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GAME & FISH

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The Regional Outdoor Guide

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JUNE/JULY 2023

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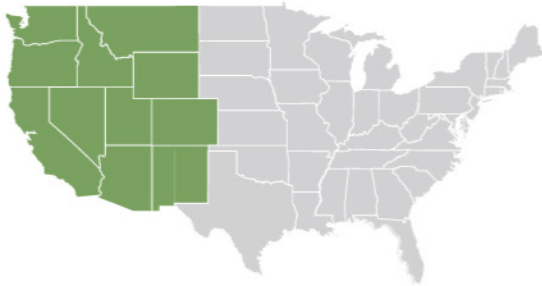


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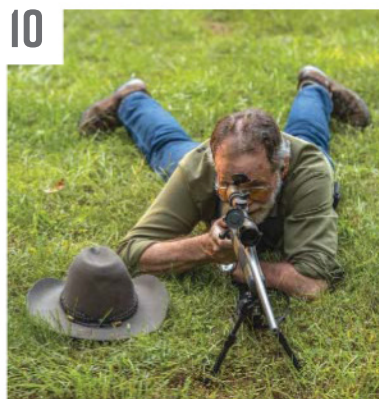
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FREEDOM TO HUNT

With this being the June/July issue, it only seems appropriate to reflect on the freedoms we will celebrate on Independence Day. Thanks to the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, we Americans can include hunting among them. And while we enjoy the freedom to hunt within regulations we as hunters have agreed to in order to conserve game species, it is a freedom—like many others—under attack.

Take, for example, hunting black bears with hounds. Anti-hunters have already managed to get the method banned in many states, even though it's a traditional and highly effective way of managing the species. I was fortunate to go a hound hunt with Table Mountain Outfitters in Idaho last June, and my story on the adventure begins on page 20. It is a story that would not be complete, however, without pointing out the many ways that animal-rights extremists go after hound hunters. Brian Lynn, vice president of communications and marketing for the Sportsmen's Alliance, discussed these attacks with me during the hunt. And they're just the tip of the iceberg.

"The people trying to end hound hunting don't just want to end the use of hounds for bears or mountain lions. They want to end all hunting. Period. Full stop," says Lynn. "The same logic they're using to end bear or lion hunting with hounds can be applied to squirrel and rabbit hunting with hounds, and even upland bird hunting. They're out to stop hunting and they're doing it piecemeal, starting with hounds and other activities with fewer participants, such as trapping. When they finish with one species or method they'll come for the next logical one in your state while also going after neighboring states."

As hunters, we need to support one another. If you don't hunt bears or rabbits with hounds, or pheasants with spaniels, recognize the enjoyment experienced by those who do. If you don't understand a hunting method, learn about it before judging those who employ it. If we stand together, we'll continue to enjoy our freedom to hunt.

Adam Heggenstaller
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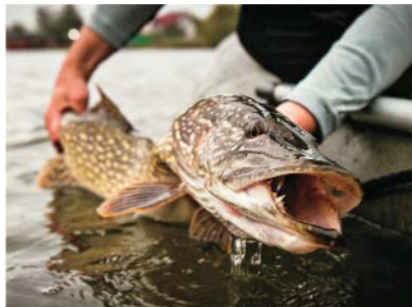
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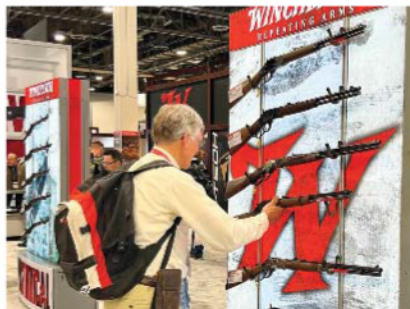
BETTER BAITCASTING

The cursed backlash! Who hasn’t picked loops out of a baitcaster, just when the bite was on? Watch “How to Properly Tune a Baitcaster” to avoid this mess.



CLEAR FOCUS

Get field-tested advice on glass from Craig Boddington in “Choosing the Right Binocular for Hunting,” an exclusive look at what to keep your eyes on.



SHOT SHOW REPLAY

If you’re considering a new hunting firearm for this fall, dive back into our reports from SHOT Show 2023, where we detail the year’s top guns.



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SHUTTERSTOCK (TOP LEFT, TOP RIGHT, BOTTOM LEFT, BOTTOM RIGHT), CRAIG BODDINGTON (MIDDLE LEFT), LYNN BURKHED (MIDDLE RIGHT)



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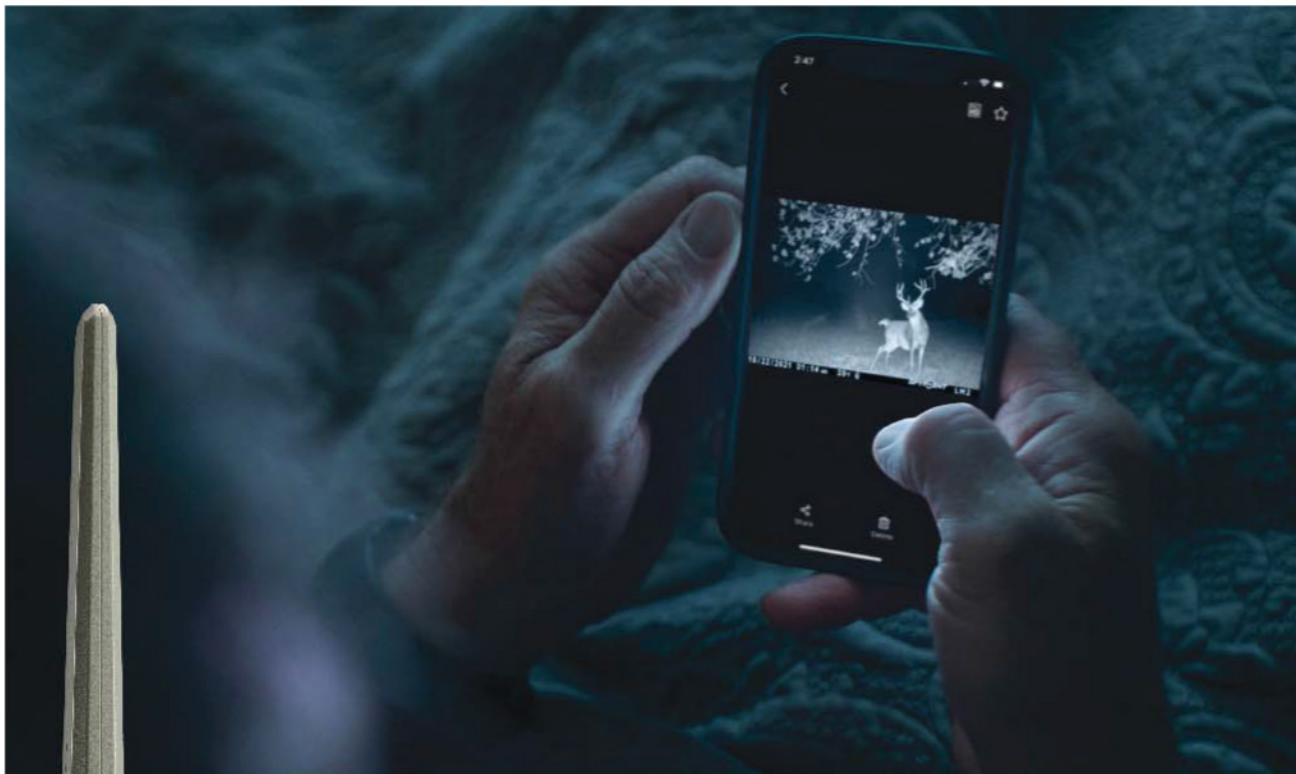
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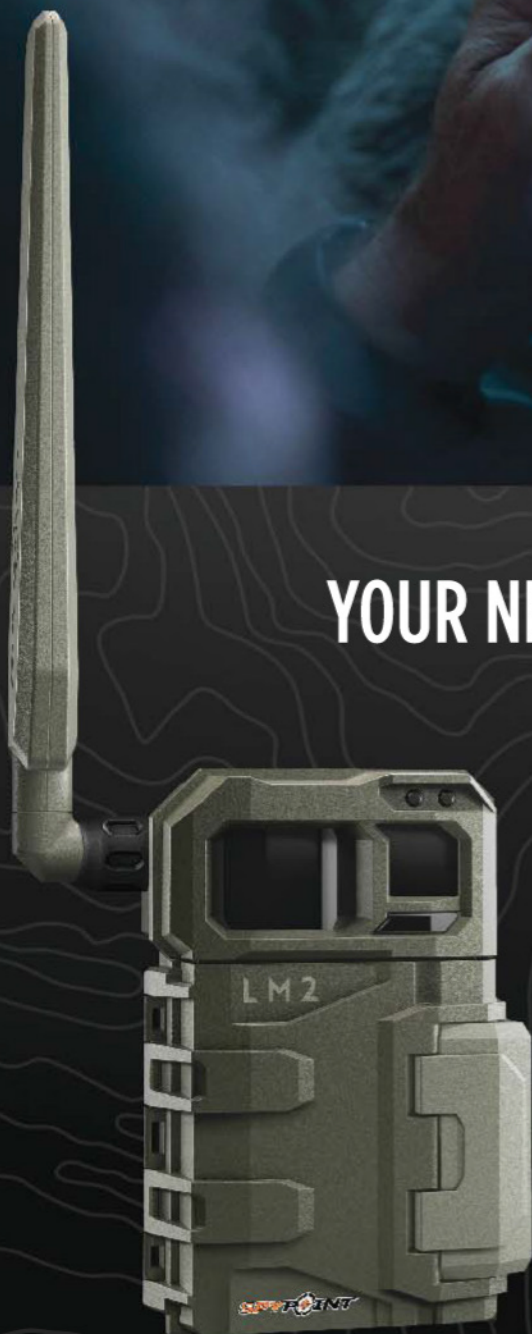
The moon's phases are listed as New, First Quarter (First Q), Full and Last Quarter (Last Q). Times listed represent the peak activity times for game and fish each day.

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Ready AND Steady

PRACTICE ASSUMING THE FOUR MOST COMMON SHOOTING POSITIONS SO YOU CAN BE COMFORTABLE USING AND ADAPTING THEM IN THE FIELD.

By Richard Mann

When shooting from prone with a bipod, it's more stable to lie with your body in line with the rifle instead of at an angle, but sometimes you must adapt to the terrain while hunting.

There are two rules of thumb when it comes to field shooting positions. The first is that the easier the position is to assume, the less steady it will be. The other is that the closer you can get your rifle to the ground, the steadier you will be. Competence from field shooting positions can help you find success while hunting, but competence only comes with practice. Here's a crash course in the four field shooting positions with some tips to help you assume them faster and shoot better from them.

STANDING

The standing off-hand position is the fastest to assume and the least steady, but sometimes it's required when you're surprised and need to take a fast shot. Most think that to assume it, you just

snap the rifle to your shoulder. Ideally, however, when you bring that rifle up, you should be in sort of a fighting stance, with your support-side leg slightly forward. You should also be slightly crouched, with your knees over your toes and your shoulders over your knees. This provides a good, balanced foundation and helps you control recoil.

Using shooting sticks from the standing position is similar, but for the best results, square up perpendicular to the rifle, with your feet spread a bit wider than normal. You'll use your legs and body to limit the side-to-side movement of the rifle, and you'll use the sticks to control the up and down.

KNEELING

This position is only slightly steadier than standing. It's best used when

you need to shoot under and/or over intermediate obstructions. To assume the position, take a half-step forward with your support side leg and then drop to your shooting-side knee. Rest your support-side elbow on your support-side knee, and if you have a shooting sling, use it for added stability. If you can sit on your heel, or better yet, on your folded-over foot, you'll be even steadier. Remember, the closer you get your rifle to the ground, the steadier you will be.

If you're using sticks or maybe shooting over a log or rock, you can kneel on both knees, spread about shoulder width apart. However, the reverse kneeling position is even better. Kneel on your support-side knee, as opposed to your shooting-side knee, and then rest your shooting arm or elbow on your shooting-side knee.



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For best results when shooting from the kneeling position without a rest, place your support arm directly under the rifle.

SITTING

The seated position is useful for many hunting situations and is very steady. The simplest and fastest way I've found to get into it is to just step one foot across the other and then squat. You can extend your shooting hand to ease the impact with the ground while you're holding your rifle in your support hand. Once down, you have options. You can place your feet flat on the ground and rest your elbows on your knees, or you can cross your legs, lean forward, and place your elbows on, or in front of, your knees and shins.

When shooting from sticks while seated, square up perpendicular to the rifle, spread your legs wide, place the soles of your feet on the ground and your elbows just forward of your knees. Also, lean forward so that your head is in front of your pelvis. You can also place your support hand on the comb or toe of the buttstock, or use it to hold onto the rifle fore-end or shooting sticks. If you have a shooting sling, use it. It can make the sitting position rock steady.

PRONE

The prone position demonstrates the validity of both rules of thumb described earlier. Because it's the most time consuming to assume and because it gets your rifle the closest to the ground, it's the steadiest. However, because of intermediate obstructions, it's not as applicable in as many hunting situations. The best

way I've found to go prone is to just drop to both knees, lean forward, and catch yourself with your shooting hand while holding the rifle in your support hand. Once on your tummy, spread your legs with your feet wider than shoulder width, then prop up your shoulders on your elbows. Without a bipod or rest, you'll want your body positioned at about a 20- to 30-degree angle to the rifle.

If you're using a bipod, deploy it before going prone—you can adjust it once you're on the ground. If you have a bipod or a rest, place your support hand under the buttstock and use it to fine tune your hold. If I'm low enough for

my support hand to touch the ground, I'll often make a fist and rest the toe of the stock between my thumb and index finger. Alternatively, I'll grip the strap tightly and rotate my fist under the buttstock to fine-tune my hold. When shooting with a bipod or other forward support, you want your body positioned in line with the rifle's barrel, as opposed to at an angle, if the ground allows it.

ODDBALL POSITIONS

Sometimes, in the real world, these positions must be modified. I once took an Idaho black bear by shooting uphill at an extreme angle while lying on my back under a large log in a deadfall and resting the rifle across the top of the log. On another hunt, I had to shoot a Nebraska whitetail buck that snuck up behind me on my shooting side. I shot him off-hand but with the rifle from my left as opposed to my right shoulder. And while hunting waterbuck along the Limpopo River in South Africa, I had to kneel and rest my rifle across my guide's shoulder.

You really cannot plan for the sometimes-weird positions you might have to shoot from while hunting. The best preparation is to become as confident as possible with common field shooting positions so that you'll feel comfortable modifying them in the heat of the moment. Also, sometimes mother nature provides us a shooting support steadier than any tripod. Just as you can learn to use the terrain to aid in your stalk, learn to use it to help you shoot, too. 



When shooting from the seated position, rest your elbows on or in front of your knees or shins, and use a sling for added stability.

RICHARD MANN (2)



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BRING *the* HEAT

ADAPTING TO THE CONDITIONS
IS THE NAME OF THE GAME NOW.

By Dr. Jason A. Halfen

A hollow-bodied frog is capable of drawing strikes from fish in the nastiest of cover when bass push deep into the slop.

Summer is rolling into town, bringing heat and humidity, water-skiers and wakeboarders, family road trips and weekends at the lake. The boom-or-bust cycle of spring fishing is now in the rearview mirror as our favorite lakes, rivers, and reservoirs settle into a months-long period of warm water, abundant forage and relatively active fish. No matter where you decide to cast a line, or which finned adversary you plan to target, this collection of species-specific tips will help you meet with success this summer.

FLOAT A FROG FOR BASS

Very few moments in fishing top the thrill of a bass smashing a surface lure. Indeed, watching a frog or other topwater bait during the retrieve floods an angler with the anticipation of a jarring hookset. While many anglers associate topwater lures with low-light conditions during summer's heat, bass will attack surface lures even under the bright midday sun. If you're new to summer topwater fishing, start your journey with a frog.

Hollow-bodied frogs excel where few other lures dare to swim: right in the middle of the thickest surface vegetation, wood and slop. With exceptional flotation and giant double hooks that ride above the lure, hollow-bodied frogs can extract bass from the heaviest cover. The best frogs expertly balance sufficient weight for long casts with optimum buoyancy to float with a lifelike profile at rest: head high and tail low, just like a living frog.

LiveTarget hollow-bodied baits—frogs, sunfish and even mice—are exceptional topwater lures and proven bass catchers. Featuring biomimetic colors, profiles and appearance details, LiveTarget frogs are excellent replicas of their living counterparts. They cast a mile, float perfectly at rest, and attract a bass's attention when worked through cover.

Like when fishing any other topwater lure, pausing a moment after the strike—so the line comes tight and the bass can dive away from the boat—will help make your hooksets more effective. If you're still missing strikes, give the rubber skirt a trim. Sometimes those long skirts can get wedged between the hook and the frog's body, impeding a positive hookset.

TROLL UP WALLEYES

For decades, summer walleye fishing was relegated to the ultra-finesse realm: live bait—especially wiggly leeches and supple nightcrawlers—fished slow, on long, limp leaders, adjacent to deep structure. In recent years, however, summer walleye fishing has enjoyed something of a rebirth, as contemporary power-fishing techniques have entered our collective walleye angling consciousness.

Speed trolling with crankbaits is an excellent way to cover water and capture summer walleyes. A rapidly moving baitfish-profile lure that disperses both flash and vibration throughout the water column appeals directly to walleyes' predatory nature and is effective across the range of waters where they swim.

In many natural lakes and reservoirs, summer walleyes slide into depths of 18 to 24 feet, where they spend much of the warm season as long as some sort of forage remains available. They can easily be reached by long-lining deep-diving crankbaits using braided lines. In this presentation, dedicated trolling tackle—8-foot, medium-power, moderate-action trolling rods, line-counter reels, and 10- to 15-pound-test braided line—is a real advantage. The braid's thin diameter minimizes water resistance and allows lures to dive deeper with less line in the water.

Let sufficient line out to deliver the lures into the walleye strike zone—generally within 2 to 3 feet off the bottom. When in doubt, get the lure deep enough to deflect off the bottom occasionally, then reel up a few cranks. Now, the trap is set.

Summer walleye trolling is a game of speed. Fish will often respond favorably to lures pulled between 2.5 and 3.5 mph as measured by your GPS chartplotter. At speeds such as these, it's important to have well-tuned crankbaits, as a lure that does not run true will invariably snarl itself and frequently other nearby lines or lures in the trolling spread.

Do yourself a favor and check each bait's behavior boatside at or above your target speed, making any necessary adjustments or replacements before ever sending lures down to the walleye zone. An assortment of Rapala Tail Dancers and Scatter Minnows, as well as Northland Rumble Sticks and classic Acme Reef Runners, will transfer summer walleyes from the depths to your landing net.

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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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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 turned tail and headed back into the woods.

Our Grizzly Hunting Knife features 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

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Monster muskies are prowling the thick cabbage and coontail now searching for easy meals. Big spinners, whether single or tandem, are the ticket for avid anglers on the hunt for these giants.

BURN MUSKIE BUCKTAILS

Summer is the perfect time to churn the water with bucktails. Water temperatures are approaching their annual peaks, and muskies are on the chew, ready to chase down fast-moving presentations. Look no further than thick beds of cabbage and coontail to garner consistent summer musky action.

Both weed varieties cast shade within the water column, reducing nearby water temperature and providing respite from the bright midday sun. Dense stands of cabbage and coontail provide ample cover for baitfish and small panfish, guaranteeing that resident muskies have an abundant food supply.

Contemporary bucktails fall into one of two broad categories: lures with a single

spinner blade and those with tandem blades. Both styles can be fished slow or fast, but be prepared for the tandem-blade spinners to pull back hard as you crank them in. Spinner blade size and shape will determine the retrieve speed at which the lure performs best, as well as the amount of thump and vibration the rotating blade creates as it spins along the lure's axis.

Long, slender willow-leaf blades function best at high speeds and displace the least amount of water, producing more flash but less thump. At the same time, Colorado blades are typically associated with slightly slower presentations: crank these too fast, and the spinner may “blow-out,” no longer rotating smoothly around the lure's wire backbone. Big

Colorado blades move a lot of water as they spin and distribute the most vibration into the water column. The amount of thump from a spinner blade increases as its size increases, as does the effort needed on the retrieve.

Which bucktails should you choose? Frequently, sparse cover, shallow water and extreme retrieve speeds call for lures with willow-leaf blades. Dense cover, a slower retrieve speed or fishing after dark calls for big Colorado single- or tandem-blade spinners. Keep your color selections simple: black tails with silver or gold blades are great for clear water. Brighter, more colorful combinations—like yellows, oranges or flashy mylar skirts—perform well in stained or turbid water during summer. 



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FARM TEAM

THE NEXT FEDERAL FARM BILL WILL ESTABLISH THE TERMS—AND THE SCALE—OF CONSERVATION AND SPORTSMAN ACCESS ON AMERICA'S PRIVATE LAND.

By Andrew McKean

The amount of funding for the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program, which many states use to support walk-in hunting areas on farms and other private lands, will be decided in passage of the 2023 Farm Bill.

The federal Farm Bill, reauthorized by Congress every five years, is the most important piece of legislation that most of us ignore. That's because the \$1.4 trillion bill, which influences everything from public-school lunches to disaster payments for drought-crippled corn farmers, is dense, complicated and so full of acronyms that it's hard to know whether you should support ACEP, VPA-HIP or EQIP.

