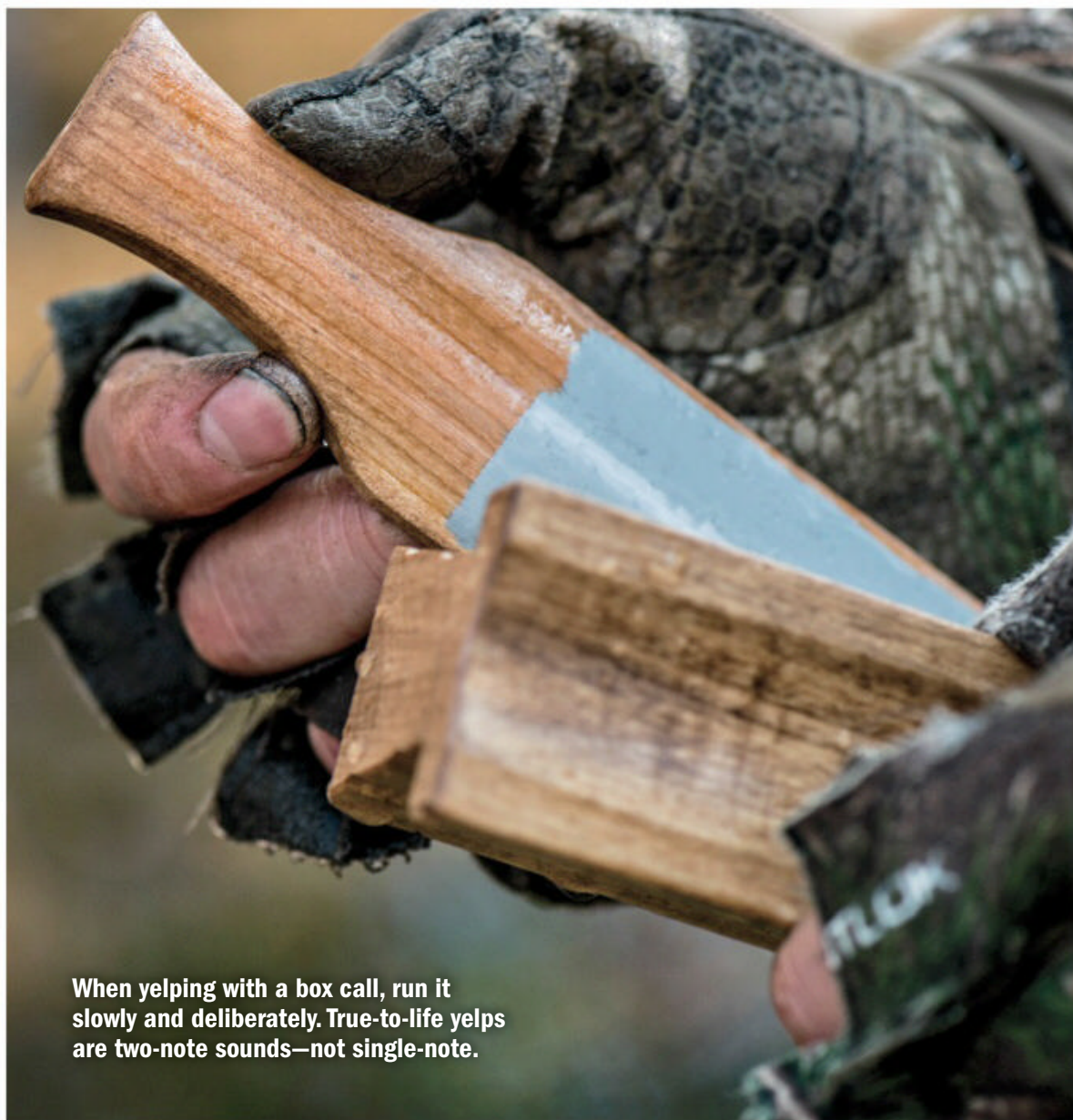
The key to understanding yelps is grasping cadence and structure. A yelp is a two-note call that drops off sharply

at the end. Most beginners default to a one-note yelp, and it doesn't work. They also string their yelps together too quickly, which sounds unnatural. Whether you use a diaphragm call, slate or box, think "slow and purposeful" with your two-part yelps.

PURRS

Most of the purring you'll hear from wild turkeys will come from hens as they preen themselves and slowly, contentedly pick their way past your blind. When birds fight, especially gobblers, they'll engage in a souped-up purr that often transitions into other calls, but what most hunters should think about is the softer version. This is an all-clear, confidence-boosting call.

Whether you channel your inner Cajun and roll your Rs with a mouth call or drag a striker softly across a slate, this call is for close birds that need a little coaxing to cross the red line. It's a great way to convince a hung-up gobbler that he should cover the last 50 or so yards.



When yelping with a box call, run it slowly and deliberately. True-to-life yelps are two-note sounds—not single-note.

CLUCKS

The cluck, a one-note sound that might remind you of that of a chicken, falls close to the purr on the vocalization spectrum. Content turkeys cluck, just like they purr. The two sounds are often made back-to-back, and if you learn how to do this, you can further sell the ruse that all is good with your faux flock.

The easiest way to do this is to end a purr on a slate call with a quick, soft pop of the striker. The key here is subtlety, just like it is if you make clucks with a mouth call. Content birds don't scream their lungs out, so you want to keep your library voice going here. Again, if you've got birds that are hung up or respond negatively to more aggressive calling, clucking might be the ticket.

CUTTS

Cutting is the "come at me, bro" of the turkey vocabulary—though, technically, it's more of a "come at me, sis." This sound, which really ramps birds up, can be made like a cluck on a slate call but with some serious force and rapid-fire succession. It often triggers a dominant response from hens, which usually pulls in the boyfriends and can turn a dead setup into an action-packed gobble fest.

The cutt is also easy to make with a mouth call, but probably best created with a box call. Ensure you're chalked up and confident, and tilt the paddle at as much an angle as you can. Then, bring it home with authority several times in a row.



Read the situation and create the right sounds to communicate with birds. Starting subtly and building to aggressive calling often works best.

CLUTCH CALLS

Seven of the best turkey calls to carry this spring

Owning—and knowing how to use—a variety of calls improves your odds in the spring. While plenty of options exist, running diaphragm calls like the **Primos Veronica** (\$6.99; primos.com) is an excellent way to expand your vocabulary. This three-reed, spur-cut mouth call is designed so that users can produce everything from the high-pitched kee-kee to a low-and-slow raspy yelp. Another great option for mouth calls is the **Hunter Specialties Tongue Series** (\$29.99; gsmoutdoors.com). A four-pack contains options for producing every sound a turkey can make thanks to the unique cuts of the latex.

Naturally, you'll want more than diaphragm calls, and no turkey hunter worth his or her salt would be caught dead in the woods without a box call and a pot call. In the former category, it's hard to find a better option than **Zink's Wicked Series Box** (\$119.99; zinkcalls.com). This premium call is hand-built, hand-tuned and is double-sided to allow for different tones. Pot call fanatics should check out **Flextone's Pot Luck Glass** (\$12.99; flextonegamecalls.com). This compact and weatherproof call is designed to keep working even when the rain comes, all while producing crisp, loud-as-you-need-them sounds.



TONY J. PETERSON (ABOVE)



LOCATOR LOWDOWN

Play a productive game of Marco Polo with toms.

As discussed, if you can gobble, you can get turkeys to gobble, which is the whole point of a locator call. Also, as mentioned, it's not always smart to go around sounding exactly like the thing everyone in the woods is trying to kill. Fortunately, you've got other options.

