

CATFISH NOW!

DIGITAL MAGAZINE

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BAIT!!!

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Catfish anglers from all around the country descended on Louisville KY in February. The occasion was the Third Annual Catfish Conference. Just as catfish tournaments go a long way toward educating an eager public, events like Catfish Conference are one more important cog in the wheel that will help grow the sport of catfishing by bringing anglers together and distributing information on the sport.



The SeaArk Catfish Conference 2018, presented by Suzuki Marine, was held at the Crowne Plaza Airport Hotel and Convention Center in Louisville, KY. The original sponsors of Catfish Conference, Monster Rod Holders, Jeff Jones Marine, and Business House used what they learned from the first two conferences to make the third one even better. Thousands of catfish enthusiasts from 25 states attend the highly anticipated event.

Catfishing information flowed like water over a waterfall as attendees visited with vendors at their booths and with other cat men and women in the aisles. Opening morning could literally be described as an elbow to elbow encounter of the catfish community.

There was a pulse-like beat to the flow of the crowd as seminars began across the hall the flow of traffic migrated to hear the expert speakers share their knowledge of the catfish world. When the seminars ended the flow of people went back into the exhibit hall and the aisles filled up again until the next seminar began. Those seminars were drawing 90 to 100 eager catfish anglers with an appetite to learn more about the sport they love.

As always, I wish to thank the great sponsors that support us. It is because of them that we are able to offer the contents of CFN to our readers free of charge. I hope you will help me thank them by considering their products when you are in the market for catfish supplies.

We are extremely pleased to bring you this month's collection of catfish related content and ask you to share this issue with your friends, relatives and other catfish enthusiasts. By doing so you just might help them catch more CatfishNow.

Fish with passion,
Ron Presley, Editor

Front Cover:

B'n'M prostaffer, Ty Konkle, uses Foley Spoons to put Tennessee River skipjack in the boat for bait.

Ron Presley Photo

BELOW THE SURFACE

by Ron Presley

Follow the lead of those who know the ropes



Most people are familiar with the statement, “When in Rome do as the Romans do.” It’s good advice for catfishers too. When you visit an unfamiliar lake or river, one of the best things you can do, to improve your success, is to find out what the local catfish anglers use for bait. You need to adapt to, and follow the customs of those anglers that fish the body of water regularly. Just because skipjack is the bait of choice in your area doesn’t

Using the right bait increase anglers’ chances of getting a nice fish like Lisa Hill has here. Photo courtesy of Lisa Hill.

mean it’s best everywhere.

By adapting your techniques to local customs, you shorten the learning curve and enjoy more productive fishing. The more time you save by being smart, the



more time you are fishing with the bait that is most likely to put fish in the boat.

Jeremy Coe, travels the county as tournament director of Cabela's King Kat tournament trail. His observations on bait usage starts by drawing a horizontal line across the United States through Indianapolis.

"Skipjack reigns king in most places south of Indianapolis," offered Coe. "The Central U.S. is definitely skipjack country. If you go down south in flathead territory shad and bluegill become popular as well in places like Ohio and West Virginia.

Goldeye are especially good winter baits on the Yellowstone River. However, they don't freeze well. Eddie White suggests freezing in water, vacuum pack, or just use the guts.
Photo courtesy of Eddie White.

Move out west, especially northwest in states like NE, SD, ND and even parts of IA, anglers use suckers and chubs for channels. They also use stink baits, blood baits, and dough baits. A fourth prominent type of bait is in the Carolinas where they use a lot of white perch and mullet. In the



end, bait choice depends on the species of catfish and location of the fishery.”

This story is aimed at visiting three geographically diverse bodies of water and reporting on the best baits to use in those areas. The differences will enlighten you.

“...whatever is easiest to catch by the angler, typically tends to be the best...”

Texas - Lake Wright Patman

Lake Wright Patman is home waters to catfish enthusiast Lisa Hill. Lisa travels all over the county in search of whiskered critters with her tournament partner, James Prince. She understands, that when they travel, they need to adapt to the destination waters by finding out what bait works best. But, when Lisa is at home in Texas, she knows exactly what bait to use to tempt the whiskered fish.

Formed on the Sulphur River, Wright Patman provides flood control for the region and big catfish for the anglers. The record blue catfish for Wright Patman is 69 pounds, caught back in 2014, on cut shad, by Sandy Wilson. Local anglers know what Wilson knew when she caught the record. On Lake Wright Patman, cut gizzard shad is the best bait for catching trophy catfish.

“Both gizzard shad and threadfin shad can usually be found year-round,” offered Hill. “Gizzard shad is the bigger of the two and what we like to use. Shad can literally be anywhere on the lake, but there are two locations that have a higher percentage of producing shad on a regular basis. The two places most easily accessible on Lake Wright Patman are the spillway at the dam and a bridge named Low Water Bridge. On a good day you can cast net 8- to 10-inch shad. That

size makes great cut bait.”

“Most days you can cast your net a few times and have all you need,” continued Hill. “On other days you may have to throw the net a hundred times to catch only a few. Sometimes we have to work hard for the best bait.”

“Using live shad is a challenge for us,” explained Hill. “Shad can be difficult to keep alive in bulk without the help of a good bait tank. So, once we catch shad we quickly transfer them into a plastic Ziploc bag. Then we store the bag on ice in a cooler.”

Hill normally uses a balloon rig or a Santee-Cooper rig to drift fish on Wright Patman. The shad is cut into three pieces, the head, gut, and tail. The tail is simply disposed of.

“Sometimes bait catching can be as challenging as the catfishing itself,” concluded Hill. “But, when we get the right bait, it’s worth all the time and trouble spent, because then we have the opportunity to catch a trophy catfish.”

Montana – Yellowstone River

Eddie and Ann White, claim their home waters as the Yellowstone River. They operate a wholesale bait business (The Minnow Bucket) near their hometown of Broadview, Montana.

The Yellowstone River flows from Yellowstone Lake in Yellowstone Park. It winds its way through Montana where it joins the Missouri River at the Montana-North Dakota state line. It is considered one of the only free flowing rivers in the US. There are diversion dams for irrigation, but no permanent dams that form lakes along its length.

“Catfishing doesn’t begin until the

One of Eddie White’s favorite rigs is the zero rig. Note that the sinker is allowed to run all the way down to the hook with the knot protected by the bead.

Photo courtesy of Eddie White



Billings area and moves east towards the confluence,” said Eddie. “West of billings, the water is typically too cold for channel cats. In our area we do have stone cats and bull heads, but channel cats are our primary species to target.”

“I sell bait commercially,” said Eddie. “I spend about a fourth of my life chasing bait. We trap, seine, dipnet, and hook and line, depending on the time of year.” Needless to say, as bait suppliers Eddie and Ann are well versed in the bait needs of catfish anglers in their area.