Happily, folks far more familiar with the process and details are watching the development of the 2023 Farm Bill with an eye for what it can deliver to America's hunters, anglers and outdoor recreationists. Folks like Jim Ingles, director of governmental affairs for Pheasants Forever.

"Depending on what part of the country you live in, or whether you are a farmer or a hunter, you're going to hear about, and be affected by, this legislation," says Ingles,

whose job is to ensure that conservation provisions of the sprawling legislation are preserved or even increased in order to affect things like clean water, healthy wildlife habitat and expanded access. Those conservation titles, which amount to just 7 percent of the federal funds distributed by the bill, include items such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) that pays farmers to keep marginal cropland in bird-boosting cover and the clumsily named Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) that creates hunting access on farmlands.

The 2018 bill expires on Sept. 30, which means Congress will be pushing to get the next Farm Bill completed and signed by Oct. 1. Ingles says that most sportsmen and -women can look beyond the biggest-ticket items that fund the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the billions of dollars in price supports and crop insurance.

"Habitat and access, that's what we boil it down to," he says. "There's a lot at stake in those two categories. Programs like CRP and EQIP [Environmental Quality Incentive Program] affect tens of millions of acres of wildlife habitat across America. And if we don't get VPA-HIP funded, hunters could lose popular walk-in hunting programs across the country."

The longest-running conservation program in the Farm Bill is CRP, which could be called America's grass bank, intended to keep soil from washing and blowing away. All the cover planted in place of crops is a boon to ground-nesting birds, including waterfowl and upland species, and since CRP was authorized in the 1985 Farm Bill, it's also raised a lot of whitetails and non-game species. But we're a long way below the high-water mark of 37 million acres of CRP contracted in 2007, an era defined by low commodity prices. Grain prices are

currently spiking because of the war in Ukraine and global weather events, which means it will be a fight to get CRP acres back to those historic highs.

"We'd like to see CRP restored to high levels, but we can't go to Congress right now and ask for 40 million acres," says Ingles. "That would be expensive and a non-starter in a Congress that's losing its appetite for big public expenditures. So we're going to ask for as many acres as possible, but with management flexibility that makes it appealing to landowners looking for alternatives to row crops that can make their operations more resilient during these wild swings in weather events that they've been experiencing. We think it makes sense to talk about CRP as both an ecological and economic safety net for producers."

The VPA-HIP was created in the 2008 Farm Bill to provide grants to state fish-and-wildlife agencies to allow public hunting, fishing and wildlife-related recreation on private land. Many administer the program as walk-in hunting initiatives, which have created millions of hunter days on hundreds of thousands of acres.

"If you hunt walk-in areas in your state, you are benefitting from VPA-HIP," Ingles says. "If funding goes away or gets reduced, it's going to remove a lot of hunting access."

The 2018 Farm Bill approved \$50 million in access grants to states and tribes, and this time around advocates are asking for \$150 million to provide even more private-land access for hunters. Ingles notes that acres enrolled in VPA-HIP projects are good for landowners, who get an incentive payment for voluntarily allowing access and for improving wildlife habitat. It's also good for recreationists, who can access high-quality habitat for not only hunting, but also fishing and other outdoor activities like bird watching.

The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, which is leading a coalition of conservation groups on a unified approach to Farm Bill priorities, notes that economic analysis of private-land access "shows a huge return on investment while expanding hunting opportunities." That's an appealing pitch to not only Congress, but also landowners, rural communities, state agencies and even the sporting goods industry—all groups that have skin in this year's Farm Bill game. 

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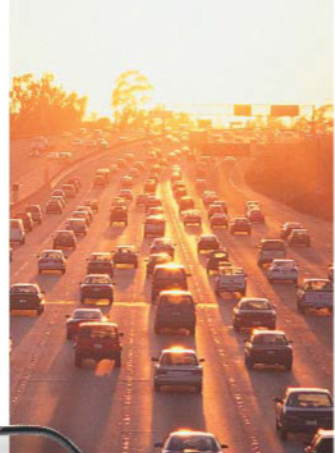
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RACE ON THE MOUNTAIN

THE FIRST RULE OF
HUNTING BEARS WITH HOUNDS
IN SOUTHWESTERN IDAHO IS
TO KEEP UP WITH THE PACK.

By Adam Heggenstaller

Black bears inhabit rough, rocky country in Idaho, and hounds are all too willing to meet the bruins on their own turf.

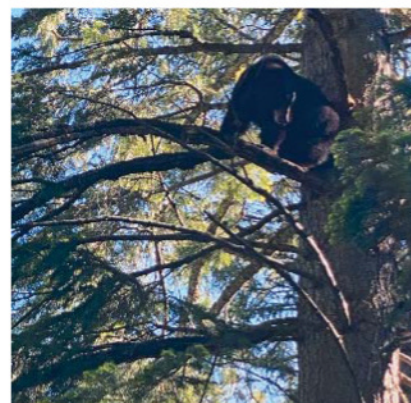


SCOTT HAUGEN (MID); ADAM HEGENSTALLER (RIGHT)

When the mud-spattered Toyota stopped at the end of the gravel road, I slid out and strode to the edge of a clearing that had most likely been a log landing in the recent past. The ground dropped off quickly beyond the crushed stone and scattered bark fragments, and below me stretched a vast forest of pine towering above thick, green undergrowth. A soft wind swayed the branches of the trees at the edge of the landing, and I caught my breath when the breeze delivered the faint yet unmistakable sound my ears had been straining to hear.

A bark, a bawl ... somewhere down in there—way down in there—the hounds were still on the trail.

I turned around to get the attention of the guys in the truck and, excited to hear proof that the race was on, pointed in the direction of the sound. It was a needless gesture. Casey Hileman, the owner of the hounds and a guide with Table Mountain Outfitters, had been watching his pack's progress on a Garmin GPS handheld unit since the dogs had picked up the bear's scent more than an hour before. He knew exactly where each of his dogs were, if not where the bear was going to take them.



Good thing, too, because even though my friend Brian Lynn, vice president of the Sportsmen's Alliance and an avid bear hunter, hopped from the truck and joined me to listen, neither of us caught the sounds of the hounds again. Brian just shrugged.

"And that's why we have GPS," he quipped. "Could you imagine trying to keep track of dogs out here without it?"

I couldn't. In the 80 minutes or so that the hounds had been trailing the bear,

they'd covered more than 6 miles. The terrain was seemingly straight up and down in some spots, and innumerable snarls of deadfall and brush covered the forest floor. The hounds, hunters themselves in top form, were a lot better

at traversing this country than us. They would give their all to their job—run the bear up a tree or hold it at bay on the ground—no matter how far they would have to chase it first. Being softer and slower of foot (I say that with no

disrespect to my hunting partners) we had to resort to technology to stay in the race.

With each hound wearing a collar having a GPS receiver, we monitored the track of every dog in real time on the handheld. Having spent years training his dogs and hunting bears with them in the wilderness of southwestern Idaho, Hileman could study the icons on the handheld screen and visualize what was happening on the front lines based on the speeds and directions of the hounds transmitted to the screen. He knew when dogs were within sight of the bear, “looking at it,” and when dogs had lost the trail. After another 20 minutes, it seemed as though this first race of the morning was leaning toward the latter.

“I don’t think they have it anymore,” Hileman said. “They’re spread out and heading in different directions. Let’s go see if we can pick them up. There’s a road that will get us pretty close.”

In the truck we made a winding descent, took a turn and soon the handheld

Table Mountain Outfitters guide Casey Hileman judges a bear treed by his hounds in a drainage.



ADAM HEGENSTALLER

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When hounds strike the scent of a bear, the entire forest knows it. Driving forest roads with dogs in the back of the truck is an efficient way to find bruins.



showed us we were within a couple hundred yards of the hounds, which were moving in our general direction. It looked like they were still seeking the scent of the bear, but Hileman knew it was over.

“Rooster! Rooster! Rooster!” he shouted out the window to one of the hounds. “Clancy, here! Here dogs, come on dogs!”

The pack heeded his call, though judging by the hounds’ expressions when they emerged from the timber, it was clear they didn’t want to call it quits. Hileman loaded each one into the large dog box spanning the bed of his truck, and we were off to try to strike another bear. In this rough and immense forest, treeing or baying one—let alone getting a shot—would be far from guaranteed.

IN DEFENSE OF DOGS

Idaho is one of only a handful of states that permits hunting black bears in spring with hounds. The season, and dates during the season when hound hunting is allowed, vary by unit. Generally speaking, Idaho’s spring bear season opens in

early April and ends in late June, with hounds permitted for most of that time in the majority of units.

Baiting is also permitted in most Idaho units during the spring. Table Mountain Outfitters (tablemountainoutfitters.com) employs a combination of both techniques to put hunters onto bears.

“Bait sites really serve two purposes for us,” Scott Denny, who owns and operates Table Mountain Outfitters (TMO) with his wife, Angie, explained to me during my hunt with TMO last June. “We run bait sites to pattern bears for hunters who want to sit for them, and the sites that are being hit by bears give us a place to start the dogs. Normally we’ll run dogs in the morning and hunters will sit on bait in the evening.”

Both are effective methods of hunting bears and managing their populations in the expansive Idaho forestland where TMO operates its spring camp. With millions of steep acres covered in timber, it would be difficult to consistently locate bears—even with hounds—if there were nothing to encourage bears to establish a pattern.

Baiting and hound hunting, however, are criticized by those who do not understand the methods. Much of the misguided negativity toward the techniques stems from anti-hunters looking to drive a wedge between specific groups of sportsmen. Unfortunately, some hunters only help the anti’s cause by condemning methods of take that they subjectively view as unfair.

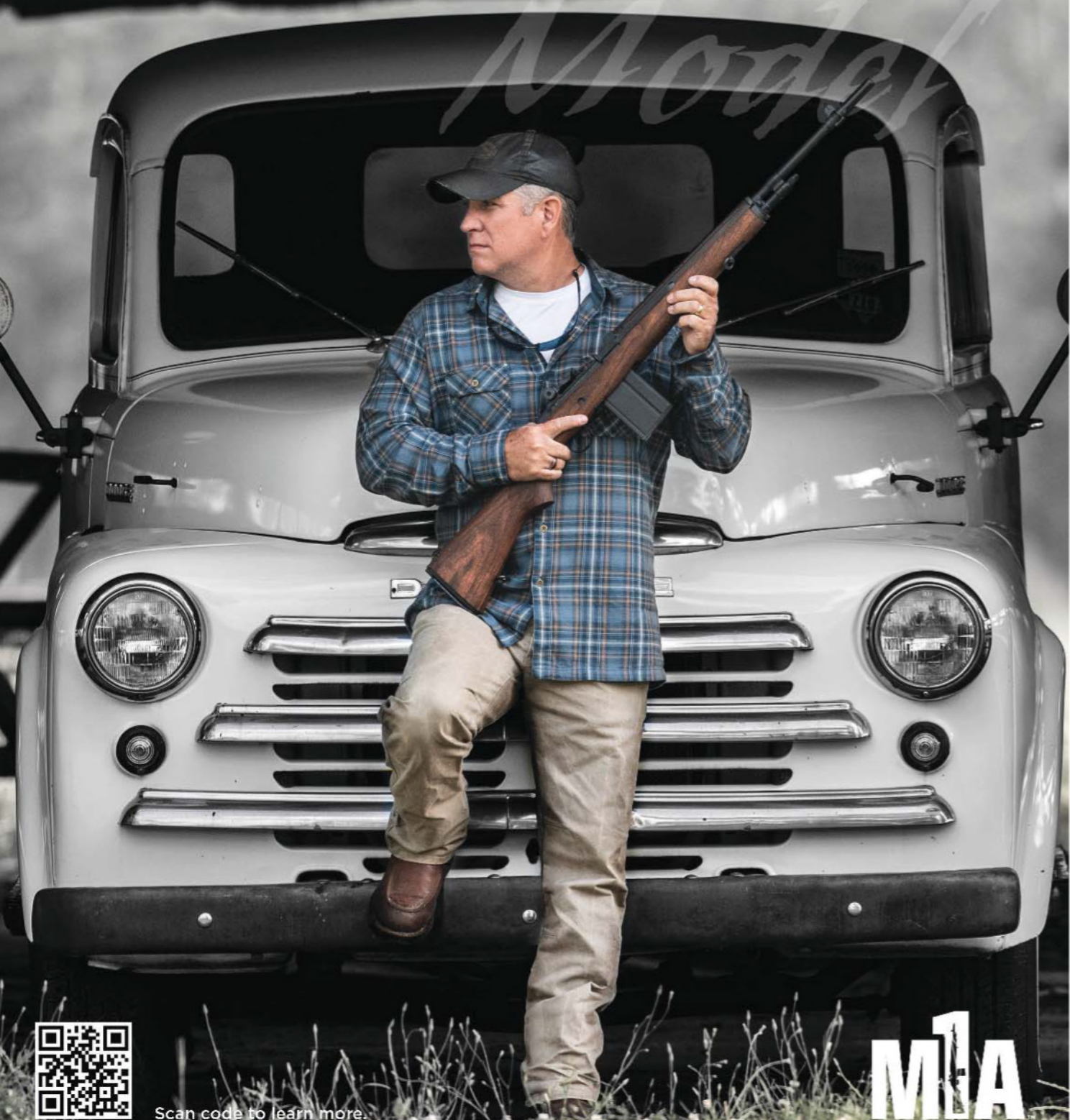
“Hunters are sometimes their own worst enemies,” noted Lynn as we discussed the criticism often directed at hound hunting and baiting for black bears. “The anti’s recognize this and are always quick to use it against us. When they can get hunters to disagree on something, it only gives them more reason to influence public opinion and seek a ban. Wayne Pacelle [former president and CEO of the Humane Society of the U.S.] said it point blank: ‘We are going to use the ballot box and the democratic process to stop all hunting in the United States. We will take it species by species until all hunting is stopped in California. Then we will take it state by state.’”

SCOTT HANGEN (TOP)

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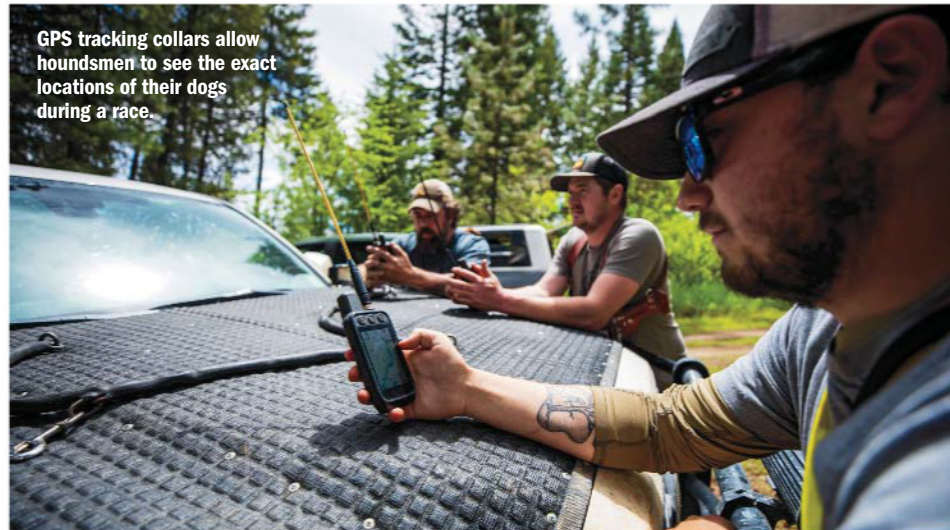
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As the head of communications and marketing efforts for the Sportsmen's Alliance (sportsmensalliance.org), Lynn said that he is all too familiar with the tactics employed by extremists at the federal, state and agency levels to end hunting. In his home state of Washington, animal-rights activists banned bear hunting with bait and hounds by a ballot initiative in 1996. They did the same in Oregon two years before.

Anti-hunters also tried the ballot initiative approach to end hounds and bait in Idaho in 1996, Lynn pointed out. The Sportsmen's Alliance was a major financial contributor in the battle leading up to the vote, helped to educate Idaho citizens on the facts of bear hunting and provided fundraising consulting to garner the means needed to spread the truth among the public. Voters resoundingly rejected the measure, and bear hunting as Idahoans know it was preserved.

But the fight isn't over, noted Lynn. Hound hunting remains under attack in every state where it is legal, and anti-hunters are becoming increasingly



furtive in their tactics. For example, distorting animal-cruelty laws to apply to hound hunters, trainers and breeders is a current favorite strategy.

"They disguise overly restrictive laws pertaining to breeding, kenneling, tethering, selling and transferring dogs as 'animal-cruelty' laws," Lynn explained.

"These hit hunters, especially houndsmen and bird dog hunters, really hard. They make it difficult for hunters to train and interact with working dogs in a constructive way."

As I'd see in the coming days, hound hunters like Hileman and the Dennys have nothing but respect, admiration

SCOTT HAUGEN

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and downright love for their dogs. They pour years of effort into training and take great pride in the partnership that forms between hunter and hound. And along with that, I'd soon realize hunting with hounds is one of the most physically

demanding and ethical ways to pursue black bears.

TREED IN NO TIME

After another couple turns on the gravel roads snaking their way through the pines, I was lost. Hileman, of course, knew exactly where he was going and pulled the pickup into a wide spot at the end of an old skid trail. He opened the dog box, and four hounds bounded out the door, quickly disappearing into the wet woods. Seconds later, they struck the scent of a bear, their bawls crashing like waves against the huge trees.

"Clancy's got it," said Hileman a couple minutes later. "He's really going now. He might be looking at that bear."

The guide started to head in the direction of his hounds, and I grabbed my rifle and followed. Unlike the morning's first race, this time the hounds' voices remained clear in my ears. The GPS showed they were less than 400 yards away, heading along the side of a hill and into a shallow drainage. I fought my way through briars and over rotting logs, trying to keep up with Hileman,

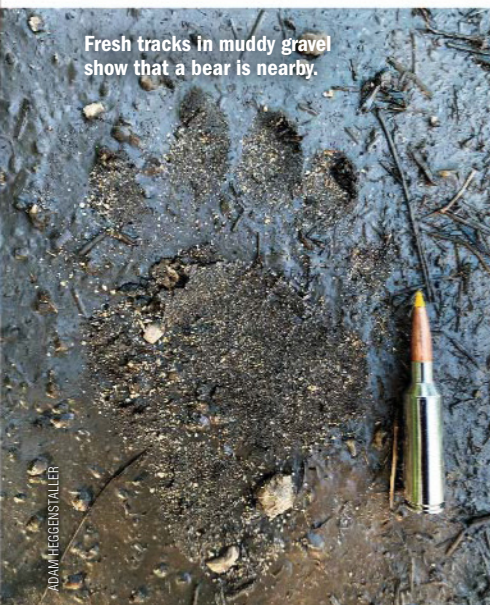
slipping in the mud of the trail made slick by a light rain.

We hadn't hiked 10 minutes when the dogs' long, deep bawls shifted to shorter, more excited chops. They were getting louder because they were no longer moving away from us. We were gaining on them. The hounds had stopped at a tree, and in that tree was a bear.

Moving down the hill, drawing closer to the ruckus, I was astounded by the size of the gigantic pine looming before me toward the bottom of the drainage. It made the hounds scrambling around its trunk look like brown and white ants. A couple smaller trees had fallen next to it, uprooted by wind, forming humps of tangled roots and branches. The dogs climbed all over the deadfalls, seeking to gain every inch that would put them closer to the bear.

"Good Clancy. Good dogs," said Hileman with the sincerity of a parent looking over a straight-A report card. "Good dogs."

The bear peered down from its perch 30 feet above the hounds, unimpressed by their performance. Even as the dogs



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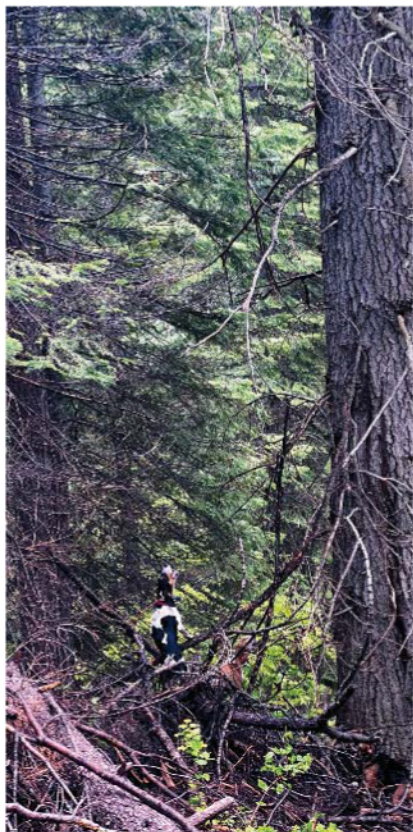
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clawed and jumped at the trunk and tried to climb it, the bear seemed smug in its knowledge that it was unreachable.

“That’s not the one we want,” said Hileman, looking up at a bear I judged to be about 100 pounds. “I had a feeling it was a small bear since it treed so quick, but sometimes I’m surprised. This one’s got to grow up.”

It was an example of how hound hunting allows for selectivity in the taking of a bear. When a bear is treed, hunters typically have all the time they want to judge the animal for maturity, size, condition of its coat and color. It also ensures female bears with young are not taken, which is prohibited in Idaho. If a shot will be fired, it can be taken deliberately, with plenty of time to use a solid rest, shoot from a stable position and wait for the ideal angle that guarantees a quick, ethical kill.

Hileman gathered the hounds and put them on leads to walk them back to the truck. They weren’t going to leave the tree any other way, but for now, their hunt was over. Even though Clancy was young “and can go all day, and day after day,” Hileman didn’t want to overwork



BEAR ESSENTIALS

Tough, lightweight gear is key for hound hunting.

