CATFISH NOW! DIGITAL MAGAZINE

September 2017 - Issue #12



Catfish Potpourri

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Front Cover:
Florida angler, Trenton Lambert, is shown with a nice channel from Central Florida's St. Johns River.
Ron Presley Photo

Catfish Connections



Welcome to the September edition of CatfishNow (CFN) digital magazine and social media platform. It is hard to do anything these days without thinking about the people of Texas and Louisiana that have been devastated by Hurricane Harvey. If there is anything good to come from it, it is the response of good people from every walk of life. These volunteer responders have proven once again just how great America is.

My support will have to be of the monetary kind, and I urge you to do the same. Just be careful to who you give to, because there are some scammers out there.

I got tears in my eyes and sorrow in my heart looking at the disaster on TV. Yet, I was heartened by the fact that I saw so many of my friends responding with boats, food, water, and more importantly their own loving hearts and labor. Thank you to all that provided physical assistance to those in need.

September brings cooler weather and good fishing. September and October are loaded with year ending tournaments that catfish anglers look forward to.

If you are a tournament angler you need to read Mark Blauvelt's story on tournament mortality. He makes a case for giving more attention to tournament livewells as a means of improving the practice of catch and release fishing.

Recreational anglers with an interest in catching some cats for the dinner table will enjoy the story from Santee Cooper. The story reveals the specific way that one South Carolina angler puts catfish on the table.
Terry Madewell chronicles a tournament angler's actions on Lake Wylie and Brad Durick offers up his Rule of 4 catfish strategy. This month's Catfish Profiles in Passion is about the Masingale brothers, two of the most successful tournament anglers around.

As always, we would like to hear from you. We encourage you, as readers and as advertisers, to continue your feedback. Tell us what you think of this issue and what you would like to see in future issues.
Our goal at CatfishNow is to help the sport of catfishing grow, to the benefit of all. We look forward to your comments and will seriously consider them as input for future editions.

I want to thank our great sponsors that stand behind us and make it possible for CatfishNow to be offered free to our readers. I certainly hope that you will reciprocate by supporting them when you can.

We are extremely pleased to bring you this month's collection of catfish related content and we hope you will share it with your friends, relatives and other catfish enthusiasts.

Fish with passion,
Ron Presley, Editor

Santee Cooper Keepers
by Ron Presley

BELOW THE SURFACE

Winner, winner, catfish dinner



Doug Allen and his mate, Capt. Ken Coffee, are shown at Black's Camp after a great day of fishing on Lake Moultrie.

The Santee Cooper lake system is made up of two lakes. There is an upper lake, Lake Marion, which is the largest lake in SC. There is a lower lake, Lake Moultrie, which connects to Lake Marion through a seven and a half-mile diversion canal. As it is chronicled in history, the Santee Cooper lake system was under construction as WWII became a dominant event in US history.

"When the war broke out they had not clear cut the upper lake," recalled catfish guide Doug Allen. "They needed to produce electricity so they just went ahead and flooded the farm lands and whatever else was there. The lower lake was basically clear cut, except for some areas that still had stumps in it. The result is an excellent



Doubles are not unusual on Allen's boat. These nice eaters went home to the dinner table.

fishery."

Allen operates Santee Cooper Fishing (843-499-2574). His specialty is dragging his version of the Santee Cooper Rig. He is renowned for his go-to bait, a strawberry chicken concoction. Everyone knows that strawberry Jell-O is the ingredient that gives his bait the red color, but one question remains a mystery. Are there other ingredients that Santee Cooper catfish just can't resist? The bottom line is simple. It works. It is not unusual for Allen to fill a client's ice chests with eater size cats and a few more for catch and release.

The lakes are also famous for their abundant stock of landlocked striped bass. As the story goes, South Carolina traded some of Santee Cooper's striped bass to Arkansas for some blue catfish. It was a trade made in heaven. Arkansas now has some great striper fishing and Santee Cooper has a reputation as a big catfish lake. The locals refer to the blue cats in the lake as Arkansas blues.

Catfishing from pontoon boats is very common on Santee Cooper. Allen prefers it. "I like the roominess of a pontoon deck," said Allen. "It gives anglers plenty of room to move around and be comfortable. And, when the weather is cold we can button up the enclosure and be perfectly cozy."



Strawberry chicken and the Santee Cooper Rig put 70 catfish in the boat on this particular fishing trip.

Allen's years of guiding have led him to a tried and true method for catching catfish. He is a stickler for the precision in his setup and method. He starts with a fixed family of rod holders across the back of the boat. He numbers them from left to right. Equally spaced and mounted across the back are rod numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

About 18 inches up from the back, on the side rail, Allen has another rod holder on each side. He has them mounted at a 90-degree angle to the boat. On the starboard side, the rod holder is numbered ought (0), and on the port side he calls it double-ought (00).

Once his anglers understand the number system, Allen instructs them on the outfits and where to place the bait. His reels are number counter reels, and just to show the importance that he gives to bait placement, he gives each angler a little lesson to begin each trip.

"Sometimes you have to pull a little line through the reel just to be sure the number counter works," instructs Allen. "Then make a comfortable cast directly behind the boat and start pulling out line until you get it back there where you want it."

"Don't throw out at an angle, because the line can come back and tangle the rest," warned Allen. "Then it takes 30 minutes to get going again."

"When you get the number counter where you want it, just lock it down. Bottom line, you want to have the bait straight out behind the rod holder."

The middle two lines are put out first at 250 feet. "The reason we get them out 250 feet is because we do not want the fish



Allen's reels are all line counters and his rods are numbered from left to right. Additional rods are sometimes set out the side using planner boards.

to see the boat," said Allen.

The next two, rod holders, #2 and #5, are set out at 225 feet. "At that distance, they won't tangle the other lines when I turn a corner," continues Allen. "That leaves #1 and #6 at 200 feet behind the boat."

If Allen determines he wants to put out a couple more rods he will place them in the ought and double-ought holders out each side. Those lines are run back 175 feet. If he wants more of a spread he will run planner boards out of those side rod holders.

Allen's terminal rig is commonly known as the Santee Cooper drift rig. There are different variations as anglers like Allen include their special "tricks" on the popular drifting rig.

Allen's Santee Cooper weight is a flexible creation that he makes himself. He starts with about 10 inches of small diameter nylon rope. "I pull out the cotton insert and seal one end by melting with and open flame," instructed Allen. "I fill the rope with about 14 #2 or #4 lead buckshot and finish with a 3\8-ounce lead swivel weight. Cut off the excess rope and seal that end with heat. I also carefully singe the sides of the rope to keep the buckshot from coming thru the side. This is my fishing weight."

Next, he ties his terminal tackle. "I take a 10-inch piece of 80-pound mono and tie a small gold swivel in the middle to attach the weight to," said Allen. "I add a regular swivel to both ends. I use this separate line to keep the weight from tangling with the main line or the leader line."

About three-feet of 60-pound leader line is needed to finish the rig. "I add a cork on the line with a bead on top of the cork to

protect it," instructed Allen. "Push the stick into the bottom of the cork to cinch it up and keep it from collecting debris."

Allen then carefully snells a #6 or #7 circle hook to the bottom of the leader line. If tied properly this knot will not slip and become loose. More importantly, it will turn as pressure is applied and catch the fish in the corner of the mouth.

"You can test the hookset by pulling the line thru your fingers," advises Allen. "You will see the hook turn at the last second, to make a proper hookset."

"…meat inside the corbicula is a delicate pink color..."

Tie the leader assembly and the 80-pound mono piece together and you have Allen's version of a Santee Cooper rig. It is by far the most popular rig to use on either Marion or Moultrie.

The bait that Allen uses most often sounds like it may have come from somebody's cookbook. "We will be using strawberry chicken," offered Allen. "I soak chicken breast overnight in the fridge, in a mixture that includes strawberry Jell-O. I place one breast in a Ziploc bag and transfer it to the ice chest in my boat. From there I can take it out as needed."

Small baits are the rule on Allen's boat. "The bait we use is not much bigger than a 50-cent piece," reported Allen. "Believe me, that small piece of chicken will attract the biggest cat out there. The reason the catfish like it is that it looks like the internal part of their favorite clams, which often pop open on their own to reveal the meat."

Allen is referring to the large populations of corbicula that exist in the Santee Cooper lakes. The catfish love the clams and reports from the cleaning tables support the claim. Many a catfish has been cleaned that had their stomachs full of corbicula. The meat inside the corbicula is a delicate pink, similar in color to Allen's strawberry chicken.

Once he is set up, Allen drifts over pre-determined ledges where he has caught fish before. A typical drift might start in 25 feet of water and drop down to 35 or 40 before rising again. The fish often bite either on the drop or as you climb back up a hill on the other side.

The lakes of Santee Cooper are pretty wide open and wind can often play a big role in your fishing day. Allen uses two or three drift socks to slow his drift. This is another reason Allen likes the baits to be trolled far away from the boat. "The drift socks are rather large," said Allen. "I don't want them to be visible to the fish."

He justifies his insistence on fishing far behind the boat with a story from the past. "I had a first mate for about 12 years that would always put a rod out in front of the cabin," offered Allen. "It was 100 to 125 feet back. I bet he didn't catch 10 fish in 12 years. To me, that proves, the further out you get the more inclined they are to bite."

"I have also noticed over the years, that some of the longest lines out always get hit first," added Allen. "It did not matter whether it was a big one or a little one, they always got hit first."

Allen further explains his "distance theory" with the use of sonar. "It takes 2 ½ minutes from the time you see them on the depth finder until the time the bait gets to em'," advised Allen. "So, the further out you let the line, the longer it takes to get the bait to the fish. Those fish have already forgot you went by and they move back to where they were and you drag the bait right by them."

By the end of the day it was apparent that Allen's method worked. More than seventy fish were caught and landed on his strawberry chicken concoction, using a Santee Cooper rig, and fished using his strict rules about presentation.

So, the proof was in the pudding, or should I say the Jell-O?



- Ron Presley

Catfish Basics #023

Plan for success

Sandy Flowers Pensacola, Florida



Successfully catching catfish depends on several different variables. Those elements will all come together with proper planning and conditions.

Take time to plan your trip. Check the fishing reports for the river you plan to fish. Local tackle shops are a great source of current conditions. Things like weather conditions and moon phase can have a high impact on your success. Always bring plenty of bait (whether live or cut bait) and scout the stretch of river you'll be fishing. Mark "fishy" spots to return to when needed. Always be willing to try a new fishing spot or a new kind of bait and experiment with new techniques.

In the first place, just get out there on the water and have fun. But, if you want an even better tip—NEVER FORGET THE BUG SPRAY!

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"Sliding Steel":
The act of setting the hook. When Dale Russell Lowe, who often fishes with his son Chase, sets the hook on a big catfish he refers to it as Sliding Steel. He slid the steel to a 141.76-pound monster blue cat at Icebowl 2017.

Dale Russell Lowe, Jr.
Bedford, Virginia, Big Cat Fever Rods





CatfishSpeak - The Language of Catfishing

Like any other sport, catfishing has a verbiage of its own. From catfish slang to useful phrases, catfish anglers communicate in a special language. CatfishNow plans to keep you up to date with this angler blending of the English language and catfish jargon that we will call CatfishSpeak. Send us your favorite.









B'n'M How To
Live Bait Rigging for Flatties
with Ryan Lawrence



Rule of 4 Catfishing

by Brad Durick

Making bad days not as bad



Catfishing is a sport where anglers of all levels try to accomplish the same objective. They are out to catch fish, and usually the biggest fish they can. Over the past few years research has been conducted on how weather and water conditions affect catfish. The findings help anglers to better understand patterns and how to adjust to them through a system of prediction.

We all know that conditions change, but do you know that in many cases these changes can be predicted? Some small adjustments to techniques can increase your catch, making a bad day not as bad.