“We have an abundance of forage species,” reported Eddie. “The top three are suckers, flathead chubs, and goldeye. There are three types of suckers — white, long nose, or red horse. White suckers are the preferred bait. Flathead chubs are the second best, and the goldeye is third.”

Eddie likes to note that Yellowstone River catfish will key in on different food sources as the different bait runs transition through the year.

“In the early season high water dominates and suckers take precedence,” advised Eddie. “The suckers are on their spawning run and the cats will focus on them. The flathead chubs are also in the spawning run, but typically in the feeder creeks.”

“Suckers will remain the best bet up until July/August when the water starts to clear and goldeye run begins. The flathead chubs also return to the main channel.”

“Flathead chubs will congregate in huge balls,” outlined Eddie. “During this time the cats will focus on that particular forage, making any other bait almost obsolete. However, with chubs and goldeye running at the same time, the bite can switch from one to another depending on the day. Once Fall arrives and the chubs start their run back up feeder creeks to winter, goldeye can be the go to bait.”

Eddie and Ann like to pre-rig terminal tackle for different presentations. They have narrowed their preferences down to three different set ups. They always use



Ty Konkle uses B'n'M Duck Commander Ultralight Combos, baited with wax worms, to put some fun into catching bluegill for bait.

cut bait for the simple reason that they have never had much luck using live bait.

“With catfishing evolving there is no such thing as typical rig any longer,” said Eddie. “It is amazing how many Plano boxes we have set up for different presentations. If I had to pick three, it would be a standard Carolina rig, a zero or whisker bomb rig, or a Carolina rig with a float.”

Fishing on the Yellowstone depends on the area and season. In the winter anglers look for deep wintering holes. “In our area, deep would be 20 feet,” instructed Eddie. “There is a large variation in depth along our stretch of the river. Depth can change from those 20-foot holes to 6-inch runs, necessitating the use of jet boats rather than prop driven vessels.”

“During pre-spawn, warm mudflats and rocks, along with downed timber, hold the most fish,” explained Eddie. “During high water the cats prefer back waters and flooded feeder creeks where they sit to avoid the main current and rush of debris. During the summer 8- to 15-foot holes during the day and flats or runs in front of those holes at night produce the best numbers and sizes of channels. Fall finds us struggling to establish a pattern as the fish move downriver towards their wintering holes. So, we typically fish any of the previously mentioned techniques to find them.”

Eddie and Ann are also tournament anglers, often with their son Spencer, and they will be directing tournaments in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming in 2018. They plan to expand their tournament activities in 2019 to include neighboring states in an effort to “bring legitimacy to tournament angling in the northwest.”

Tennessee - Chickamauga Lake

For catfish anglers fishing the Tennessee River and its many lakes, skipjack is king. That is true for Chickamauga Lake near Chattanooga, TN, but one local guide advises anglers to have backup baits available.

For Ty Konkle, owner operator of FV-Catfish.com Guide Service, skipjack is good certain times of the year, but other times there are some great, and preferable, alternative baits. It usually comes down to what is abundant at the time, and Tennessee law allows anglers to use gamefish if they catch it on hook and line.

“Anything you catch legally, and is in the slot limit, you can turn around and use as bait,” advised Konkle. “That might be crappie, white bass, shell crackers, bluegill, and others in the sunfish family. There are times when the fish want one type of bait more than the other. The key is to experiment when you start your day. Use a variety of baits and let the fish tell

you what they want.”

“There is no real way to explain it, other than it is what is running at the time,” offered Konkle. “When the crappies start coming into the shallows and they start stacking up pretty good, they make excellent bait. A lot of people like skipjack, but if they’re not running really well they might not be as good as something else. It seems like during any particular time, whatever is easiest to catch by the angler, typically tends to be the best bait for the catfish.”

“I always say, what can easily be caught at a certain time is probably the bait to consider using. When they are ‘running’ they are probably on the catfish menu.”

Sometimes one bait works better than another, and that can change daily or even hourly. It definitely changes by season. Konkle reports days when the only fish caught came on live bluegill, then he offers a caveat.

“During the winter you can hardly catch one on a live bluegill,” declared Konkle. “I typically find cut baits work

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better during winter up to spawn. After the spawn live bait can really be the hot bait. Oily fish, like skipjack, tend to work better during warmer water temperatures. Non-oily fish like bluegill work better in colder water when they don't 'wash out' quite as easy."

"The big thing to remember about bait usage is that each state has a different classification of what constitutes a bait fish," instructed Konkle. "States also regulate how they can be caught. For instance, in Tennessee, if its caught in a legal manner and in the correct slot limit, it can be used as bait. Bluegill caught in a cast net cannot be used as bait in Tennessee. However, catch bluegill on hook and line and they are legal as bait."

Concluding Remarks

These three examples of geographically diverse bodies of water

The right bait can result in the right fish. Konkle shows off a nice Tennessee River flattie.

underline the importance of local knowledge in achieving fishing success. The lesson from each location is to be observant, ask questions, and adapt to local customs.

Even though catfishing techniques change frequently as new methods are tried and proven, catfish have been eating the same food, in the same kinds of places, for their entire life. In fact, they base their feeding behavior on the behavior of the bait that lives in the same water they do.

When it comes to choosing bait, successful catfish anglers would do well to heed the age-old proverb, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do."





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Catfish Basics #035

Planer Board Tip
 Seth McCallister
 Unhooked Fishing, Offshore Tackle

I grew up as an avid walleye angler, using planner boards. By the time I started catfishing seriously they were already part of my arsenal. Using planer boards for catfish is very similar to bottom bouncing in the walleye world.

We use them in lakes, small rivers and even in some of the largest rivers, like the Mississippi River. We use them on both flats and in large structure situations. Anytime anglers have a circumstance where they would drag in the conventional way, planer boards will work really well.

A great tip when running planer boards is to keep your rod as high up in the holder as you can. We use 10-foot rods positioned in the front of the boat, running multiple Offshore Tackle boards on each side. Running longer rods on a high rod holder angle keeps the line out of the water, reducing line drag, and results in a wider spread.

Planer boards are not as difficult as some anglers think. Planer boards are very simple to use and can really increase your chances for putting quality fish in the boat.

Seth fishes competitively with Alex Nagy. They are two of the first, if not the first catfish anglers, to join the National Professional Anglers Association (NPAA). You can view their YouTube videos on their Unhooked Fishing channel.