Hunting bears with hounds often demands hiking over rough, nasty terrain, because that’s where the bruins like to live. Shots will typically be short, less than 50 yards, and so this isn’t a hunt where a precision rifle with a heavy barrel and robust stock is needed. Accuracy, of course, is never a bad thing, and the **Browning X-Bolt Speed Suppressor Ready** (\$1,429.99-\$1,529.99; browning.com) provides it in a compact, lightweight package.

The rifle’s fluted, sporter-contour, 20-inch barrel is threaded for a suppressor and comes with a muzzle brake. The composite stock keeps weight at less than 6 1/2 pounds and is available with Browning’s Ovis camo finish. The Smoked Bronze Cerakote on the external metal surfaces resists corrosion and scratches from brush and rocks. The rifle I used on my Idaho hunt was chambered in 6.8 Western, and the 175-grain Long Range Pro Hunter load cleanly took a bear with one round.

The scope, too, requires some thought when hunting bears with hounds. Since shots will often be at close range, lower magnification is the ticket. Hunters need a bright scope with a reticle that stands out against black hide in shade and shadows. The **Leupold VX-3HD 2.5-8x36 mm scope** (\$499.99; leupold.com) I mounted to the X-Bolt gave me a clear view of my target in the tree, and built on a 1-inch maintube, the optic was compact and balanced nicely with the rifle.

The scope’s Elite Optical System provides bright images in low light while reducing glare. The CDS dial gives hunters a quick way to adjust for longer shots if needed, such as while spot-and-stalk hunting. Above all, the VX-3HD is tough, which provides piece of mind should a hunter happen to fall while traversing tricky terrain (I know this from experience).



him and the other hounds. They would get much-deserved rest during the afternoon and night.

HONOR AMONG HOUNDS

It didn’t take long for the hounds to demonstrate their amazing noses the next morning. We were slowly driving down another gravel road, still sipping hot coffee left over from breakfast, when a chorus of bawls erupted from the boxes in the back of the truck. Their noses constantly working, Clancy and the gang had struck a bear from the road—not uncommon with good dogs. In fact, driving mountain roads with the air wafting through the dog box and across the hounds’ noses is a preferred way to cover ground without needlessly

tiring dogs and hunters. The tiring part would come soon enough.

Hileman pulled the truck off the road and released the hounds. The race was on immediately, with the dogs’ voices quickly fading as they rushed downhill and over a low ridge. The area was covered in saplings, brush and other tangled vegetation that was over my head, but it didn’t slow the hounds one bit. They were off and running.

“We have a bait down there,” said Hileman. “The bear was probably on it when the dogs first struck. They’re looking at him right now.”

The houndsman could sense the excitement in his dogs, and pressed into the damp surface of the road was further proof that the trail was hot. Fresh bear

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tracks told us the animal had just been here, and judging by the size of them, it was a nice one.

After the initial fade when the dogs plunged down the hill, the volume of their bawls remained consistent. Rather than taking a course that continued to lead away from the bait site, the bear had turned and was running a line roughly parallel to the road, maybe half a mile from our location. This went on for perhaps 20 minutes, and then the sound began to grow louder. The bear had made another turn and was heading toward us.

"Looks like the bear crossed back on its track," explained Hileman, watching the dogs' route on the handheld. "It's coming this way. Be ready to shoot."

Lynn and I walked the edge of the road, looking for an opening in the brush that would give us a better view downhill. The best we could find were small patches of vegetation about 75 yards away that were just a bit thinner than the surrounding growth. The dogs sounded like they were just out of sight, and as I scanned the brush on the slope below me, I caught a quick flash of black. It was the bear, and it was gone just as quickly as it had appeared. Seconds later a couple glimpses of the hounds showed me they were right behind.

The race then took another turn, heading downhill and away from the road again. The bear had most likely either seen or smelled us and was putting distance between itself and us once more. Judging by the sound of the dogs, the bear soon turned yet again, looping back toward the starting point of the race before making another change in direction that took it farther downhill. It ran another long, rough loop at that elevation before going straight downhill and leading the hounds almost out of hearing range.

It had been more than an hour since the hounds had first struck the trail, and Hileman decided to make a move. We jumped in the truck, watching the race on the handheld, and found a road that would take us downhill and put us closer to the action. After a couple mile drive, Hileman stopped and studied the GPS.

"We got a tree," he reported. "Let's see what we have."

According to the handheld, it was only about 300 yards from the truck to the tree with the bear. That was a

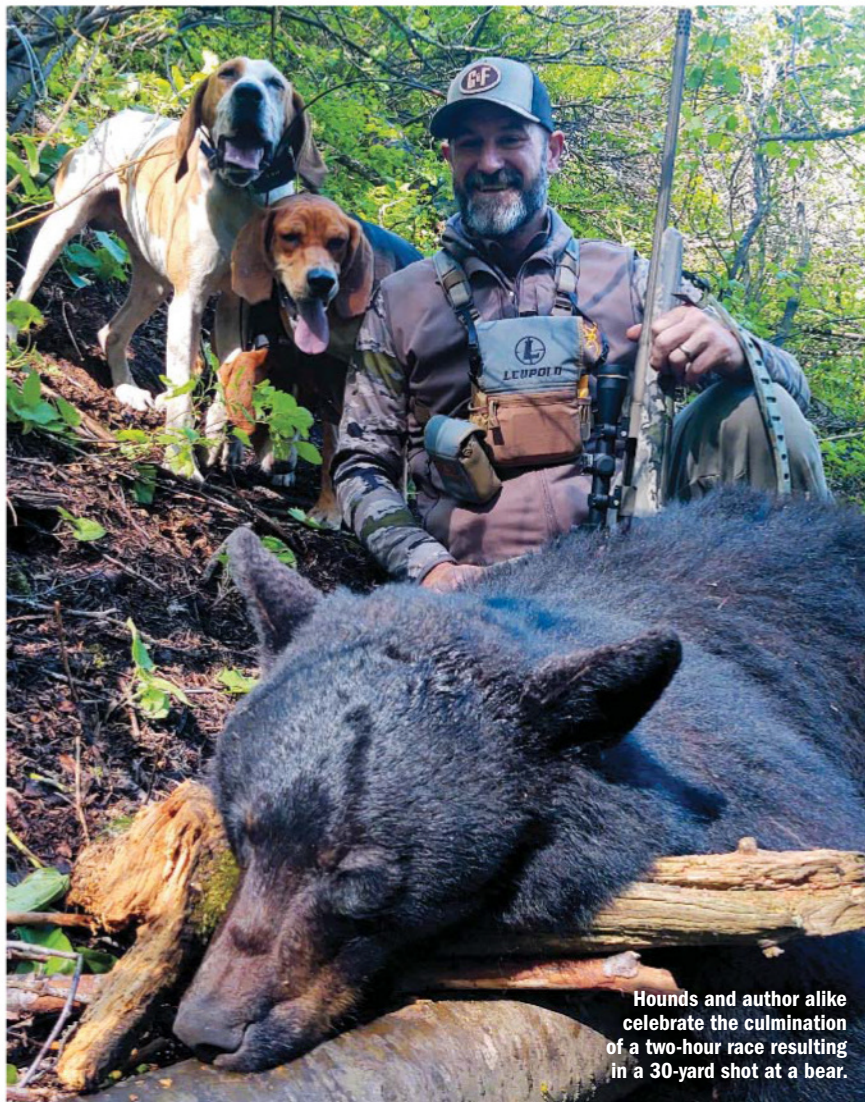
straight-line measurement, however, and a ridge between us and the tree would triple that distance. The bottom portions of the ridge were covered in alders and briars, slowing our progress as we clawed our way to the top, over the spine and then down into a steep drainage where the bear had treed. The hounds' choppy barks urged us on, and after a half-hour of sweaty struggle we arrived at a huge pine holding a black mass in its branches 60 feet from the ground.

The pine grew straight out of the drainage bottom. Climbing the slope on the far side of the tree put us about 30 yards from the bear but less than 20 feet below it. We could clearly see this was a bear worthy of taking, and being all

black, something of a rarity in an area known for its color-phase specimens.

After a race that had spanned more than two hours and led the hounds over nearly 10 miles of rough terrain, my shot was almost anticlimactic but certainly welcomed. As the report echoed down the drainage and over the ridge, the dogs rushed in to get their final licks at the bear. They would leave their hard-earned prize only when we snapped leads to their collars and pulled them away from the jet-black carcass.

Tied to nearby trees as we skinned and quartered the bear, the dogs continued to bark, adding to the atmosphere of satisfaction with a job well done. It was almost like they were congratulating me for being able to keep up with them. 



Hounds and author alike celebrate the culmination of a two-hour race resulting in a 30-yard shot at a bear.

ADAM HEGGENSTALLER

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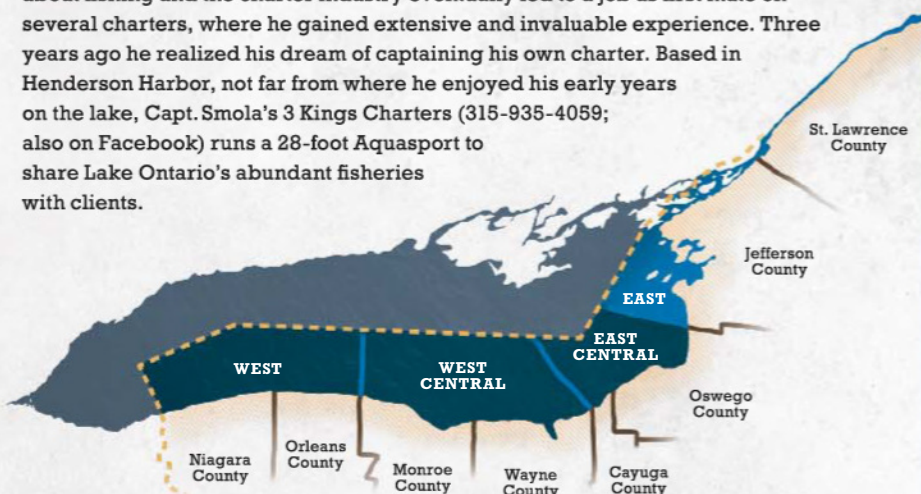
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Spending his childhood days at his grandparents' camp on Lake Ontario's Sawyer Bay near Henderson, N.Y., Capt. Jason Smola developed a deep love for being on the water at an early age. His eagerness to learn more about fishing and the charter industry eventually led to a job as first mate on several charters, where he gained extensive and invaluable experience. Three years ago he realized his dream of captaining his own charter. Based in Henderson Harbor, not far from where he enjoyed his early years on the lake, Capt. Smola's 3 Kings Charters (315-935-4059; also on Facebook) runs a 28-foot Aquasport to share Lake Ontario's abundant fisheries with clients.



ON THE WATER

with **Capt. Jason Smola** of 3 Kings Charters

What's your favorite bite to key on during June and July?

The Eastern Basin of Lake Ontario stands out due to its diverse range of fish, particularly toward the end of June and July. The area has abundant structure, which attracts a variety of fish. We can catch salmon, brown trout, steelhead and lake trout using the same set of lures, such as spoons, flasher flies and flashers with meat rigs.

What lure do you reach for, day in and day out?

During this time of year, our preferred lure is undoubtedly the black and silver NK28 [spoon from Northern King]. It's hard to find a better option that works just as well in both cloudy and sunny conditions.

Why is a charter on Lake Ontario ideal for families?

A family-friendly charter is not just about the fishing, but also the overall experience. The Eastern Basin offers stunning scenery that can add to the enjoyment of the trip. We can enjoy picturesque Henderson Harbor, pass charming islands and admire the high, impressive rocks along the trench leading to Stony Point Lighthouse.

Tell us about a memorable day on the lake with kids.

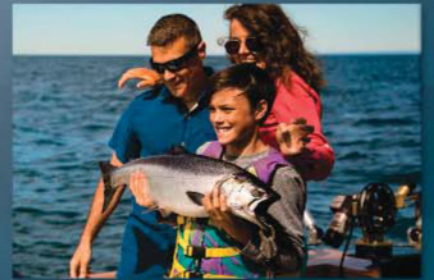
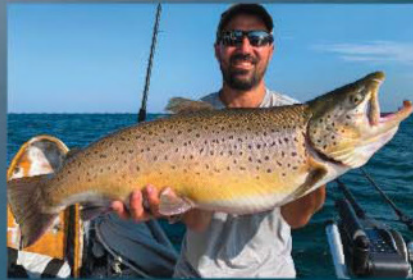
During an afternoon trip, we had my 13-year-old cousin Truman and my 9-year-old son Mason with us, and the experience was amazing! They both caught their limit of king salmon, along with two bonus lake trout. Even at a young age, they were able to skillfully fight the fish using copper [line] rods, dipseys and riggers, and successfully bring them to the net. The action was non-stop for the couple of hours we were out, and the kids had so much fun they didn't want the trip to end.



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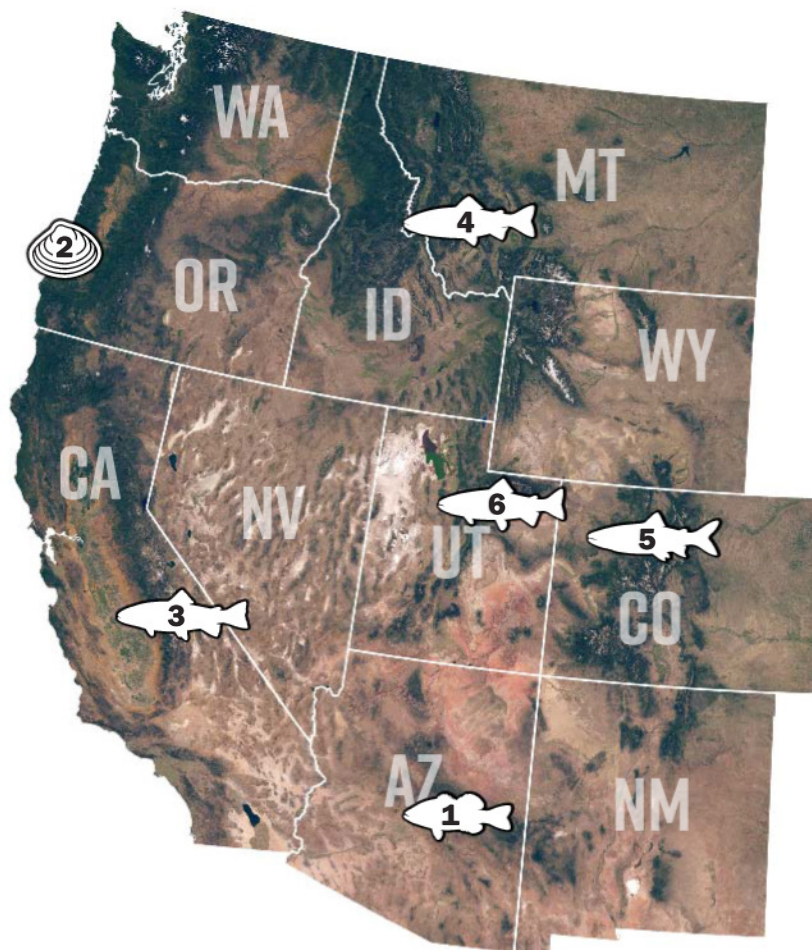
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AROUND THE WEST

A SAMPLING OF THE REGION'S BEST FISHING AND CAMPING OPPORTUNITIES THIS SUMMER

By Andrew McKean



School is finally out. Vacation days have been locked in. The weather is good. And there's so much fishing and camping to be had around the West that there's no excuse for not wetting a line, burning hot dogs, spoiling the kids and camping in sight of public water. What follows is a guide to a half-dozen of some of the best summertime spots around the West, where you really can have it all—great fishing for any of a dozen species, cheap lodging in the form of a tent and a reconnection with the public lands that make America great.

The fish are just supporting characters. The headliners are the memories and traditions you'll make with every cast, campfire and picnic-table meal.



BEAT THE 'ZONA HEAT

Just a two-hour drive from Phoenix and Mesa, Apache Lake offers Arizona's best mix of fishing, camping and backcountry exploration—and it's an oasis when the lowlands bake with oppressive heat. The downside of this impoundment of the Salt River is the winding dirt roads required to reach it, but they also limit the recreational crowds. Bass are the main draw, with largemouths and smallmouths eating spinnerbaits, weedless plastics and topwaters. Find flooded reeds or structure, and the crappies can give you plenty of meat for a fish fry. Deep-water trout and rocky-point channel catfish are bonus species. You'll need a Tonto Park Pass to camp at most campgrounds (one exception is the Forest Service's Burnt Corral Campground), but you can find primitive areas in the National Forest on the hillsides above the lake.



CLAM IT UP

Oregon's entire coast will give up clams and crabs, but the Umpqua River estuary is your best bet. The hottest June and July clamming will be from Reedsport, past the village of Gardiner and down to Winchester Bay. The best crabbing is in the tide-influenced river channel and can be excellent off the marina docks and the pier that extends out into the river. Boatless clammers (which should be the name of a punk band) can do well walking under the Highway 101 bridge near Bolon Island or on the sand off Gardiner.



PICTURESQUE PERFECTION

Crowley Lake, a trout factory between Bishop and Mammoth, Calif., is hot, but so are any of a dozen lakes and streams up and down the Eastern Sierra and U.S. Highway 395. Big trout, ample camping and gorgeous views of the Sierra Nevada make this a near-perfect Golden State destination. A small boat or canoe will get you into fish here, but shore fishing for rainbows can be excellent with standard spoons and spinners.



ACCESSIBLE WILDERNESS

A combination of abundant camping, public access and tremendous fishing for whopper brook and rainbow trout make western Montana's Georgetown Lake an appealing spot for any summer weekend. By mid-June, the bigger trout, including some slab-sided cutthroats, are going deep. Work weedlines with big leech streamers or even jointed crankbaits. Many of the campgrounds along the lake are privately owned; the best are Stuart Mill Bay, Lodgepole and Piney. But the great thing about this jumping-off point for adventure in the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness is that there are Forest Service campgrounds galore in the area. Get to Georgetown by driving State Highway 1 between Anaconda and Philipsburg, and if you don't have a burger at the 7 Gables Resort across the highway from the lake, you're missing a grand Montana tradition.



TROUT ON A GRAND SCALE

Colorado's Grand Lake is in the epicenter of an empire of federal land, public campsites and fishy water, but let's start with the camping on this largest natural lake in Colorado. If you want a tent site within casting distance of this beautiful blue-green fishery, consider Sunset Point, Arapaho Bay or Stillwater campgrounds. But you'll find at least three dozen other options up and down Highway 34 between Granby and Estes Park. Fishing in summer conditions generally means going deep for cool-water lake trout. Stocker trout usually can be caught from shore with sinking presentations, but the whopper trout Grand Lake is known for require a boat and some fairly hefty hardware.



STRAWBERRY SEASON

Utah's Strawberry Reservoir is a gem of an impoundment, located along U.S. Highway 40 between Heber City and Duchesne. You'll need to get there early to snag one of the campsites in the Forest Service's Strawberry Bay Campgrounds. If you strike out, head over to Soldier Creek, Renegade or Aspen Grove, or leave the lakeside crowds behind and camp on any of a dozen public campgrounds in the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest. Fishing for Strawberry's monster rainbow and cutthroat trout is best from a float tube or cartopper boat, but all types of tackle work here, from streamers on sinking fly lines to wobbling spoons and bright spinners.

BE A BETTER BOW SHOT

WANT TO HONE YOUR
ARCHERY PROFICIENCY
BEFORE SEPTEMBER?
HERE'S HOW.

By Darron McDougal

The mule deer buck was bedded 23 yards below me. Sounds like a slam dunk, but the steep, declined angle, variable crosswind and adrenaline coursing through my veins tested my months of practice and preparation. After calming down and concentrating, I connected and soon was admiring his chocolate antlers in the palms of my hands.

Bowhunting has many challenges. When you finally earn a shot opportunity, do you really want to blow it? Bowhunters can take many different steps to increase their skills before bow season. Don't overlook these five.

1. MASTER A SURPRISE RELEASE

Shot anticipation causes some archers to "punch" the trigger and/or flinch during the shot. These things thwart accuracy and become more pronounced when a bull or buck is standing 40 yards away. If you struggle while practicing, address issues before involving live game.

There are several solutions. First, try standing 5 yards from your target and spend a week shooting strictly from there. It removes loads of pressure and minimizes pin movement on the bulls-eye. Your sole goal is to get comfortable with applying light pressure on the trigger, then pushing and pulling using

Establish a shooting sequence and repeat it with every shot you take during off-season practice to ensure it'll be instinctive when drawing on an animal.

your back muscles until the shot triggers naturally. Once you have it down, move back to 15 yards and see how things go.

Not working? Find a shooting coach. Or switch to a release aid that fires differently (i.e., switch from an index-finger release to a handheld thumb-button model). Making a change like that retrains your brain how to shoot an arrow, giving you the opportunity to start fresh and build positive habits.

Some folks struggle so badly they can't beat the severe anticipation without using a resistance release, which fires after you switch off a safety and then push and pull. It reduces the shooter's "control" aspect common with index-finger or thumb-button releases. Once considered strictly a target release, many bowhunters now use hinge releases, which practically force them to slow down and execute properly amidst an adrenaline-packed encounter.