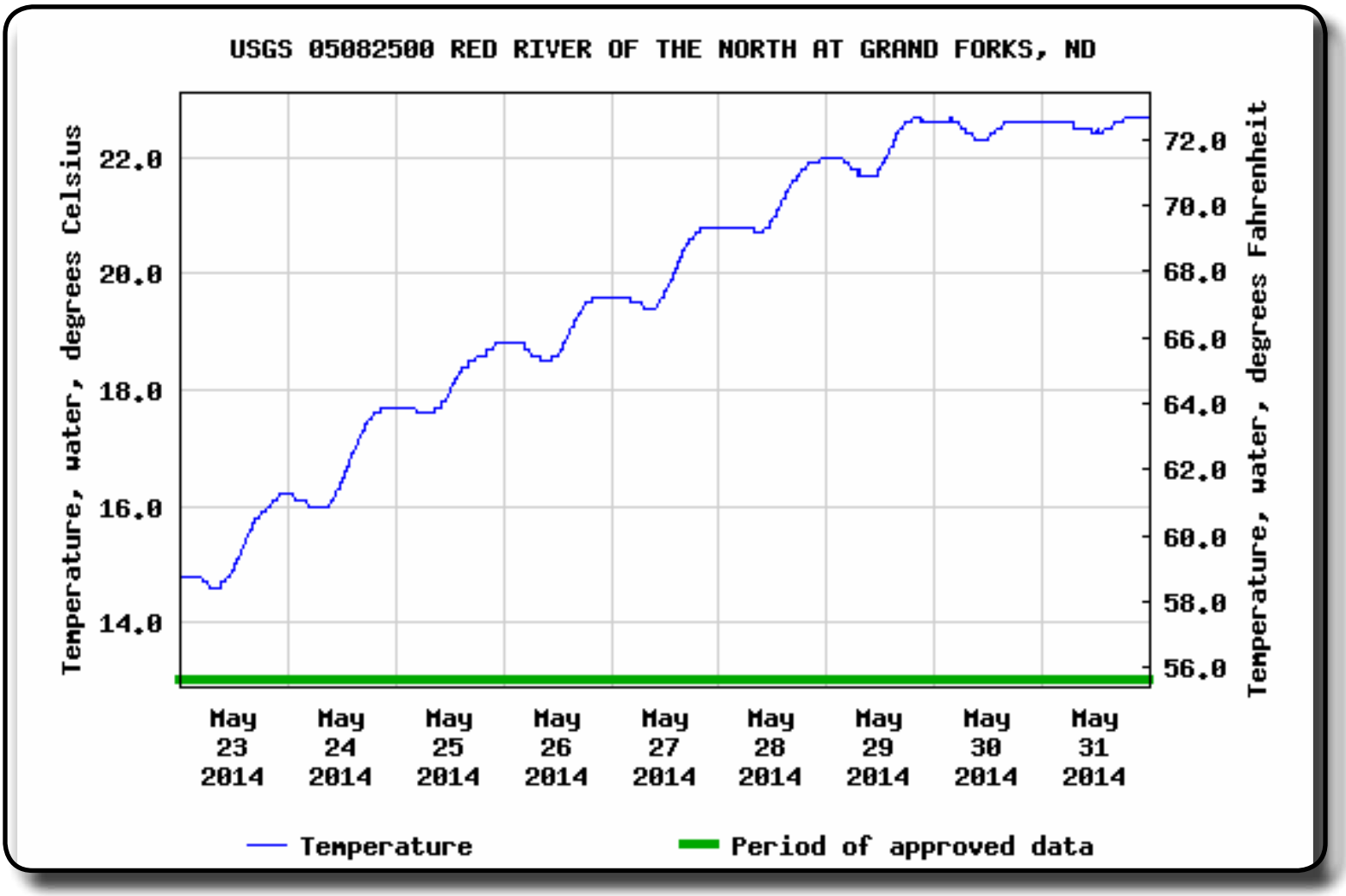
When weather systems strike, or there is a seasonal change, there seems to be a four-day process that the catfish go through before the bite gets good or bad.

When you get in that optimum temperature, in between Rule of 4 situations, great fishing can ensue.

This process is also in play during certain times of the season. There is a Rule of 4 that dictates the upswings or downswings of catfishing. Understanding how fish react to fronts and dramatic events in their water can increase your catch, even in the toughest of times.

Changes in the Weather

Basically, Rule of 4, is how long it takes catfish to adjust in or out of a pattern. In plain terms four days in and four days out of a pattern. Here is an example. Like many catfish anglers I have my favorite



This USGS graph shows a dramatic increase in water temperature over the course of two weeks. You can see where the temperature stabilized for four days and the fishing got back to normal.

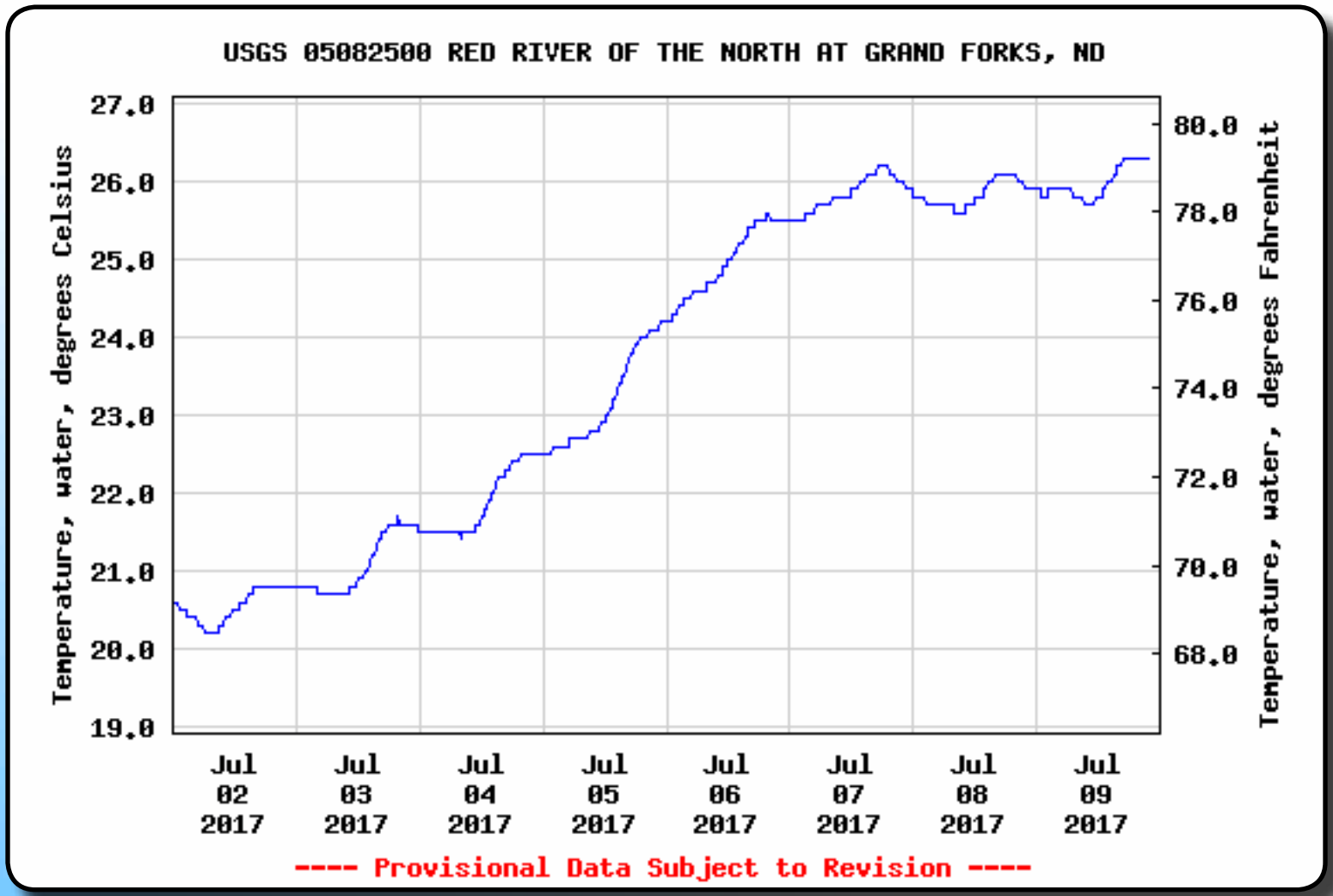
spots that I live and die by. There were fronts that would come through shutting off my bite. I noticed that the bite on day one was pretty horrible; day two a little better, but not many takers; day three was characterized by lots of picking and pecking at the baits before a fish was caught; and day four was back to normal.

I have since learned to adjust to the pattern through a series of different moves in the general fishing area. I have dubbed this "lateral movement". This movement is not dramatic, but it still provides a learning process to be more successful after a big front.

"Understanding how fish react to fronts and dramatic events in their water can increase your catch, even in the toughest of times."

Usually catfish (or any fish for that matter) get active as the barometer is falling, indicating a big storm or other weather event. During this time, the catfish will be running faster water breaks and be very aggressive as they prepare for the negative event. As the front passes and the wind changes to the northwest, indicating that the low pressure system has passed, the catfish will move to the area of least resistance, out of the current or into structure.

On day one they will start moving out



Depicted in this USGS graph is a dramatic cool off with stabilization and a dramatic warm up. Both the bottom and top peaks were the four days out of the system that slowed the bites.

of the structure or move to the secondary current seam. They are right next to the main current of the channel but not in the current.

On day two they will move to the edge of the secondary current or into the middle part of a hole in the main channel. They may play with the bait some before committing, but they will hit.

On day three a normal head of the hole, edge of the break line, bites ensues, but not with the force we all love from a catfish. Many times, the middle part of the hole may hold more fish.

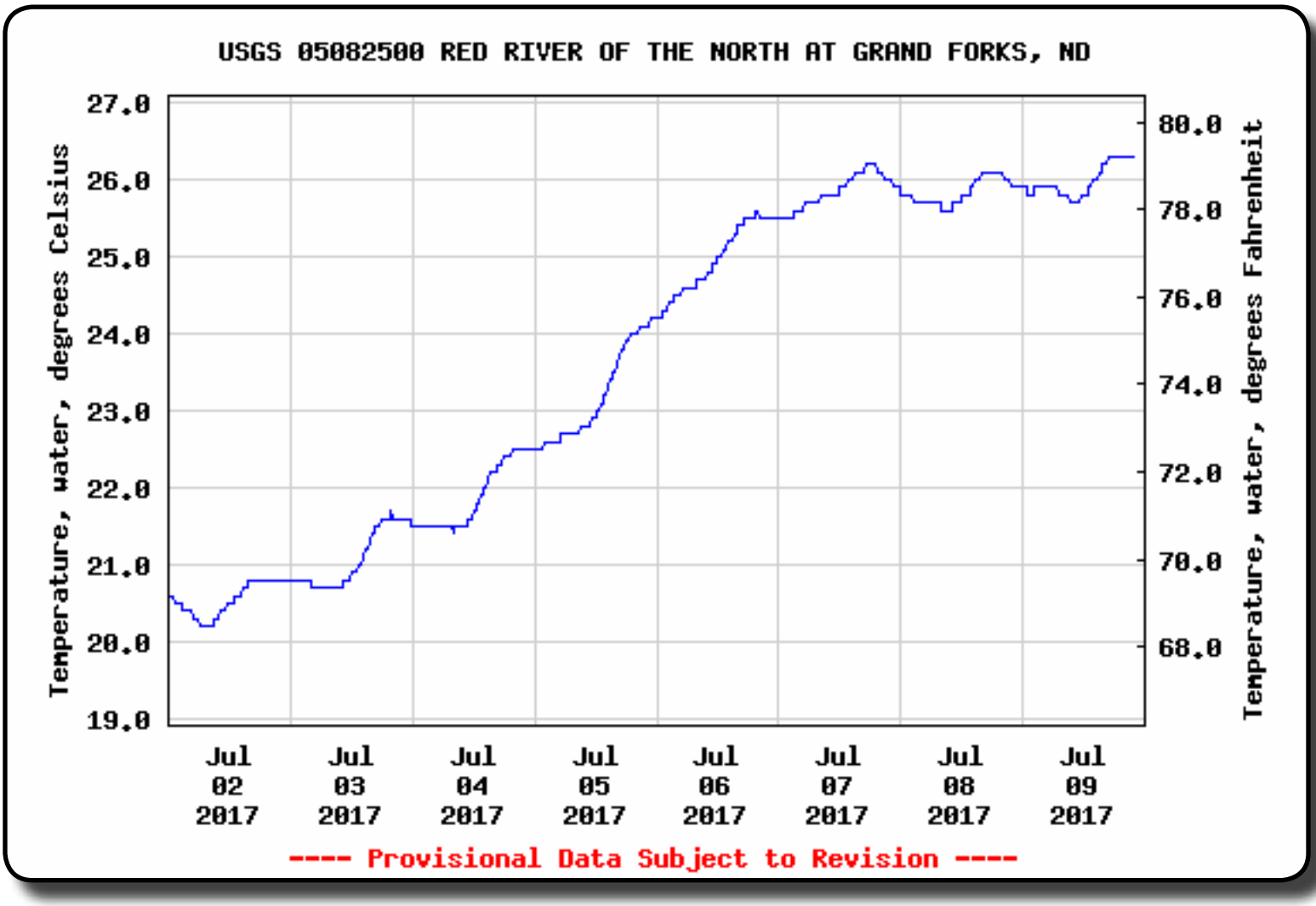
On day four there is no messing with the baits, just slamming them. Fishing returns to a normal bite in the faster water and at the head of the hole.