Crow calls, owl hooters and even peacock calls are all available to spring longbeard chasers who just need to hear a few real birds to devise a plan. If you're trying to roost a bird, an owl hooter is tough to beat (although a gobble is as good or better). If you're running and gunning all day long and just want a midday bird to sound off, try a simple crow call. The best for this is a series of five caws, with the first three drawn out and the last two made very quickly (listen to real crows and this will make sense).

Cutting, like all calling, is situationally specific. If you've got a hen that's chatty, you're off to a good start. You can also use the cutt around midday when nothing is going on, but you'll want to start with softer yelps and purrs first. I often use two separate calls—a slate and a mouth call, for instance—to create calling sessions that sound like hens getting after one another. These sessions always lead to aggressive cutting, and they've brought in many longbeards over the years, especially on heavily pressured public ground.

GOBBLES

We all know what a gobble is, but most of us don't actually know when to use it as a call. The best answer is "not very often." Gobbling is something to consider if you know for certain that no one can potentially sneak up and shoot you with a load of No. 4s. It's also a last resort for a hung-up gobbler that you can see but who just doesn't believe your normal turkey talk. Occasionally, the competition aspect of throwing a gobble into the mix does the trick and you can coax a longbeard in closer.

There are gobble-shaker calls out there, but you can also hold a box call upside down and quickly shake it back and forth for a passable gobble. If you're confident with a mouth call, you can shake your head like a lunatic and create a loud, realistic-sounding gobble that will have spit flying and your snoozing hunting partner checking his underwear. While a gobble might not be a great call for very many situations when you want to draw a longbeard into range, it's an excellent locator call. In fact, in my experience, it's the best one out there. 



WINDIGO IMAGES (TOP); LEE THOMAS KJOS, THE RAW SPIRIT (BOTTOM)

Pot-style calls are great for making purrs and clucks. Both sounds convey contentment. Use them to coax in a wary tom that's hung up out of range.

BIRDS

ON THE

EDGE

NEBRASKA OFFERS MIDWESTERNERS THEIR FIRST CHANCE AT A SPRING GOBBLER—AND SOME OF THE REGION'S ONLY MERRIAM'S.

By Joel Nelson



Looking to chase turkeys as soon as possible? Nebraska's archery turkey season has the earliest start in the Midwest, beginning on March 25.

To the uninitiated, Nebraska may not seem to be an impressive spring turkey destination. After all, it offers a mix of agricultural and prairie land that's just as easily found in neighboring plains states. Yet, each year turkey hunters flock to the Cornhusker State for both archery and firearms seasons. A closer look at what Nebraska has to offer helps explain why.

For starters, the state has a robust turkey population, which some estimates place around 150,000 birds. It also has one of the nation's most diverse populations, containing three of the five turkey subspecies found in the U.S., with Easterns, Rios and Merriam's—as well as hybrids—all inhabiting various parts of Nebraska. Eastern portions of the state offer rich crop fields and steep draws near major streams and are well suited for Eastern birds. Southern and central parts of Nebraska, meanwhile, hold more Rios. Farther west, there are broad vistas, big timber and sweeping river valleys loaded with Merriam's turkeys.

It's these birds, with their characteristic white-tipped fans, that draw the most interest from Midwestern and Eastern hunters. While western Nebraska is at the de facto edge of the Midwest, it's also the eastern edge of suitable Merriam's habitat. This makes it one of the nearest places for hunters traveling from the east to chase Merriam's birds.

As if that weren't enough, Nebraska offers one of the earliest season openers in the country, with its early archery season opening up in late March. Hunters from other states can get a jump on their seasons by a week to as much as an entire month, depending on where in the U.S. they live. Success rates are also quite high—over 60 percent in each of the past seven seasons for shotgun hunters. As a bonus, hunters can purchase up to three turkey permits, which are reasonably priced (\$128 apiece for nonresidents). Taking all this into consideration, it's easy to see why the Cornhusker State consistently ranks as one of the best for turkey hunting in informal rankings and lists—and why any serious Midwestern turkey hunter should seriously consider a trip there this spring.



You can set up ambushes for Merriam's birds. Just do enough scouting beforehand to determine areas that funnel them.

PRIME PARCELS

It's no secret that much of Nebraska consists of open country, with most western areas offering broad plains with interspersed pockets of red cedar. Out here, rivers and steep draws or ravines hold many of the roost trees, so hunters can often start and end each day with some idea of turkey movements to and from these areas. However, many times, the early-season draw is remaining crop residue and grain from the previous season. For this reason, it helps to locate ground with at least some crop fields. Identifying hot areas beyond this gets trickier depending on where you're hunting, as so many agricultural areas offer the food these birds need to survive.

In March, irrigated stretches of corn, wheat and soybean fields commonly hold huge groups of birds. As a result, seeing birds in Nebraska's prairie region won't be the issue. In fact, many huge flocks—up to hundreds of birds—can be quite visible at a distance. What's often more difficult is finding birds on public lands or private areas that allow hunting.

I've found permission easier to come by with young hunters in tow. And, as it just so happens, crossbow hunting is legal during the archery-only early season—beneficial for young ones who haven't mastered a vertical bow but can shoot a crossbow. Despite how some archers feel about crossbows, they're a great way to get youth and other hunters involved.

TURKEY SWEET SPOTS

As mentioned, there's a lot of great turkey ground in western Nebraska. However, I feel comfortable pointing to a few areas specifically.

One is the "Nebraska Black Hills." Technically this area is called the Pine Ridge region, but its ecology is very similar to that found in South Dakota's Black Hills. While Nebraska's version may lack comparable elevation, and timber may not be as dense as it is across the border, it also seems to see fewer hunters overall in my experience.

The Chadron, Neb., area serves as a general bullseye in this topographically rich region, which includes big timber and healthy turkey populations. Much of it is national forest land with vast tracts of public hunting. With basic planning and prep work, hunters can head to Nebraska's panhandle and start having some fun. The Crawford area, just to the west, is another great basecamp with just as many turkeys in the surrounding hills and fields.

Of course, cream-of-the-crop areas here are often those where national forest ground meets private farms. These spots offer birds both cover and roost habitat, as well as the food they need to make it through winters. Cattle ranches in the valleys are also hotbeds for turkey activity, and although they primarily attract birds to overwinter, remnant groups often don't land too far from where they spent the cold and snowy months. With the amount of birds straddling this public/private edge, it pays to have a good map and detailed ownership boundaries from a phone-based app like onX.

An abundance of spectacular habitat doesn't necessarily make tagging a bird a forgone conclusion, though. One major thing to consider when deciding where to hunt is pressure. As a rule, expect easy accesses to the largest public tracts to be well worn—at least for the first mile or so. Beyond that, you'll usually have much of the rest of it to yourself.

With private ground, birds frequently seen from the road attract a lot of door-



Aggressive calling often works for western Nebraska gobblers, but if birds keep walking, you'll have to try to get in front of them.



After you tag out in Nebraska, cross the border and hunt in South Dakota's Black Hills.

TURKEY TRIP PLANNER

Considerations for a western Nebraska Merriam's hunt

A trip to hunt Merriam's turkeys in Nebraska's panhandle can be as simple or complex as you decide to make it. You can crash in a cabin, camp on public ground or hit up a hotel. If you're an avid angler, you can even tack on a fishing trip. Or, if you're a turkey hunting addict, consider other exciting opportunities across the state line.