I use Spot-Hogg's Wiseguy index-finger release. I like how it can be adjusted across a wide spectrum of sensitivity. I set mine as light as it can go. I also find the BOA strap to be comfortable and consistent. The length adjusts to individual preference, and the open-hook jaw provides fast hookup.

2. DEVELOP A SEQUENCE

I recall a sticker on an acquaintance's bow riser that read, "Stay calm. Pick a spot." That's good advice, but I fear it's too shallow. The act of shooting an arrow is very simple and can be accomplished in as little as two seconds. But shooting an arrow properly is complex when you break it down into steps.

Consider that first you must assume a proper stance. Then, you have to estimate the yardage or use a rangefinder. If you have a fixed-pin sight, you must decide which pin you'll use or if you'll hold one high or another low. If you have a one-pin slider sight, you'll have to adjust it. And you must place your hand on the grip consistently.

Once you hit full draw, you'll need to find your anchor point, center your sight pin in your peep sight, then reference your bubble level. Next, you'll put your pin not just in the general area you want to hit, but on a specific spot within it. Once you're settled in and are okay with your pin float, you'll begin the back-tension process to fire the release. Don't forget to follow through.

Wow, that seems like a lot. But creating a task-based sequence during the summer and using it at crunch time mentally reduces the "bigness" of the opportunity because you're not dwelling on the animal or its size. Even more importantly, it helps the shooter focus on releasing not just a shot, but a quality shot.

3. BUY BETTER ARROWS

Inconsistent arrows can be a detriment to consistent long-range accuracy. Straightness and weight tolerances are two big considerations. Arrows rated at +/- .001 inch for straightness and +/- .5 grain are the standard for those looking to tighten groups. If you're shooting arrows with a +/- .003- or .006-inch straightness tolerance, switching to an arrow with a tighter tolerance is a good idea.

4. ADD PRESSURE TO PRODUCE

Shooting at a deer target in the backyard at known distances isn't realistic bowhunting practice. Better practice is to self-impose consequences for poor shots.

"Make your practice harder than the real thing," says accomplished target archer and Western bowhunter, Kevin Wilkey. "I try not to get comfortable when I'm practicing. During the indoor archery season, I intentionally bounce around from range to range and don't shoot from the same lane. When I'm on the line with other shooters, I occasionally delay so that I'm the last man standing when the shot clock is seconds from draining. When practicing in the backyard, orchestrate tough shots that will result in a broken arrow if you miss."

Whether it's a broken arrow or a bruised ego, having consequences for poor shots can motivate you to work harder to tighten up your game.

5. BALANCE YOUR BOW

Bow balance directly impacts aiming stability. For many years, stabilizers

If you struggle with shot anticipation, a change of release style can often help.



were an underutilized tool, but lots of bowhunters are now catching on. I see many running stabilizer systems closely related to what champion target archers have long been using. A combination of stabilizers is a great way to achieve a perfect bow balance. Rather than use a generic 6-inch stabilizer, try a combination of different stabilizers or a stabilizer system until your bow truly balances.

Some bow manufacturers have introduced new mounting locations and systems for sights, arrow rests and quivers, positioning the accessory weight at the center of the riser or closer to it. This alleviates most of the negative impact accessories once had on bow balance. The difference is astounding.

PATIENCE MAKES PERFECT

The cure doesn't happen overnight. Often, it takes weeks of diligence and dedication to move your proficiency needle. Sometimes, practice sessions are purely frustrating. Don't force yourself to keep shooting. Have the self-control to walk away. The worst habits are formed by forcing the issue. Come back another day with a fresh mind and fresh muscles.

Following these five tips won't guarantee nothing but double-lung shots. Bowhunting is bowhunting. Any number of things can go wrong—some beyond our control. But I believe summer practice that includes mentally focusing on drawing and shooting your bow and understanding the features and limitations of your gear are good steps in sharpening your archery game. **GF**

HATCH A PLAN

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR TARGETING
STOCKED RAINBOW TROUT.

By Gary Lewis



We were supposed to launch the boat at 3:30 p.m., but I was early. Arriving an hour before my dad, who was trailering the boat, I put on polarized glasses and scouted from the bank.

A hundred yards upstream of the launch and boat moorage, the reservoir we would be fishing narrows to the original river channel and a back eddy shaded by tall trees. I thought it looked

like a good spot to look for the splash of a trout rising for a mayfly. It was only a couple of minutes before one slashed at the surface. When I saw another, I looked closer and could see dark shapes 3 to 6 feet deep in the green water.

Earlier in the year, I used pink bubble-gum worms to catch steelhead downstream in this same river canyon. Now I was armed with smaller plastic worms, a spinning rod and 4-pound-test line.

Those trout were within easy casting distance. I adjusted the small balsa float and aimed a cast up-current. In the clear water, the plastic crawler fluttered down, drifted into the strike zone and a trout flashed under the float.

By the time dad arrived with the boat, I already had a limit of trout to my credit, but the fish had been easy to unhook and release. I could start again with a clean slate, and the fish were on the bite.



Summer rainbows call for a variety of techniques. Go equipped for any bite with both a spinning rig and a fly-fishing outfit.

STOCKING SCHEDULES

From mid-May through early July, hatchery trout operations are in full swing throughout the Northwest. Water levels are at their peak and ambient temps are good for trout. When plotting a trip, I like to find opportunities to put a spinning rod in play and keep a fly rod ready for when the fish are close to the surface. Some of our favorite waters are slow-moving river reservoirs, but we can also find

ourselves in irrigation impoundments where the fish can be big, especially in early June before they either get smart or go home for dinner.

Most fish and wildlife agencies post their stocking schedules online. Changes in weather, the price of fuel and emergencies can change the timing of fish releases, but it's a good idea to comb the stocking schedules early in the year. Most lakes get the "legals," which

average 8 to 10 inches, but a person can put more poundage in a trout limit by targeting the trophy-size trout that are older, better fed and better fighters. If a lake gets 5,000 legals in the season, it might also get 250 trophies and a few brood stock trout that can tip the scales at 5 pounds or more. Premier fisheries that get a lot of angling attention, like any larger reservoir with campgrounds and mountain views within a two-hour

drive of a metropolitan area, are likely to get a couple of stockings of brood fish or trophies every season. It's all there in the stocking schedule ... except when it's not.

A lot of what happens behind the scenes does not show up in the hatchery forecast. Sometimes there is an abundance of brood stock, or surplus steelhead in the system that need to go somewhere. Another thing to watch for is when a lake is drained for maintenance or to kill trash fish. When the lake fills up again, the fisheries department scrambles to fill it with trout, and the fishing can be really good for the entire summer.

Then there are the lakes that are never on the stocking schedule, but they magically have hatchery trout every season, and plenty of them. What's up with that?

Some reservoirs are not on the published stocking schedule because they are managed by agencies or municipalities or utility companies with their own hatcheries. These can be some of the best destinations. Think about it: A power company built the dam and part of the negotiation with the tribe or the community that permitted the



States typically post stocking schedules online. However, take them with a grain of salt; any number of variables can impact planned stockings.

FINDING BOTTOM

Locate feeding trout with this simple trick.

To find a lake's bottom quickly, clip a forceps to the bottom fly on a tandem rig and let it over the side. When the forceps touch bottom, mark the spot on the line. If you want the fly 16 inches off the bottom, set the float accordingly.

Using this method, an angler can adjust the presentation up and down the water column to target the actively feeding trout.

If there are multiple people in the boat, set one bottom fly at 12 inches off the bottom, another at 18 inches and a third at 24 inches. Then, re-rig to match the hot setup if one guy is catching more than the others. Oh, and borrow your buddy's forceps.

construction was to provide a fishery. So, every year the company is contractually obligated to populate the lake with, say, 30,000 trout. They're going to do it, but chances are they aren't taking the time to put it on a list somewhere. And that's a lot of fish.

READ STILL WATER

When approaching a new lake for the first time, the challenge is figuring out where the fish are. It can be as simple as looking for splashes, but in most cases the fish aren't rising. Look at the topography, the shoulders of the ridges running down into the water. These are the deep places and the holding structures. Flatter ground running down to water is where the shallows are and where the smaller fish will be in early morning and again in the evening.

Creek mouths and river channels show where the cooler, oxygenated water is. Scout out these places, as well as the dry creek beds because there is usually subsurface in-flows in such places. Even a little trickle of spring water input can hold one big trout.

SINK IT AND SHAKE IT

In any given lake, there are more legals than brood stock by orders of magnitude. Soaking a jar bait or presenting a salmon egg might catch an 8-pounder, but an 8-incher is more likely. If a lake has been stocked with brooders, they had to go somewhere. Search them out with electronics or look for the best oxygenated water and fish close to the bottom.

Set up to wind-drift over the fish, drop anchor or spot-lock to stay in the right place. The key is getting the bait or fly to the right depth.

Let's say the fish are showing up on the screen in 8 to 9 feet of water. Rig up a fly rod with a floating line and a substantial indicator, such as a Thingamabobber, and a tapered leader down to 6- or 8-pound test. The fly should be heavy and slim so the angler can move it up and down, and it should pulsate. Rabbit and marabou are the best materials for that kind of movement. Think the Clouser Deep Minnow, NearNuff Sculpin, Rainy's Heavy Hitter, Sweeney Todd, Full Metal Jacket or my favorite, the Original Whammy.

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Get the fly down to the fish, watch for the shimmy in the indicator when it bottoms out, then shake it. Give it good up-and-down and sideways action. Rinse. Shake. Repeat. The fish are going to react to it. If one grabs hold, the indicator might not go down hard—it might even just tremble. Set the hook anyway.

FLOATS AND PLASTIC WIGGLERS

When trout are schooled at a depth of 3 to 6 feet, that's when I like to put down the fly rod and pick up a spinning rod. I like a rod that is 7 1/2 feet long with a pretty good backbone, but a slower action. The reel should be almost filled with a stealthy 4-pound test for long, pinpoint casts. The setup is simple. Tie off to a barrel swivel and add 3 feet of 3-pound-test leader, terminating at a No.

8 or 10 egg hook. Pin the hook through the middle of a plastic wiggler worm to maximize the flutter on the way down and the action imparted with every twitch of the line. The float, of course, should be adjustable, to meet the fish where they are.

SPOON-FEED THEM

On days when we launch the boat early in the morning and the water's surface is like glass and we know the fish are suspended, it can be fun to put a small spoon in play. In most cases, a spoon should be fished slowly so that it wobbles side to side, the slower the better. I like to keep the motor around at 1 mph or a little slower. This can be accomplished some days on a wind drift, but a bow-mount trolling motor is more consistent.

The spoon could be a small Acme Kastmaster, Little Cleo or Thomas Buoyant. Every lake fishes a little differently, so it helps to have local knowledge. Frog patterns are important, as are brown trout, chub, rainbow and perch, depending on the local forage. Sometimes we put a flasher in front of the spoon with a 15-inch leader. And it never hurts to tip the hook with a bit of worm, corn or even a plastic Berkley grub.

When waters start to warm in early summer, the fish are active, but they tend to disperse in larger lakes. Confidence breeds concentration, which pays off. A thoughtful approach to prospecting for fish, to perfecting the presentation and to finding the feeders will increase efficiency and provoke more grabs from targeted trout. **Gf**

On mornings when the water's surface is calm and still, a slowly wobbled spoon can be deadly on suspended trout.



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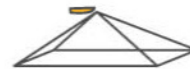


A gar and crappie suspended in a fallen tree.

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ON THE ROCKS

A LIGHT-TACKLE WAY TO FISH THE ROCKY OUTCROPPINGS ALONG THE PACIFIC COAST

By Art Isberg

Rods measuring 8 to 9 feet, with medium power and a fast action, are ideal for the light lines and swimming lures the author fishes.



I hiked through crashing surf, heading for one of my favorite casting spots on top of a huge stone monolith the size of a small house.

Perched 20 feet above the blue Pacific swells gurgling at its base, I had command of a large piece of open water. Summer on the Pacific Coast is a glorious time and place to fish the biggest fishing hole on the planet. I knotted on a No. 4 Scrounger lead jig head, carefully threading on a white, 8-inch curly-tail worm. This is a deadly combination that brings black rock bass and ling cod up from the depths to strike and hook up in rod-bending battles that will thrill any saltwater angler. The killer instinct of rockfish to devour any swimming bait that has a life-like action is what makes this unusual combination work so well.

Traditionally, shoreline rock-fishing means stiff rods, high-test leaders and big hooks holding meaty chunks of sardines, anchovies or mussels. All this is held on rocky bottoms with heavy sinkers anchoring against wave wash. In a term, this is called “bottom fishing.” You cast out a heavy rig, then sit and wait, hoping for something to come along and take it.

My style of using long rods and casting a large variety of swimming lures is simply easier, covers more water and is far more productive than bottom fishing. Here’s how it works.

THE RODS

The first important step to this approach is choosing the right rods. That means selecting long surf rods with medium backbones, yet supple, thinner tips that recoil quickly to send light lures way out on long casts. My sticks of choice start at 7 feet and go up to 9 feet. Line ratings on the rods’ blanks tell you what they’re best suited for. When using monofilament, I opt for 8- to 10-pound-test lines. For braided line, 10- to 16-pound lines get the nod. My rods are of two-piece construction, with generous double handles for comfortable control and the strength needed for two-handed casting speed with light lures.

As you move up in rod length, line ratings also increase, regardless of whether you’re using worms, eels or jointed, hard-plastic lures. Because I like lighter lines in the 8- to 10-pound class, rods in the 8- to 8 1/2-foot range match best for most lures on relatively light lines.

THE REELS

Medium-size saltwater spinning reels are the perfect match to the rods discussed. Many of these are classified as 3000-series reels. The easiest way to choose a reel is to match its spool capacity to the pound-test line you choose. With 8-pound-test monofilament line on my saltwater rigs, that means matching reels that can spool about 360 yards. If you choose to move up to 10-pound test, then your reel choice should handle about 290 yards of mono.

There are many quality saltwater reels on the market today, and it is not my intention to recommend any single one. But there are details worth noting and looking for in your choice of reels. For example, select those with stainless steel bearings for smooth, long-lasting operation. Also, they should feature carbon-fiber drags that have positive pressure and can be quickly reset during all-out battles.

Because you will be doing a lot of casting and retrieving, gear ratios are also worth mentioning. Those rated at 6.2:1 or faster allow for easy, steady retrieves without winding your arm off. I also prefer reels with large,

easy-to-grip handles, which I find more comfortable than smaller ones. Because you'll be fishing in a saltwater environment, choose reels with sealed bodies to keep out water and grit.

THE LURES

The choices of swimming lures for rockfishing, such as worms, eels and full-bodied lures, are many. One of my favorites is the Scrounger—a large lead head and hook with a plastic swim collar, onto which I thread a soft-plastic bait. For long casts on light lines, lead heads in the 1/2- to 1-ounce class are solid choices. By changing weights and retrieve speeds, you can either work them back just under the surface for topwater retrieves, or use a countdown method to sink them close to bottom. Other good selections are the Sidewinder Black Eel, Savage Soft Plastic Eel and the River2Sea S-Waver glide bait in abalone shad.

Using lead-head jigs with curly-tail swimming worms or eel-shaped plastic bodies can be very effective. Choose lighter colors such as white, pink and light blue, or those with sparkly bodies. Jointed hard-plastic lures are another

good choice, though a bit heavier to cast. Consider the Rapala X-Rap Flying Fish or Heddon's Swim-N-Image to do good work. Their shimmering bodies and flashing live-bait colors elicit strikes, and their large sizes mean farther casts and quicker sink times, which can be a real advantage if rockfish are feeding down deep.

READ THE WATER

The casual visitor to the coast might think the mighty Pacific Ocean looks pretty much uniform, beautiful as is. But not so to the angler who goes out after rockfish using the swimming lures we've just mentioned. He must learn that there are both honey holes and spots that don't produce the kind of action he seeks.

You must learn to develop an eye for these special places. Always look for rocky mounds above swirling, breaking waves. Cast to either side and the end closest to you. Let the lure sink deeper down rocky sides before you start your retrieve. Rock bass love spots like this, where they can lie in wait before darting out into the foaming water to attack a bait.



Large pools protected from wave action will often hold ling cod. To catch them, count down your lure and fish it just above bottom.

Black rockfish often move with the tides to maintain the depth they're most comfortable with, rarely holding in shallow water.



PRIORITIZE SAFETY

Another point to emphasize is safety. You'll be fishing near breaking waves and strong ocean currents that are powerful and swift. Upon arrival, stand back and observe the wave wash and height around rocks before moving into position to begin casting. Waves break in a tempo I count as seven in a series. Somewhere in that count will be one or two waves that suddenly reach higher up on rocky shores. You always want to watch for that and mark it carefully, so you don't get caught fishing too close to the water and take a soaking spray—or worse.

The Pacific Ocean is a wonderful fishing hole, but one with much different rules than other places where anglers flex a rod. Safety is always the priority when fishing here. But summer on the coast, with a long fishing rod in your hands, will make memories you will not soon forget. 📸

Other pieces of water to look for are any large pools protected from breaking waves and fronted by rocky ledges above the water. Quieter spots like this always hold fish, and often ling cod, which are decided bottom feeders. Long casts using count-down presentations to sink your lures just off the bottom will reach them.

A third area to concentrate on is any long, rocky point that juts out into open water. You can carefully cast to both sides as you move out, advancing slowly. Once you reach the end, you'll have deeper, open water and 180 degrees to work with. Cover all of it from left to right, getting your swimmers down deep using the same count-down system just mentioned.

TIME THE TIDES

It's worth mentioning timing here. Summer tide tables are printed in yearly tide books, in local newspapers and online. Refer to them when planning a fishing trip to the coast. Outgoing tides quickly change water depth, and rockfish will move out with them to maintain the depth they're comfortable with. They do not hold in shallower water, as some might think. That means an incoming tide produces the best fishing, and it will hold up as long as the water stays high.



The Pacific coastline is not for the faint of heart. Closely observe how and where waves break before getting into position.

A Game Of **CAT AND MOUSE**

TACTICS FOR FINDING AND CATCHING SPAWNING, TIGHT-LIPPED CATFISH

By Keith Sutton

A large, detailed photograph of a male catfish in a pond. The catfish is positioned in the lower right foreground, facing left towards its nest. The nest is a shallow, circular depression in the sandy bottom, lined with mud and small stones. The water is murky green, and the background is filled with the silhouettes of bare tree branches hanging over the water. The lighting is dramatic, with the catfish's head and the nest area illuminated against the dark background.

After fertilizing eggs, a male catfish guards the nest for several days until they hatch and then defends the school of fry until it's ready to disperse.



WINDIGO IMAGES (MAIN); KETH SUTTON (RIGHT)

During most of the year, catfish are pretty easy to catch if you're savvy to their ways. This is not so during their summer spawning time, however.

As spring begins, catfish respond quickly to anglers' offerings. Warm spring rains plus longer days raise the water temperature and stimulate feeding activity. Catfish are active, hungry and concentrated in dense schools this season.

As spring ends and summer begins, however, catch rates drop because mature catfish become occupied with spawning activities and eat far less. With flathead catfish, this occurs when the water temperature is 66 to 75 degrees. Channel cats and blues spawn at 70 to 74 degrees, with some spawning activities happening in the 80- to 81-degree range in shallower, warm-water lakes.

All catfish nest in cavities. Flatheads use hollow logs, holes in clay banks, root masses in downed trees or manmade structures such as old tires and metal drums. Blue catfish deposit their eggs between rocks or in root wads, depressions, undercut banks or other areas

protected from current. Channel catfish prefer dark, secluded spots such as crevices in piles of woody debris, burrows in banks and spaces under rocks. When suitable spawning habitat is absent, catfish might migrate (from a lake into a tributary stream, for example) to find it.

A sexually mature male selects and cleans a nest site. A female lays her sticky yellow eggs there, then the male fertilizes the mass, chases the female away and begins guard duty. He protects the nest from predators and fans the eggs with his fins to keep them aerated and free from sediments. Eggs hatch in 6 to 10 days (depending on water temperature), and the school of fry remains nearby for several days, guarded continuously by the male before dispersing.

Male catfish eat very little during these activities. Consequently, angler catch rates fall dramatically, with a noticeable decrease in the number of bites. This doesn't mean catfish can't be caught, however. Despite difficulties hooking up, fishermen can still find and catch some dandy cats if they employ the specialized tactics that follow.



Bloody baits like chicken livers are effective during the spawn as they produce a scent trail that even nest-guarding cats find irresistible.

FOCUS ON TRIBUTARIES

When spawning activities peak and few fish are being caught, try fishing areas you previously passed by. For example, if the main body of a lake encompasses all your regular fishing locales, try moving into tributaries where many catfish migrate as the water temperature warms.

The same phenomenon occurs in rivers. Catfish leave the main body of water and migrate up smaller streams to spawn. Therefore, anglers might have to focus their fishing efforts in tributaries to catch them. This is especially true of blue and channel catfish, which often gather near upstream spawning areas when the water reaches an ideal nesting temperature. Flatheads are less migratory and more likely to stay in the same locales season after season.

The best tributaries have a warm inflow, such as creeks swollen by early summer rains, and the catfish within those waters will usually be caught near humps, holes, trees and other current breaks near the confluence of the tributary with the main lake or river. Bait your rig with a night crawler or piece of cut bait, then cast upstream and let the rig drift downstream in the current. More bites will likely result.

TARGET CAVITIES IN RIPRAP

Your catch rate should also improve if you fish areas with numerous spawning holes. Catfish in these spots might not be actively feeding, but the big-headed males will attack almost anything that comes near their eggs or fry, including your baited fishing rig.