Three Great Books

Thousands of Great Catfishing Tips

Three books are displayed against a background of water. The left book is 'PRO TACTICS™ CATFISH' with a cover photo of a man holding a large catfish. The middle book is 'The Freshwater Angler™ Catching CATFISH' with a green cover and a photo of a catfish. The right book is 'HARDCORE CATFISHING BEYOND THE BASICS' by Keith Sutton, with a cover photo of a man in a hat holding a large catfish.

All by the "Dean of Catfishing" himself, Keith "Catfish" Sutton
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Catfish Profiles

in Passion: Chad Ferguson

by Ron Presley

Specializing in whisker fish



The catfish addiction is real for Captain Chad Ferguson, Chief Catfish Officer (CCO) at Catfish Edge. The Texas native has been crazy about fishing his whole life. He grew up at Possum Kingdom Lake in Northwest Texas where he says there were only two things to do—fish or ride motorcycles.

“I spent a lot of time fishing,” joked Ferguson. “I’ve been fishing since I was about four years old. I’d spend time on the boat docks fishing for anything I could catch. It would be from sun up to sundown, and then when possible, I’d go out on the boat with my grandfather or father to fish. The level of addiction has definitely gotten worse over the years.”

Chad Ferguson is driven by a love for the outdoors and the freedom it provides.

The forty-four-year-old Texan lives on the far outskirts of Fort Worth Texas. He guides on a number of different lakes in the area, but most of his fishing is done on Eagle Mountain Lake. Others include Lake Worth, Lake Lewisville, Lake Ray Roberts, and Texoma.”

“I’m fortunate that we’ve have multiple excellent catfish lakes within a couple of hours of home in every direction,” offered Ferguson. “I like to venture out and fish somewhere ‘new’ when I can. I like the chance to fish water that I’m not exposed

to all year long.”

“I love being outdoors,” continued Ferguson. “It doesn’t matter whether it’s hunting, fishing or anything else. Much of my passion for fishing is driven by the love of the outdoors. I get grumpy if I’m inside too much or around large groups of people for too long or start feeling too confined. Much of the reason for being on the water is getting away from all that, enjoying the gifts that god has given us, and taking it all in.”

“I guide for catfish only,” said Ferguson. “Occasionally I’ll catch a few sand bass or hybrids in the summer. I also do a little gar fishing, but 99.9% of the time I only fish for catfish.”

As a guide he enjoys all the catfish species and he fishes for them all. Channel cats, blue cats or flatheads, it doesn’t matter. Big fish, little fish and everything in between makes him happy, but his passion is catching trophy blue catfish. If he is going to fish for fun, which he says he doesn’t get to do often, it’s usually for big blue cats.

“I was promoting CPR when it wasn’t the ‘cool’ thing to do.”

The Guiding Game

“One of the things I enjoy most is guiding or taking others on the water,” said Ferguson. “I like watching them catch fish and seeing the smiles on their faces. It doesn’t matter if it’s their first fish, the most fish they’ve ever caught, or their biggest fish. When I see people enjoying themselves on the water catching fish, I enjoy it as much or more as they do catching them.”

Make that person catching a first fish or a personal best a child, and Ferguson’s reward is multiplied several times over.

“I have more fun watching a child catch fish,” continued Ferguson. “I get more excited over it than I could catching that fish myself. A lot of people see that in me. I’ve been guiding long enough now that people who were kids and teenagers coming with



When Ferguson fishes for fun you can be sure he is targeting trophy blue catfish.

their parents are now bringing their kids to fish with me. Sometimes I have four or even five generations on the boat that have been fishing with me.”

The Catfish Conservation Game

“I’m a strict trophy catfish catch and release angler when it comes to big catfish,” noted Ferguson. “I release all catfish over 10 pounds and prefer to release everything over five pounds. I am firm believer in selective harvest and have been doing both since I began as a guide. I was promoting CPR when it wasn’t the ‘cool’ thing to do. I try to go above and beyond to do my part to educate anglers in the importance of conservation and having respect for the environment.”

The End Game

“I expect to continue catfishing as long as I enjoy it,” offered Ferguson. “If there ever comes a time that it’s not fun any longer, or I don’t enjoy it, then I’ll have to get out. I don’t see that happening though. I’ve got one child that’s about to go off to college and one that’s got some more years at home.”

“Fishing kind of consumes the daily life at the Ferguson house now as it is,” offered Ferguson. “I work hard, play hard, love to





hunt, fish, shoot guns and spend time with my family. My daughter is a competitive cheerleader so I spend a lot of time chasing after her and doing 'cheer dad' stuff. I also spend a lot of time cooking barbecue and other outdoor cooking on discadas."

"One of these days, when I've got more free time, tournament fishing is something I might do more of. But at this point, I just don't have the capacity to do so when it involves traveling all over the country to get to the larger tournaments."

"Sometimes I think that when I get the kids out of the house, and life slows down some, my wife and I might move to the coast for a while. We might spend some extended time there and spend more time fishing saltwater. That's something I really enjoy a lot—but don't get to do often."

"I love the challenge of fishing and the constant quest to figure it out," concluded Ferguson. "It doesn't matter how long you've been fishing, or how much time you've spent on the water, there's always something new

Ferguson is lucky to have several good catfish lakes near his home. He is shown here after a good day with his son Lane.

to learn and discover. Things change all the time. I often tell people that when it comes to fishing, the minute you think you've got it all figured out and know what you're doing, you'll get humbled when the fish let you know otherwise!"

Ferguson thanks his business partner, Matthew Davis at Whisker Seeker Tackle, and his sponsors, SeaArk Boats, Marine Master Trailers, Humminbird, Minn Kota, Abu Garcia, Costa, Under Armour, Rig Rap, EGO and Hodgman for helping him live his dream.

 - Ron Presley

Fishing with Kids

It was not his best day guiding, but one of his best days on the water. He was fishing with his 12-year-old son. On that day, Lane broke the Texas State Junior Anger Record for blue catfish. It was not only a state record, but a lake record and several other state and water body records.

“It’s a day I’ll never forget,” commented Ferguson.

Captain Chad Ferguson’s passion for fishing with kids reaches beyond his family. He likes to see all kids have success with fishing. He suggests that there’s not one single thing that produces a successful trip with kids. Rather, there are several.

“First and foremost, make a fishing trip with youth about the kids and tailor your approach to their age,” advised Ferguson. “Make it about the kids having a good time and respect the fact that they have limits (especially the younger ones). Kids usually don’t care about catching big fish, a certain species of fish etc., so don’t be too set in your ways and what you plan on doing. They’ll usually have just as much fun drowning worms for perch as they will by catching anything else. It’s not always about the fish, it’s about the time on the water, giving them the attention and creating a bond.”