WHERE TO STAY

Camping options abound for DIY turkey hunters looking for a quick spot to sleep. Chadron State Park offers spacious sites and even a few camper cabins, with ample hunting on state and National Forest Service ground nearby. Similarly, the Crawford, Neb., area has plenty of city and private campgrounds, along with a state park of its own—Fort Robinson

State Park. Hotels and motels are found throughout the Crawford and Chadron areas, but the national forest itself offers campgrounds, cabins and dispersed camping throughout the forest.

ADDED ATTRACTIONS

If you're looking for more opportunities for outdoor exploration, consider these. First off, perhaps more turkey hunting? With Wyoming and South Dakota's Black Hills inside of 100 miles, this could be the start of a multi-leg, several-state turkey adventure. There's also good trout fishing in the Black Hills and even closer in Nebraska. West Ash Creek, Big Bordeaux Creek and Chadron Creek offer public stretches, with many more miles of private water possible for those willing to knock doors and do some hiking.

knocking and frustrated ranchers. Focus instead on likely looking cover and ag fields that attach to public ground after a reasonable hike in. I've had good luck asking landowners to access specific far-away parcels where I wouldn't be parking in plain sight or near their cattle operations. The result is usually a lengthy hike, but also much better turkey hunting than I'd have chasing birds near high-traffic roads and trails. Often, these heavily pursued birds have already played the game and become the wiser for it anyway.

Aside from private options and the national forests, Nebraska also has an extensive walk-in program that benefits hunters statewide. In 2009, the Game and Parks Commission initiated the Open Fields and Waters (OFW) program, which provides access to private lands from more than 850 individual landowners. While many parcels focus on habitat for

everything from deer to upland birds, turkey hunters also benefit from the additional accessible holdings.

TOP TACTICS

For Nebraska's archery game in late March, few hunts outdo a well-placed blind set along a fenceline crossing, strut zone or other funnel where you've seen birds. Here, solid scouting is crucial. In fact, heading out ahead of your anticipated hunt dates to simply get eyes on live birds isn't a bad call. In March, and even early April, turkeys will be in large groups and usually quite visible if you do some looking. This also means that 90 percent of the birds will be in about 10 percent of the cover, again placing huge importance on preliminary scouting.

A ground blind certainly makes it easier to draw on turkeys without being seen. However, the scattered scrub cedar

and brush provide ample opportunities to hunt turkeys more like you would with a shotgun. This is especially true if you hunt with a crossbow. Good numbers of early-season birds make for a target-rich environment; as long as you're near the action, you can hunt fairly aggressively.

For several reasons, the same can be said for a calling strategy. Merriam's birds love loud, shrill box calls, and in open spaces with big winds, they're often a necessity. This, combined with the fact that you'll likely be competing with good numbers of hens, means a loud-and-proud calling program often works best.

By the time shotgun season arrives, and depending on the weather, birds may be breaking up or already in smaller, more nomadic groups. That means they'll often hunt a bit more like your average Eastern, though this varies based on how open the terrain is. They'll likely roost, fly down, find some hens and follow them around to food sources throughout the day only to fly up and do it all over again.

However, in the far western hills I've found birds to be much more free-roaming, just like birds in South Dakota's Black Hills. These gobblers point their beak in a direction and never stop walking. When encountering these rangers, try to get ahead of their path of travel and intercept them. This can be difficult if they have a head start, so act quickly if you notice it happening.

If these birds get to an area and gobble out, your next best play is to head to that exact spot and call enthusiastically. Gobblers will often double back to a hen that goes exactly where they last were. The tom is also usually more comfortable after assessing the safety of a certain location just moments earlier.

GO WEST

With tons of great habitat, a strong turkey population, solid success rates and liberal harvest regulations, Nebraska represents an excellent opportunity for diehard turkey hunters. This is especially true for those looking to knock a Merriam's turkey off their bucket list. Whether you're interested in tagging your first gobbler of the season with a bow or running and gunning with a scattergun a few weeks later, the Cornhusker State has you covered. Just do a little planning, hop in the truck and head west for an exciting start to your spring season. 

DOWN EAST HAT TRICK



LANDLOCKED SALMON, SMALLMOUTH BASS AND LAKE TROUT
ARE AN ATTRACTIVE SPRING TRIFECTA IN MAINE'S GRAND LAKE STREAM AREA.

Story and Photos by Bryce M. Towsley

In Grand Lake Stream it's not uncommon to catch landlocked salmon on streamers, nymphs and even dry flies.



Conventional wisdom holds that landlocked salmon are descendants of some Atlantic salmon that were trapped by geological upheaval about 10,000 years ago. That event stranded them from going to sea, so they just carried on with what water they had. Fish nerds call them “glaciomarine relicts.”

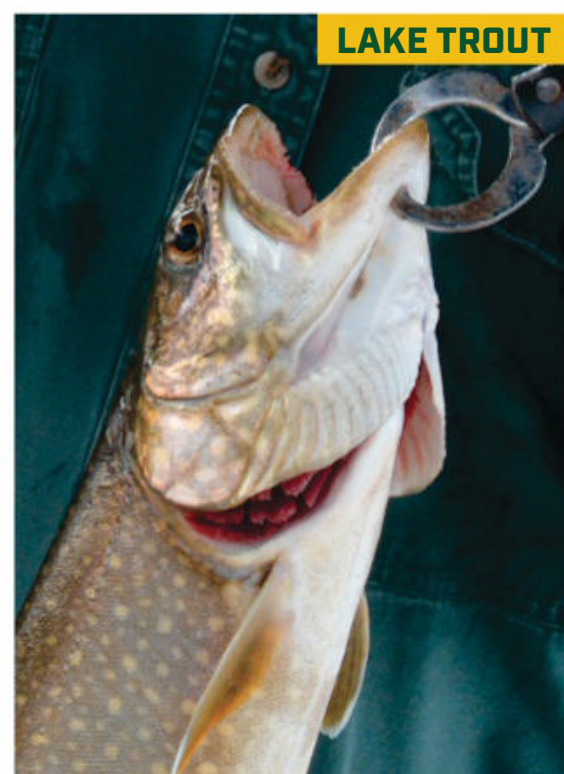
However, the newer, enlightened thinking is that perhaps some of the fish just didn’t want to bother to run to the sea. Rather than follow the crowd, these mavericks said, “Forget that, I am good here. Lots of smelts to eat and no giant sharks or other sea critters trying to eat me. Besides, all that swimming is just exhausting.”

No matter, landlocked salmon are a northeastern fish and there is no destination with more mystique and allure than Grand Lake Stream, Maine. No matter if you troll the area’s lakes or cast a fly in Grand Lake Stream itself, the landlocked salmon draws fishermen from all over the world.

Although scientifically the same, landlocks are different fish than Atlantic salmon, and it’s different fishing. I remember one buddy coming back from a week-long trip and saying, “It was the best Atlantic salmon trip ever. I almost caught a fish this time.” I have fished for sea-run Atlantic salmon several times and can confirm it’s not a high-volume event. That said, landing an 18-pound salmon on a fly rod in a roaring tidal river was one of the top two best events of my angling life.

Landlocked salmon have all the same fighting ability of the sea-run fish, but they don’t get the size. It takes a pretty good one to hit 6 pounds. The best I have seen is 8 pounds. But, they are abundant and willing in the good waters. While I once spent two weeks to catch three Atlantic salmon in the rivers of New Brunswick, that’s a so-so morning on good landlocked salmon waters.