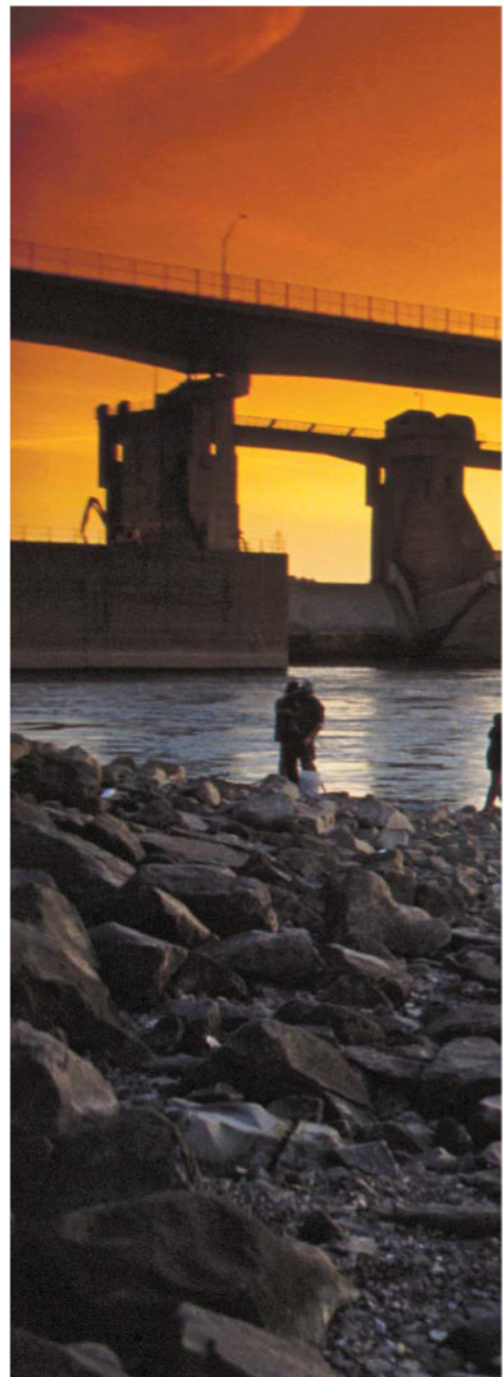
Riprap-covered banks near dams, bridges and causeways are among the best spots to try. Big channel cats especially like this habitat, but blues and flatheads might gather as well if there are numerous nesting cavities available in crevices between the boulders.

Place your bait where you find distinguishing features on long look-alike stretches of riprap. For example, a pipe or log jutting from the rocks might attract catfish. Other times, changing rock structures do the trick—big rocks changing to smaller rocks, for example, or slides of rocks creating underwater points. Cast your bait to these key spots and fish it right on bottom.

Simple fishing rigs help reduce the number of hang-ups when fishing riprap. When fishing shallow edges, try just a baited hook—nothing more. Smaller, “eating size” cats are abundant here, so a 4/0 to 6/0 octopus or circle hook



Trolling shad-imitating crankbaits can produce when more traditional catfish baits do not. Where allowed, troll multiple colors until you determine what the fish want.



usually is adequate. Cast to your targeted spot, then allow the bait to flutter down without a sinker attached. When the rig touches bottom, lift your rod tip and pull it sideways so it drifts down to a different spot. Lather, rinse, repeat until you get a taker.

When targeting deeper riprap edges, try baiting the hook on a 1/4- to 1-ounce jighead. Work this the same way you work the rig previously described. Drop, lift, move. This is an ideal way to avoid hang-ups and target cats hiding in cavities and crevices within the rocks.

KEITH SUTTON



Riprap and buckled concrete revetment offer myriad crevices that provide excellent nesting habitat, especially for big channel cats.

The best baits are native riprap forage animals such as shad, minnows, crawfish and small sunfish.

When fishing for flatheads, a tail-hooked crawfish or a sunfish hooked behind the dorsal fin can bring smashing strikes. For blue cats, use chunks of cut shad or herring.

Small whole shad and live minnows stacked several to the hook work great for channel cats. Commercial stink baits and night crawlers are effective here as well, especially on small individuals of all three species.

HIT THE REVETMENT

Revetment also attracts spawning cats. This type of structure is found on navigable rivers maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers or other agencies. To stabilize the banks and prevent erosion, bulldozers are used to smooth the shoreline, then the soil is covered with huge mats of concrete pads connected with steel cable. This revetment might be covered with riprap to further stabilize it.

Wind and wave action often carry away soil and leave cavities beneath the revetment, particularly along edges

and anywhere one of the concrete pads has broken. These openings make ideal spawning holes, and if you can pinpoint some of them with a sonar unit, you can drop a baited hook right in front of aggressive male catfish guarding eggs or fry there.

Start downstream and troll slowly upstream parallel to the bank, watching your sonar for the ups and downs of buckled revetment slabs. Cast a baited float rig directly above each hole, with the bobber set at a distance above the hook equal to the water depth above

the hole. Let the rig settle and wait for a hit. If you haven't had a bite after 5 to 10 minutes, move along the bank until you find another likely spot and anchor again. Continue doing this, working your way upstream and fishing one hole after another. Good catches of eating-size catfish often result.

COAX WITH CRANKBAITS

When targeting spawning flatheads, here's another tactic that often produces hits when nothing else seems to work. Try trolling shad-imitation crankbaits like Bomber's Fat Free Shad along riprap edges. The shovel-headed cats spawn in these areas, then frequently hang around riprap rocks to feed on shad, crawfish and other forage. They're suckers for a tight-wiggling, fishy-looking plug darting past.

Where legal, troll with multiple rod-and-reel combos, each rigged with a

differently colored crankbait, until a color preference is determined. Use just enough trolling-motor speed to keep the lures skimming the rocks and bumping them occasionally.

Keep your fishing combos properly secured in rod holders or be prepared to lose them. Strikes are explosive.

BLOODY BAIT AND RED HOOKS

Because catfish are so tight-lipped this season, anglers should use every trick they know to draw strikes. One that often helps me is using extremely bloody bait that creates a scent-and-taste trail catfish can follow to zero-in on foods. Cats involved in spawning activities might attack, but not eat, enticements that don't properly stimulate their senses, but bloody baits like fresh chicken liver or freshly caught shad that have been scored with a knife or divided into cut-bait chunks are almost certain to

be swallowed. Using bloody baits can sometimes be the difference between no bites and at least a few.

I also like to use red hooks like Tru-Turn's Red Catfish Hooks or Daiichi's Bleeding Bait line. That bit of red signifies blood to predator fish and hence a wounded, easy meal. By triggering a natural feeding response, they can increase your number of hook-ups significantly.

Fishing for catfish during their spawning season can be frustrating, for sure. When female cats are laying eggs and males are guarding their nests, they often are hard to find and difficult to entice. Nevertheless, if you are diligent in your efforts and fish the proper locales with the proper bait and tackle, you're almost certain to discover a pattern that will enable you to catch at least a few fish—even at a time when cats are at their most challenging. **GF**

Red hooks suggest wounded prey and an easy meal—just the thing when catfish are unwilling to expend a lot of energy to feed.



KETH SUTTON

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- 10:30P SMALL TOWN HUNTING

SPORTSMAN

SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

BASS AFTER DARK

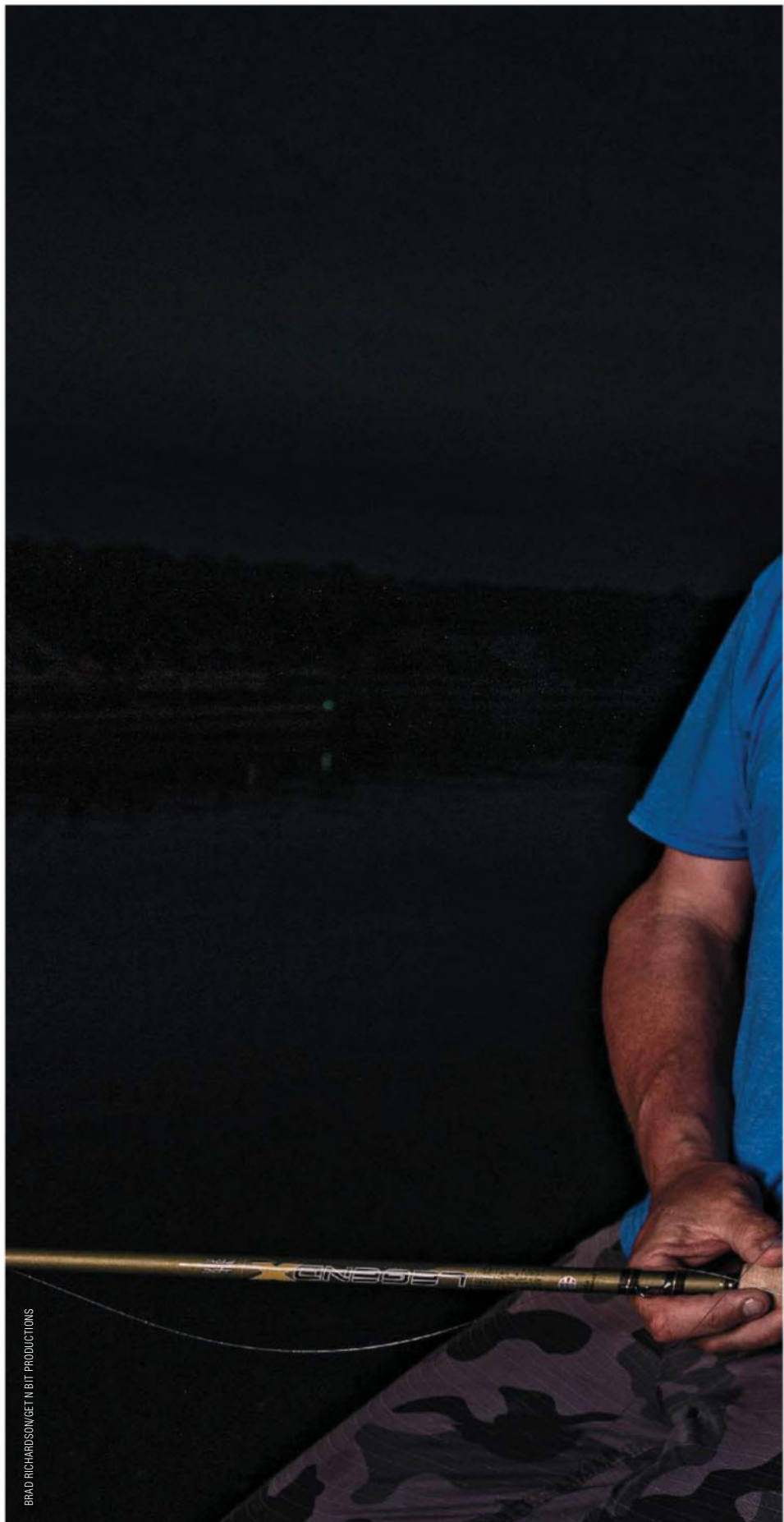
THE NIGHTTIME IS THE
RIGHT TIME TO HOOK UP
WITH HOT-WEATHER BASS.

By Ken Duke

First, the obvious: It's hot out there in many places across the region. The sun can really punish an angler bent on fishing between dawn and dusk. It'll sap your energy, harm your skin (without proper safeguards) and warm the water to the point that fish demand deep shadows or deeper water. It can also bring out water skiers, jet skiers, swimmers and pleasure boaters—all fine people if they would simply stay on the shore.

With so much competition for a placid piece of water and so much need for relief from the heat, the obvious answer is to fish at night. It can also be the correct answer. Here are three questions to determine whether nighttime is the right time on your favorite summertime bass lake: First, is the water clear with two or more feet of visibility? Second, does the lake get a lot of boat traffic? And third, do you want to catch more and bigger bass?

If your answer to each of those three questions is “yes,” night fishing during summer is the way to go. It takes some



BRAD RICHARDSON/GETTY IMAGES



Nighttime fishing offers both anglers and fish a reprieve from the heat. Bass are more active then thanks to cooler water and far less boat traffic.

getting used to, but night bass action is often much, much better than battling it out under the heat and glare of the sun with dozens or even hundreds of other boaters, all searching for a little bit of vacation fun.

Three factors will help you get the most out of summer night fishing for bass: understanding the basic seasonal patterns, factoring in moon phases and planning and preparation for fishing after dark.

SIZING UP SUMMER

Summer is a mixed bag. On one hand, bass can be lethargic in the extreme heat. On the other, summer is predictable and the most stable of the four seasons.

The best summertime bass patterns for daylight fishing typically involve deep water (in and around the thermocline where temperature and oxygen levels are attractive to bass), current or dense

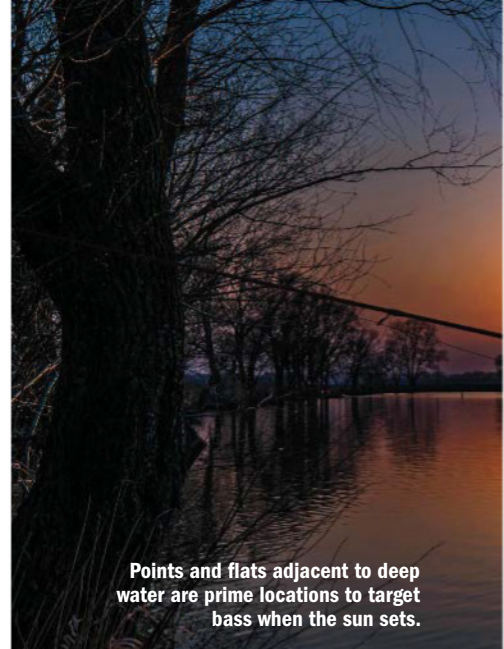
cover that provides lots of shade. If you have those elements or conditions, you can probably catch bass during the day, but it might not be easy, especially if the lake is crowded with other boats.

Legendary underwater cinematographer Glenn Lau spent more than 15,000 hours filming and observing bass below the surface. Co-authoring his book *Bass Forever* was an advanced course in bass behavior for me. In Lau's experience, big bass shut down almost completely during the day, when many anglers are on the water. That's when they move into the heaviest cover they can find (usually near deep water) and are extremely lethargic.

However, once the sun goes down, things change.

MOON MATTERS

The moon's impact on Earth is considerable even if it's hard to quantify or



Points and flats adjacent to deep water are prime locations to target bass when the sun sets.

define. It creates our tides, innumerable animals breed or hatch in synchronicity with the moon and human violence has long been linked to moon phases.

For generations, anglers have tried to decode the moon's influence on fish and forage. While it would be disingenuous to say that anyone has it all figured out, there are some truths that are not simply self-evident. They're indisputable.

Just like the sun, the moon rises in the east and sets in the west. Unlike the sun, which we orbit, the moon orbits the Earth and completes a full circuit every 29 1/2 days. When the moon rises at about the same time the sun sets, they are oriented in such a way that the moon is fully illuminated. This is a full moon.

When the moon rises at about the same time the sun rises, and sets at about the same time the sun sets, we can't see it very well. This is the new (or dark) moon. After the new moon, we can see a little more of the moon each night. After about a week, the right half of the moon is visible. This is the first quarter moon. In another week or so, it will be full. A week after that, the left half of the moon is visible (third quarter moon). Then the new moon comes again and the process repeats.

Legions of amateur angling astronomers have tried to explain and predict the impact of the moon on fish behavior. In fact, there was a time when every newspaper and outdoor magazine would publish moon tables in every edition and issue. (Editor's Note: Some still do. See page 8.)



Firefly Marine offers deck lights for the bow and elevated stern lights.

LIGHT UP THE NIGHT

Onboard illumination for hardcore nighttime anglers

In 1993, Chad Watts and a couple of friends built a custom stern light from a telescoping cane pole. An old reel-oil bottle served as the globe for the bulb. It illuminated their boat from high above—like a full moon on demand—drawing bugs away from the anglers and offering just enough light to see quite well. It worked great.

Then life happened. Work and family obligations separated the group, but Watts never forgot about the light. Recently, Firefly Outdoor & Marine was born, and the Firefly has become a beacon to night anglers everywhere.

Watts makes both bow and stern lights that meet Coast Guard standards for running lights. The short bow light will cast a faint glow at your feet and help you to see in front of the boat, while the stern light rests atop a flexible pole that can handle running speeds of any bass boat on the market.

The light poles come in a variety of colors to match your boat. A set of bow and stern lights costs about \$220. For more information, visit fireflymarine.com.



The tables typically identify the times when the moon is directly overhead, underfoot or on the horizon. Major feeding and activity periods occur when the moon is directly above or below. Minor periods occur when it's halfway between those points.

Conventional wisdom says that night fishing is best around the full moon because it's brighter and the bass—sight feeders—can see better. Conversely, the theory is that daytime fishing is better during the new moon because the nights are darker and it's harder to see.

The same baits you'd expect to get bit during the day will work for you at night, but certain bait styles shine in the summer darkness, especially topwaters and spinnerbaits. With either, you should opt for dark colors because they silhouette better against any light in the sky.

Topwaters and buzzbaits can be particularly strong around the full moon because they show up well against the bright night sky. Big, single-spin spinnerbaits fare best around the new moon. Forget the erratic retrieves that might trigger a daytime bass. Stick with a steady retrieve so the bass can zero-in on the bait better. Use a trailer hook on spinnerbaits and buzzbaits to reduce missed strikes.

And all those spots that you'd love to fish during the day but can't because they're beaten to a froth by jet skis and swimmers? Well, they're all yours after dark, and they're often loaded with bass when the sun goes down. Target points and flats near deep water and you should be in the action.

SAFETY FIRST

Having a dozen rods on the deck of your boat next to a baggy landing net is not a big problem when the sun's out. At night, it can turn you into a cautionary tale. The more you streamline your gear, the better off you'll be and the less likely you are to break something precious—like your neck.

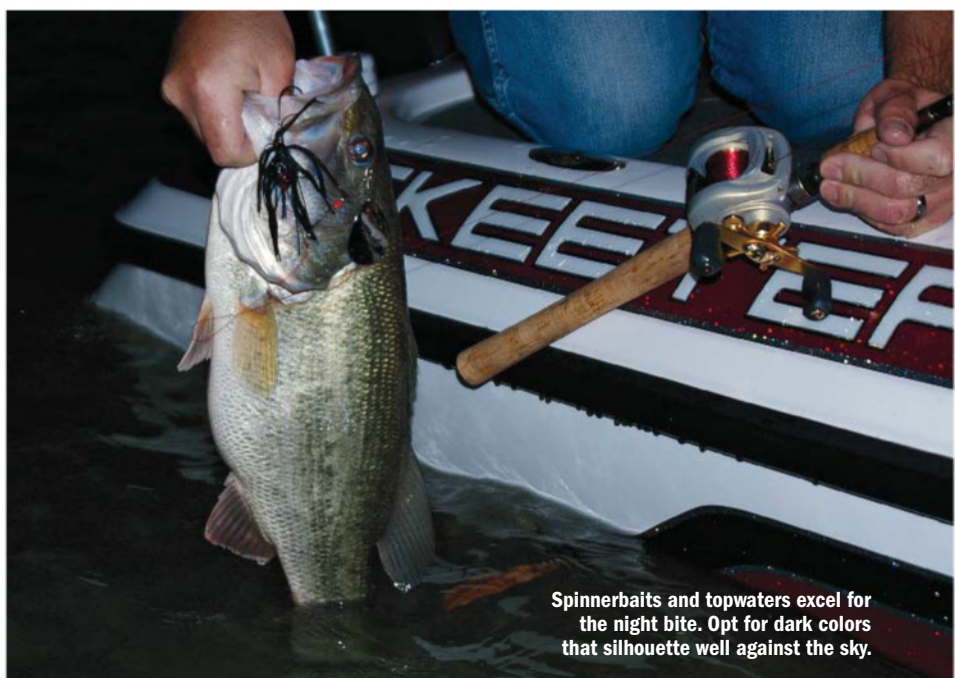
Don't forget to hydrate, even at night, but be extra careful with drink bottles. Stow them away when you're not actively drinking from them and throw them away when you're finished. If you step on a capped drink bottle, it's going to roll and you're going to fall.

Tying knots or finding the right bait is a challenge at night without proper illumination. Get a light, such as the Streamlight Bandit, that clips on the bill of a cap. Or use the utility lights in your boat, but mask them with red or green cellophane or a light coat of reddish nail polish so you won't be blinded by white light, which will destroy your night vision for several minutes. Another alternative is the Firefly (see sidebar).

If you're unfamiliar with the body of water you plan to fish at night, get out there before dark to launch your boat, get your bearings, identify some landmarks you'll be able to find in the dark and generally learn your way around. That'll pay off if you stop fishing before dawn and need to find your way back to the ramp or dock.

If you have GPS, turn it on before you ever start the engine. It'll track you as you fish, leaving a nice trail you can follow to get back home. But don't rely on GPS exclusively. Carry a map, too. Murphy's Law has a way of popping up on any fishing excursion, but when it happens after dark, it can be especially troublesome.

Finally, take a page from the book of every pilot: Have a plan and tell someone on shore where you'll be going and when you should be back. Night fishing is productive and a lot of fun—but only when you're safe. 🦗



Spinnerbaits and topwaters excel for the night bite. Opt for dark colors that silhouette well against the sky.

PARADISE ON THE PENINSULA

THE ULTIMATE OUTDOORS DESTINATION
IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST,
WASHINGTON'S LONG BEACH PENINSULA
OFFERS 28 MILES OF SURF, SAND AND ADVENTURE.