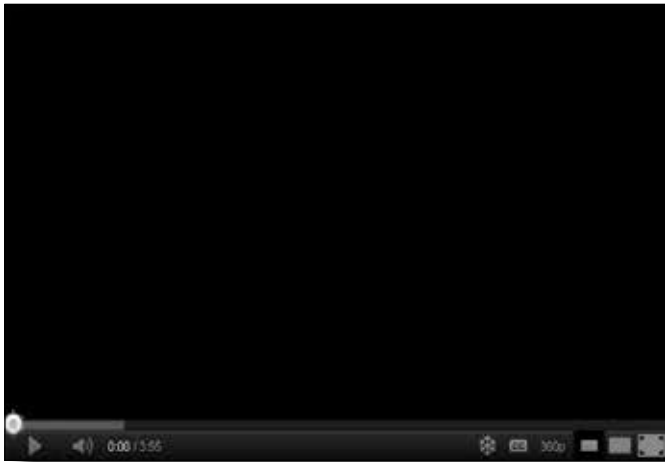
“The biggest mistake I see people make with kids is that they push them too far,” continued Ferguson. “You have to adjust to their age and the capacity they have. The younger they are or the less interested on any given day, the shorter the time on the water needs to be.”



It is a proud Ferguson shown here with his 12-year-old son, Lane, when he broke the Texas State Junior Anger Record for blue catfish.

“Break things up and keep them interested,” advised Ferguson. “Keep plenty of food and drinks on hand to keep them nourished. Also, teach them what you’re doing and why you are doing it.”

“Last but not least, get them out there early and often,” concluded Ferguson. “If you don’t have kids then find someone else’s and get them out there—and that includes girls! Kids these days spend too much time in front of a screen and know nothing about the outdoors. As anglers we have a responsibility to pass it on.”



CFN How To:
Fish Care Tip from Mississippi River
Monsters
with Raulin Forst
Bass Pro Shops, Memphis

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CATFISH "SPEAK"

Filet Mignon:

Brandy Brooks is a female catfish angler. She loves the sport and hopes that her presence in the sport will help involve more women in catfishing. Filet mignon is the name she gives to a prime piece of cut catfish bait.

"We call the cut of bait behind the head a chunk of fillet mignon," says Brandy



**Brandy Brooks-B'n'M Poles-Driftmaster
Rod Holders-Bottom Dwellers Tackle**

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.



CATFISH CONSERVATION

Trophy Catfish for the Future

by David Ranier

Alabama: Sportsmen's Caucus Celebrates 10th Year in State

Editor's Note: Alabama is a state that understands the value of the great outdoors and catfish play a big role in that value. Although catfish are not specifically mentioned in the following article, catfish anglers can read the article and think about the possibilities that exist when legislators are up to date and understand the issues associated with catfishing. You know the old saying—all politics is local.

With barbecue and wild-game delicacies on the menu, the Alabama Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus treated Alabama legislators and guests to lunch to celebrate the 10th year of the Caucus in Alabama.

Alabama is one of 48 states that are members of the national organization, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation.

Senate President Pro Tempore Del Marsh and Representative Randy Davis, Alabama's Caucus leaders, explained to attendees how important hunting and fishing are to Alabama for a variety of reasons.

"It's hard to believe we did this back in 2008," Sen. Marsh said of the formation of the Alabama Caucus. "I really didn't know if this would get any legs under it or not. But it seems every year we're getting more and more participation, not only from legislators, but those who love wildlife and hunting. I don't think people realize the economic impact hunting and fishing have on Alabama. It is huge.



Conservation Commissioner Chris Blankenship tells the legislators and guests at the Alabama Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus luncheon about the importance of outdoors recreation and the outdoors industry to Alabama's way of life.
Photo by David Rainer

"As we move forward, there is some hunting-related legislation we're dealing with now that we're going to give a lot of consideration. But, we're

going to continue to do things in the Legislature that promote hunting and fishing in this state. In Alabama, we're blessed – with incredible waterways; the Forever Wild program is creating places for people to hunt; and just the hunting industry in general is important to Alabama."

Rep. Davis pointed to the economic impact sportsmen and women have on Alabama.

"Hunting and fishing is a \$3.5 billion industry in the state, and it is growing each day because these groups are working together, creating such things as the Alabama Bass Trail and recruiting Polaris, which is now made here in Alabama," Davis said. "The Caucus is about protecting and advancing traditional hunting rights in Alabama, recognizing our natural resources, working on conservation to enhance hunting, fishing and wildlife habitat that is a part of the state and reasonable public access to hunting lands. We have a no-net-loss statute that keeps land available for folks to go and hunt. We also are protecting the investment of sportsmen and women in the wildlife industry. We network with 48 other states. It's very important what we're doing here."

Chris Blankenship, Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), said

that the economic impact of hunting and fishing is no doubt important, but those activities have intrinsic values that are hard to measure.

"Hunting and fishing are very important to Alabama, both economically and culturally," Blankenship said. "We talk a lot about the economic value, but it's really just a way of life here in Alabama. It means so much to our quality of life. We can't work all the time. We're a state that works. People enjoy that, but they also enjoy their recreational opportunities.

"...it's really just a way of life..."

Hunting and fishing mean a lot toward true happiness."

Blankenship said there are about 215,000 licensed hunters in Alabama with almost a \$2 billion economic impact.

"Deer hunting alone has about a billion-dollar economic impact," he said. Blankenship said about 500,000 fishing licenses are sold in the state annually with a \$1.5 billion economic impact.

"Like Representative Davis said, hunting and fishing puts about \$3.5 million into our economy annually," he said. "And our State Parks and Forever Wild land provide additional outdoor opportunities. Then




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you have the TVA (Tennessee Valley Authority) and the Alabama Power lakes that seem to draw people in droves in the summertime.”

Blankenship noted that Alabama’s abundant natural resources and skilled labor force translate into an expanding outdoors industry in the state.

“There are great companies in Alabama that employ thousands of people in our state that are part of the hunting and fishing industry,” he said. “I always leave somebody out, but we have Polaris, Remington, Pradco, Bass Pro and Cabela’s. Our newest company, Kimber Arms, is opening a new facility in Troy. But dwarfed by those are the thousands of jobs in small businesses that make fishing lures, hunting clothes and other hunting and fishing equipment and gear.

“I think the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation and the Sportsmen’s Caucus is very important. If you have people who hunt and fish

Trophy catfish like this Wheeler Lake monster are caught often in Alabama where legislators understand the value of a productive fishery.

in your district, I think it would be good to be a member of the Sportsmen’s Caucus.”

Bee Frederick, the Southeastern States Director for the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation, organized the luncheon along with Patrick Cagle, a member of the Alabama Conservation Advisory Board.