I have trolled for landlocks for years in Vermont, but I had not fished the legendary waters of Maine until last spring. Maine is also well-known for its bear hunting, and that’s how I got turned on to the salmon fishing there. My buddy Dean Wetherby booked a bear hunt with Eagle Mountain Guide Service (eaglemountainguideservice.com) run by Matt Whitegiver. I thought





Matt Whitegiver, left, uses a comfortable 24-foot Bentley pontoon to troll for salmon on West Grand Lake. The boat has much more room to stretch than the Grand Laker canoes traditionally deployed in Down East Maine.

a bear hunt sounded good, so I booked one, too. It worked out well and I took a nice boar last September.

Bear hunting in Maine is typically an evening-only thing, so I asked Matt about fishing in the mornings. Matt pointed out that a huge part of his annual guiding business is fishing. One thing led to another, and I ended up booking some time on the water with him. My buddy Bob Rose and I arrived at Matt's Wilderness Lodge in late May, too early for black flies, just right for fishing.

"We have great salmon fishing," Matt told me. "There is also some world-class smallmouth bass fishing. Let's plan to do both. I expect that we will probably catch a few lake trout as well. We'll call it a Down East Hat Trick."

ON THE PONTOON

The traditional craft for fishing the local lakes is the Grand Laker canoe. It can be paddled, but with a large, square stern it's typically pushed by a small outboard motor. There were several of these at the access point for West Grand Lake as we prepped Matt's boat for launch.

Matt showed up with a 24-foot Bentley pontoon boat that was designed for fishing. He calls it the "Bentley War Machine" and I have to say, it's the most comfortable boat I have ever been aboard when trolling for salmon.

"The canoes are fine, very traditional," Matt said. "But one reason a shore lunch is so popular is because they get a little cramped and people need to stretch their legs. It's a great experience fishing from one, and I recommend it for anybody."

"However, my approach is about comfort and about catching fish. We fish all day. This boat is so comfortable we don't need a shore-lunch leg-stretcher. Instead, we eat a 'deck lunch' on the boat and we keep fishing."

It might be argued that the traditional trolling lure in Down East waters is a hand-tied streamer fly, like the famous Gray Ghost created by Maine's fly tyer laureate, Carrie Stevens. These flies are designed to imitate the salmon's main diet in the lake: smelt. With three people in the boat, we could legally run six lines, so we tied on a few smelt-imitator flies and a few spoons that looked like smelt.

We also rigged live smelt, just to be sure. On the way to the boat launch we had stopped at a remote house beside the road. In front of the garage was a tank

filled with smelts. (I don't know for sure the plural of smelt, but in Maine they are called smelts.) We took what we needed and left cash in the coffee can. The old dog on the porch didn't even bother to bark. I guess strangers raiding the fish tank in the gloom of night is just not worth the bother. Got to love rural Maine.

The secret is to rig the smelt in a way that keeps it swimming rather than spinning as it's trolled. It's also usual to run a live smelt at a slower speed than might often be used for lures or flies.

I fished for salmon in Lake Champlain quite a bit, and the conventional wisdom there is to troll fast at 4 to 5 mph. Matt shook his head in horror at that suggestion. With the rigged smelt we slowed down to about 1 1/2 mph.

We ran out some flat lines and of course put a lure in the prop wash just behind the boat. Every salmon fisherman knows that trick.

Some lines were on downriggers, but we also used traditional lead-core line. The line changes color every 10 yards, and you count the colors to determine how much line is played out and how deep it will run at a given speed. It was my first time using lead-core for trolling, and I must say I am hooked. I didn't keep track, but I think we caught as many salmon on the lead-core rods as the rest combined.

As the day turned gloomy and dark, Matt put out a few spoons with a tarnished copper finish. "Always run tarnished copper on a dark day," Matt said. "It's a salmon killer."

I jokingly called it decayed copper, and he corrected me. I kept the joke going all day, and Matt corrected me every time. Late in the day, he turned to me, exasperated, and said, "You are an outdoor writer, and you need to get this stuff right!"

Bob and I laughed. Matt did not. He takes his fishing very seriously.

Matt's seriousness paid off as he helped us put a lot of fish in the boat. Even with some horrible weather

Smelt is the dominant forage fish of landlocked salmon. It's important to rig a smelt correctly so it doesn't spin when trolled.



conditions rain, wind, cold fronts and one epic storm that drove all the boats off the water we caught fish. In two days of trolling on West Grand Lake we caught a bunch of salmon, several lake trout (togue in Maine speak) and a few smallmouths.

Landlocks are notoriously hard fighters, and they love to jump. Often the first indication that you have a fish on is when you see a salmon jumping behind the boat. They fight right to the net, and if catching one on light tackle doesn't make you giggle, you probably aren't human.

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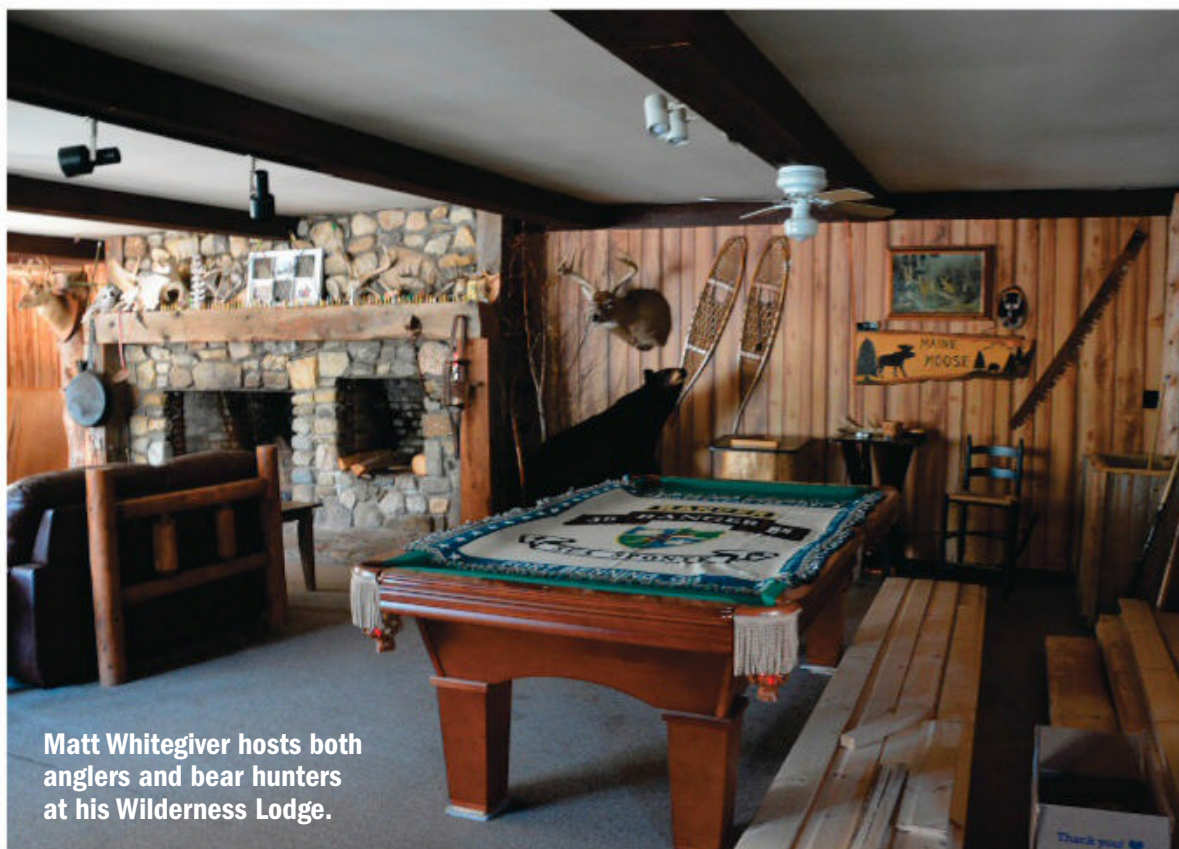
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BEECH HILL BASS