By M.D. Johnson



Anglers wear out the redtail surfperch, black sea bass and ling cod up and down Long Beach Peninsula.

In 1993, I was a 29-year-old Ohioan who, while attending a writers' conference in Portland, Ore., met a young lady. Julie was a Washington State native and, much to my delight, loved the outdoors. Hunting, fishing, camping, gardening, retrievers, firearms—it was a match made in heaven.

The conference quickly became priority No. 2, replaced by exploring the Pacific Northwest with my impromptu guide. During that week, I was introduced to the Columbia River, the Cascades and

Mount St. Helens, to name just three adventures. But it was the coast, and Washington's Long Beach Peninsula, that captivated me the most. Never had I seen a place so full of outdoor opportunity.

Today, some 30 years later, my then-guide is now my wife, and has been since 1999. There's been quite a bit of water under the proverbial bridges since those early days, but what hasn't changed is my deep-seated love for the Long Beach Peninsula and everything it has to offer the outdoor enthusiast.

WHERE IS THE LBP?

The simplest way to find yourself on Long Beach Peninsula (LBP) is to follow the Washington side of the Columbia River, via State Route 4, west until you almost drive into the Pacific Ocean. That's the LBP.

Actually, depending on where you originate, accessing the LBP is pretty easy from any direction. From Astoria, Ore., drive over the 4.1-mile-long Astoria-Megler Bridge, take a left at the light and drive straight on to Ilwaco. From



there, head north on Highway 101 into Seaview and the heart of Long Beach.

From Washington's Interstate 5, take Allen Street (Exit 39) west from Kelso through Longview onto the Ocean Beach Highway and follow the signs. For those driving from Olympia and Seattle, it's an easy drive south on I-5 to Highway 6, west to Raymond and South Bend on Willapa Bay, and south on Highway 101. At the stop sign, turn right and follow the bay to the LBP.

Long Beach Peninsula is a 28-mile-long sandy spit that runs north and south between the Pacific Ocean to the west and Willapa Bay to the east. Technically, the LBP goes from the town of Ilwaco on the south side to historic Oysterville at the northern end before terminating at Leadbetter Point State Park. Along the way, visitors will pass through the towns of Seaview, Long Beach, Klipsan and Ocean Park, all of which offer lodging, restaurants and everything one might need for a grand outdoor adventure.

A word to the wise: Driving on the beach, which is considered a state highway and has enforced rules, including a 25-mph speed limit, is permissible. However, it's easy to get stuck, expensive to get pulled out and, most of all, flood tides aren't choosy about the type of vehicle they submerge.

EPIC VARIETY

Anglers will find a plethora of saltwater fishing opportunities awaiting on Long Beach Peninsula. The difficult part is deciding what to fish for on any given day.

Redtail surfperch are excellent on the dinner table, range from 10 to 15 inches in length, typically are not too picky about what they eat and are a popular species with anglers on the Peninsula.

Though abundant, redbait surfperch—or simply redbait—can be challenging to find along the 28 miles of beachfront, preferring deep-water slots and troughs as opposed to long, shallow flats. The best “perchers” will venture onto the beach at low tide, drive around to find these troughs, then fish them on the incoming (flood) tide. Wading is the preferred method of accessing these “saltwater crappies,” but always keep safety in mind, as sneaker waves, unseen changes in water depth and rip currents can prove dangerous or even fatal.

Perch tackle can be elemental. A sensitive, medium-heavy- to heavy-power, 9- to 10-foot spinning rod matched with a reel spooled with 20-pound braid gets an angler started. Terminal tackle consists of a “high/low” rig or, better yet, a double-hook, pre-tied crappie rig, with two No. 6 Aberdeen hooks spaced about 12 to 16 inches apart and a 2-ounce sinker clipped to the bottom of the setup.



While stunningly beautiful, Long Beach Peninsula is not without its potential perils. Always be mindful of the tides and powerful “sneaker” waves.

Common baits include razor clam necks (available in freezers up and down the LBP), salad shrimp tossed with garlic powder, nightcrawlers and 2-inch Gulp! Sandworms in the Camo color.

NORTH JETTY

At the southernmost end of the LBP is Cape Disappointment State Park. Here, anglers will find the North Jetty, one of two jetties built at the mouth of the Columbia River (the South Jetty is on the Oregon side) to slow the deposit of sand and sediment into the all-important shipping channel. The jetty, while accessed through the state park, is the property of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Although wildly popular year-round, extreme caution is strongly advised when on the North Jetty. Any number of bad things—slips, falls, shifting boulders, weather, waves—can turn a good day into a not-so-good day rather quickly.

However, fishing opportunities abound on and around the North Jetty. Surfperch are caught on the ocean side, while the river side provides excellent angling for black sea bass, ling cod and, come August and September, fresh-from-the-Pacific silver salmon. Crabbing, too, is quite popular from the North Jetty, with Dungeness seekers plying the waters closer to Waikiki Beach with “crab snares” baited with oily fish, including smelt, anchovies, spawned-out salmon carcasses, and squid or chicken scraps.

CHARTERS FOR HIRE

The ports of Chinook and Ilwaco, both at the southern end of the Peninsula, are hotbeds of charter operations. Whether it's salmon, sturgeon, black sea bass, ling cod or Dungeness crab, there's someone in the ports who can lend a hand, plus everything else you're going to need.

“As far as I'm concerned,” says Butch Smith, owner/operator of CoHo Charters in Ilwaco (cohocharters.com), “we have the best salmon fishing on the West Coast right here in Washington.”

While Smith's fleet offers both halibut and catch-and-release sturgeon angling during the month of June, he's quick to add, “The end of June through July and August is definitely prime time for salmon out of Ilwaco. The Peninsula has a lot to offer the entire family, along with some fantastic fishing. Entertainment, dining, shops. It's all here.”



BEFORE YOU GO

Start planning your Long Beach Peninsula adventure now.

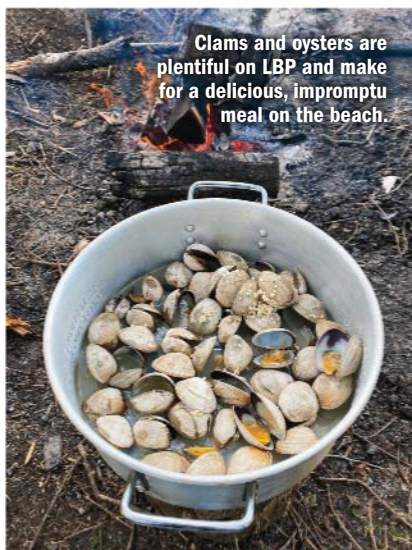
At the south end of the Peninsula, the **Port of Ilwaco** (portofilwaco.com) offers boat moorage, quaint shops and sundry stores, an incredible Saturday open-air market and charter services.

Moving north on the Peninsula, the **Pacific County Tourism Bureau** (visitlongbeachpeninsula.com) office sits at the corner of Highway 101 and Pacific Avenue, the main drag through the city of Long Beach. Here, visitors will find a variety of planning assistance, such as calendars of events, lodging listings, eateries and entertainment.

Just north of the Pacific County Tourism Bureau, the folks at the City of Long Beach (longbeachwa.gov) office can point you in the right direction whether you seek information on fishing, boating, hiking, camping, or anything outdoors.

And finally, no visit to the Peninsula is complete without a stop at **Jack's Country Store** (jackscountystore.com) in Ocean Park. Founded in 1885 while Washington was still a largely uncharted territory, Jack's has everything from a large selection of fishing tackle to fresh Willapa Bay oysters and excellent jalapeno brats—with steamed buns, of course.

Numerous lodging and dining options exist up and down the Peninsula.



Clams and oysters are plentiful on LBP and make for a delicious, impromptu meal on the beach.

FRESHWATER FISHING

Despite being surrounded on three sides by saltwater, the LBP has plenty to offer those looking to wet a line in freshwater.

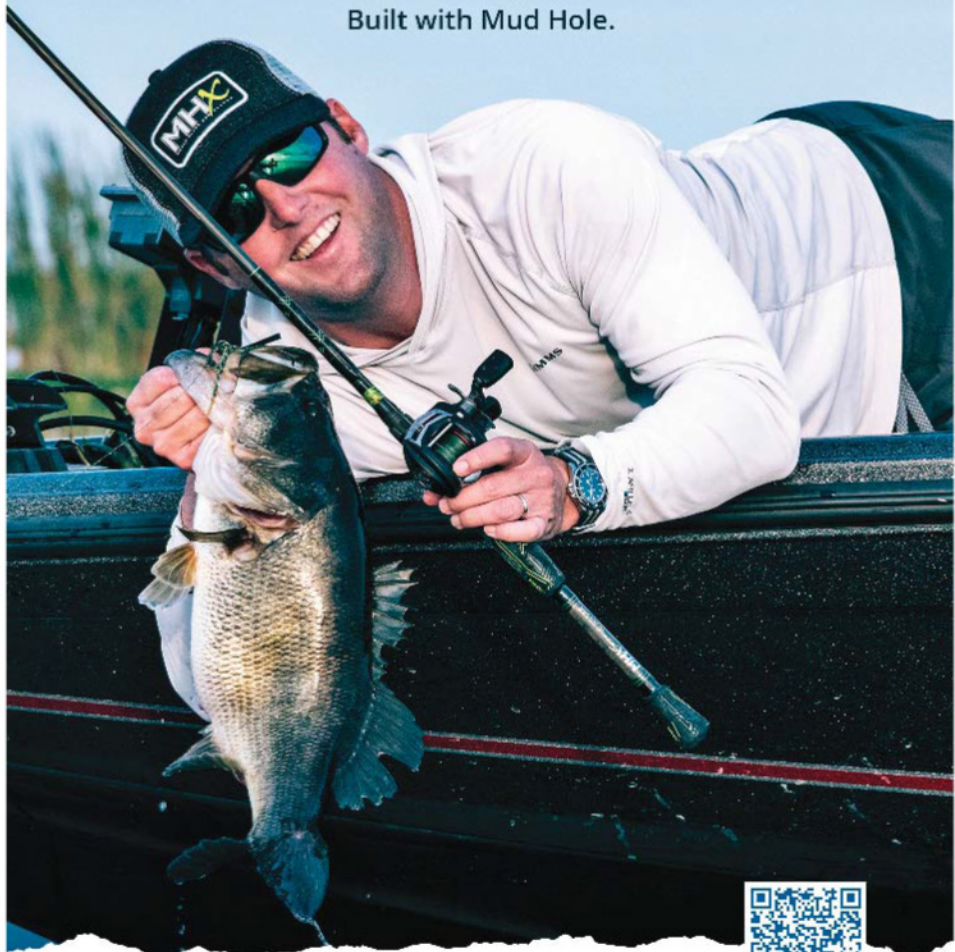
If it's trout you're looking for, these come courtesy of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife in the form of hatchery-raised rainbows stocked throughout the spring, with periodic off-the-schedule stockings as facility production or surpluses allow. These are catchable trout, each measuring roughly 10 inches and weighing half a pound or so. They're excellent on the table and as eager to hit a variety of baits and lures as any swarm of stunted farm-pond bluegills. On the LBP, both Black Lake, near Seaview, and Loomis Lake, 6 miles north of Long Beach proper, receive stockings and can provide great fishing opportunities for the entire family. Black and Loomis lakes have unimproved launch facilities for trailered skiffs, though many anglers find canoes, kayaks and even float tubes to be better options.

Black and Loomis lakes also support good populations of yellow perch, along with largemouth bass, which can weigh 3 to 5 pounds or more. Daybreak often sees an active topwater bite for largemouths (think weedless hollow-body frogs), giving way to mid-sized spinnerbaits and Beetle Spins fished just below the surface as the sun rises. There's an almost infinite number of privately owned smaller ponds up and down the LBP, so if you're the sociable sort, knock on a few doors and ask for permission. On the LBP, you never know what might be biting. 

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FINDING BIG BUCKS AND LEARNING THEIR HABITS.

Story and Photos by Scott Haugen



Bucks are most active in the open during the first few hours of morning and in the late afternoon, though they will often move to seek shade and change beds during midday.

By 3:30 a.m., Dad and I were where we wanted to be. It was Oct. 1, opening day of general rifle season. I had been scouting the area since early August and had seen some good bucks. We assumed the place would be overrun with hunters, but we didn't see a single truck until 10 minutes before legal shooting light. Over the next few minutes, we watched more trucks making their way down various logging roads in Oregon's Cascade Range.

Daylight came and the sun eventually crested the mountains behind us. Dad and I had yet to see a deer, but we dared not move. The logged unit we glassed was tall

with weeds, willows and briars, making it hard to see deer unless they moved. Finally, more than three hours into the morning, a buck materialized from the brown fireweed. Then another ... and then a third. These were the same bucks I'd been seeing all summer when they were in velvet. All the sudden traffic in the woods had put them on edge.

We already had the rifle set up in the shooting sticks. At 305 yards, Dad made a perfect shot. It took us a couple hours to get the buck out, but there was no hurry. This morning belonged to my dad, who was soon to turn 82 years old and had just taken a mature Columbia

blacktail deer, his favorite big-game animal to hunt.

Driving home, we stopped and talked to a fellow hunter parked alongside a logging road. "Man, sure aren't the deer there used to be," he muttered. "I haven't seen a deer all day!" When I asked if he'd been scouting, he said he hadn't been able to find time.

I start serious scouting for bucks around the Fourth of July. By this time, I can tell how big their racks will be and get a good sense of populations. On my first day of scouting the place where Dad shot his deer, I saw 23 bucks, mostly mature ones.

VISIBLE IN VELVET

Whether you hold an early-season archery tag or you'll be hunting the general rifle season later, now is the time to get out and scout. When bucks are in velvet, they're visible. Bucks don't want to damage their valued headgear, which is used not only as protection against predators, but also for fighting with other bucks during the rut and as a status symbol.

Velvet racks are engorged with blood, sensitive and easily damaged from May through mid-August. This is why bucks hang out in the open during the summer more than any other time of the year. I like glassing the first few hours in the morning, when bucks are most active. I also look for velvet bucks in the late afternoon, as soon as draws and hillsides become shaded. It doesn't take a big drop in temperature for bucks to start moving and feeding during the hot summer months.

Scouting during the hottest part of the day can also be productive, because as the sun hits a bedded buck, it will get up to re-bed in the shade. Bucks bedding in open habitat will often change beds multiple times a day, be they blacktails, whitetails or mule deer. To do so, they must move in broad daylight.

Once you've located a buck, study the land. It's critical that you intimately know the land so when hunting season comes you can anticipate where a buck might be. The deer Dad took last season lived in big country, and I knew the only thing that would push that buck out was a cougar. There'd been an early archery season in the area, but it was nearly impossible habitat to bowhunt in the extremely dry conditions, so I ruled out hunting pressure as potentially moving that buck.

I quickly learned where Dad's buck was bedding in the summer; that was easy because it was in the open. But I also knew that as soon as that buck—and the others with it—stripped their velvet, the bedding area would shift into a nearby stand of thick Douglas firs.

In the last week of August, Dad's buck stripped its velvet. I kept scouting, set trail cameras, and found that the buck had multiple trails connecting its bedding and feeding areas. On opening morning, Dad and I set up where multiple feeding trails converged and headed into the thick bedding area. The plan worked.

While hunting bears in early September in Idaho one year, I saw a giant whitetail that had just stripped its

velvet. Every evening, four nights in a row, I saw that buck in the same spot. I drew a November deer tag for the unit and hoped to find the buck during the rut. After three days, I finally found it. The buck was giant, unmistakable. But at more than 800 yards away, I couldn't get a shot. I tried getting closer but ran out of daylight. For two days I looked for the buck, with no luck, but I did shoot another dandy I'd also seen in late summer. Because I knew the area, and where those bucks lived, I filled a tag.

The next summer I scouted for the giant whitetail buck and found it in the same drainage. I drew the tag again, but I was too late. Someone killed it early in the rifle season. The buck carried more than 180 inches of antler. However, that season I killed one of its offspring, another big buck, less than a mile from where the monarch had lived.

Had it not been for summer sightings, I would have never gotten those two bucks. A great deal of learning takes place when scouting in the summer. The more you know the land, the better you'll be able to predict where bucks will be, and most importantly, understand why.



Finding bucks is only a starting point. Next, figure out what it is about the area that has attracted them and whether those features will be relevant in hunting season.

WHERE TO START

When hunting new land for the first time, try to scout it in the summer, when bucks are most visible. So many times, in so many states, I found more bucks in a single day of summer scouting than I saw during the entire time I hunted them. On July 10 one summer, I saw 17 bucks. I hunted that area for 28 days and saw just one legal buck the entire season. Hunting pressure was what I blamed for keeping bucks in deep cover, moving only during darkness. Had I not seen them in the summer, I wouldn't have thought there was a deer within miles, as sign was sparse in the thick habitat.

Summer scouting reveals how many bucks are in an area and how big they are. It provides a confident starting point come hunting season.

One July I was scouting out of state. I found some nice bucks, one whopper, and felt confident they'd be there come the Sept. 1 archery opener. I went back into the area three days before the season and spent hours poring over trail-camera footage and scouting. The target buck I was hoping for showed up nearly every day on one camera or another. Then, the day before the season, the buck stripped its velvet. I hunted from a ground blind on opening morning, but the buck failed to walk the trail it had been using every day for the past two weeks.

Figuring the buck would soon be nocturnal, I made a bold move and re-located my pop-up blind very near to where I thought the buck's core bedding area was. Sure enough, in the closing minutes of legal shooting light, the big buck came down the trail and I arrowed it. Had I stayed hunting where I was, it



High Definition video captured by the Browning Dark Ops Pro DCL is a key component to the author's summer scouting strategy.

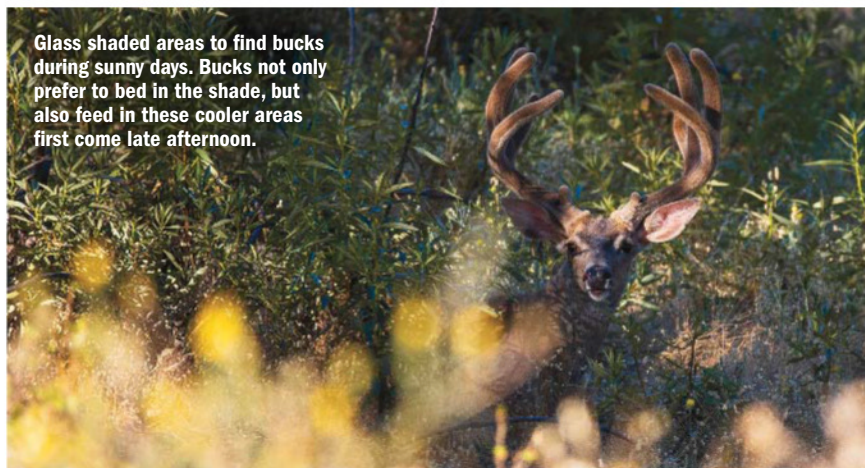
BROWNING, CAMERA, ACTION

Capture valuable video with the Dark Ops Pro DCL.

In some of my deer hunting areas I run more than two-dozen trail cameras year-round. In distant places I'll be hunting, I try to make a road trip, scout and set out trail cameras in early to mid-July. When I return for the hunt, I gather cameras and study footage on my laptop.

Eight months ago I started using Browning Dark Ops Pro DCL cameras (\$179.99; browningtrailcameras.com). I run all my cameras on video mode to get the full story. High Definition (1080p) video captures movements, behaviors and sounds that still images can't. With the ability to increase the length of the video clips captured by the Dark Ops, these cameras have revealed a lot about deer—and predators. Think a 10-second video shows a lot? Let it run for 2 minutes and learn exactly what deer are eating.

I'm impressed by the stunning HD clarity of the Pro DCL and the camera's ability to capture discrete movements in the night. I love the strap system, tilt bracket and how easy it is to confirm the framing of shots. I've had multiple Browning trail cameras set out and have not had to change the batteries. They've been covered in snow, experienced weeks of torrential downpours and weathered many days of freezing temperatures. Through all this, the functionality of the cameras held up perfectly and the batteries kept working, capturing thousands of high-quality video clips.



Glass shaded areas to find bucks during sunny days. Bucks not only prefer to bed in the shade, but also feed in these cooler areas first come late afternoon.

would have been dark by the time the buck reached me. Locating the buck in summer when it was in velvet, along with reading sign during the time of the hunt and understanding habitat and buck behavior, helped me fill a tag.

Another year I held a general-season archery tag in northern California. The buck a buddy and I caught on trail camera traveled virtually the same trail at the same time in the morning for three weeks prior to the hunt. But on the August morning I hunted from a ground blind, it didn't show up. By 11 o'clock it was more than 100 degrees outside the blind.