It should be noted that not all fronts are created equally and this is an example of the most severe. Some will only slow a bite for a few hours, but most in some way shape or form will follow the Rule of 4, especially during times of higher stress such as spawn or low water conditions.

Water Temperature Changes

One of the more fascinating aspects of the Rule of 4 has to do with major shifts in water temperature. Research has shown, that with a big heat up or cool down, without a major front, the bite can hold for up to four days before making the pattern shift with the temperature.

If the water temperature is warm and stable with a very predictable catfish bite



A massive warmup is shown in this graph. It occured right at the end of the 2017 spawn, taking weaker stressed fish and shutting them down.

going on and there is a small front that sets off a cool down of three to six degrees, that bite pattern often won't change to a sluggish off current bite for four days. Likewise, once the trend reverses and things start to heat up it seems to take four days to get back out to the fast water on an aggressive bite.

Two times a year there are exceptions to this. Prespawn and fall are times when the Rule of 4 is spot on to pattern changes, but the fish are so involved in eating to prepare for spawn and winter they don't react as described.

During these two times of year it is fairly common to see dramatic drops in water temperature. Unless it is an eight to ten degree drop in a day or two, the catfish's need to feed will keep the fast and furious pattern rolling. Sometimes they might move to the secondary current seam, but they will never be far from the main channel and the food trough.

Over the years I come into September and October trying to finish up the season strong. What I have found is that a couple of days of a major cold front that drops the water temperature from the mid-60s to the 50s is not going to affect the bite all that much until day four. Once we reach the fourth day then the lateral movement to the off current areas comes into play and adjustments to pattern must be made.

The easiest way to find the fish, knowing that they are close, is to use your Humminbird Side Imaging unit, like the Helix 10. Motor along the likely areas

until you find catfish tucked in and sulking out of the current. Most of the time, if you put bait in front of them, they will take it without hesitation.

Dramatic Turns

I pointed out some situations when a front can drop the water temperatures 10 or more degrees in just a few days. It is usually day four of the drop when the changes make their way from the surface through the entire water column. One thing that most catfish anglers are not aware of is, that fast warm ups can create the same shut down at day four just like clockwork.

The spring of 2017 has proven this theory of fast heating, not once but twice. In mid-May, we on the Red River of the North experienced a fast cool down from 63 to 55 degrees in five days. As expected, at day four the bite turned off until it leveled out for four days before turning back on. Just as everything stabilized it heated up very quickly and the temperature went from 55 to 73 degrees in just over a week. This caused an even harsher shut down to the bite. It also triggered the fish into spawn to make things more difficult.

Once things settled down from the warmup we had very seasonal temps until another week long hot blast took the water temps from 68 to 80 in a matter of five days, once again shutting off the bite. The sad truth to the fast heating water is that the fish become even more negative than when it drops, but every time they shut off at the fourth day and turn back on after four days of stable temps.

When this happens, all we can do is keep grinding away by fishing normal patterns. We can go deeper or fish at night, when it is cooler, hoping they come out to feed.

Brad Durick is a nationally recognized catfish guide on the Red River of the North, seminar speaker, and author. He has written extensively about catfish and how they react to weather and water conditions. He has also gone deep into patterning channel catfish based on weather and water conditions in his books Cracking the Channel Catfish Code (2013) and Advanced Catfishing Made Easy (2016). Both books are available on Amazon and Amazon Kindle. For more information go to www.redrivercatfish.com.

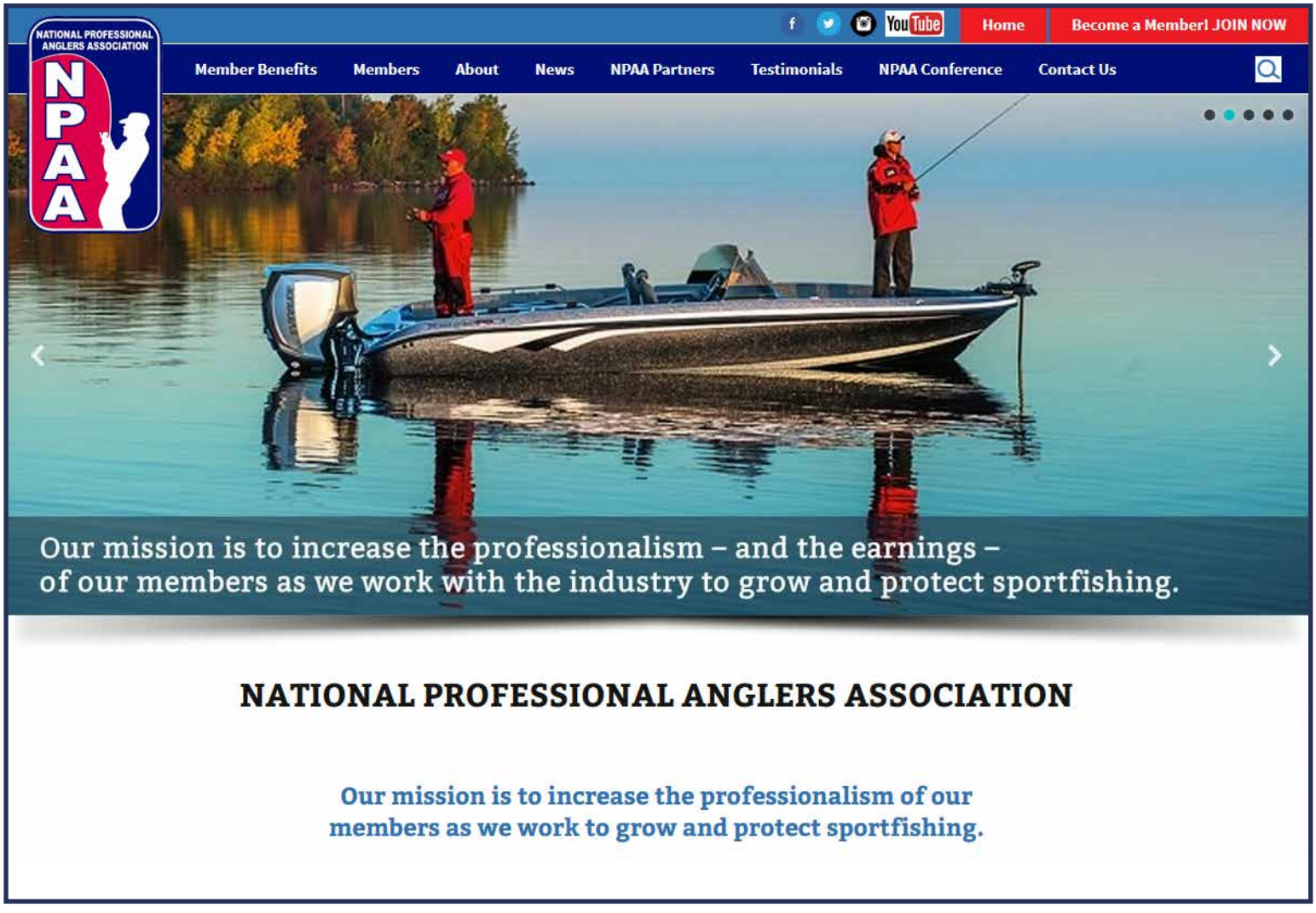


- Brad Durick



WHISKER WHACKERS

CATFISH NEWS AND VIEWS



Catfish Profiles in Passion: Masingale Catfishing

by Ron Presley

The definition of team work



Consistency is the word most often used to describe Masingale Catfishing. “Brothers Jason and Daryl Masingale will catch fish 99 percent of the time in any water,” said one fellow angler.

“What can I say,” asked a tournament competitor. “They are tough and know how to fish. They always do what needs to be done to catch fish.”

The two anglers, from Paragould, Arkansas, got their fishing start early in life. They both credit their dad for instilling the love of fishing in them. Their passion started in small ponds and ended up in the Mississippi River and beyond.

“From as early as I can remember our dad would take us fishing at small ponds near our house and at my grandparents,” recalls Jason. “We fished for every species of fish that was big enough to get on a hook.”

“We fished those farm ponds for bass, bluegill, and catfish,” added Daryl. “Dad taught us how.”

The brothers have been addicted to fishing since they were four or five years old. “Instead of begging for toys on a trip to Walmart we were in the fishing isle looking at fishing baits,” said Jason. “We would try to convince mom or dad why we had to have whatever fishing lure we were wanting.”

As the brothers got older they started fishing the ponds on their own. When they were old enough to drive they expanded their adventures to other ponds, lakes and rivers.



Daryl (left) and Jason are shown here sharing their catfish knowledge at the 2016 Mississippi River Monsters tournament in Memphis.

"A couple of our friends would borrow their dad's jon boats and we would fish out of them. We thought we were big time when we were able to do that," joked Jason.

In their high school and early college years they started to target catfish and consequently discovered tournament fishing. It was a fellow catfishing enthusiast that took them fishing on the Mississippi and peaked their interest in tournament fishing.

"We first fished the Mississippi River in 14-foot jon boats," said Jason. "We immediately decided we needed a bigger boat. During that time, I discovered an individual on a catfish forum that I had recently guided on a duck hunt. Matt Bingham was gracious enough to take me and Daryl fishing on the Mississippi River. He showed us what trophy catfishing was all about."

"…the reward of a successful fishing trip is very satisfying."

At Bingham's suggestion, the brothers decided to give tournament fishing a try. "Daryl and I ordered a 20-foot SeaArk and put an old outboard motor on it that we pulled off a bass boat. The first time we fished out of it was at a Cabela's tournament in New Madrid, Missouri," recalled Jason.

Team Masingale went to that tournament with a cooler full of Arkansas crackjack (aka skipjack) and some of the biggest crawdads they could find.

"Our livewell consisted of Rubbermate Totes with ratchet straps in the middle to keep them from blowing out," remembered Jason. "A manually powered



5-gallon bucket was our pumping system for fresh water."

To say that tournament was a start of something great would be an understatement. Team Masingale finished in the money in that first tournament and have compiled a long list of top tournament finishes since. A quick calculation shows that they have had a run of tournament placements that averages no less than a third-place finish.

Whether it's tournament fishing or recreational, the fun is in the fishing for the Masingale brothers. Bent poles are something that makes them happy, and it doesn't necessarily have to be their poles.

"Most people laugh when I tell them this, but I love to catch skipjack," offered Jason. "For me, skipjack fishing is just as challenging at times as trophy catfishing. But catching trophy catfish is definitely most enjoyable. When drag is peeling off the reel and Daryl asks how big is it, and you have no idea—that is definitely a good feeling."

I've been fishing for as long as I can remember," added Daryl. "So that's

about 41years. Drifting for trophy catfish on the major rivers and lakes in the south and Southeast U.S. is what I enjoy most. We primarily fish the Mississippi River, but enjoy fishing any new waters that have trophy class catfish. In reality, I enjoy seeing others catch fish more than catching them myself."

Like most tournament catfishers, the Masingale brothers hold catfish conservation high on their list of priorities. They recognize that catfishing is not like it used to be and more anglers need to play a role in conserving what we have.

"I would love to be able to go back 300 years and see the rivers like they were before human influence," suggested Daryl. "We will never see it like that, and won't be able to undo what has been done, but what we can do is take care of what we currently have. Anglers should promote taking care of our natural resources, and keep them clean. I ask everyone not to litter, leave it like you found it or better."

Practice CPR," advised Daryl. "If you want to catch fish to take home for dinner, take the smaller fish. Return the trophy size fish for breeding stock. The genetics needed to grow trophy fish can only be passed on if they are allowed to spawn. I hope that fishermen in the future are able to have the same opportunity we have today. Better yet, if we all do our part, the future anglers will have a better opportunity to catch trophy fish."

"I feel it is everyone's responsibility to protect the resources and environment to the best of their ability," added Jason. "Natural resources, such as fish and game, are totally dependent on the rules and regulations that are applied to them. It is up to us, as sportsmen and sportswomen, to protect, maintain, and improve these resources. Whether it be through trophy length limits or restriction of overall limits, it is very important that appropriate measures ensure that future generations will continue to enjoy these resources."

Jason says it's not too late. "We still have the opportunity to protect the waters that produce trophy fish. We can improve those waters that have suffered from over harvest."