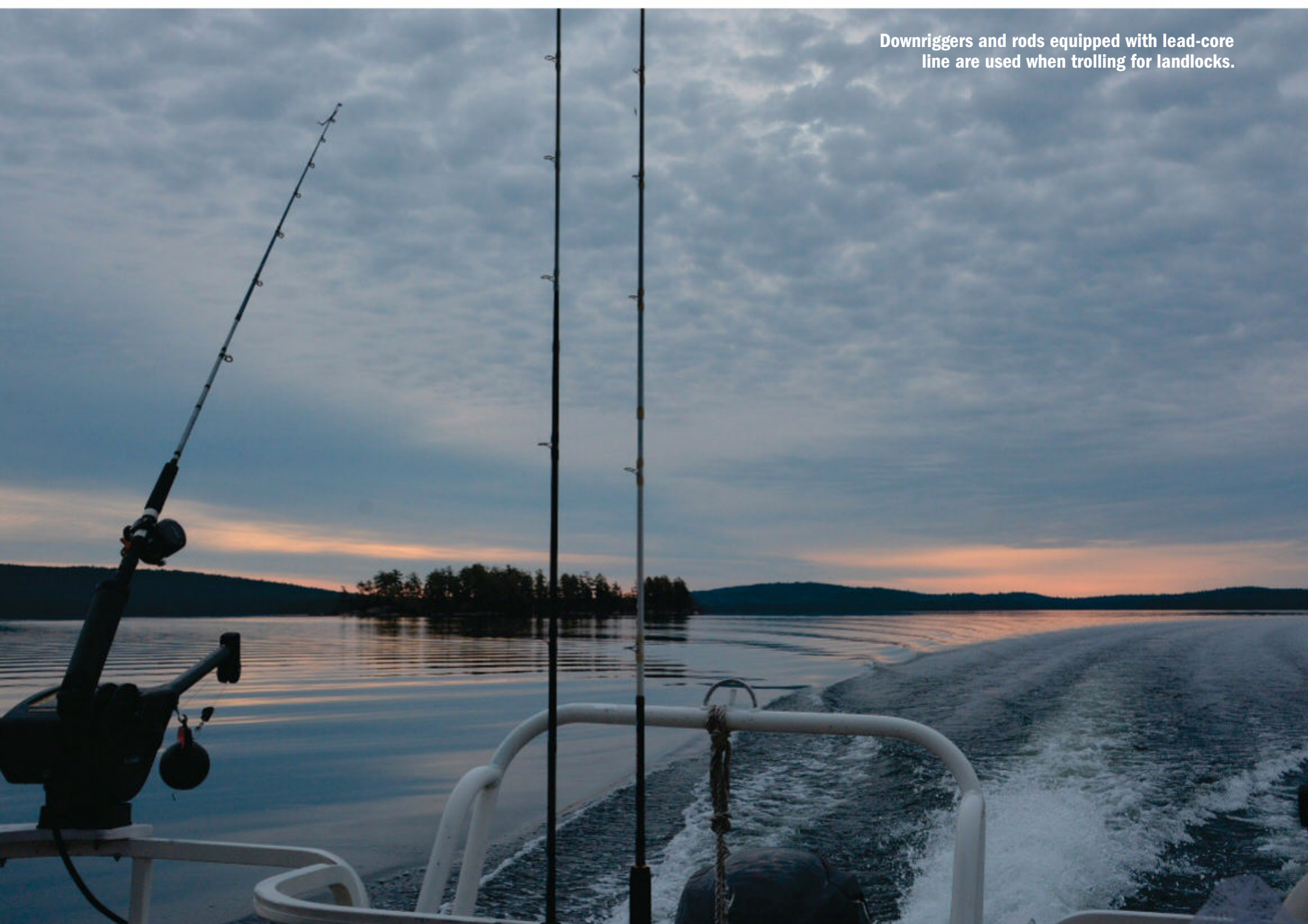
On the third day, we shifted our attention and the Bentley War Wagon to Beech Hill Pond, where we focused on casting for smallmouth bass. Smallmouths slam lures and fight you all the way to the boat. Those virtues make them one of my favorite fish. They are the perfect complement to landlocked salmon.

It was one of those slow days, but we still boated a dozen or so smallmouths, with some of them pushing 3 pounds. The lure of the day was a silver No. 5 Mepps spinner with an orange dressed hook. I also had some luck with white and red jigs, and caught a few bass on crankbaits. But that Mepps was just deadly at sucking the big fish out of the rocks and into the boat.

Bob had bought the spinner at a little mom-and-pop store where we stopped



Matt Whitegiver hosts both anglers and bear hunters at his Wilderness Lodge.



Downriggers and rods equipped with lead-core line are used when trolling for landlocks.

A man with a beard, wearing a camouflage baseball cap and a matching long-sleeved shirt, is shown in profile, looking off to the right. He is holding a pair of binoculars with both hands. A rifle is visible behind him on the left. The background is a blurred forest. The text 'BORN TO WEAR CAMO' is overlaid in large, bold, yellow-green letters.

BORN TO WEAR CAMO

A hunter is more than just a predator. Hunters are caretakers, providers and leaders, too. Head into the backwoods with Michael Waddell, Travis "T-Bone" Turner and Nick Mundt as they honor America's authentic hunting culture.

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BONE COLLECTOR

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MYOUTDOORTV.COM

for snacks. It was the last one in the store and, no, Bob would not sell or loan it to me. I considered stealing it, but he is a pretty big guy and it wouldn't be worth the beating.

Matt guides on the 1,400-acre Beech Hill Pond often and knows it well. Much of his customer base comes from tourists in Bar Harbor looking for a day trip. This is the lake he usually takes them to.

"No matter what they are looking for I can usually find it for them," Matt said. "I had one family who was not impressed with these big bass. We had a language barrier, but I finally figured out they wanted a lot of fish. So I took them to a sunfish spot, and they fished with worms and a bobber. They boated a lot of fish and were very happy at the end of the day. It wasn't my preferred way of fishing, but it's about giving the customers what they want."

STREAMER SUCCESS

The last day we had to fish, Bob and I made our way to Grand Lake Stream to try our hand at fly fishing for landlocked salmon. We came in so green it was rubbing off on everything we touched. But by asking a lot of questions from the good people we met there and after a few hours on the stream, we figured out enough to dodge embarrassment.

Everyone we talked with was using nymphs. So we drifted nymphs for a while. I didn't see anybody catching fish, so after a few hours I switched to a streamer pattern.

It's one I claim I invented, but it may have been around and I just didn't see it. I call it a Copper Finn. It's a Mickey Finn-style streamer with a copper bead head, only for the wing I use white, orange and yellow bucktail with a bit of Krystal Flash. The body is copper tinsel with silver ribbing wire. A short red-floss tail gives it some pizzazz.

On my second cast the fly swung out of the drift and just as I started to retrieve, a salmon hit hard. After a grand fight, I dipped the net under my first landlocked salmon on a fly—on a pattern I created and tied myself! My hat squeaked and stretched as my head started to swell with thoughts of pride: Never mind all those other guys on this stream, I got this. I figured it out pretty fast. Gaze upon my glory.

Landlocks may not be as large as sea-run Atlantic salmon, but they fight hard and jump often. They're also more plentiful.





Brine and smoke landlock fillets over alder. Don't expect there to be any leftovers.