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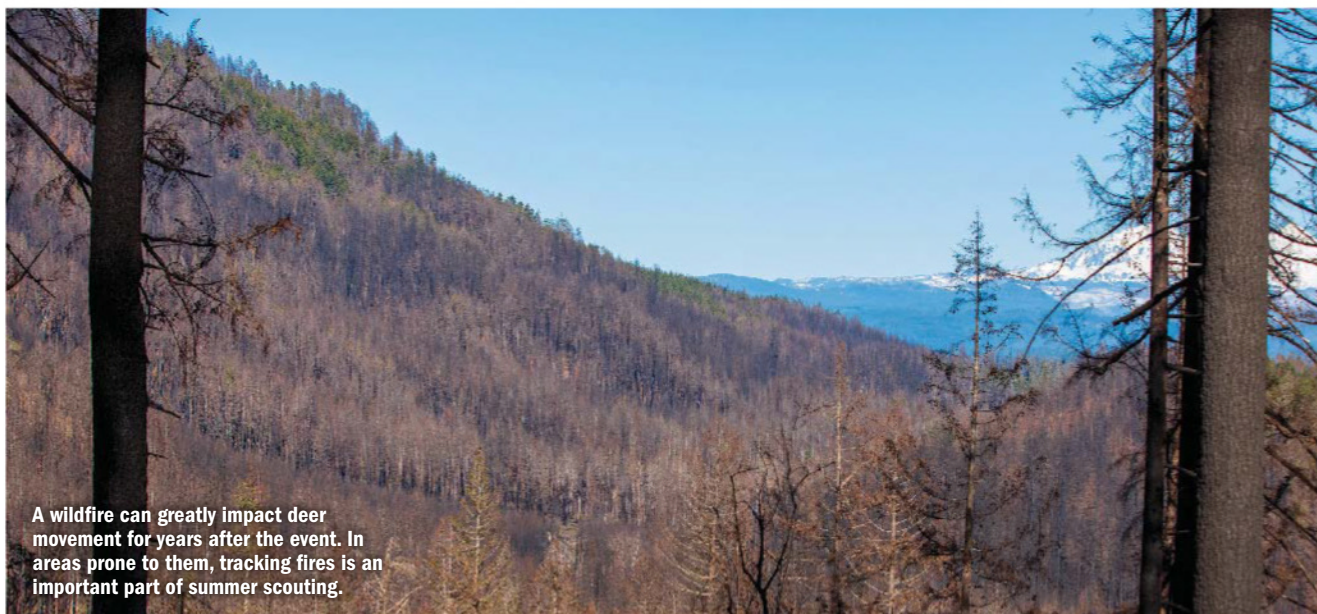
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A wildfire can greatly impact deer movement for years after the event. In areas prone to them, tracking fires is an important part of summer scouting.

I was soaked in sweat. The next day was supposed to be even hotter, so we moved the blind a couple hundred yards up the oak-studded hillside.

The move paid off; around 9 o'clock the big buck walked by, and I filled my tag. Our thinking was simple. Hotter days meant deer would be seeking cooler conditions, sooner. Here, where water was lacking, that meant heading to the crests of hills where they could bed in the shade and catch uplifting thermals to cool them.

If hunting migratory deer late in the season, summer scouting might not apply because the deer won't be where you'll be hunting. Unless you can break away to walk the land in the summer, you'll be learning the land while simultaneously hunting. In this situation, try setting trail cameras and checking them in the middle of the day. Spend mornings and evenings hunting, and the middle of the day checking cameras and looking for sign. Never head back to camp for a nap when hunting unfamiliar land. There's always something to be learned, and the best time to do this is in the middle of the day when deer are hunkered down.

I've had good success over the years scouting wintering grounds in the summer then returning to hunt in October and November. This is where summer scouting is all about learning what you can about the land, not necessarily looking for deer. Look for old rubs that reveal buck movement in the area during the

rut, worn trails and does. I've filled a lot of deer tags over the decades thanks to does I found while scouting in the summer. A lot of homebody does are visited by migratory bucks, so don't overlook the value of finding does.

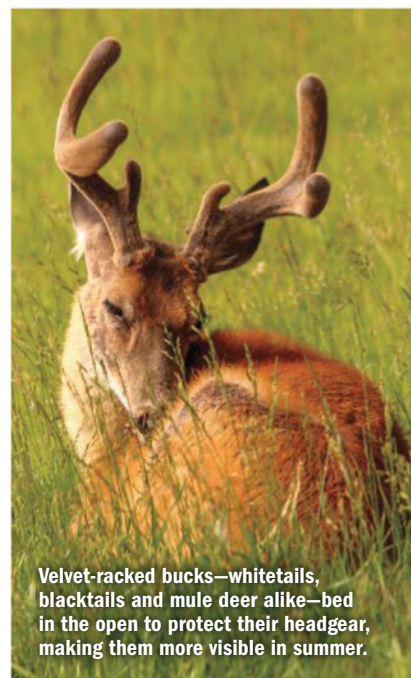
A CHANGING LAND

Scouting unfamiliar land helps you learn it, but sometimes you show up to hunt familiar places and are caught by surprise. Recently, I encountered a drastic change in vegetation due to extreme summer heat and drought. Rather than massive stands of blackberries thriving—the soft vines of which deer love feeding on in late summer and early fall—the ground was overrun with tall grass and noxious weeds. Though the new vegetation was good for bedding cover, it choked out the food. With so little food and no water in the small creek at the bottom of the draw, the deer left. Although I killed a buck that season, it was 3 miles from where I normally hunted.

Clear-cut logging has also surprised me more than once when I've rolled into familiar hunting grounds and found the stands of timber gone. A change in such landscapes not only forces deer to relocate bedding areas, but it can also impact where they feed, thus what trails they use to travel from the new bedding areas to feeding zones. It can take some time, even years, to learn where deer go during such a disruption. Mind you, it's not a bad thing. I'm all for logging

because it creates the best deer and elk habitat where I hunt, but learning new land and finding deer amid such changes can be difficult.

A couple winters ago one of my hunting areas was obliterated by an ice storm. So many trees and big branches fell that it impeded deer travel routes. In fact, it shut down deer travel to the point they had to relocate to another drainage. Sometimes natural disasters like snow and ice storms, even high winds or tornados, can influence where deer live and how they



Velvet-racked bucks—whitetails, blacktails and mule deer alike—bed in the open to protect their headgear, making them more visible in summer.



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move. It's no secret many old whitetail and blacktail bucks live in a very small area, and if that habitat is devastated by sudden environmental changes, the deer will move, sometimes miles.

Throughout the West where I do most of my deer hunting, wildfires have greatly changed the face of the land in recent years. We've never dealt with wildfires to this degree. Today, large-scale wildfires are commonplace, and I'm learning a lot about deer movement based on burns, the intensity of burns and where deer are moving in response to them. But most importantly, I'm understanding why deer are choosing to live where they do in their respective habitats, and it's helping me find more bucks.

In your summer scouting efforts, be sure to track wildfires if looking to head on a hunt out West. Big fires are easily tracked online, as well as by making calls to regional forestry and wildlife offices. If you're planning on hunting an area that's near a wildfire, or in a region where wildfires have occurred in recent past, be prepared with a backup plan. Every fall, areas are closed right before, and even during, a hunting season due to fire. Having another place to hunt is wise.

With so much land shut down by wildfires, more hunters are forced to hunt in closer proximity to one another. Hunting pressure, be it forced by fires or not, is something that will impact buck movement. Most bucks will go nocturnal with the onset of human intrusion, often in a matter of hours, and killing such bucks becomes nearly impossible.

ELEMENTS OF ATTRACTION

The number of bucks I've found during summer scouting and then killed is surprisingly low, but I've filled a lot of tags

in the same areas where I'd seen big bucks in the summer. I mostly hunt blacktails in thick cover, Western whitetails in big country and mule deer that move. Though I may not find a target buck when I'm hunting, I'm confident the areas I have chosen to hunt hold big bucks. This is because I'm hunting where big bucks want to be, and summer scouting provides me with that critical information.

I've learned two key points over the years when targeting big bucks. One, a mature buck is never anywhere by mistake, except during the rut when some deer seem to lose all common sense. And two, when a big buck is taken out of an area, another mature buck will move in. When you see this scenario

unfold, take time to closely study the area to see what is attracting mature bucks. It's likely a combination of prime feed, cover, multiple escape routes from bedding areas, multiple trails connecting bedding and feeding areas, and does.

If you kill a big buck you've never before seen, figure out what brought it there. It could be feed, cover, predators, hunting pressure, even a severe storm could have pushed it. At the very least, plan on hunting that same spot at the same time the next season, for if all factors remain constant, another big buck will be there. Maybe you'll even find it when scouting in the summer.

One July a buddy from Wyoming called, excited about a double-drop-time



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The author tagged two nice whitetails in consecutive years at the same spot due to spotting a giant buck in summer and focusing his efforts on the area.

mule deer that had just run in front of his truck in the middle of the night. I'd drawn a tag for the area and planned to hunt with him. He set out trail cameras and caught the buck many times, always at night. Then in September it disappeared for more than a month. We eventually found the buck and I shot it on opening day, less than a mile from where it hung out all summer. That buck liked the area, and we were hunting there because of the summer intel we had gathered.

Summer scouting takes effort and sweat, but if you want to elevate your deer hunting to the next level, this is the place to start. Big deer are smart, and they're most visible in summer. Now is the time to find them. **(H)**

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V218

Door County DREAMS

WISCONSIN'S DOOR COUNTY ON LAKE MICHIGAN OFFERS BASS ANGLERS
**EXCEPTIONAL SMALLMOUTH FISHING WITH CHANCES
AT BEHEMOTH BRONZEBACKS.**

By Drew Warden



In spring and early summer, the Door Peninsula's shallow bays attract loads of smallmouths as they prepare for their annual spawn.

I was halfway through a slow, steady retrieve when my line suddenly pulled tight, a noticeable bend forming in my rod. Something in the shallow, clear waters surrounding the Sister Islands had inhaled my black marabou jig. I set the hook and felt a weighty fish dart off in another direction. A short but dogged fight later, I had a chunky smallmouth bass in hand—my first of the day. After a few quick photos, I slid the feisty fish back into the cool water, and my boatmates congratulated me on my first Door County smallmouth.

It was mid-June, and our group of anglers was on Lake Michigan's Green Bay for two reasons: to catch lots of smallmouth bass and to test Humminbird's new MEGA Live Imaging TargetLock system before its official launch. The new accessory lets anglers lock their MEGA Live Imaging on structure while being free to use their trolling motor for navigation. We'd see it in action over two days of excellent fishing.

I spent most of the morning with fellow anglers Ryan Chuckel and Bryan Brasher, catching several nice smallmouths on swimbaits and hair jigs. After lunch, I hopped onto Capt. Adam Rasmussen's boat. A Door County charter captain for the past eight years and owner of Rasmussen Outdoors Guide Service and Salmon Depot Charters, the guy has the fishery around Sister Bay dialed in. We caught more bass around the islands before fishing the docks along Sister Bay's shoreline. We eventually stumbled onto a big school of smallmouths, ranging from dinks to decent fish around 3 pounds. I

don't know how many we caught that afternoon, but the almost-every-cast action was a fun way to close out my first day fishing on Green Bay.

Most serious bass anglers know of Door County. The area has received lots of attention for its abundant, spirited smallmouths, especially those exceeding 6 pounds. In 2014, Bassmaster crowned Door County's Sturgeon Bay the nation's best bass fishing "lake." The ranking was justified. From 2012 to 2014, winning total weights for the two-day, 10-fish bag in the annual spring Sturgeon Bay Open Bass tournament were each more than 60 pounds. The average per-fish weight for winning teams across those three years was nearly 6 1/2 pounds, and the largest smallmouth caught weighed 8.45 pounds.

The fishery has declined a bit from those peak levels, but fishing remains very good. A 50-plus-pound total bag still typically wins the pre-spawn tournaments in May. And behemoth bass, like the 8.78-pound monster caught in 2018, still show up on occasion. This level of fishing begs the question: What is it about Door County waters that make them so good for smallmouths?

"We just have all the pieces of the puzzle here, I would say," notes Scott Hansen, a Wisconsin DNR fisheries biologist in Door County for more than 15 years. "All of the components for the different life-history stages. Good spawning habitat. Some protected areas where they're allowed to spawn and where the young—the nursery areas, so to speak—can occur."

Medium and medium-light spinning rods of at least 7 feet are needed for the long casts and finesse baits used to catch spring smallmouths.



DREW WARDEN (2)

Green Bay's forage base is also astounding. Its fertile waters offer ample zooplankton for young fish. Adults, meanwhile, gorge themselves on a buffet that Hansen says includes crayfish, smelt, perch, minnows, invasive alewives and the ubiquitous—and similarly invasive—round gobies, which smallmouths love.

Since gobies were first discovered in the Great Lakes, Door County's smallmouth bass have grown considerably longer on average. Fish that once took seven years to reach the 14-inch legal size limit are now doing so in as little as five years, sometimes less. While Hansen hesitates to credit gobies exclusively for this growth, he says it's hard to ignore their potential influence. With its big fish and scenic views, it's clear why Door County is a bucket-list spot for many bass anglers.

THE BITE WINDOW

Although Sturgeon Bay gets much of the press, it barely scratches the surface of what's available. Door County boasts 300 miles of shoreline along the Door Peninsula. Prime fishing extends from Little Sturgeon Bay on the Green Bay side north to Washington Island and then back south along the Lake Michigan side to roughly Jacksonport.

Despite its northern latitude, the open-water season is relatively lengthy. Weather, naturally, is the determining factor early and late.

"Depending on the year, you can start catching them middle to end of April, but for the most part, it starts the beginning of May—like the traditional Wisconsin opener—and then all the way until it gets too cold that they quit biting, or it freezes," Rasmussen says. "I've caught them as late as December."

Spring and fall are traditional big-fish time periods, with Rasmussen favoring spring. His biggest-ever smallmouth weighed 7 pounds, 10 ounces and came in the second week of May. He also caught a 7-pound, 4-ounce giant one fall. Summer months, meanwhile, offer numbers and quality. I caught my personal-best bronzeback, a 5-pound, 13-ounce fish, in the middle of June. Rasmussen says 3- to 4 1/2-pounders are common, and there are good numbers of 5- to 6-pound bass.

"Sixes have just turned into good ones," he says. "Like you don't get too excited until they're in that high 6- or

7-pound range. Legit 7-pounders ... I fish here 80 to 100 days a year, and if I see like two of those a season, that's probably about right."

Action begins in early May on southern Door County's Green Bay side, where waters warm sooner. Pre-spawn—and eventually spawning—smallmouths invade rocky and sandy shorelines and flats in the shallow bays lining the peninsula.

Little Sturgeon Bay, Rileys Bay and Sand Bay are among the first to warm, as are Sturgeon Bay and Sawyer Harbor. From the middle to the end of May, Rasmussen reports, northern areas like Fish Creek, Egg Harbor, Ephraim and Sister Bay heat up. Lake Michigan bays, such as Rowleys, North and Moonlight, typically have a later spawn than those in Green Bay, as do those around Washington Island.



Door County offers stunning views of its many lighthouses on Lake Michigan. Visitors can hike, bike or paddle to take in the sights.

DOOR COUNTY TRIP PLANNER

Multi-species fishing and more on the peninsula

Capt. Adam Rasmussen runs his charter business out of Sturgeon Bay. A testament to Door County's multi-species diversity, Rasmussen offers smallmouth and walleye trips through his Rasmussen Outdoors Guide Service (rasmussenoutdoors.com) and trout and salmon trips through his Salmon Depot Charter Fishing (salmondepot.com). Book him for a no-hassles adventure and to shorten your learning curve on the water.

DIY anglers should visit Howie's Tackle (howiestackle.com) for local info and to stock up on necessary supplies. There are ample boat ramps on both the Green Bay and Lake Michigan sides of the Door Peninsula, along with a few fishing piers and shore access points for shore-bound anglers. The Wisconsin DNR (dnr.wisconsin.gov) has an interactive map showing launches, shore fishing access and more. Also, bone up on regulations, which can vary.

If taking a break from fishing, there's plenty in Door County to keep you busy. State parks offer hiking and biking trails, and there are several golf courses, with some offering incredible views. You'll find kayak and paddleboard rentals for sightseeing, or there are museums and historical landmarks if that's more your speed.

For fine dining, I heartily recommend Boathouse on the Bay, which offers excellent food and a killer view of scenic Sister Bay. Area supper clubs, a distinctly Wisconsin experience, are another option. Or consider taking in a traditional fish boil, a Scandinavian tradition that's been part of Door County culture for decades. There are breweries and wineries to explore, and area lodging options are almost endless, ranging from quaint bed-and-breakfast accommodations to expansive resorts. Get information on all the above at Destination Door County (doorcounty.com).



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June is a big spawning month, but by mid-July, Rasmussen says most fish head to summertime haunts in deeper water, where they look for structure—reefs, boulders, drop-offs and more. He says fall bass move deeper still, schooling near steep transitions. They'll be on 20-, 30- or 40-foot breaklines, sometimes even deeper.

While most of Door County is open to year-round catch-and-release smallmouth fishing before the Lake Michigan harvest opener in early May, Washington Island and the Mink River are not. The Mink River is a fish refuge downstream to the mouth in Rowleys Bay from the first Sunday in March until June 15, with no fishing for any species allowed. Meanwhile, angling for bass specifically is prohibited within a quarter mile of all islands in the Town of Washington Island from early March to July 1.

What's nice about the Door County fishery, though, is that the area's smallies don't all spawn simultaneously. The

spawn's timing varies from bay to bay along the Door Peninsula and even from one part of an individual bay to another. In fact, Wisconsin DNR research suggests Green Bay smallmouth populations are isolated from one another and genetically different. Anglers can usually target pre-spawn fish somewhere, even if other bass are on beds. Most bays have boat ramps in individual townships, so lengthy runs across open water to target pre-spawners are rarely required. Just hitch up your trailer and launch where you want to fish.

A FINESSE GAME

In Green Bay and the main lake's clear waters, spinning rods and finesse tactics reign supreme. Light tackle, light line and long rods shine all season but especially early when long casts and low-impact presentations are required. Marabou jigs, Ned rigs and 2- to 3-inch tubes and swimbaits weighing 1/16, 1/8 or 3/16 ounce are good springtime bait options, as are jerkbaits.

Rasmussen likes a 7-foot-3-inch medium-light rod for hair jigs, swimbaits and Ned rigs, and a 7-foot medium-action rod for tubes. He prefers the 13 Fishing Aerios, but any 2000- or 3000-size reel with a quality drag works. He spools up with 8-pound Sufix NanoBraid or 10-pound Sufix 131 braid with a 6- to 10-pound Sufix Advance fluorocarbon leader, depending on water clarity.

Retrieve swimbaits and hair jigs slowly but steadily; Rasmussen says proper retrieve speed is highly specific and varies daily. When he guides, he usually fishes along with clients, in part so they can see how he's reeling. He says fish are often that specific in their preferences. Meanwhile, work Ned rigs and tubes just off the bottom, occasionally making contact.

These setups work in mid- to late summer, too. All that changes are the places smallmouths are found and the weight of the baits needed to reach them. Excluding a small window after spawning, where bass stick around the shallows and can be caught on 1/2-ounce spinnerbaits, Rasmussen says most fish push out to structure in 12 to 25 feet of water. For these depths, he bumps up to 1/4-, 3/8- and 1/2-ounce jig heads on swimbaits.

In July, drop-shot rigs become key for Rasmussen as marabou jigs fade away. For plastics, he suggests 2- to 3-inch floating baits mimicking gobies, like Berkley's PowerBait MaxScent Flat Worm or Z-Man's Trick ShotZ. He likes a VMC Redline Finesse Neko hook, which allows for nose-hooking or threading baits on the hook. On calm days, he rigs a 1/4-ounce drop-shot weight; in heavy wind, he prefers a 3/8-ounce weight.

Rasmussen turns to a temperature gauge, his FishWeather app and LakeMaster maps to find the warmest water and highlight desired depths in the spring. But he mostly uses his eyes (and quality polarized sunglasses) to find fish and ideal habitat. In summer and fall, electronics play a larger role. When fish move deeper, he uses Side Imaging to find the big boulders smallmouths love and utilizes MEGA Live Imaging to see if fish are present. If not, he moves until he finds them. When he does, he uses TargetLock to watch fish while using Spot-Lock to anchor in place and fight the wind.



Small swimbaits on light jigs and Ned rigs are good baits for smallmouths in shallow bays. When fish move deeper, try drop-shotting.

Scientific Discovery Stuns Doctors

Biblical Bush Relieves Joint Discomfort in as Little as 5 Days

Legendary “special herb” gives new life to old joints without clobbering you. So safe you can take it every day without worry.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 54 million Americans are suffering from joint discomfort.

This epidemic rise in aching joints has led to a search for alternative treatments—as many sufferers want relief without the harmful side effects of conventional “solutions.”

Leading the way from nature’s pharmacy is the new “King of Oils” that pioneering Florida MD and anti-aging specialist Dr. Al Sears calls “the most significant breakthrough I’ve ever found for easing joint discomfort.”

Biblical scholars treasured this “holy oil.” Ancient healers valued it more than gold for its medicinal properties. Marco Polo prized it as he blazed the Silk Road. And Ayurvedic practitioners, to this day, rely on it for healing and detoxification.

Yet what really caught Dr. Sears’ attention is how modern medical findings now prove this “King of Oils” can powerfully...

Deactivate 400 Agony-Causing Genes

If you want genuine, long-lasting relief for joint discomfort, you must address inflammation. Too much inflammation will wreak havoc on joints, break down cartilage and cause unending discomfort. This is why so many natural joint relief solutions try to stop one of the main inflammatory genes called COX-2.

But the truth is, there are hundreds of agony-causing genes like COX-2, 5-LOX, iNOS, TNK, Interleukin 1,6,8 and many more—and stopping just one of them won’t give you all the relief you need.

Doctors and scientists now confirm the “King of Oils”—Indian Frankincense—deactivates not one but 400 agony-causing genes. It does so by shutting down the inflammation command center called Nuclear Factor Kappa Beta.

NK-Kappa B is like a switch that can turn 400 inflammatory genes “on” or “off.” A study in *Journal of Food Lipids* reports that Indian Frankincense powerfully deactivates NF-Kappa B. This journal adds that Indian Frankincense is “so powerful it shuts down the pathway triggering aching joints.”