“The main thing we want to do is recognize that there is an active Sportsmen’s Caucus here in Montgomery so we can provide that nexus for sportsmen and women to have a voice in the halls of government and the DCNR,” Frederick said. “We want to make sure our legislators are informed on the latest issues that are important to sportsmen and women across the state.

“Ideally, we are able to inform the lawmakers, but also the other sportsmen’s groups in the state, about issues that are going on and the importance of hunting and angling in Alabama. Over 2,000 legislators across the country are associated with the National Assembly of Sportsmen’s Caucuses. We have a nationwide network of pro-sportsmen elected officials, and we want to provide a venue for information sharing across the states.”

Cagle, who is in his third year on the Alabama Conservation Advisory Board, pointed out that DCNR gets no money from the Alabama General Fund and that hunters and anglers provide the support for the Department.

“It is important that Alabama legislators understand how the Conservation Department works, how hunters and fishermen pay for the activities that ensure we have abundant wildlife and fisheries,” Cagle said. “I think the luncheon was a great success. We were able to sign up several legislators at the luncheon, and it was a chance for the Department of Conservation to present its message in front of legislators.”

Nationally, the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation is promoting legislation that will affect Alabama.

The Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow’s Needs Act of 2016 amends the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act. Pittman-Robertson levies an excise tax on firearms, ammunition and archery equipment and distributes that money to states based on license sales.

The modernization bill would extend financial and technical assistance to the states for the promotion of hunting and recreational shooting. A portion of the bill would allocate funds that may be used for any activity or project to recruit or retain hunters and recreational shooters.

The Foundation is also promoting the Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Management Act, or Modern Fish Act, which would recognize the contribution of the nation’s more than 11 million saltwater anglers.

The saltwater recreational fishing industry contributes more than \$70 billion to the economy each year and supports 455,000 American jobs.

The Foundation and Congressional sponsors said current legislation under the Magnuson-Stevens Act does not properly recognize the importance of recreational fishing, and that has led to restrictions on the angling community in terms of short seasons and reduced bag limits.

Commissioner Blankenship testified before a Congressional House Committee in Washington, D.C., on the bills in September.

This new bill would allow alternative management for recreational fishing, which would include a new look at fisheries allocations, rebuilding fishery stocks and improving recreational data collection.

In fishing-related news, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council voted to issue Alabama and the four other Gulf states exempted fishing permits for the recreational red snapper seasons in 2018 and 2019. This action must go through a public comment period and then to NOAA Fisheries for final approval.

 - David Ranier



The Saga of Catfish Bait

by Brad Durick

There is no greater challenge in catfishing.



Many casual catfish anglers don't understand the importance of good bait. Many diehard catfish anglers go to great lengths to get good bait and almost crazier lengths to keep it fresh.

I am not going to get into what is the best bait for catfish because it changes depending on where you live, and the time of year you are fishing, but fresh catfish bait is a big deal, BIG!

Catfish, especially the big ones, are true predators that hunt for their food. It is a fallacy that catfish are just bottom feeders that loaf around the bottom of the lake or river picking up anything they can find. They are opportunistic

A good cooler keeps bait fresh. Fresh bait translates into good fish.

feeders, yes, but dumb garbage eaters they are not. They can take a full-sized fish in the blink of an eye. Knowing that they can hunt that effectively, it is critical to get what they want in front of them.

The absolute best way to get the freshest bait possible is to go to a local bait shop if yours carries what catfish want; or, go out and catch it fresh the day you plan to go fishing. Anglers can use a cast net to catch shad where they are the main forage. I have to catch

mine on hook and line because cast nets are illegal where I fish. Be sure to check your local regulations.

In many cases it is more practical to make a “bait run” to stock up on bait. This is basically where you dedicate a day or two specifically to catching bait to have on hand for the future.

Once you have collected your bait it is imperative to keep it as fresh as possible until you need to put it on the hook. Many serious catfish anglers have taken this far beyond what many people can imagine. Personally (as a guide), I have two commercial bait tanks and two deep freezes dedicated to bait storage. This is more storage capacity than one of the larger bait shops in my town. My desire to stockpile bait is mainly due to an off-kilter supply and demand of bait. It has forced me to be able to stock up and store bait during the good times to ensure I don't run out.

Keeping Bait Fresh While Fishing

To keep my suckers alive and fresh in the boat I like the Frabill Aqua Life systems. It is a six-gallon insulated pail with a strong internal aeration lid. I start the day with cold tank water with the fish. It keeps them happy all day, even when the weather is hot.

If for some reason my suckers die in my holding tank, or at the end of the day I had to kill them due to aquatic nuisance laws, it is critical to keep them cold and fresh. If I am on my way to the river or need to keep them for the next day I packaged them in a Ziploc bag, squeeze the air out and pack them tight on ice. This will keep them fresh for up to two days.

Should it come down to freezing bait there are a couple things you have to do to ensure that it will be as



Wrapping bait you wish to freeze in Glad Press and Seal is a great solution to get the air out and keep the bait longer. Utilizing a Roto Mold cooler with ice packs will keep your frozen bait in the best possible shape until used, or saved for another day.

fresh as it can be. First, you have to package it with as little air in the bag as possible. Vacuum sealing is the best, but expensive and kind of a pain. I found a great bait saving product a couple years back, Glad Press and Seal. Simply pull some off the roll, and wrap the fish in it, squeezing the air out as you go. This also keeps your bait from freezing together into a block.

Captain Ben Goebel (River City Catfishing) advises anglers to buy chamber sealed bait if possible. It is a professional grade packaging that preserves bait well. Where vacuum sealing squeezes the juices out of frozen bait, the chamber sealing process does not. Goebel says that he sees little difference in bait packed and frozen with this method compared to fresh baits. It also allows anglers to buy and store quantities of skipjack without the

“The best bait collectors are often the best catfish anglers.”





risk of the bait going bad.

Frozen Bait When Fishing

When you take frozen bait fishing it is critical to keep it as frozen as you can until it's time to use. Of course, packing it tight on ice is a big key. When you open the package take only what you need from the bait and immediately put it back in the ice. I found that using a quality Roto Mold cooler, such as the Big Frig Denali, keeps bait at its best. While more expensive (the prices are falling) these coolers make this task much easier and your bait that doesn't get used at the end of the day can go back into the freezer when you get home. It should be noted, that once frozen bait is thawed out, and soft, it is ruined and should just be thrown out.