SMOKE 'EM

The only way to make salmon?

Down East anglers can keep two salmon per day. I don't like fish and I really don't like salmon, so catch and release comes easy. My idea of a shore lunch is to toss everything back and get a burger on the way home.

However—and this is a big however—I have always liked smoked salmon. So we kept three that were hooked too deep and were going to die anyway. I brined the fillets using brown sugar, real maple syrup and kosher salt, and smoked them in my Bradley smoker using alder wood.

I planned to share, but before I realized how out of control I was, it was all gone. The smoked landlocks really were that good!

Then I noticed every other rod in sight had a fish bending it. Something turned the salmon on, and it probably had nothing to do with my fly. Ten minutes later, just as quickly, it stopped.

We moved downstream a few pools and witnessed the most amazing Hendrickson hatch. The water was carpeted with flies, but nothing was taking them. We might not be experienced on Grand Lake Stream, but we still figured out the pool did not hold any fish. So we hiked back to the pool where I had caught the salmon.

It was hard to get down the path with the stream of fisherman going the other way. One said back over his shoulder, "It was an amazing hatch, everybody caught fish." The guy behind him said, "I caught six as fast as I could get my fly back in the water." The next guy, "I caught eight! It was the most outstanding fishing I have experienced!" The last one in line was a woman we had talked with earlier. "Man, you guys missed it," she said. "It's over."

Story of my life. 

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Downsizing

FOR TOM

BETTER 20-GAUGE AND .410-BORE LOADS MEAN
TURKEY HUNTERS CAN CARRY LIGHTER GUNS.

By Game & Fish Staff



It wasn't that long ago when the .410-bore shotgun was considered a turkey gun only for kids or as a last resort for recoil-shy hunters. With a really good .410 load and gun, neither of which were particularly made for killing turkeys, the effective range on gobblers may have been 25 yards.

Specific turkey loads packed with super-dense Tungsten Super Shot (TSS) changed all that in a hurry, and now the .410-bore is enjoying popularity in the springtime woods like never before. Shotgun manufacturers offer .410 models built just for turkey hunting, and with these guns firing TSS loads, patterns are lethal at 35 yards and beyond.

Likewise, high-density turkey loads extend the range of 20-gauge shotguns as well. *Game & Fish* staff have hunted with 20-gauges that threw lethal patterns at 50 yards. That's the traditional territory of the 12-gauge.

Granted, 12-gauge shotguns also perform at a new, and almost unbelievable, level with high-density loads as well. But rather than haul through the woods a

12-gauge that's lethal at nearly twice the distance they'd ever consider shooting, many hunters are opting to downsize to smaller turkey guns.

Going with a 20-gauge or .410-bore shotgun affords hunters two main advantages. One, these guns typically weigh less—sometimes much less—than 12-gauge models. If the hike is long or steep, or if an all-day run-and-gun hunt is the plan, a lightweight gun is a big benefit. Plus, the lighter the gun, the easier it is to hold steady while a gobbler takes his sweet time coming into range. The second advantage is many 20-gauge and .410-bore shotguns produce less felt recoil than 12-gauge models because they fire lighter payloads. Smart hunters are tired of taking a pounding each spring to kill a turkey.

The following shotguns are among the easiest handling—and most lethal—turkey setups on the market. And, of course, we didn't forget the loads, which play a major role in these smaller guns' success on turkeys. You'll like these options if you're looking to lighten up this spring. 



A .410-bore shotgun like Mossberg's 500 Turkey model carries easily and balances nicely when setting up to call.

BENELLI M2 TURKEY PERFORMANCE SHOP

It's all about the pattern with this 20-gauge turkey gun. Benelli Performance Shop enhancements by pattern guru Rob Roberts improve consistency and increase range. Each gun is fitted with a Burris FastFire II sight (included) and a custom choke tube then patterned. Printouts provided with the shotgun show points of impact in 10-, 20- and 30-inch circles, so much of your preseason homework is done. When you do shoot the Inertia Driven gun, though, the ComforTech stock cuts almost half the felt recoil.

GAUGE: 20
CHAMBER: 3"
CAPACITY: 4 rounds
BARREL LENGTH: 24"

OVERALL LENGTH: 45.3"
WEIGHT: 5.7 lbs.
MSRP: \$2,999
benelliusa.com

FRANCHI AFFINITY 3 TURKEY ELITE

One of few 20-gauge turkey guns available with a pistol-grip stock, the Affinity 3 Turkey Elite is the product of feedback from avid hunters. The Inertia Driven action ensures reliable cycling, while two Rhino extended turkey choke tubes produce consistent patterns. The rifle-style fiber-optic rear sight is fully adjustable, and the fiber-optic front sight is protected by a metal shroud. A Picatinny rail is included for mounting optics. The Turkey Elite's exterior metal components are treated with Cerakote for durability as well as concealment.

GAUGE: 20
CHAMBER: 3"
CAPACITY: 5 rounds
BARREL LENGTH: 24"

OVERALL LENGTH: 41"
WEIGHT: 6.8 lbs.
MSRP: \$1,279
franchiusa.com

MOSSBERG 500 .410 TURKEY

Weighing a half pound less than the 12-gauge 500 Turkey model, this little .410 is well-equipped for all-morning walks in the turkey woods. It comes with a Mossberg X-Full extended choke tube and a front fiber-optic bead to direct the pattern where it belongs. The .410 Turkey's length of pull is a bit shorter than standard at 13.87 inches, making it a good choice for small-statured hunters.

BORE: .410
CHAMBER: 3"
CAPACITY: 6 rounds
BARREL LENGTH: 24"

OVERALL LENGTH: 45 3/4"
WEIGHT: 6 1/2 lbs.
MSRP: \$566
mossberg.com





MOSSBERG INTERNATIONAL SA-20 TURKEY

The SA-20 Turkey weighs just 5 1/2 pounds, but if you're concerned about recoil from magnum 20-gauge loads, its gas-operated action helps keep it moderate. Mossberg outfits this shotgun with features any turkey hunter will appreciate. It comes with an extended turkey choke tube. A fiber-optic ghost-ring rear sight works with a fiber-optic front bead for easy aiming. Hunters who want more precision will find it easy to add an optic, thanks to the included rail that mounts to the receiver.

GAUGE: 20
CHAMBER: 3"
CAPACITY: 5 rounds
BARREL LENGTH: 22"

OVERALL LENGTH: 40 1/2"
WEIGHT: 5 1/2 lbs.
MSRP: \$749
mossberg.com

STEVENS 301 TURKEY XP

Two major upgrades make this single-shot .410 ready for the turkey woods. First, it comes with an extra-full choke tube instead of the full or modified fixed choke typically found on shotguns of this type. Second, a 1x30 mm red-dot optic is included with the gun—a far better aiming system than the common single bead. Stevens worked with Federal Ammunition to optimize the barrel for Federal Heavyweight TSS loads. If you're looking to try the .410 for turkeys, this gun is a real bargain.

BORE: .410
CHAMBER: 3"
CAPACITY: 1 round
BARREL LENGTH: 26"

OVERALL LENGTH: 41 1/2"
WEIGHT: 5.07 lbs.
MSRP: \$268
savagearms.com

WINCHESTER SXP NWTF TURKEY HUNTER

The SXP is Winchester's workhorse pump gun, but that doesn't mean it can't be a nimble 20-gauge turkey gun. With a 24-inch barrel, the NWTF Turkey Hunter model weighs a little more than 6 pounds. The chamber and bore are hard chrome plated and the bolt is protected with black chrome for resistance to wear and corrosion. An Invector-Plus extra-full-turkey choke tube is included with the shotgun, and it comes with TruGlo fiber-optic adjustable sights. A portion of the sale of each NWTF Turkey Hunter is donated to the National Wild Turkey Federation.