Understanding that the future of fishing depends on the kids, the Masingale brothers suggest keeping fishing with kids simple and fun. "There has been many a fishing trip that turned into a rock skipping contest," stated Jason. "My point is, we should introduce them to the sport of fishing and keep it fun and entertaining."

You might be a Masingale if . . .

1. You caught a state record sturgeon, but didn't realize it until a few months later.
2. You enjoy catching bait as much as catching catfish.
3. You once fought a stick on a rod and reel for 3 minutes thinking it was a fish.
4. You would rather watch someone else in the boat catch the big fish.
5. You love to see the smile on peoples face when fighting big fish.
6. You have tournament catfished for more than a decade.
7. You fished on a team that averaged a 3rd place finish over several years.
8. You love fishing the Mississippi River.
9. You believe in CPR and selective harvest.
10. You have no plans to stop catfishing anytime soon.

"Kids are our future fishermen," confirmed Daryl. "We need to introduce as many kids to fishing as possible. Keep it simple and keep it fun. Fishing for bluegill under a bobber is a guaranteed fun activity for any kid."

As for their own legacy, they hope to be remembered as a couple of guys that did not let success go to their heads. They make it a point to treat others as they would like to be treated. They want to be remembered as a team that was respectful, considerate, and a joy to be around.

"When I first started tournament fishing I recall how I enjoyed being able to go talk to the sponsored tournament fishermen," said Daryl. "I would like to be remembered as the guy that anyone could talk to. I love sharing what I know and helping other anglers catch fish."

"I hope I am remembered as someone who enjoys life and the outdoors," offered Jason. "As Masingale Catfishing I hope that we are remembered as a team that progressed through the sport of trophy catfishing while earning respect and maintaining integrity along the way."

"Fishing for me has always been a way to escape the stresses of everyday life and work," offered Daryl. "It's a way to enjoy the beauty of nature and enjoy the simple pleasure of feeling the tug of a fish on the end of my line."

"I like the challenge that fishing provides," continued Daryl. "It is the challenge to catch a fish bigger than you have ever caught. You never know if the next bite will be the one you are looking for. Everything can change in a split second. The anticipation of that possibility is why I love fishing."

"For me, fishing is an activity that can be very frustrating, but rewarding at the same time," explained Jason. "You get out of it what you put into it. I guess what I am trying to say, is that the reward of a successful fishing trip is very satisfying. It provides an escape from day to day worries."

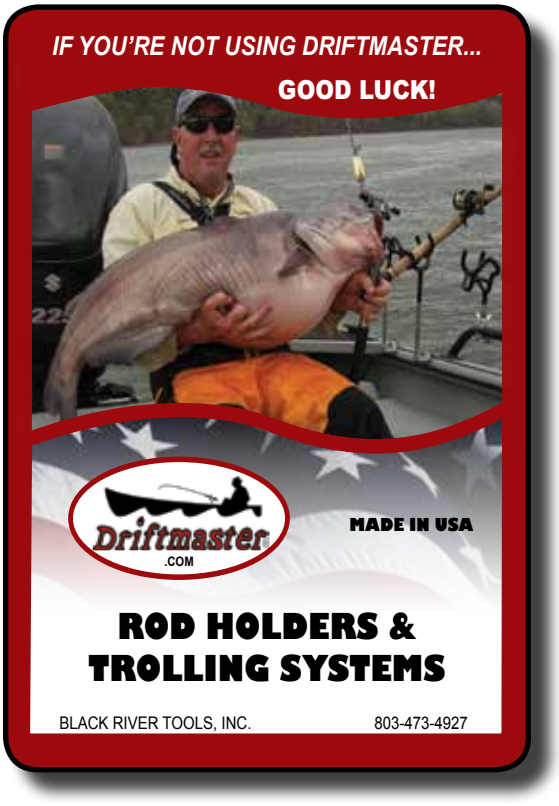
"Whether it's watching a bobber go down, catching skipjack, or drifting in 80 feet of water on the Mississippi River, the excitement is the same. It is an escape from the stresses of work and life. I can fish all day and realize at the end of the day that I was so focused that all I thought about was what can we do to catch more fish."

Daryl at 46 and Jason at 44 are proof positive that hard work, determination, and teamwork pay off. They have plenty more tournaments to fish, and an abundant amount of catfishing tips and techniques to share.

Just about the time this story is published, Masingale Catfishing will be presenting a seminar at the 2017 Mississippi River Monsters catfish tournament in Memphis. One day later they will compete in that event as defending champions.



- Ron Presley



Catfish Basics #024

Strategize for Success

Lisa Hill– Texarkana, TX



I am motivated to fish competitively because of my love for the sport. I've been catfishing now for three years and have become comfortable with different techniques. The challenge of a tournament is to find fish, usually in unfamiliar waters. Preplanning will improve your success.

My tip for someone fishing a tournament is to strategize. Begin by studying your Navionics and look for conditions where big catfish would most likely be.

Your electronics will help you find changes in contour or any type of structure, such as a collapsed bridge. If fishing in fast moving current look for structure that would break the current, such as a wing dike. Also look for variations in depth, subtle drops, ledges, old road beds and flooded creeks. These places hold catfish.

If you can present the right bait in the right place, at the right time, you are likely to to entice the big fish you hope to catch.



CATFISH CONSERVATION

Trophy Catfish for the Future

by Mark Blauvelt, B'n'M prostaff angler

Reducing Tournament Mortality



The "lap pose" is a supportive way to hold a large fish for a photo. A fish grip is being used to control the fish.

Tournament Mortality? Yeah, that's right. I am talking about the elephant in the room that everyone likes to avoid. Sure, we all know it happens, but it's always at another tournament trail or in someone else's boat, because it "NEVER" happens to our fish.

This is a common response when folks hesitantly bring it up at a tournament or on some of the more



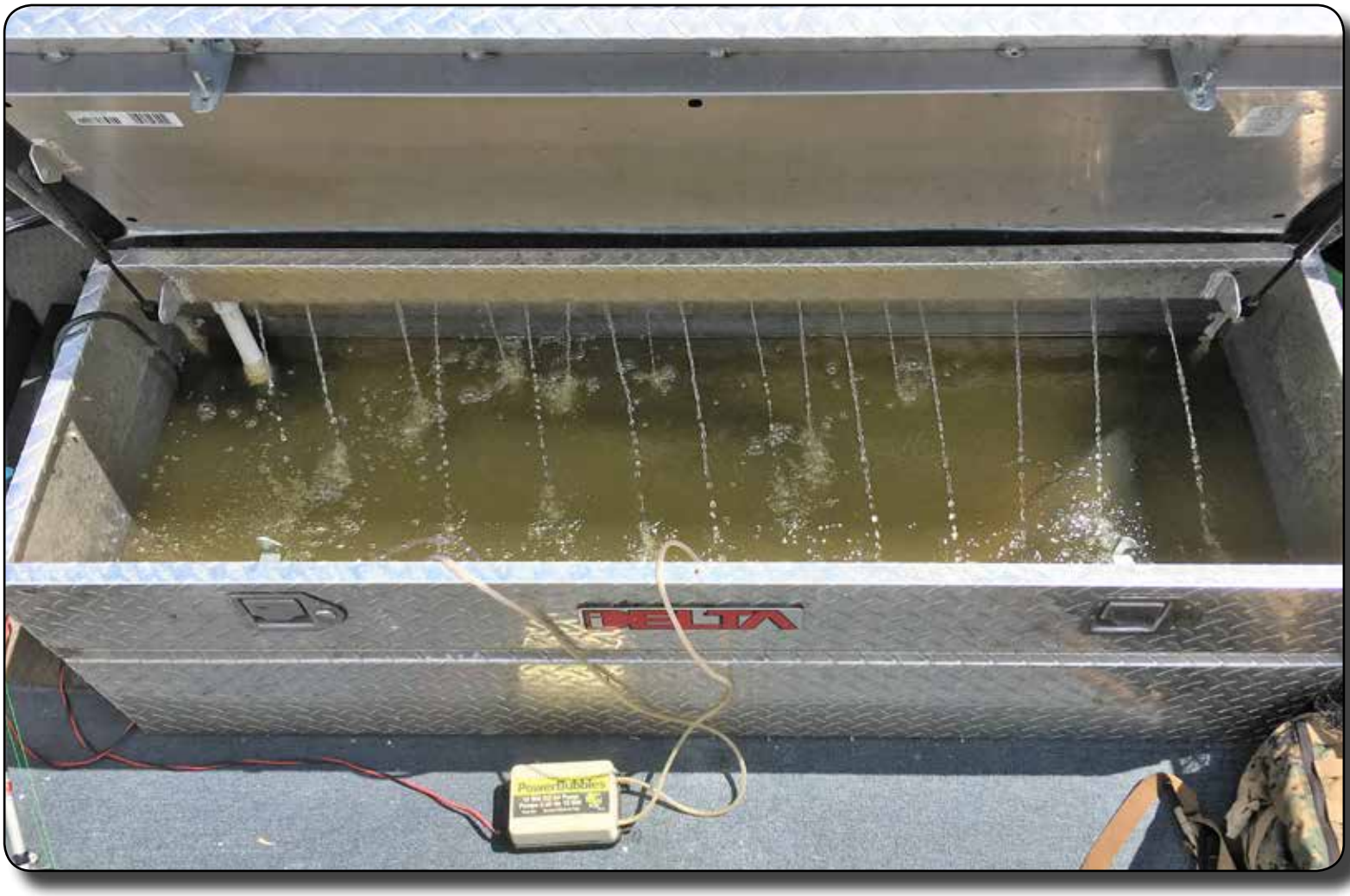
Tiffany Reed is weighing a nice flathead using a weigh sling to reduce damage to the fish.

popular social media sites. So, now that I've brought it up, let's be clear on a few things. First, it happens, and it happens at many tournaments and sooner or later it will happen to you! Now for the naysayer and deniers, I can tell you that if you have never lost a fish, you haven't fished enough tourneys. I can honestly tell you that I have lost a few fish and even released a few more because they did not look healthy enough to hold in the livewell.

Now that it is out in the open, we tournament anglers need to step up our game, because as much as we want to blame the lack of big fish on commercial fishing and pay lakes, we are our own worst enemy. As the sport grows, and more and more folks are learning how to catch large cats, and get into bigger and bigger tournaments, we are adding to the mortality rate of the very fish we all love to catch and want to protect.

It's a double-edged sword. The more the sport grows, the more folks that are fishing and prefishing tournaments, and the more bigger fish that are brought in to the scales. Many of those fish are getting heavily stressed and when released, even though they are swimming off, still may die within a few days or even weeks, not to mention the ones that are belly up





at the release.

It's time that we, the tournament guys, step up our game to better handle the fish. We need to take better care of them in the livewell and getting them to the scales so that the mortality rate after the tournament is lower. I propose a few ideas that, in the future, will certainly help all the way around.

Landing fish can be hard on them if you are using a heavy knotted braid net. Instead, look for smooth rubber coated ones that do not cut into the fish from the sheer weight. The knots can cut them and/or remove a lot of the slime.

"…the very max amount of fish you will be able to hold is about two times the gallon capacity of the well."

Blauvelt advises anglers to have enough water in the livewell before you land a fish.

Laying the fish on the bottom of a diamond plate floor on a hot sunny day can literally burn the fish. Instead, use a landing mat or unhook the fish on top of the net to protect its belly.

If you are catching fish from more than about 25-28 ft deep, learn how to safely burp a fish. Check out YouTube for videos on this.

Weighing the fish can be a chore. If they are smaller, like less than 10 pounds, you can easily lock a fish gripper on the lower lip and weigh it vertically. But once fish get bigger then about 10 pounds it is important not to have the



A weigh sling also makes an effective fish mat. It is especially effective on a hot sunny day to reduce belly burn from the bottom of the boat.

entire weight of the fish on its lower lip. The next best way to weigh the larger fish is either in the net or better yet by using a weigh sling. Slings are great, very easy to use, inexpensive and can double as a fish mat for the bottom of the boat.

Weighing fish in a net can be very hard on the fish. Just like when landing them, the knots cut into the fish. If it's that big, use the sling or wait until weigh in. If it's that big, culling it is unlikely anyway.

I might add, there are several newer culling systems that use clamps instead of poking a hole through the lower lips. These are highly favored because there is no need to poke holes in the fish that could cause an infection site.

The livewell is another element of the equation that needs attention. Always make sure you have enough water in the livewell before you land the first fish. Make sure you have a large enough livewell for the fish you may catch. Typically, the very max amount of fish you will be able to hold is about two times the gallon capacity of the well.