Other Baits

There are many catfish baits available on the market, especially for channel cat. From stink baits of every variety, to chicken livers, there are concoctions to catch catfish on every

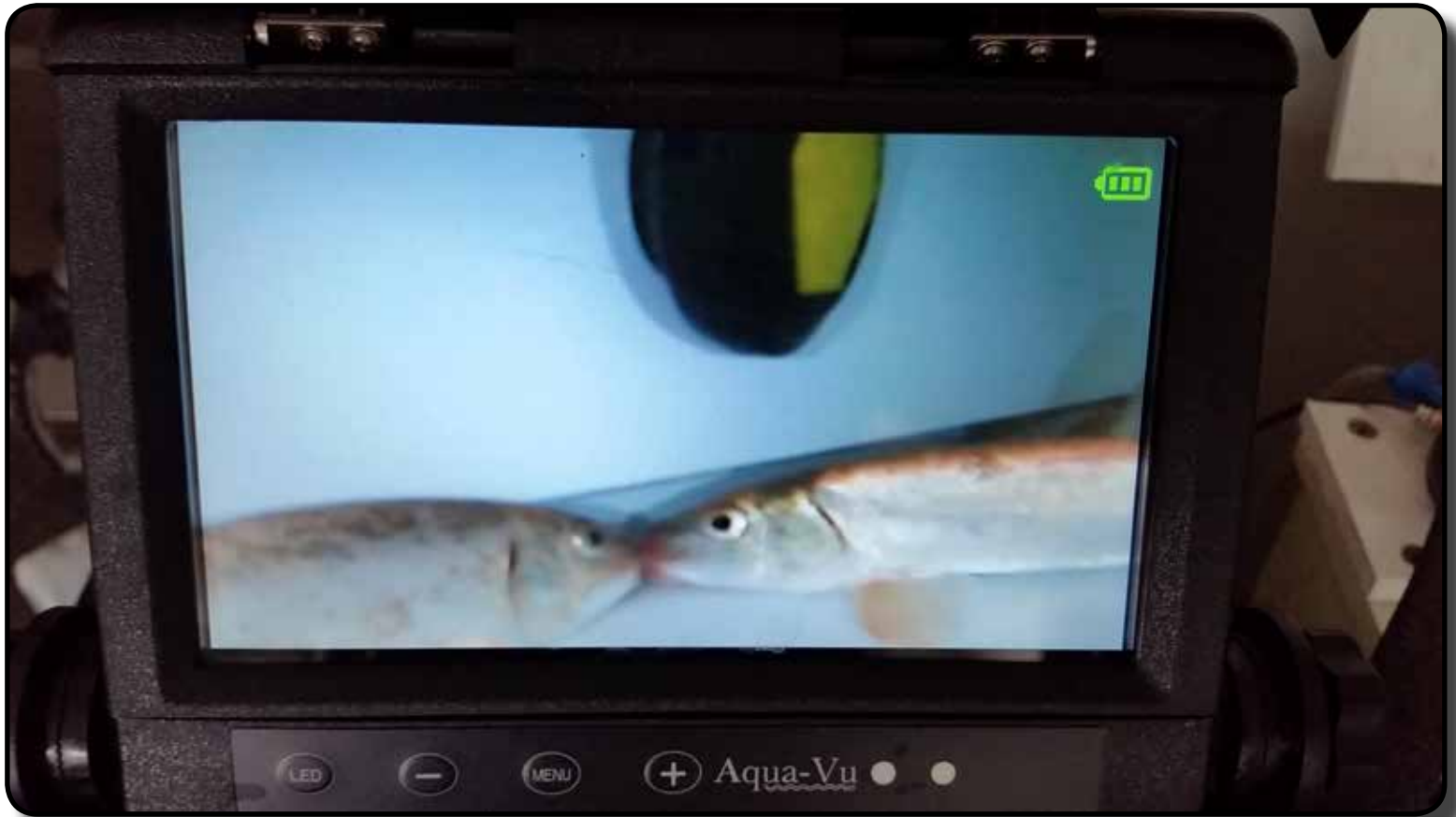
Frogs can be a great catfish bait in some regions of the United States. They tend to be best in late summer and fall.

corner.

Catfish will eat these baits, but you have to understand catfish behavior. In the first part of this article it was noted that catfish are predators and your best success will come when you use the freshest bait possible.

Smaller channels are dinner targets of the bigger fish. Some rivers don't have big schools of smaller channel cats, and those that exist have to be careful they are not eaten by the bigger fish. Those smaller fish will bite stink baits and chicken livers aggressively, as they try to get what they can, while staying out of the feeding zone of larger fish. The bigger fish are hunters and generally not interested in stink baits unless it lands right on their nose.

Lakes, ponds, and back waters, often hold many smaller fish and they are trying to get their share of the



food that is available. When a dip bait, chicken liver, or anything else is put in the water they will charge to it to get what they can. It's a competitive thing. This behavior continues until they get big enough to venture out and hunt for their own foods. They eventually become more of a lone hunter.

While these manufactured baits are useful and have their place in catfishing, there still is nothing like fresh baits for effectiveness. Even the smallest of catfish can be an incredible hunter.

I once was walleye fishing near a tailrace with a 3-inch fathead minnow on a jig. I felt a light tap, set the hook and what came up was astonishing. A 4-inch channel cat hit, and tried to eat, a 3-inch minnow. Now tell me catfish are not born hunters.

The bottom line is that catfish are predators with a bad rep. They are the true kings of their underwater jungle. While they will take an easy meal, they

White suckers are a great northern catfish bait. They can usually be purchased at a local bait shop. Keeping an underwater camera in the tank can be fun and an easy way to keep tabs on the health of the bait.

will stalk down and hunt their next meal. Just remember, the bait that you offer the catfish will determine the outcome on the end of your line.

Captain Brad Durick is a nationally recognized catfish guide on the Red River of the North, seminar speaker, and author of the books, Cracking the Channel Catfish Code and Advanced Catfishing Made Easy. For more information go to www.redrivercatfish.com.



CATFISH



by Ron Presley

Making dreams come true

The Arkansas Area Catfish Hunters (AACH) include a large dose of community service in their activities. They do it through their Challenged Outdoorsman of America Chapter (COA). Since 2013 they have used family members, volunteers and club members to carry disabled and challenge youth, adults, and veterans, fishing and hunting. While their activities include people of all ages, they have a special affection for sharing the great outdoors with the kids.

“Every year we hold a fishing derby for our challenged youth,” said Robert Tallman, AACH and COA representative. “I’m talking about the kids with special needs and disabilities. Our main focus of course is on the kids, but we also use this time to get the family involved.”

The program reaches around 100 to 150 kids a year with the hope of increasing that number in the future. They want the special day to be one where volunteers and family members can focus on the challenged child only—a day just for them.

“We started a new program just last year,” reported Tallman. “It is a dream fishing trip for one special needs child.”

One successful dream trip included a child named Jared. He is pictured in the photo holding the big catfish.

“Jared loves to fish,” offered Tallman. “He had always dreamed of catching a big catfish.”