GAUGE: 20
CHAMBER: 3"
CAPACITY: 5 rounds
BARREL LENGTH: 24"

OVERALL LENGTH: 45"
WEIGHT: 6 1/4 lbs.
MSRP: \$529.99
winchesterguns.com

BROWNING TSS TUNGSTEN TURKEY

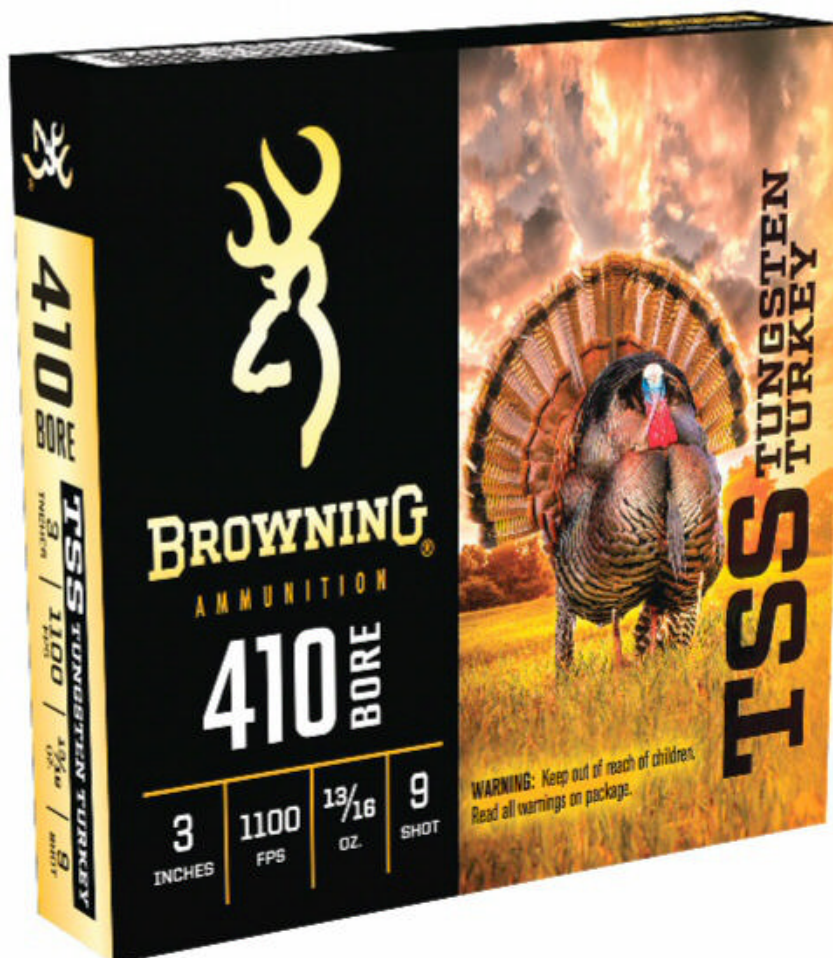
At 18 g/cc, the TSS pellets Browning packs into these loads are among the densest available. The density and small diameter of the No. 9 TSS pellets loaded in the .410 offering allows them to penetrate like lead No. 5 pellets. Within that 13/16-ounce load, there are about 275 of them. The 1 1/2-ounce 20-gauge duplex load of No. 7 and 9 TSS is even more impressive, holding about 400 pellets, and No. 7 TSS pellets offer greater penetration than lead pellets. These are two wicked loads that really boost performance in smaller guns. browningammo.com

FEDERAL PREMIUM HEAVYWEIGHT TSS

These loads from Federal also use 18 g/cc TSS pellets, and they are offered in a variety of pellet mixes. There are 20-gauge, 1 1/2-ounce loads of No. 7, No. 9, No. 7 and 9, and No. 8 and 10 pellets in the line, as well as a .410-bore, 13/16-ounce load of No. 9 pellets. All have a muzzle velocity of 1100 fps. The 20-gauge loads use Federal's rear-braking FliteControl Flex wad for improved pattern delivery. federalpremium.com

HEVI-SHOT HEVI-X STRUT

A dual-pellet load, Hevi-X Strut contains 25 percent Heavier Than Lead tungsten No. 6 pellets layered over Heavier Than Steel Hevi-X tungsten No. 5 pellets. The No. 6 pellets have a density of 12 g/cc, while the No. 5 pellets have a density of 10.1 g/cc. **Hevi-X Strut has an advertised velocity of 1450 fps, high for a turkey load, which Hevi-Shot says is possible because of the higher-strength tungsten pellets. Put it all together, and the load offers up to 50 percent more energy than a conventional No. 6 lead load at an economical price. Hevi-X Strut is available in a 20-gauge, 1 1/4-ounce load and a .410-bore, 9/16-ounce load.** hevishot.com





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MOSSBERG 940 PRO WATERFOWL

FEATURES PROVEN IN
COMPETITIVE SHOOTING ALSO EXCEL
IN THE DUCK AND GOOSE BLIND.

By Brad Fenson

A Cerakote finish protects the 940 Pro Waterfowl from the elements and helps keep it hidden from the birds.

Trying a new shotgun reminds me of the old days when I was still dating—there are going to be some attributes you like immediately and others you need to investigate further. A mixed-bag duck and goose adventure with the Saskatchewan Goose Company (saskgooseco.com) was the perfect place to put Mossberg's new 940 Pro Waterfowl to the test. The first morning out, a flock of mallards and pintails broke the ice, and when the call came to shoot, I shouldered the gun and swung on a drake, dropping it clean, then doubled on a second bird climbing fast while trying to escape. It was duck dinner for two and love at first sight.

A quick look down the blind proved it to be a wall of smiles. With shooters from 5 to 6 1/2 feet tall, the adjustability of the 940 Pro appeared to keep a wide variety of hunters happy. The stock's drop and cast are adjustable, and the length of pull is 13 to 14 1/4 inches. Mossberg uses a new barrel-making process to help

shooters maintain point of aim and point of impact. The slim-profile fore-end is easy to grip and keeps the front end of the gun light and easy to swing.

The development of the 940 series of shotguns is vital history to note. Mossberg teamed up with renowned competitive shooters Jerry and Lena Miculek, which led to the 2020 launch of a new 12-gauge autoloading shotgun for competitive shooters—the 940 JM Pro. Mossberg saw the opportunity to transfer the technology of its new competitive-style platform to shotguns geared for hunters, which spawned the 940 Pro Waterfowl and the 940 Pro Snow Goose. New ideas and technology made a difference and made all shooters pay attention.

Back in the blind, and like a first date, the little details started to stand out. The shotgun was easy to load, even with gloves. The oversized charging handle was easy to grasp for opening the action. The more significant, beveled loading port with a redesigned and elongated,

pinch-free elevator and shell catch made it easy to speed-load.

I quickly sensed the innovation from the competitive shooters in the design. With the action open, I would drop in a shotshell and hit the large release button, locking the loaded chamber in a split second. Two more shotshells were inserted quickly into the magazine tube, where the “pinch-free” quality really became noticeable. The magazine will hold four 2 3/4-inch shotshells, but I plugged the gun to hunt waterfowl.

It is important to note that the 940 shotguns are gas-operated. In a world where inertia-driven guns have taken center stage in recent years, the operation and recoil of an exemplary gas gun are still worth a serious look.