If you have a 40-gallon livewell, then about 80 pounds of fish is close to the maximum that you'll be able to safely hold. A lot of that depends on the size and number of the fish.

Also, it's more important to have bottom area then it is to have depth in a livewell. Catfish all want to sit on the bottom, so a 55-gallon barrel is no good. I'd much rather have a 40-gallon rectangular livewell with more space on the bottom for the fish to spread out.

Always aerate, and if your system can do it, always pump fresh water into the livewell on a continual basis. This action keeps fresh and cooler water on

the fish. Adding a livewell treatment is good too, since it calms the fish and protects the slime coat.

Having calm fish in the livewell is the key to keeping them lively at weigh in. If your livewell can not pump fresh water in, then be ready to bucket or pump the water and change it every 2-3 hours. A simple bilge pump attached to a hose can do this cheaply. If your livewell has a pump inside, its operation will slowly warm the water, so replacing water is vital on warm summer days.

Remember also, if your livewell is painted a dark color, it will attract heat and warm the water quicker.

Many folks are now running oxygen and that is a great way to hold fish, but it can be a little expensive and it's important to not "burn" the fish's lungs with too much oxygen.

If you are using oxygen, or run an aerator, it's important to vent the lid of the livewell to release toxic gasses that can build up. We have all opened a livewell and gotten a blast of warm stinky fish breath.

If you are running a simple pump and aerator, I suggest also adding a 12-volt Mr. Bubbles aerator to add oxygen from the bottom up vs just a spray bar that shoots to the surface. I have done this for years and it really helps running both at the same time.

Getting the fish out of the box and to the scales is also stressful. This is a crucial time to protect the fish, since they are about to be out of the water for a few minutes. Anglers need to minimize this time as much as possible, since fish are already stressed.

In smaller club level tourneys with channel cats and smaller amounts of fish, I bring a large Rubbermaid tote with a latching lid. I fill it at least halfway up with water from the livewell. Remove the fish quickly from the livewell to the tote, making sure heads are down in the water. Then quickly bring them to the scales. Pull the fish out of the tote and into the weigh-in basket, leaving water in the tote. The fish can go back into the tote for the for transport back to the release point.

Bigger tournaments where you have a drive through weigh in are nice. Still, it's important to flush the livewell with fresh water before you pull out. Also switch your system from pumping fresh to recirculation of the same water. This is where oxygen is a plus. You can also add a separate air stone bubbler for added aeration. All this is really a must if you are in a long weigh-in line.

The last point I want to bring up is that when folks show up for a tournament, even club level ones, the "Livewell Check" should include a visual inspection of the tank being used. Depending on the waterway, and the size of the fish typically caught, a minimum gallon size should be enforced that will insure safe storage of the fish.

I realize directors do not want to do this because they may lose some entrants. But let's face it, if you are going to enter a tournament, on a watershed that winning weights are 120 pounds for the day, then you need to be responsible enough to be able to provide a large tank to care for those fish.

I do not have all the answers, but we need to see more emphasis put on entry forms with at least a recommended livewell size. The recommendation would educate folks on what they should have in the boat. We all know that a huge fish will happen to someone with a small cooler on the boat.

These are my ideas. While not perfect, it is important that all anglers and tournament directors are in this together. We share the responsibility when it comes to catching, storing, weighing and releasing our trophy catfish.

 *- Mark Blauvelt*



CFN How To
Choose the Right Weight for Bumping
with David Shipman

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fishing's future

Practice Catch Photo Release

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It's for the Future

Diary of a Tournament Catfisherman

by Terry Madewell

Employing the tactical strategy of a tournament fisherman can improve your catfishing success

The popularity of catfish tournaments has surged in recent years. One reason for its popularity is that tournament fishing enables anglers to elevate their catfishing passion to a competitive level.

Jeff Manning of Rock Hill, South Carolina is a veteran tournament angler. He's fished various tournament trails and has won numerous individual tournaments. He has also garnered the season-long point championships for a multiple-event tournament series on several occasions.

Manning has developed a high level of focus with the ability to analyze water, fish and forage patterns. What he sees in the patterns allows him to adjust his tactical strategy on tournament day.

This chronicle is an insight to Manning's strategies from a tournament held on Lake Wylie, a Catawba River lake on the North/South Carolina border. The tournament began at 7 a.m. and ended at 3 p.m. Anglers can fish until three o'clock, then immediately pull lines and be at the weight-in site by 3:30 p.m.

I was invited to fish with Manning's team, "Reelin' the Blues," to record his tactics and strategies on tournament day.

Tournament Day:

6:00 a.m. – Manning arrives early to arrange gear and assess weather and water conditions to formulate his initial strategy.

He said Lake Wylie has an excellent population of blue, flathead and channel catfish. With a three-fish limit for weigh-in Manning said blues and flatheads are his targets because of top-end size.

"Catfish have a 'wolf pack' mentality..."

"The species targeted will change with conditions." he said. "Recently I won a tournament at Lake Wylie with three big flatheads totaling 99-plus pounds. It's still a fall-type pattern here but the water has cooled and we have less current now. Warmer water and more current are keys for flathead success in these waters. Instead of going north, where I'd target flatheads, I'm going south to fish deeper water and focus on blues."

7:00 a.m. - Tournament begins and Manning notes that many anglers head north, up the lake, as we're heading south.

"Our first stop is going to be close," he said. "I want to get bait in the water quickly this morning. I think we may have a strong early bite on blues."

7:12 a.m. - Manning graphs a point, marking the desired combination of forage and big fish marks. He anchors and casts his rods to the areas he's mentally noted where he marked big fish on the graph.

"I try to put the bait as close to where I saw fish as I can," he said. "If they are in a

Some spots produce multiple fish close to the same size, great for getting a tournament limit in the boat, but not always best when needing big fish upgrades.





bite mode, I want them to bite quickly."

7:28 a.m. - First bite and a blue catfish just under 32-inches is landed.

7:40 a.m. - Another chunky blue is landed, measuring just over 32-inches.

7:58 a.m. - The third blue catfish is caught and Manning has three fish to weigh with one over 32-inches, two others just under.

"This is good, we have three so we'll spend the rest of day upgrading, and that impacts my strategy," Manning said. "Catfish have a 'wolf pack' mentality and they stay on the move feeding. If we need to make a move to stay on them, we may move a short distance to get ahead of them and they'll pass through again, if we have quality fish. Catfish have definitive movement patterns. I don't believe in coincidence when tournament fishing."

8:20 a.m. - Manning weighs the three fish and total weight is 46 pounds. Manning said the bite today has been primarily on gizzard shad, a week ago he said it was primarily white perch. We'll focus more on shad for now, but will keep some perch out to give big catfish plenty of options.

Manning believes a big catfish may bite any size bait, but when he specifically targets huge catfish he prefers large baits.

8:53 a.m. - An 18.5-pound blue catfish is caught, biggest of the day, on a white perch head. Raises the total weight to 49 pounds, a three-pound upgrade.

9:05 a.m. - Additional fish are caught but no size upgrades, all in the 13-to-15-pound class. Manning said he's hunting a 30- to 40-pound-plus catfish for a significant upgrade.

"That could mean a top-three finish," he said.

9:28 a.m. - Manning gives a "10-minute warning" for a fish to bite or we're moving. Nine and one-half minutes later we catch a 14-pound blue, not an upgrade, so Manning moves.

9:38 a.m. - Manning said we're going to start 'bumping points' looking for one or two much larger fish. Now he diversifies baits in terms of types and sizes and water fished in terms of depth. While on the move he notes three tournament boats that went up lake early and are now motoring back toward the lower end of the lake. Also, the last three catfish have come on perch baits.

"Those are good fishermen so it looks like the north bite may be slow and that tells me to stay south for now," Manning said. "If serious about fishing tournaments, planning and executing a continuously evolving strategy during the tournament is essential."

10:17 a.m. - We anchor on a point with forage and large fish graphed and he uses whole live perch, large perch heads, perch fillets and cut shad as bait. He is using predominately larger baits now.

"We're looking for a 'toad' now," he said. "I am using more large baits, but some smaller ones just in case. I like big baits when specifically targeting huge catfish. I don't think a big catfish swims by a big bait and thinks 'Naw, I'm gonna eat light today'. Catfish are not hard to understand. They look for food, they eat it and once a year they take a few weeks to make more catfish."

10:20 a.m. - A 13-pound blue is boated and quickly released. Manning said we need to have patience on this spot because it's produced big fish previously.

11:19 a.m. - A 17.5-pound fish is boated, a slight upgrade to overall weight.

11:38a.m. - We move and relocate to another deep water point slightly further south.

12:00 noon - A rod is slammed three-eyes-deep into the water, but the fish was only a feisty 16.5-pound blue. Manning's hopes for a 'toad' were high for a minute.



Manning tracks the bait that catfish bite and uses the information to plan subsequent strategy.

12:53 p.m. - "A little over two hours are left, I'm gonna gamble on finding a big fish feeding," he said. "We're going to go to the back of a large creek that should have a lot of big gizzard shad and fish for one or two really big feeding fish."

We set anchor in eight-feet of water and fan cast all around the boat.

12:58 p.m. - Manning hooks a fish, but one of the smaller ones of the day at 12 pounds and it's quickly released.

"This is a good sign," he said. "Fish are back here feeding, we just have to poke around and find a big one."

1:20 p.m. – A larger fish is hooked but lost.

"I saw that fish when it rolled and it



was over twenty pounds, a quality fish," Manning said. "I believe our fish is back here so we're going to make our stand in the flat because we've got quality bait and catfish. Let's get one or two big fish bites."

1:40 p.m. - Manning moves about 100-yards toward slightly deeper water where he saw shad activity.

1:57 p.m. - Caught and released a 13-pound blue on a big perch head.

2:25 p.m. - Manning makes another move, continuing to poke around looking for the big fish he's confident is in the back of this creek. He sets up in seven and one-half feet of water. Gulls are now in the creek searching for forage, another good sign.

In the next 30 minutes, more 15-pound-class blues are caught and released.

2:59 p.m. - "One-minute warning," Manning said.

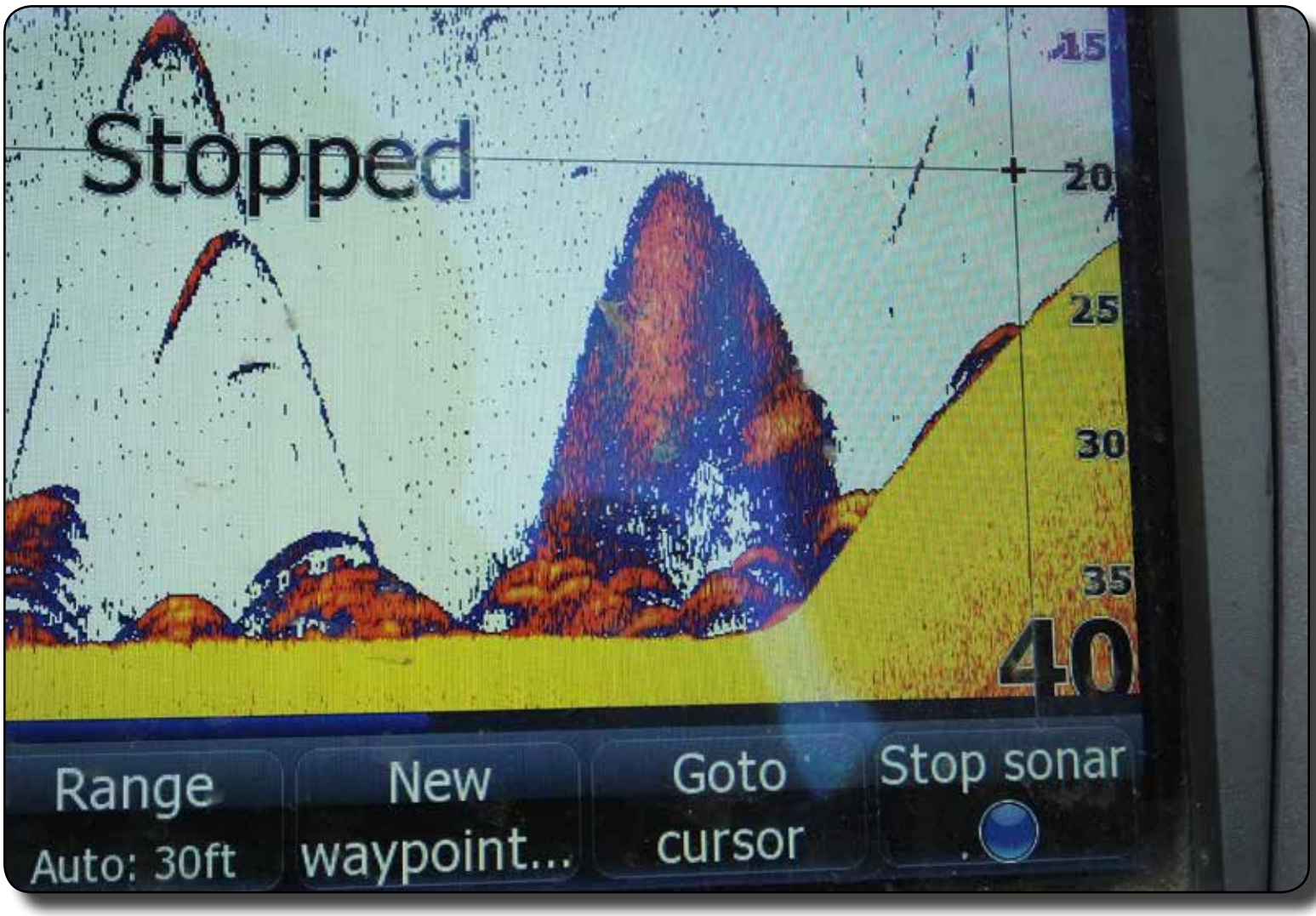
3:00 p.m. - "It's three o'clock, we're done, reel 'em in," he said.