Jared’s trip with AACH turned out great indeed. He is shown here holding the big catfish he caught on his dream trip.

We made it happen. His family was treated to a weekend in West Helena. Jared was taken out on his big adventure to seek out that big catfish he always dreamed about."

AACH members Mike King and Tallman carried Jared out on the Mississippi River and Jared got his wish.

"About 2 hours into the trip we found the fish," recalled Tallman. "Jared's first fish was a whopping 21-pound blue cat. He followed that with a few others around 10 pounds. Jared told me this was a day that he will never forget and his family was almost in tears they were so happy."

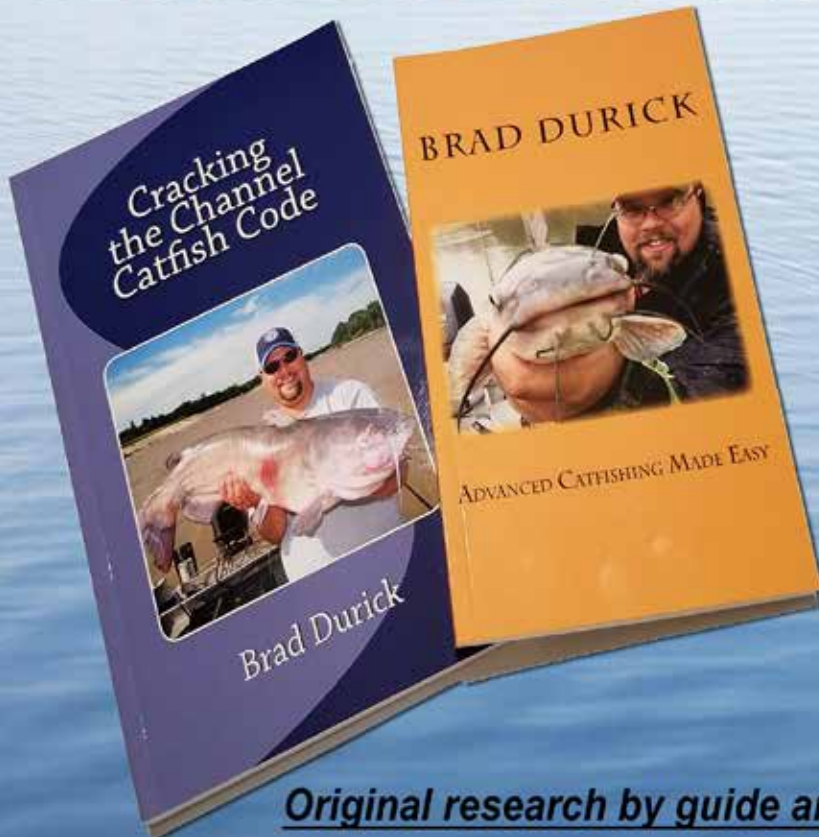
COA Arkansas will be holding this event for a special needs child every year going forward. Also, with the help of their community sponsors they plan to create and award two \$500.00 scholarships to two special needs youth. Their families can use this to help in schooling or medical bills for their special needs youth.

For more information on AACH and COA Arkansas visit the website at <http://aach.webs.com/> and like them on their Facebook page.



AACH activities include people of all ages, but they have a special fondness for kids.

BECOME A BETTER CATFISH ANGLER!



Available at- Amazon,
Bottom Dwellers Tackle
Catfish Connection or
redrivercatfish.com

Original research by guide and educator, Captain Brad Durick

COA-Catfishing For A Cause

We Are Fishing For Them



7th Annual

Catfishing For A Cause Benefit Catfishing Tournament.

Sept 15th-2018 / Tar Camp Park, Redfield Arkansas

6:30am-1:30pm Weigh In Starts at 2:00 pm.

Plaques will be awarded , raffles all day , & Dinner Will Be Served

Get your teams lined out for this fun filled benefit Catfishing Tournament. (50.00 Per Team Of 2 /6 poles max)

(DISABILITIES DO NOT HANDICAP OUTDOORSMEN)

**Facebook - Challenged Outdoorsmen Of America Arkansas
100% of all proceeds go to the COA Arkansas for future trips and events for our Challenged Youth and Veterans
www.coaarkansas.com / email : coaarkansas01@gmail.com**

PhotoMWall.com

The History of AACH and COA

The Arkansas chapter of COA has an interesting history. It is further evidence of the positive influence catfishermen can have on the world. It only took two men to get the COA Arkansas Chapter started, but it takes an army of volunteers to continue the good work.

"In 2011 a good friend of mine from Texarkana, Dearil Jackson Sr. and I was talking," explained Robert Tallman. "We always loved taking about catfishing. One day he says to me, 'I see all your photos of your fishing trip, but they are always photos of someone else holding fish. Why is that?'"

Tallman went on to explain that he just enjoyed taking others out and putting them on fish. Jackson then offered to send him some videos on what he did in his spare time. The videos turned out to be shot on trips where Jackson, his family, and some volunteers took disabled and challenge youth, adults, and veterans on fishing and hunting excursions.

When Tallman inquired about the

videos he discovered that Jackson ran an organization called the Challenged Outdoorsmen of America (COA). Jackson suggested to Tallman that he would be a perfect candidate to start an Arkansas chapter.

"I told him I would be honored," said Tallman. "So, in 2012 The Challenged Outdoorsmen of America Arkansas Chapter formed. I got a few board members to help me out and we were on our way."

The COA Arkansas Chapter held their first Casting for a Cause Tournament in 2013 at Murray Park in Little Rock Arkansas and have continued ever since. The 2018 benefit tournament will be held on September 15.

"...volunteers and family members can focus on the challenged child..."



- Ron Presley

Catfish Basics #036

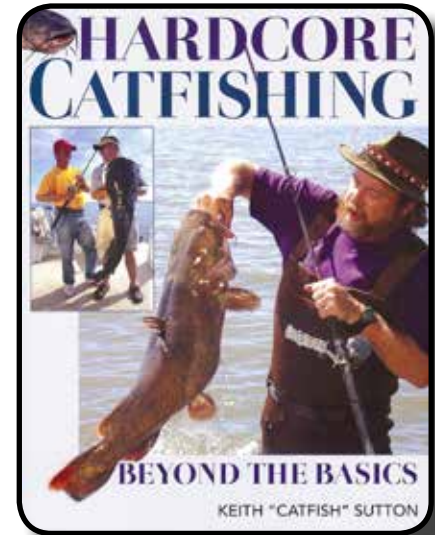
Something Smells
Keith "Catfish" Sutton

Are you killing your chances to catch catfish by engaging in simple behavior that can be managed? Keith "Catfish" Sutton is a catfish fanatic, author, and CatfishNow contributor. He has been helping anglers catch more and bigger catfish for years through his books and articles.