Hunting with the 940 Pro Waterfowl was intuitive. Whether we were hunting ducks, big honkers or small Arctic geese, the shotgun was easy to get in front of birds and to quickly point at the next one. What I did not realize at the time was

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how low the shotgun recoiled. It wasn't until I hunted the following week with my shotguns from home that I noticed the difference. Low recoil is imperative to fast target acquisition and shooting in both hunting and competition. The 940 comes with a ported choke tube, which helps with recoil, and remember that the gas-operated gun was initially designed for competition, where recoil can be a hinderance.

Mossberg manufactures durable shotguns that withstand foul weather and negligence. The 940 Pro Waterfowl has a unique Cerakote finish that is dull and non-reflective, which acts as a natural camouflage. Cerakote is a polymer-ceramic compound, which benefits the firearm by providing and enhancing physical components, significantly limiting the wear and tear over time.

The 940 has a chrome-lined chamber and bore, taking durability and performance to the next level. A chrome-lined chamber and bore are less subject to corrosion and pitting, especially on guns used in bad weather or around saltwater. Coatings are added for corrosion-resistant internal parts, including a boron-nitride-coated gas piston, magazine tube, hammer sear and return spring tube. The new waterfowl shotgun is pretty much impervious to corrosion and durable enough for the roughest field conditions when topped off with a stainless return spring.

The attention to detail in coatings, gas operation and shell catch means flawless cycling. I ran close to 15 boxes



Oversized controls and a nicely beveled loading port ease operation in the field.



The author put nearly 15 boxes of ammo through the 940 Pro Waterfowl during hunting and testing with no cycling or firing issues.

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of shotshells through the shotgun and never experienced a single misfire, cycling issue or jam. We did not clean any of the shotguns, and they kept working as designed, even in temperatures well below freezing.

The performance-enhancing features are expected to allow hunters to run up to 1,500 rounds through the semi-auto before cleaning it without interfering with the operation and consistency. Being able to run three cases of shotshells through a shotgun without having to clean it, even in foul weather, can be a game-changer.

A shotgun that performs every time you pull the trigger generates a big smile. Add a camouflage finished stock and fore-end, and you have a modern-looking firearm, especially with the uniquely colored Cerakote finish.

Another feature waterfowlers will love is the HiViz TriComp sight. HiViz Shooting Systems has been around since 1996 and has a strong following among hunters and competitive shooters. The company has become a leader in innovative sights that enable shooters to see better, acquire targets with ease and shoot more instinctively. The HiViz sight

SPECIFICATIONS

MOSSBERG 940 PRO WATERFOWL

mossberg.com

TYPE: semi-automatic shotgun

GAUGE: 12

CHAMBER: 3"

CAPACITY: 5 rounds

BARREL LENGTH: 28"

OVERALL LENGTH: 48 3/4"

WEIGHT: 7 3/4 lbs.

STOCK: synthetic; TrueTimber
Prairie; adjustable drop and cast

LENGTH OF PULL: 13" to 14 1/4"

FINISH: Patriot Brown Cerakote

SIGHTS: HiViz TriComp fiber-optic

CHOKE TUBE: X-Factor Extended

MSRP: \$1,092

has interchangeable triangular and round LitePipes to customize the configuration for any hunter. It was a positive influence on the number of birds harvested in Saskatchewan.

The 940 Pro Waterfowl sports a 28-inch vent-rib barrel fitted with an extended, ported choke. The barrel comes equipped with an X-Factor ported choke tube that is Accu-Choke compatible. The Cerakote finish is Patriot Brown, and the camouflage pattern is TrueTimber Prairie. There is texturing on the fore-end and stock, sling swivel studs, and the receiver is drilled and tapped. The safety is located on the tang, where it is ambidextrous.

Patterning was consistent, even at longer ranges on snow geese. Our final shoot was in a haled-out barley field where more than 5,000 mallards and pintails swarmed our decoys for three hours. We hunted with some of the locals and took 80 ducks, and it was clear those of us with Mossberg's new duck gun had an advantage. The 940 Pro Waterfowl offers reliable function on a competitive platform for serious hunters. 

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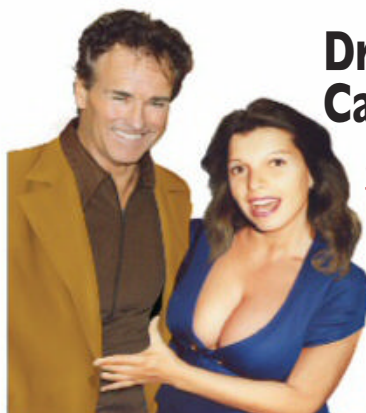
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FOUND AND LOST

IT'S EASY TO WANDER WHEN A BIG BUCK BECKONS.

One afternoon in March Shane and his father drove to their hunting club's new lease to scout for deer and turkeys. Shane was full of anticipation over what the land might hold, and he had a big goal in mind.

"I want to find the perfect place to hang a deer stand of my own, Dad," he said on the drive to the property. "One that nobody knows about except me." Shane's father nodded, understanding.

No sooner had they pulled onto the club grounds than Shane spied an obvious deer trail. He bounded out of the truck and followed it into the woods.

"Meet back here in an hour or so," yelled his father after him.

Shane scanned the leaf-littered ground while continuing on the trail. It led him down a ravine to a narrow creek where he could see deer tracks on the other side. He followed them up and out of the creek bed, through another woodlot,

across a small field, then over a hill and into more woods.

And there, contrasting brilliantly against the brown leaves, rested a perfect shed antler with five long white tines. Shane picked it up; its burred base was as thick as his wrist.

He imagined what the giant buck that recently wore it must look like. Probably a 10 with a matching side, he figured. But maybe it was a non-typical! Maybe it had a drop tine on its other side! His mind raced. He had to find the other antler.

Now on a mission, the boy deviated from the trail and made a series of circles all the while studying the ground for the other shed. Eventually he wandered into a cutover before finding a limestone ridge that led to a saddle on a hill. There he followed a trail that funneled him down the other side. Pretty soon he felt that he was awfully far away from where he'd found the antler, so he turned around to restart his search.

But when Shane started back, nothing looked familiar.

For the first time in more than an hour, Shane stood tall and looked all around. It was overcast, and with no sun for reference, he had no idea which way was north. Even if he knew, he still would have no idea where the truck was. Shane walked up the nearest hill hoping for a vantage, but the trees blocked his view.

That's when Shane realized he was lost. Even worse, he realized he'd left the truck with nothing—no compass, no matches, no coat, not even a knife! He had only a silly shed antler that he now clutched tightly.

Shane briskly walked first in one direction, began to doubt himself and then turned to walk in another. He felt the temperature drop, and he knew it would be dark soon. He suppressed the thought of having to spend the night in the woods alone. Panic began to grip him.

He was about to start yelling for his father when he heard a car horn. Then he heard another and another. Three in a row.

Desperate, Shane hustled in the direction of the sound, heading for the light of a clearing. When he entered it, he saw the glorious blue of his father's truck. He had never felt so relieved. But he also felt embarrassed, for now he realized that he wasn't very far away from it the entire time.

He found his father waiting for him on the tailgate.

"You OK, son? I was getting a little worried," Shane's father said.

"I'm fine," said Shane, his face flushed and sweaty.

"What happened to 'meet back here in an hour?'"

"I guess when you get on the trail of a good buck, it's easy to get lost in the moment," said Shane as he held up the giant shed in an effort to hide the fear that had beset him while trying not to lie.

"Where'd you find that?!"

"Honestly, Dad," replied Shane, "I can't tell you." 





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