Relief That’s 10 Times Faster... and in Just 5 Days

Many joint sufferers prefer natural solutions but say they work too slowly. Take the best-seller glucosamine. Good as it is, the National Institutes of Health reports that glucosamine



The active ingredient in Mobilify soothes aching joints in as little as 5 days

takes as long as eight weeks to work.

Yet in a study published in the *International Journal of Medical Sciences*, 60 patients with stiff knees took 100 mg of Indian Frankincense or a placebo daily for 30 days. Remarkably, Indian Frankincense “significantly improved joint function and relieved discomfort in as early as five days.” That’s relief that is 10 times faster than glucosamine.

78% Better Relief Than the Most Popular Joint Solution

In another study, people suffering from discomfort took a formula containing Indian Frankincense and another natural substance or a popular man-made joint solution every day for 12 weeks.

The results? Stunning! At the end of the study, 64% of those taking the Indian Frankincense formula saw their joint discomfort go from moderate or severe to mild or no discomfort. Only 28% of those taking the placebo got the relief they wanted. So Indian Frankincense delivered relief at a 78% better clip than the popular man-made formula.

In addition, in a randomized, double blind, placebo controlled study, patients suffering from knee discomfort took Indian Frankincense or a placebo daily for eight weeks. Then the groups switched and got the opposite intervention. Every one of the patients taking Indian Frankincense got relief. That’s a 100% success rate—numbers unseen by typical solutions.

In addition, BMJ (formerly the *British Medical Journal*) reports that Indian Frankincense is safe for joint relief — so safe and natural you can take it every day.

Because of clinically proven results like this, Dr. Sears has made Indian Frankincense the centerpiece of a new natural joint relief formula called **Mobilify**.

Great Results for Knees, Hips, Shoulders and Joints

Joni D. says, “**Mobilify** really helps with soreness, stiffness and mild temporary pain. The day after taking it, I was completely back to normal—so fast.” Shirley M. adds, “Two weeks after taking **Mobilify**, I had no knee discomfort and could go up and down the staircase.” Larry M. says, “After a week and a half of taking **Mobilify**, the discomfort, stiffness and minor aches went away... it’s almost like being reborn.” And avid golfer Dennis H. says, “I can attest to **Mobilify** easing discomfort to enable me to pursue my golfing days. Definitely one pill that works for me out of the many I have tried.”

How to Get Mobilify

To secure the hot, new **Mobilify** formula, buyers should contact the Sears Health Hotline at **1-800-333-6172** TODAY. “It’s not available in retail stores yet,” says Dr. Sears. “The Hotline allows us to ship directly to the customer.” Dr. Sears feels so strongly about **Mobilify**, all orders are backed by a 100% money-back guarantee. “Just send me back the bottle and any unused product within 90 days from purchase date, and I’ll send you all your money back.”

Use Promo Code **MBGF523** when you call to secure your supply of **Mobilify**. Lines are frequently busy and due to heightened demand, supplies are limited. To secure your supply today, call **1-800-333-6172**.

In fall, larger 4-inch swimbaits and Alabama rigs shine. For A-rigs, Rasmussen relies on a 13 Fishing Envy 7-foot-11-inch crankbait rod and a 20-pound fluorocarbon leader. Smallmouths are typically even deeper, so he'll drive around in 30 to 40 feet of water with 2D sonar or Side Imaging until he finds them. He advises anglers doing similarly not to place deep-caught fall fish in livewells or keep them out of the water too long, though, as it can kill them.

During the spawn, Rasmussen avoids targeting smallmouths on beds. First, he doesn't wish to hinder their reproductive success. Second, it's still possible—and often more productive—to catch pre-spawn bass in June.

Nest fishing is a complex, controversial topic. Most studies suggest that pulling a male smallmouth off a nest he's guarding reduces the probability of that individual nest's success. Brood predators, like other sunfish or gobies, consume some or all the eggs or larvae, with more typically consumed the longer the bass is off the bed. If all eggs or larvae are eaten, that nest fails, and if enough are lost in the male's absence, he may abandon the nest.

Still, research offers conflicting opinions on population-level effects of nest fishing, and no regulations (yet) prohibit it. If you decide to target smallmouths on beds, minimize potential negative impacts. Use artificial instead of live baits to avoid deeply hooking fish. Immediately release bass where caught. Move to a new

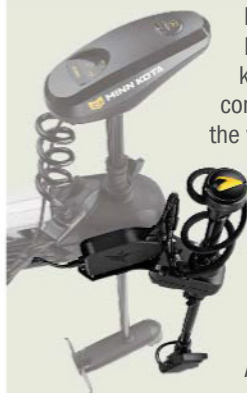


Five-pound bass are not uncommon in Door County, as the author discovered.

SMALLMOUTH SECRET WEAPONS

Gear to make bronzeback fishing more productive

Quality spinning rods, reels, lines and finesse baits are a good place to start for a Door County smallmouth adventure. But a few key items can make your trip even better.



HUMMINBIRD MEGA LIVE IMAGING TARGETLOCK

New MEGA Live Imaging TargetLock (\$1,500 for adapter kit/\$3,000 with transducer; humminbird.johnsonoutdoors.com) lets you lock live-imaging sonar on a particular structure in the water. You can freely drift or use your trolling motor to move or anchor in place via Spot-Lock, and TargetLock automatically keeps your transducer pointed at the target. On windy days while targeting offshore boulders, Capt. Adam Rasmussen uses this feature so he can focus on smallmouth fishing without worrying about boat control or manually adjusting Live Imaging. We also used it in shallower water in June to stay on a school of fish hanging near a dock wall in Sister Bay. Additionally, TargetLock's MEGA Live Sweep function provides a constantly updating 120-degree view ahead of you, while

MinnKota Steer lets you control trolling motor and MEGA Live Imaging direction simultaneously. It's a potent tool on Green Bay or anywhere you choose to fish.

FIN-NOR CLEAT SUNGLASSES

Polarized sunglasses are essential tools for Door County smallmouths. I wish I'd had Fin-Nor's new Cleat sunglasses (\$189; fin-nor.com) last year. They've become my go-to due to their exceptional comfort and ability to help me see into the water. The Cleat glasses have an innovative venting system, an adjustable nose pad and integrated spring hinges for a snug fit on different face shapes and sizes. I love the built-in peripheral shields, which block extra light from the sides, making the view beneath the surface even clearer. They're available in several frame and lens colors.



BERKLEY POWERBAIT MAXSCENT

Berkley states that its MaxScent products catch 45 percent more fish than its original PowerBait. It's especially effective on finicky fish and when using finesse presentations, like a drop-shot or Ned rig. MaxScent features a unique water-absorbent PVC construction that releases a super-charged scent field in the water to convert bass looks into bites. And, unlike other scent products, it doesn't dry out. The PowerBait MaxScent Flat Worm (\$9/10-pack; berkley-fishing.com) is a great drop-shot plastic, while the MaxScent Lil' General (\$9/8-pack) is perfect for Ned rigs. The MaxScent Tube (\$9/8-pack) is another good option for Door County smallies.



area after catching a couple; that leaves at least some nearby nests undisturbed.

Many anglers still feel that Wisconsin's current 9-pound, 1-ounce smallmouth record, taken from Oneida County's Indian Lake in 1950, could fall in Door County waters. Green Bay certainly has the forage base to support such growth. Five years ago, one fish came within ounces

of it, and bass approaching 8 pounds are still occasionally caught in spring tournaments. If anglers keep practicing ethical catch-and-release fishing, and key habitat is maintained, the possibility is there. Until then, anglers can wear themselves out on quality bass with a chance at a true giant, all in a setting that offers picture-perfect views. 

Fish Oil Failure Shines Grim Light on America's Memory Crisis

America's Top Memory M.D. Reveals Why Fish Oil Doesn't Protect You from Senior Moments – and the #1 Alternative

More than 16 million Americans suffer from age-associated cognitive impairment, and according to nationwide research, these numbers are only rising.

Thankfully, anti-aging specialist and best-selling author Dr. Al Sears says there's an easy way to banish senior moments and brain fog for good.

It's a safe, natural compound called DHA – one of the building blocks of your brain. It helps children grow their brains significantly bigger during development. And in adults, it protects brain cells from dying as they get older.

For years, most people thought fish oil was the best available source of DHA...

But industrial fish farming practices have depleted the nutritional content of nearly every fish oil you can buy.

Today, roughly 20 million Americans are wasting their money on fish oils that hardly do anything at all.

And since they think they are addressing the problem, fish oil's failure has led to America's memory crisis continuing to grow practically unchecked.

Fortunately, Dr. Sears says, "there's still hope for seniors. Getting more DHA can make a life-changing difference for your mental clarity, focus, and memory."

Dr. Sears, a highly-acclaimed, board-certified doctor— who has published more than 500 studies and written four bestselling books — says we should be able to get enough DHA in our diets... but we don't anymore.

"For thousands of years, fish were a great natural source of DHA. But due to industrial fish farming practices, the fish we eat and the fish oils you see at the store are no longer as nutrient-dense as they once were," he explains.

DHA is backed by hundreds of studies for supporting razor-sharp focus, extraordinary mental clarity, and a lightning quick memory... especially in seniors.

So, if you're struggling with focus, mental clarity, or memory as you get older...

Dr. Sears recommends a different approach.

THE SECRET TO A LASTING MEMORY

Research has shown our paleo ancestors were able to grow bigger and smarter brains by eating foods rich in one ingredient — DHA.

"Our hippocampus thrives off DHA, and grows because of it," explains Dr. Sears. "Without DHA, our brains would shrink, and our memories would quickly fade."

A groundbreaking study from the University of Alberta confirmed this. Animals given a diet rich in DHA saw a 29% boost in their hippocampus — the part of the brain responsible for learning and memory. As a result, these animals became smarter.

Another study on more than 1,500 seniors found that those whose brains were deficient in DHA had significantly smaller brains — a characteristic of accelerated aging and a weakened memory.

PEOPLE'S BRAINS ARE SHRINKING AND THEY DON'T EVEN KNOW IT

Dr. Sears uncovered that sometime during the 1990s, fish farmers stopped giving their animals a natural, DHA-rich diet and began feeding them a diet that was 70% vegetarian.

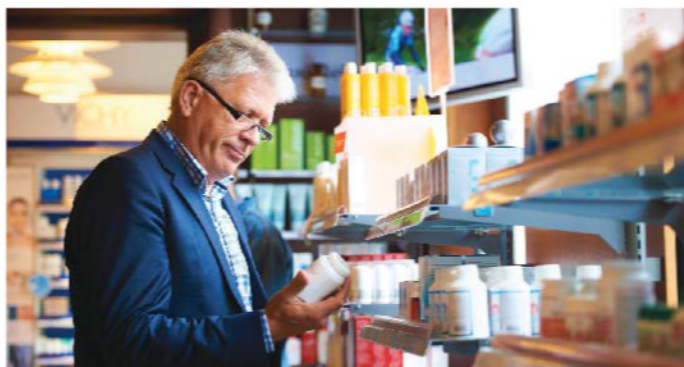
"It became expensive for farmers to feed fish what they'd eat in the wild," explains Dr. Sears. "But in order to produce DHA, fish need to eat a natural, marine diet, like the one they'd eat in the wild."

"Since fish farmers are depriving these animals of their natural diet, DHA is almost nonexistent in the oils they produce."

"And since more than 80% of fish oil comes from farms, it's no wonder the country is experiencing a memory crisis. Most people's brains are shrinking and they don't even know it."

So, what can people do to improve their memory and brain function most effectively.

Dr. Sears says, "Find a quality DHA supplement that doesn't



Why the 'brain fuel' ingredient in fish oil is slowly drying up.

come from a farmed source. That will protect your brain cells and the functions they serve well into old age."

Dr. Sears and his team worked tirelessly for over two years developing a unique brain-boosting formula called **Omega Rejuvenol**.

It's made from the most powerful source of DHA in the ocean, squid and krill — two species that cannot be farmed.

According to Dr. Sears, these are the purest and most potent sources of DHA in the world, because they haven't been tampered with. "**Omega Rejuvenol** is sourced from the most sustainable fishery in Antarctica. You won't find this oil in any stores."

MORE IMPRESSIVE RESULTS

Already, the formula has sold more than 850,000 bottles. And for a good reason, too. Satisfied customers can't stop raving about the memory-boosting benefits of quality-sourced DHA oil.

"The first time I took it, I was amazed. The brain fog I struggled with for years was gone within 24 hours. The next day, I woke up with the energy and mental clarity of a new man," says Owen R.

"I remember what it was like before I started taking **Omega Rejuvenol**... the lack of focus... the dull moods... the slippery memory... but now my mind is as clear as it's ever been," says Estelle H.

"My mood and focus are at an all-time high. I've always had trou-

ble concentrating, and now I think I know why," raves Bernice J. "The difference that **Omega Rejuvenol** makes couldn't be more noticeable."

And 70-year-old Mark K. says, "My focus and memory are back to age-30 levels."

These are just a handful of the thousands of reviews Dr. Sears receives regularly thanks to his breakthrough memory formula, **Omega Rejuvenol**.

WHERE TO FIND OMEGA REJUVENOL

To secure bottles of this brain-booster, buyers should contact the Sears Health Hotline at **1-800-966-5680**. "It takes time to manufacture these bottles," says Dr. Sears. "The Hotline allows us to ship the product directly to customers who need it most."

Dr. Sears feels so strongly about this product he is offering a 100% money-back guarantee on every order. "Send back any used or unused bottles within 90 days and I'll rush you a refund," says Dr. Sears.

The Hotline is taking orders for the next 48 hours. After that, the phone number may be shut down to allow for inventory restocking.

Call **1-800-966-5680** to secure your limited supply of **Omega Rejuvenol**. Readers of this publication immediately qualify for a steep discount, but supplies are limited. To take advantage of this great offer use Promo Code **OMGF523** when you call.

REMINGTON PREMIER LONG RANGE

DESIGNED FOR EXTENDED SHOTS ON GAME,
THIS LOAD PERFORMS ACROSS ALL DISTANCES.

By Adam Heggenstaller

It had taken us all day to find the blacktail buck bedded on the side of a hill rising from Alaska's Kodiak Island. I was lying prone on an adjacent hill, a light wind quartering from right to left. The range was 284 yards, and my rifle was steady when I squeezed off the shot. The buck took one bound from its bed and rolled down the hill until it stopped on the edge of an alder patch. It never moved again. Thus was my introduction to Remington's Premier Long Range load, a performance that didn't really surprise me given the top-end components the company has put in its new line of big-game ammo.

Bullets built for long-range hunting have to possess three primary features. First, of course, they must be accurate. Second, they should have a high ballistic coefficient to minimize bullet drop and wind drift. Third, they have to expand at the lower impact velocities that come with long shots.

The latter two requirements work against one another. Heavy-for-caliber

bullets typically have better ballistic coefficients than their lighter counterparts, contributing to a longer, more streamlined form. However, heavier bullets have lower muzzle velocities and therefore lower impact velocities at long ranges. Remington balances these two factors by loading the Speer Impact bullet in the Premier Long Range line.

The Speer Impact bullet has a patented, polymer Slipstream Tip, designed by engineers at sister company Federal, that helps initiate expansion at lower velocities. The tip is hollow yet has a solid meplat, or front end. While the solid meplat improves aerodynamics and decreases drag during flight, it breaks off at impact to expose the hollow channel in the tip. This allows media to enter the tip, initiating expansion. Federal says the tip design extends the range at which the bullet reliably expands by a few hundred yards.

The Slipstream Tip also increases ballistic coefficient, and it is made of a material that resists the high

temperatures that act on a bullet due to drag while in flight. These temperatures can cause some polymer tips to deform in flight, decreasing ballistic coefficient and leading to erratic bullet flight. The Slipstream material doesn't start to soften until it reaches a temperature of 434 degrees Fahrenheit, ensuring consistent performance downrange. Other features that improve aerodynamics include a boat-tail base and rear-adjusted center of gravity that assists in bullet flight.

While the Speer Impact bullets Remington loads in Premier Long Range are heavy for caliber—175 grains in the 7 mm Rem. Mag., 172 grains in the .308 Win. and 190 grains in the .300 Win. Mag., for example—the Slipstream Tip promotes expansion at the lower velocities that come with such heavyweights. In fact, Remington engineers have tested the loads to 1,000 yards and recorded reliable expansion.

Another noteworthy feature of the Speer Impact bullet is its bonded core.

The Speer Impact bullet is designed for reliable expansion at extended ranges. These upsets were recovered from gel shot at, from left to right, 300, 500, 744 and 1,000 yards.



The bullet's jacket is chemically fused to the lead core to prevent separation on impact and ensure high retained weight. This allows engineers to "program" the bullet to expand at low impact velocities but not break apart at high ones. It's another balancing act that makes Premier Long Range an excellent big-game load at all ranges. For example, should a hunter stalk to within 75 yards of a buck, he can rest assured the Speer Impact bullet will retain enough weight to ensure adequate penetration even on quartering shots at hard angles. If he must take a shot at an extended range, say 500 yards, he can be confident that the Slipstream Tip in the bullet will cause adequate expansion to create a devastating wound channel.

I used the Remington Premier Long Range .308 Win. load to take two blacktail bucks and a caribou on Kodiak Island. None required more than one shot, and none went more than 100 yards from the spot of impact. While the farthest shot was the one on the bedded buck I described earlier, I



would not hesitate to use this load at my maximum effective range. In the Savage 110 Ultralite rifle I took on the hunt, the Premier Long Range ammo was a solid sub-MOA performer out to 300 yards, the farthest distance at which I tested the load.

Remington offers Premier Long Range in 10 loads, from 140-grain 6.5 Creedmoor (MSRP: \$70.99 for 20 rounds) to 215-grain .300 PRC (MSRP: \$82.99). While "long range" is in its name, Remington Premier Long Range works at all ranges. It's a versatile load that will serve deer hunters in the East just as well as elk hunters in the West. 



The Speer Impact's jacket is chemically fused to the lead core to prevent separation on impact, while the Slipstream tip promotes expansion.

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FOOL'S TOOLS

NOTHING CATCHES THE MOST FISH EVERYWHERE ALL THE TIME.

When school let out for summer, Shane's cousin Kurt invited him to his family's dairy farm in New York, with the promise of lots of good fishing after the daily chores were done. Shane quickly talked his parents into letting him go, and a couple weeks later he was in Kurt's room, organizing his gear in preparation for an afternoon on the water.

"I brought Rat-L-Traps, buzzbaits, deep-diving cranks and a whole slew of plastic worms," said Shane.

"I'd probably leave the buzzbaits and those anaconda-sized worms at home," Kurt suggested, chuckling a little as he looked over Shane's tackle. "Do you have any eighth-ounce white jigs or Rooster Tails?"

"I don't have anything that small," said Shane. "I just can't imagine a bass—even a Northern bass—not devouring a 10-inch purple PowerWorm when I stitch it across his noggin."

"You might be watching too many Florida fishing shows, cuz," joked Kurt. "Up here the water is colder, the bass are more finicky, and we catch them using finesse. But don't worry, I have plenty of jigs for you."

"Doubt I'll need 'em," uttered Shane, "but thanks for offering."

About that time Kurt noticed the rest of Shane's gear propped in the corner.

"Those look like reels you'd use for sharks off the coast of New Jersey," said Kurt. "What's that, thirty-pound test?"

"Twenty-five," replied Shane.

"You're going to have a hard time just *throwing* a Rooster Tail," said Kurt. "Did you bring any spinning gear or just those baitcasters?"

"Baitcasters," answered Shane. "I thought you said we would mainly be fishing for largemouths."

"Yeah, I did," said Kurt, "but I don't think it's that much fun to just ski a bass in without a fight. You Southern boys don't give 'em much of a chance, do you?"

"Whatever," said Shane, laughing.



"I'll fish my way, you fish yours, and we'll see who catches more tomorrow."

After the next morning's farm chores followed by an afternoon of fishing, the boys were exhausted. They had boated 10 fish; Kurt caught seven, Shane three. Kurt also caught the biggest, a 3-pounder, but Shane had one on that almost certainly would have been the fish of the day had he landed it. Mainly, the boys had a blast fishing together, and their informal contest continued for another week.

When Shane got back home after his trip, his father asked him how the fishing had been at Kurt's. So Shane told him the full story.

"Sure, Kurt had more bites—and I'll even admit he caught more fish," said Shane. "But honestly, Dad, I use big tackle because I like to catch big fish. I don't really care about catching lots of little dinks."

Shane's father laughed. "Seems the acorns didn't fall too far from the trees, son. About 20 years ago I invited Kurt's father, your uncle Gary, here to fish, and

we went 'round and 'round about tackle and techniques. I told him he needed big baits and heavy line, but he stuck to his ultralight stuff, saying it served him fine up there just as it would down here. I out-fished him two-to-one while he was here."

"So who's right, Dad?"

"Simple, son. You're both wrong. The world's best fishermen are proficient with all tools that catch fish where the *fish* live. To be close-minded about a technique just because it's not what you're used to at home is, well, foolish."

"So do you have a spinning reel?"

"I sure do. Uncle Gary gave me one when he left."

"I've never seen it," said Shane.

"It's in the rafters above the garage, because I never use it."

"Why not?"

"Because I'm a fool for pitching a 1-ounce jig 'n' pig into heavy cover and ripping a bucketmouth clear out of the water, stump and all," said Shane's father. "Now that's what I call bass fishing!" 

Shhhhh. No wake zone.



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