Manning's strategy is to catch a tournament limit of quality fish quickly and then upgrade that total weight as much as possible.

Manning stores the dipnet, we start reeling rigs and the rod I'm reeling has a fish hooked that had sucked the bait in, unknown to us.

Manning laughed and said he hoped that's not the big fish we'd been working for because time's up, it can't count. He estimated the blue as another mid-teen class fish when he unhooked it beside the boat.

"I think we made the right decision to come back here even if we didn't catch the big fish," he said. "I think bigger fish are here, we just didn't hook up."



Manning uses his graph to find a combination of forage and fish along underwater contour changes.

The Weigh-In:

Our top three fish weighed in at 50 pounds, and out of 27 boats Manning finished seventh. His prediction of what we needed to challenge the winning weight was very close and we were only four pounds away from a top-three finish.

At the weigh-in, Manning and others shared the day's events, and he noted that few flatheads were caught and that the winning catch was all chunky blues. The overall atmosphere was one of camaraderie and all the catfish were released alive.

Summary:

"This was an exciting day," Manning said. "We fished to win and I feel we had a chance right up until 3:00 o'clock. I like the decisions regarding our strategy. We caught 17 catfish averaging about 14.5 pounds each, that's a great day of fishing. I get an adrenalin rush on a day like today when we're one big-fish bite away from being in contention and Lake Wylie is full of big catfish."

Epilogue: At the conclusion of the 2016/2017 fall, winter and spring wrap-around season Jeff Manning's Team, "Reelin' the Blues" won the points championship for the Southeastern Catfish Club, his primary tournament trail. In winning the championship, Manning won one event, had two seconds, one third and consistently placed well in other events.

- Terry Madewell

CATFISH KIDS

by Ron Presley

Pay it forward



Rusty Jackson sees the future of catfishing very clearly. “Getting kids involved in fishing is paramount to the continuation of our sport and conservation efforts,” says Jackson. “Not only is fishing a fun activity, it builds character and teaches other life lessons that will help young kids throughout their lives.”

These comments came after Jackson, Larry Muse, Joyce Muse, Justin Russell, two Wildlife Resource Officers and two staff members finished a Kids Fishing Rodeo at the trout pond. The rodeo took place at Pass Pro Shops (BPS) at the Pyramid in Memphis. The event is part of their Summer Days



Sale and happens at least once every summer.

"Justin Russell, West TN Catfish Anglers Association, had asked for volunteers," reported Joyce. "Larry and I had the pleasure of joining the group to help out. My job was to help them tie on hooks, choose their baits and bait their hooks. I've never tied on a hook before, but Larry said I did pretty good."

The other volunteers helped watch over the kid's safety, helped them fish and posed for photos. It was a fun day for everyone.

"It was very interesting to watch the kids," said Joyce. They could see their bait sink to the bottom of the pond and watch the fish swim nearly up to their bait and turn away. Toward the end of the day Rusty Jackson got some freeze-dried crickets, which proved to be the best bait of the day. I think 5 or 6 trout were caught on the crickets."

The bridge across the pond was filled with onlookers as kids from two-years-old and up tried to catch a fish. The event ran from 12 o'clock noon to 4 o'clock. Each child got 15 minutes to fish, and then, if they wished, could get in line to fish again. The children all received a free gift from BPS. The event was offered free of charge.

"You should have seen all the happy faces and smiles generated by just holding a rod and reel," offered

"You should have seen all the happy faces and smiles..."

BASS PRO SHOPS KIDS FISHING RODEO



Jackson. “And then, the Frisbee size eyes balls when they hooked up with a fish for the first time. By the way, I still get that look when I hook up!”

Jackson also noted some of the benefits of getting kids out to fish. “Fishing gets kids off the couch and out of the house. It is an opportunity for them to experience the outdoors and all the wonders of nature. Mentally, it teaches patience, develops critical and strategic thinking and how to deal with defeat.”

“Fishing teaches the consequences of poor choices,” continued Jackson. “It also reveals the celebration and reward that comes with making the right decisions. Young anglers (old ones too) also learn how to be humbled by an animal with a brain the size of a pea that will outwit you many times!”

“Although I get an adrenalin rush every time my rod bends and the line is stretched like a guitar string, there’s nothing like being there when a kid has a fish on and seeing the emotions displayed on their face for all to see as the battle ensues,” said Jackson.

“So, if you enjoy fishing please take a little time and pass on the sport by taking a kid fishing,” concluded Jackson. “Get involved with youth fishing events in your area. Who knows you may become that special person responsible for their first fishing memory. It might be a memory that changes their life forever. And, chances are great that you may have just as much fun as they do!”

CatfishNow commends BPS for making this fishing opportunity available and thanks all the volunteers for donating their time to the event.



- Ron Presley





River Rumors

Catfish as big as Volkswagens

by Ron Presley

Beware the whiskered giants that lurk beneath the water



It has long been rumored that there are catfish in America the size of Volkswagens. Sightings have been reported for as long as catfish anglers have gathered around campfires and enjoyed adult beverages. Are they real? Are there really outrageously oversized catfish lurking in the depths or America's waters?

Jay Harrod is an Alabama boy, living in Valhermoso Springs, Alabama. He made a Facebook post that got me to thinking about the subject. The more I thought about it the more I realized that I had heard some of those

> Most stories of catfish as big as a Volkswagens are associated in some way with a dam. They are said to grow to enormous size from eating baitfish killed by the turbines.



The legend has definitely impacted our culture. This custom Beetle showed up on the social media site Pinterest.

stories too. They are embellished with different specifics, but all share the general theme of catfish bigger than Volkswagens. I decided to check out a few and share them with you.

My adventure began by researching a few other unsubstantiated mystery monsters that have been sighted on the planet. Big catfish are certainly not the only mysterious creatures that have been reported to roam our earth.

In Great Britain, it is the Loch Ness Monster that holds the attention of monster seeking enthusiasts. Loch Ness is the largest body of fresh water in Britain. In fact, the website, "The Legend of Nessie," reports that there is more water in Loch Ness than all the other lakes in England, Scotland and Wales combined.

Loch Ness is a huge body of water that is twenty-two and a half miles long and between one and one and a half miles wide. Its waters are as deep as 754 feet in places, with the bottom said to be as flat as a bowling green. So why couldn't Lock Ness hold a mysterious and elusive critter known as the Loch Ness Monster? And why couldn't some deep water in America harbor a huge catfish?

Known affectionately as Nessie, the Loch Ness monster has been spotted many times. Some observers even offer photographic evidence to back their claims.

Big Foot is another mysterious and elusive creature familiar to most people. Also known by the names of Sasquatch, Yeti,



This is probably what it looks like to hook up with a legend. Of course, the angler will never see it.

Skunk Ape or Yowie, the creature has reported sightings in nearly every corner of the globe. It is said to be seven to eight feet tall and covered with long brownish hair. Those who have been close enough, also report a strong repugnant odor and huge footprints. Just like the Loch Ness Monster, Big Foot has been reported by credible witnesses who gave remarkably consistent descriptions of the beast.

There are more, like El Chupacabra — "the goat sucker" which evidently does not eat its victims, but draws its blood through a tiny incision.

How about the Jersey Devil? This New Jersey critter is reported to be about three and a half feet tall with a head like a collie dog and a face like a horse.

Have you heard of Moth Man? This West Virginia monster is said to be approximately seven feet tall with a wingspan over 10 feet and able to take off straight up in the air at 100 miles an hour. These and more mysterious creatures are reported in more detail at www.thought.com.

With all these sightings and documentations of stranger than life critters, why not a monster catfish, as big as a Volkswagen?

Many of the monster catfish sightings can be traced to family stories told at the dinner table, amongst other tales of fish. Personally, the first person to ever suggest the notion to me was Kyle Hittner, Executive Director of the Henderson County Tourism Commission. She had heard the rumor through her family.



The Ohio River is often named in the Volkswagen stories. Could this catfish caught near Henderson, KY possibly be an offspring with super genes.

"I remember my grandma always telling me about the fish in the Ohio River," reported Hittner. "She said they were as big as Volkswagens."

Laura Tipton, Lives in Highland, Michigan. She grew up in Barboursville, WV and she remembers tales from her family too. The stories focused on the 1967 collapse of the Silver Bridge over the Ohio River. The collapse resulted in the deaths of 46 people. Two of the victims were never found. Could they have been eaten by catfish?

"I remember my grandfather talking about the Silver Bridge collapse in West Virginia," recalled Tipton. "My grandfather, Virgil Tipton, has passed on now, but when we were little kids he told us about the divers at the scene looking for bodies. The bodies were lost when their cars went into the river as the bridge collapsed. He told us that the divers would not go back in the river because the catfish were as big as Volkswagens."

The local knowledge, according to Tipton, was that the fish grew to humongous sizes because of the chemical plants along the Ohio River.

Jason Geary lives in Jeffersonville, Indiana, near McAlpine Dam. He finds the legend alive and well in his area too. He fishes the Ohio River from Cincinnati, almost all the way across to Illinois. He says that if anyone notices you with a big catfish they want to tell you that story.

"I don't have any names," offered Geary.

"...I'll quit before I go back down there..."

"But I'll tell you everywhere you go, when somebody that doesn't really know much about catfishing, but they think they do, they're always quick to tell you the story. It is usually their buddy's buddy's buddy that was an underwater diver. Or, it was a guy they know that knows a guy that is an underwater diver. It is always a diver that saw the catfish bigger than a Volkswagen. They claim they exist at every hot water discharge or dam all over the country."

"As the story goes," continued Geary, they get that big because of the bait being killed as it goes through the turbines. The catfish just lay there and eat 24/7."

YouTuber and proprietor of Dieter Melhorn Fishing, Dieter Melhorn, has heard the stories too, stories that affected his fishing behavior.

"My first recollection of the 'divers working on the dam story' had a slightly different twist," offered Melhorn. "I was around 10 years old when I was told that divers working at the 'hot hole' had seen a catfish as big as a Volkswagen."

"The 'hot hole' was a hot water discharge from a local power plant," continued Melhorn. "The actual discharge was inaccessible to the public. However, the canal flowed to a public fishing area. So, one could theorize, any fish that size would soon tire of the constant current and swim down the canal and past the public fishing area."

"We fished the 'hot hole' the entire summer, fall, and part of the winter. We never caught the monster fish."

"Later I heard it had moved downstream a few miles to the bridge. I was told that divers were examining the bridge for cracks. The man at the local bait shop told me that the diver came up, took off his scuba gear, and said, 'I'll quit before I go back down there. That catfish was big as a Volkswagen!'"

"Now, thinking the beast had left the current of the canal as we theorized would happen, and was now in more stable water, we spent the following summer climbing down the embankment to fish under that old bridge. Countless days were spent offering this monster of the depths chicken liver and nightcrawlers. We caught plenty of catfish, plenty of white bass, and plenty of bream under that bridge. However, the giant catfish remained elusive another summer."

"By the age of 12 this elusive creature not only lived in the depths of the local lake, but was also sleeping comfortably in our minds each night as we dreamed of catching it one day."

"As I got older, and heard this story from every lake I ever visited to fish, I realized that we had spent our youth on a snipe hunt. The only difference here was that the people telling the story also believed it."

"All of the stories started with 'a man told me,' and I really tried to find that man, but he was always a friend of a friend of a friend. So today, if you ever hear me say 'a man told me' before any fishing story, you can bet that fishing story is an embellishment at best."

"Just last week I had a work associate figure out that I fished," concluded Melhorn. "As soon as I told him I fished for catfish he perked up and said, 'My buddy Earl was a scuba diver, and was diving down at….' I cut him off and completed his sentence with 'he saw a catfish as big as a Volkswagen?' His eyes got BIG and he got a startled look on his face as he asked, 'do you know my buddy Earl too?'"

As I mentioned above, it was a Facebook post by Jay Harrod that got me thinking about this legend of the fish as big as a Volkswagen. He too, is still hearing some version of the story fairly often.

His post went something like this: "I heard it again yesterday!" posted Harrod. "There's catfish at the dam in Chattanooga as big as Volkswagens! Divers seen em' and took pictures. They tried to haul them up with a winch on a barge and it started smoking. They had to bring in ocean marine biologists to remove them in great white shark cages!"

"I've heard this story everywhere," said Harrod. "It's a recurring thing anywhere there's a dam. I think this particular one was referring to Chickamauga or Watts Bar. Most

Hogwash



Catfishing fanatic, Bill Dance, also heard the stories about huge catfish accumulating around the dams. “Many stories have been told about giant catfish,” commented Dance. “We would hear things like, ‘There are cats in front of that dam so big, they could eat a 6-foot human.’ However, divers that worked on the dam say they never saw fish that would come even close to doing that!”

“There was a cartoon floating around years ago where someone drew a Volkswagen with fins and barbels. It also had a catfish mouth and tail. The cartoonist placed him at the base of the dam and captioned it with something like, ‘Monster cats the size of Volkswagens live here.’”

“Naturally, all of this is a bunch of hogwash,” concluded Dance. “Big cats do frequent these areas, but not in search of humans and not the size of Volkswagens!”

catfishermen laugh it off, or use it to egg the average person on when they hear it.”

“Sometimes the story includes boats being taken under by the ginormous cats themselves,” continued Harrod. “I heard this happened near Lake James in North Carolina.”

Harrod has also hear various reasons for the growth of the catfish to humongous sizes. All relate to a good food source. Some story tellers cite workmen who fell into the water before OSHA installed strict safety standards. Others mention the divers working on dam projects, themselves becoming the target of hungry catfish. “I’ve heard those cats just gobbled them right up,” concluded Harrod.

With no verified evidence of their existence, the legend of catfish as big as Volkswagens remains a mystery. Is it just big blue catfish lurking in the deep waters around many dams and hot water discharges in America? Or, is it a creature that is yet unknown to biologists—a super strain of catfish?

Anglers and big cat enthusiasts will just have to wait for the answer. It will hinge on the ability of some brave and industrious divers to take up a call to action aimed at determining, once and for all, the legitimacy of the claim. Maybe they can verify the claim, or put it to rest. In the meantime, until solid evidence is found, we are left in the unknown.

Will one or more of these inexplicable creatures unexpectedly show themselves to the lens of a smartphone video camera or a divers underwater camera? Only time will tell.

Until the proof is found, anglers, divers and other water sports activists will continue to be frightened, surprised and dumbfounded, usually without a shred of evidence, by the behemoth catfish that are said to lay below the surface of our waters.

We can probably expect eyewitness stories of these creatures to continue. They will challenge our common sense, tickle our funny bone, and stir our imaginations. Do they really exist? I leave that determination up to you.



- Ron Presley

Why We Catfish

A Guest Editorial by Rusty Jackson

Editor's note:*Rusty Jackson is an avid catfish angler. He fishes competitively as a B'n'M Prostaffer with his partner David Magness. Much of his current day fishing is done on the Mighty Mississippi near his home in Olive Branch, Mississippi. His expeditions often include his son Cooper.*

The best spots are always on the other side



Jackson remembers the days when he headed for the pond, on his bike, machete in hand.

A green metal tackle box, corks, #8 cricket hooks, a few split shot sinkers, a 6-foot stringer, and a home-made cricket box with a rope handle was readied for use. Of course, the box was full of black crickets that I caught myself by turning over every board and log within five miles. Add a Zebco 33, mounted on a 5 ½ foot black fiberglass rod, and that was my fishing arsenal when I was 7 years old.

As we put these things in the back of the pickup I could hardly contain the excitement in anticipation of seeing the cork disappear under the water. As a bonus, there was a good possibility that I would get to drive the green and white Ford with "three-on-the-column" to the pond. Some of my earliest memories, and for certain, some of my happiest moments, were when I was fishing.

Fishing was what we did on the weekends. Everyone in my family fished, even my sister and grandmother. I called grandmother Mamaw. You better believe she was serious about her fishing. If you caught a bigger fish than her, you better get ready because it was game on until she was back on top!

Mamaw was competitive. She didn't like to be passed on the road by other cars either. Now that I think about it, I may know where my competitive streak comes from.

My grandfather, better known as Papaw, took every opportunity he had to take me fishing and hunting. I have followed the same tradition with my son. This early introduction to the outdoors paved a way of life that would continue as I got older.

I still love to fish as much today as I did then. Some would even argue that the passion has grown exponentially. I can still vividly remember fishing with my daddy and papaw just as if it was yesterday. Sometimes it was with a top-water Devil Horse or Lucky 13 for bass. Other times it was baiting up a "J" style Mustad or Eagle Claw hook with crawfish, or catalpa worms that we gathered the day before for some catfish action.

It was also fun when a big bluegill

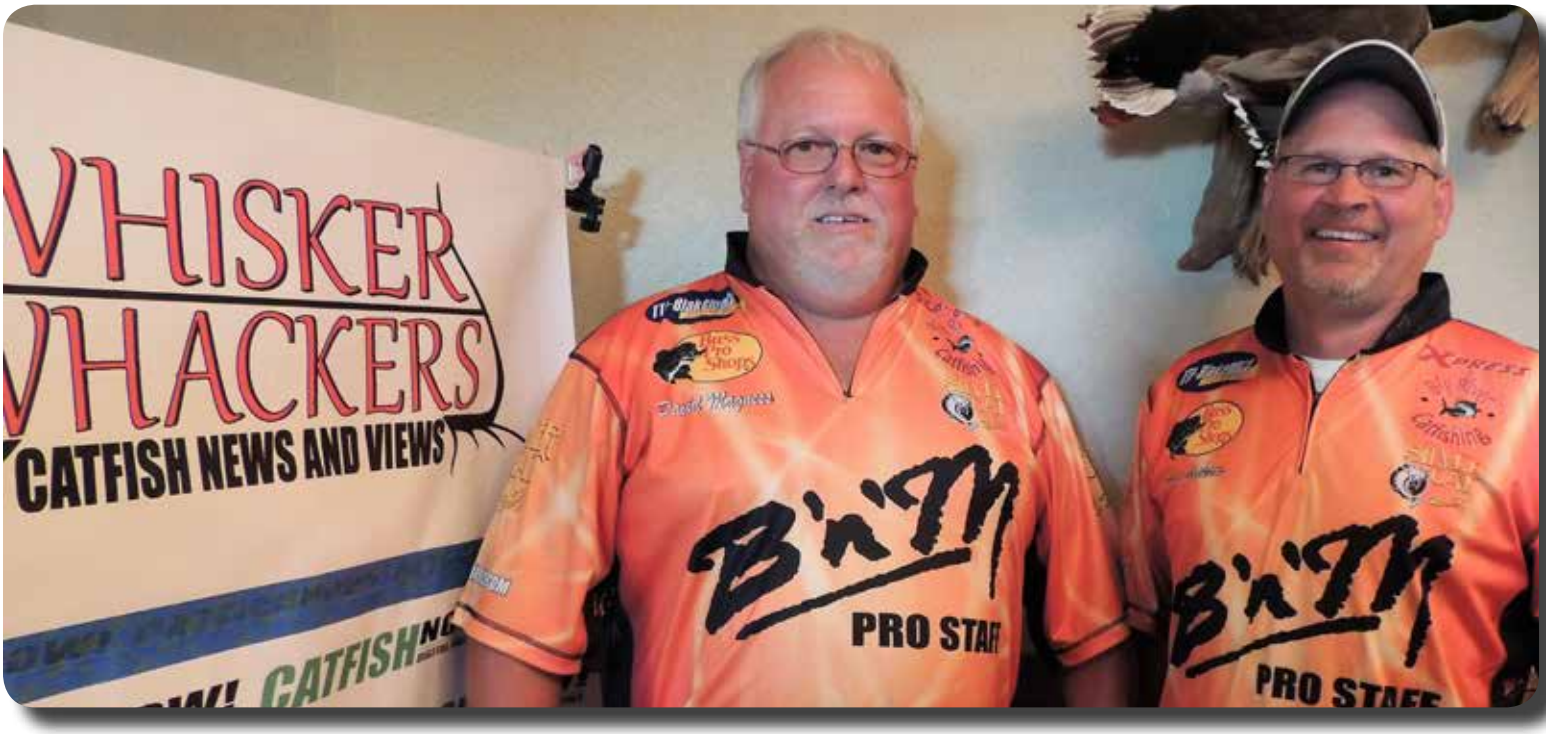


would suck in a cricket, sink a cork and make the line slice through the water. No matter what the species–I was fishing, happy and making memories.

If you ever wanted to know where I was as a kid, just look for the bike with a Plano tackle box strapped to the back fender and a Zebco 33 across the handle bars. It would have been headed to the closest creek or pond.

I'm pretty sure my mom didn't know that daddy gave me a machete to cut back the limbs and vines at the creek and on the pond levee, but it had to be safer than using the Old Timers pocket knife my Uncle Ralph gave me. "Yikes!" My mom would have undoubtedly asked, "Why on earth I would need a machete?"

The answer of course was that the best spots are always on the other side, covered with brush and sometimes an occasional wasp nest. I'm sure that right now you are



Jackson is shown here with his tournament partner David Magness. They plan to compete in the September 16th Mississippi River Monsters tournament in Memphis.

probably thinking of fun stories from your past and can relate to how someone introduced you to the sport of fishing some time ago.

Fishing is my escape, my mental vacation, my "Calgon take me away" moment. The worries of the world are left behind when I'm on the water with a rod and reel in my hand. It's like hunting with a blindfold; It's the excitement of the battle with the unknown predator at the other end of the line below the water. And yes, occasionally when it is a small fish on the other end of the line, I do feel like a bully! LOL.

I've never thought about why I fish, I've just always done it. It's just who I am.



Jackson passes his passion for fishing on to his son Cooper by taking him on frequent fishing trips.

 - Rusty Jackson

Why We Catfish Guest Editorial

This column is provided for reader submitted editorials on Why We Catfish. If you have a short story related to why you catfish, you may submit it for consideration and publication in a future issue of CatfishNow. Send submissions of 500 words or less and one or two photos to Ron Presley at presleyr@bellsouth.net.

BIG CAT QUEST	FaceBook	KEN FREEMAN
BIG SIOUX CAT ANGLERS	FaceBook	DICK HINRICHSEN
CABELA'SKING KAT TOURNAMENT TRAIL	FaceBook	JEREMY COE
CAROLINA ANGLERS TEAM TRAIL C.A.T.T	FaceBook	BRETT COLLINS
CATFISH CHASERS TOURNAMENT SERIES	FaceBook	DAVID STUDABAKER
CATFISH CONFERENCE	FaceBook	STEVE DOUGLAS
CATFISH COUNTRY	FaceBook	SCOTT WILSON
CATFISH MAFIA	FaceBook	GLEN ORR
CATFISH NATION OUTDOORS	FaceBook	KEN HAGEN
CATHUNTERS ASSOC. OF THE SOUTH C.A.T.S.	FaceBook	GLENN FLOWERS
CENTRAL MISSOURI CATS	FaceBook	MATT SANDERS
CENTRAL TEXAS CATFISH TRAIL	FaceBook	JERRY DILLARD
CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLJACK CATFISHING	FaceBook	HUNTER LIVINGSTON
EXTREME CATFISHING	FaceBook	CHAD WAUGH
FISHIN BLUES	FaceBook	TIM ORR
FLATHEAD BLUES ON CHANNEL 2	Website	AMANDA JOHNSON
GETNHOOKED	FaceBook	MICHAEL PRICE
HOLD'EM HOOK CATFISH TRAIL	FaceBook	STEVE DOBBS
ICATS	FaceBook	JOHNNY COLEMAN/BOBBY MILLER
INDIANA CATFISH	FaceBook	CHRIS WALLACE
J.K.V. CATFISHING TOURNAMENT TRAIL	FaceBook	JOSH VANOVER
KANAWHA RIVER CATFISH CLUB	FaceBook	NEAL CRAIG /JUSTIN VAUGHT
KANSAS CITY CATFISH	FaceBook	BARD KILPATRICK
MADISON CATFISH ANGLERS	FaceBook	DARRYL MILLER
MISSISSIPPI CATFISH TRAIL	FaceBook	HUGH THOMPSON
MISSISSIPPI RIVER MONSTERS	FaceBook	GEORGE YOUNG
MONSTERS ON THE OHIO	FaceBook	AARON WHEATLEY
OHIO VALLEY CATFISHING	FaceBook	MARK BARILLA
OHIO VALLEY RIVER CATS	FaceBook	FRANK
OLD DOMINION CATFISH CLUB	FaceBook	BRUCE CONNER
RED RIVER VALLEY CATFISH LEAGUE	FaceBook	BRAD DURICK
SCHEELS BOUNDRY BATTLE CATFISH TOURNAMENT	FaceBook	BRAD DURICK
SOUTHEAST NEBRASKA MO RIVER CATFISH CLUB	FaceBook	LORI
SOUTHEASTERN CATFISH CLUB	FaceBook	BRIAN SNIPES JOSHUA COGGINS
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TRI-COUNTY CATFISH ASSOCIATION	FaceBook	TOMMY WALSH
TUG "N" JUGS	FaceBook	MICHAEL PRICE
TWISTED CAT OUTDOORS	FaceBook	ALEX NAGY
WEST TEXAS CATFISH TRAIL	FaceBook	CHUCK MCCOY
WEST TN CATFISH ANGLERS	FaceBook	JUSTIN RUSSELL
WHISKY CITY CATFISH CLUB	FaceBook	RAY HERALD

CABELA'S KING KAT

AUGUST 11th - 12th MISSISSIPPI RIVER/LAKE COOPER

1. Bryan Espy/Ken Luttrell	94.02
2. Jim Gillenwater/Josh Mayes	87.42
3. Joey Heckrodt/Jerry Cox	82.7
4. Mark Farrow/Jerry Cline II	75.64
5. Ron King/John King	70.34

BIG FISH

1. Joey Heckrodt/Jerry Cox	14.92

CATFISH CHASERS

AUGUST 11th - 12th WOLF CREEK

1. Bredfeldt/Trager	103.2
2. Parks/Fischer	102.2
3. Romero/Daniels	96.7
4. Kuhlman/Kuhlman	86.9
5. Johnston/Guyle	86.8

BIG FISH

1. Johnston/Guyle	38.7

CATFISH COUNTRY

AUGUST 12th MANCHESTER

1. Vic Shepherd/Linda Shepherd	43.7
2. Ray Butler/Scott Wilson	39
3. Tim Mulvhill/Grant Wilson	28.75

BIG FISH

1. Ray Butler/Scott Wilson	32.9

INDIANA

AUGUST 12th LEAVENWORTH

1. Schmeltz/Marshall	155.5
2. Tutorow/Han/Han	128.3
3. Vanover/Fancher	117.1
4. Keen/Williams	109.3
5. Holcomb/Tanner	95.3

BIG FISH

1. Tutorow/Han/Han	57.1

KANAWHA RIVER CATFISH CLUB

AUGUST 12th — POINT PLEASANT

1. Todd Anderson/Greg Adkins/ Noah Eblin	78.65
2. Adam Scott/Cody Williams/Justin Vaught	61.6
3. Josh Bowin/Tyler Roach	57.45

BIG FISH

1. Todd Anderson/Greg Adkins/ Noah Eblin	39.05

RED RIVER VALLEY

AUGUST 12th — LINCOLN PARK

1. Philip Hartwig/Cason Weber	33.4
2. Jamie Gudajtes/Dustin Lunski	33.2
3. Brian Nelson/Bruce Nelson	33

BIG FISH

1. Brandon Lunski/Nick Lunski	17.2

CABELA'S KING KAT

AUGUST 19th — MISSISSIPPI RIVER

1. Joey Heckrodt/Jerry Cox	72.24
2. Jim Gillenwater/RD Trout	63.4
3. Alex Nagay/Brandon Schadt	58.46
4. Chris Soulders/Nick Conaway	55.06
5. Carl Morris JR/Rob Parsons	41.86

BIG FISH

1. Chris Soulders/Nick Conaway	31.3

OHIO VALLEY CATFISHING

1. Jeff Foster/Nick Maroni	77.1
2. Eric Tustin/Louie Helwig	14
3. Cliff McElroy/Rich Morrison	5.4

BIG FISH

1. Jeff Foster/Nick Maroni	36.2

ICATS

AUGUST 20th — MISSOURI RIVER

1. Aaron Tripp/Mark Williams/ Hadley Libby	58.25
2. AJ Gianneto/Matt Gannaway	49.5
3. Michael Lawson/Amanda Lawson	30.25
4. Mike Salazar/Floyd Manley/ Trapper Salazar	18.75
5. TJ Hummel/Ryan Kerster	18.4

BIG FISH

1. Aaron Tripp/Mark Williams/ Hadley Libby	49.6

CABELA'S KING KAT

AUGUST 25th - 26th — OHIO RIVER

1. Daryl Masingale/Jason Masingale	218.94
2. Tim Walsh/Thomas Walsh JR	195.34
3. Adam Dehner/Chris Pelzel	187.84
4. Terry Rogers/William Clapp	167.54
5. Chris Souders/Nick Conway	164.82

BIG FISH

1. Daryl Masingale/Jason Masingale	47.54

BIG SIOUX CAT ANGLERS

AUGUST 26th — BROWNS LAKE

1. Rich	14.13
2. Dick Hinrichsen	12.1
3. Adam Barcus/BJ Hetzel	9.7
4. Kirk McInnis/Dan VerMulm	6.11
5. Adapto Campos/Rigoberto Campos	6.5

BIG FISH

1. Adam Barcus/BJ Hetzel	6.11

CATFISH COUNTRY

AUGUST 26th — AUGUSTA

1. Darren Wright/Diane Wright	31.5
2. Jeff Winkle/Tracy Winkle	24.8

BIG FISH

1. Jeff Winkle/Diane Winkle	16

CENTRAL MISSOURI CATS

AUGUST 26th NEW HAVEN

1. Roger Gerloff/Logan Gerloff/ Gary Taylor	139.7 + BF
2. Travis Robertson/Sean Kay-singer	63.4
3. Dale Smith/Kathy Smith	60.8
4. Tony Bebouf/Anthony Nichols	55.6
5. Jeremy Korte/Ben Korte	46.3

HOLD'EM HOOK

APRIL 26th DITTO LANDING

1. Cad Daly	76.1
2. J.R. Hall	71.3
3. Steve Dobbs	63.8
4. Tim Peppers	42.7
5. Bryan Folsom	17.6

BIG FISH

1. J.R. Hall	56.6

KANAWHA RIVER

AUGUST 26th NITRO

1. Josh Antill/Brian Antill	49.55
2. Jeremy Jeffers/Troy Jarrell	37.95
3. John Gibson/Terry Legg	35.1

BIG FISH

1. Jeremy Jeffers/Troy Jarrell	28.35

OLD DOMINION CATFISH CLUB

AUGUST 26th HOPEWELL MARINA

1. Doug Holloway/Roger Bradley	117.75
2. George Isler/Claude Fincher/ Jason Moore/Matthew	79.8
3. Josh Ashley/Hunter Werres	75.95
4. Kenneth Bennett/Michael Bur-rus/BJ Wright	75.05
5. Stephen Dehner/George Den-her	71.55

BIG FISH

1. Doug Holloway/Roger Bradley	60.1

WEST TN CATFISH ANGLERS

AUGUST 26th — HOPEWELL MARINA

1. Cedric Poynor/Taylor Stovall	93.53
2. Roy Harkness/Bill Dance/ George Young JR	82.67
3. Joe Hardy/Barry Wilson	80.69
4. Hunter Jones/Terry Shands	77.09
5. Chris Peyton/Chad Smith/Mike Conrad	74.45

BIG FISH

1. Joe Hardy/Barry Wilson	61.84

JKV CATFISHING

AUGUST 26th — OHIO RIVER/SHAWNEE TOWN

1. Stephen Fancher/Cliff Riggins	109.1
2. Auddie Hammond/Chris Mitch-ell/Sherman Mitchell	85.9
3. Casey Tutorow/Andrew Haun	83.4
4. Andy Williams/Steven Hise/ Ashley Hise	83.1
5. Adam Winder/Kelly Kriesle	73.4

BIG FISH

1. Casey Tutorow/Andrew Haun	57.1

CATFISH CHASERS

AUGUST 26th - 27th — CALAMUS LAKE

1. Meseke/Pinick	140.45
2. Drew/Myer	138.55
3. Smith/Kennedy	134.9
4. Studebaker/Busch	132.85
5. Fouts/Wilson	

BIG FISH

1. Simpsom/Simpson	23.55

(Fishermen, check with club/association for exact dates, changes, cancellations and rules.)

Sept	15th - 16th	MISSISSIPPI RIVER MONSTERS	MEMPHIS	OPEN
Sept	16th	CENTRAL OHIO CATFISH	ALUM CREEK	CLUB
Sept	16th	INDIANA CATFISH ASSOCIATION	ANGEL MOUNDS	CLUB
Sept	16th	TRI STATE KATS	SIOUX CITY BOAT RAMP	CLUB
Sept	22nd - 23rd	CABELA'S KING KAT	CUMBERLAND(Old Hickory lake)	NORTHERN CHAMP.
Sept	23rd	CATFISH CHASERS	ATCHISON/MISSOURI RIVER	CLUB
Sept	23rd	CATFISH MAFIA	LAKE ALDRED	CLUB
Sept	23rd	CENTRAL MISSOURI CATS	COOLEY LAKE	CLUB/NIGHT
Sept	23rd	HOLD'EM HOOK	GUNTERSVILLE	CLUB
Sept	23rd	JKV CATFISHING	3RD ANNUAL BURCE MIDKIFF MEMORIAL	CLUB
Sept	23rd	KANAWHA RIVER	RAVENSWOOD	CLUB
Sept	23rd	MADISON CATFISH ANGLERS	MADISON	CLUB
Sept	23rd	OHIO VALLEY CATFISHING	NEWBURG LANDING	BIG CAT TROPHY
Sept	23rd - 24th	ICATS	KNOXVILLE LAKE/LAKE RED ROCK	CHAMPOINSHIP
Sept	24th	WICKED WHISKER	BELLEVUE OR PORTSMOUTH	CLUB/DAY
Sept	29th - 1st	TUGNJUGS	SKIATOOK	CLUB
Sept	30th	MISSISSIPPI CATFISH TRAIL	VICKSBURG	CLUB
Sept	30th	OLD DOMINION	HOPEWELL MARINA	CLUB
Sept	30th	SOUTHWEST OHIO CATFISH	RIVERSIDE	OPEN
Sept	30th -OCT.1st	TWISTED CAT OUTDOORS	QUINCY	SHOOTOUT
Oct	6th - 7th	CABELA'S KING KAT	LAKE WATEREE	SOUTHERN CHAMP.
Oct	7th	BIG CAT QUEST	MISSISSIPPI RIVER	NATIONAL CHAMP.
Oct	7th	CATFISH COUNTRY	TANNERS CREEK	CLUB
Oct	14th	CATFISH MAFIA	LOWER POTOMAC	CLUB
Oct	7th	FISHIN BLUES	LAKE ELLSWORTH	FALL CLASSIC
Oct	7th	KANAWHA RIVER	EUREKA	CLUB
Oct	7th	MADISON CATFISH ANGLERS	TANNERS CREEK	CLUB
Oct	7th - 8th	TRI-COUNTY CATFISH ASSOCIATION	CREVE COEUR-KUTCHIE'S	CLASSIC
Oct	13th - 15th	TUGNJUGS	OOLOGAH	CLUB
Oct	14th	CENTRAL OHIO CATFISH	DELEWARE LAKE	CLUB
Oct	14th	CENTRAL TEXAS CATFISH TRAIL	BELTON	CLUB
Oct	14th	CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLJACKS	HATCHACHUBBEE CREEK PARK	NIGHT
Oct	14th	GETNHOOKED	OOLOGAH/RED BUD MARINA	CLUB
Oct	14th	SOUTHEASTERN CATFISH CLUB	LAKE WYLIE	CLUB
Oct	14th	MONSTERS ON THE OHIO	OHIO RIVER	EVENT


Let em' go,
let em' grow