"Always avoid handling or getting sunscreen, insect repellent, gasoline or tobacco products on your hands," advises Sutton. "Studies done by Dr. John Caprio at LSU show catfish senses, particularly the senses of taste and smell, can detect even minuscule amounts of these things, which they avoid.

Even less than a drop that accidentally gets on your bait can lead to avoidance by whiskerfish, and you'll go home without so much as a nibble."

Anglers can find more catfish tips and related information in his latest book, "Hardcore Catfishing: Beyond the Basics."



2018 Schedule

Columbus, MS	2/03/18
W. Tawakoni, TX	2/17/18
Cross, SC	3/10/18
Decatur, AL	3/17/18
Sunrise Beach, MO	3/24/18
Gallatin, TN	3/30/18 - 3/31/18
Loudon, TN	4/13/18 - 4/14/18
Chester, PA	4/21/18
Camden, SC	4/28/18
Hillsboro, OH	5/05/18
Gallipolis, OH	5/12/18
Mt. Vernon, IN	5/19/18
Dixon, IL	6/02/18
Carlyle, IL	6/09/18
Pekin, IL	6/16/18
Tell City, IN	8/04/18
Huntington, WV	8/11/18
Helena-W. Helena, AR	8/17/18 - 8/18/18
Paducah, KY	8/24/18 - 8/25/18

Cabela's King Kat Classic
Jeffersonville, IN - 9/14/18 - 9/15/18

The 2018 schedule is complete and all events have met final approval. Please visit our website for pertinent updates and news. Also follow us on Facebook...



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CATFISH

by Robert Bruns



Making dreams come true

Tell most fishermen that you've caught a catfish on the fly and they're likely to question your state of mind. But thanks to modern fly tying materials and techniques, as well as advanced fly lines to deliver the fly, it's no longer unusual to catch a cat on the feathered hook. While catfish are more readily caught with conventional fishing methods, there's something to be said about fooling Mr. Whiskers on the fly. At times, a fly can be downright deadly for catfish that are putting on the feedbag.

But what fly should the fly fisher use? This question is both easy and hard to answer; easy because it turns out that cats

This large channel cat took a #6 Murray's Dying Minnow streamer. This streamer features bright red, which can act as a strike trigger for feeding fish. Photo by Bob Bruns

have been caught on all fly types, even dry flies, and hard because there are so many choices that it can be overwhelming to choose the right fly. What follows is a guide for those anglers wishing to catch catfish in a new and exciting way as well as for those who want to optimize their fly selection to put a deep bend in their fly rod.

Starting simply, flies can be



categorized based on where the fly is fished relative to the water's surface – essentially surface flies and subsurface flies, otherwise referred to as dry and wet flies.

Surface flies can be subdivided as:

- Dry flies, designed to ride on the water's surface to imitate mayflies, stoneflies, caddis flies, or terrestrials. They are fished dead-drift or with no movement. While true dry flies spend part of their time in the water and eventually emerge from the water to fly, terrestrials are insects that live on land and accidentally land on the water. Terrestrials include ants, inch-worms, caterpillars, crickets, beetles and grasshoppers.

- Poppers, that also ride on the water's surface but are fished to imitate baitfish, frogs, or mice, struggling or swimming on the water. They are actively fished and their "popping" or swimming is used to attract predatory gamefish.

The Puglisi Bluegill is an example of a larger profile fly. Such a fly, fished deep around structure, could certainly entice a big flathead. Picture courtesy of Orvis.com

Subsurface flies can be subdivided as:

- Wet flies, imitating drowned or emerging aquatic insects. They can be fished dead-drift or allowed to swing across current.

- Nymphs, imitating aquatic insects in larval, pupa, or emerging forms. They are fished dead drift.

- Streamers, designed to imitate baitfish as well as crayfish and leeches. They are actively fished.

Since catfish are generally bottom or deep-structure oriented, most will be caught with a subsurface fly, however, any fly angler hunting for cats should always include all types of flies in their fly boxes to handle special situations. As omnivores,





Anglers can catch big catfish during the winter, as demonstrated by Chuck Jarvis of Virginia.
(Photo courtesy of Chuck Jarvis)

catfish can be taken on dry flies and even poppers under the right conditions.

When targeting catfish with the fly rod, the best fly to use will also depend greatly on water conditions and the available forage one should match.

Factors to consider in choosing a fly based on water conditions are:

1) Water depth. For shallow water, un-weighted subsurface flies will work best but for water depths greater than 3 feet, weighted flies and/or flies used in conjunction with sinking type fly lines will be needed. Flies can be weighted with lead wrapped in the body or by using a bead, lead eyes, or heavy conehead.

2) Water speed. Current requires the

use of weight to fish a streamer or wet fly deep in the water column.

3) Water clarity. Poor water clarity will require the use of dark or very bright flies. Adding materials that bulk up the fly or create movement like legs or long hackle will improve detectability due to the vibrations created in the water. In the case of night fishing, the same color rules apply but flies that move a lot of water and send out vibrations are more important. And finally, a bigger fly is always more visible in dirty or stained water.

Factors to consider in choosing a good fly to imitate forage are:

1) Movement. The use of marabou, hackle, or synthetics as fly materials will help to imitate the movement of bait in the water. Movement attracts fish and also sends out vibrations in the water that can be sensed by fish.

2) Profile / Size. Flies can be tied to look big or slim in the water. If trying to imitate a bluegill or shad, a bulkier fly will

more correctly match the profile of such forage. Size also matters – bigger flies for bigger bait, however, bigger is not always better. Fish can feed selectively to the size of the forage.

3) Color and flash. Bright color or flash (silver or gold materials) can help imitate the forage and can act to trigger strikes. In some cases muted colors more correctly imitate forage, whereas when fish are “hot” or “turned on” and actively feeding, flash or bold colors such as bright red can trigger the predatory strike.

“...it’s no longer unusual to catch a cat on the feathered hook.”

A good box...

Any river rat’s fly box should hold a collection of flies representing the diversity of forage and water conditions for the locale being fished. The flies listed below will surely work on catfish and will also serve double duty for the by-catch that comes when fishing for them:

1) Freshwater streamers like zonkers, muddler minnows, intruders, clousers and woolly buggers (and variants) in sizes 6 to 2. An assortment of colors is best - dark (black, brown, olive, red) and light (white, chartreuse). Include variants with legs and flash as well as weighted versions (conehead, beadhead, lead wire).

2) Large baitfish streamers in sizes 6 to 3/0. These flies are particularly good for flatheads and blues that feed substantially on baitfish but will also take big channel cats. Saltwater patterns like Lefty’s Deceiver, Clouser minnows, and larger profile bunker flies (used for striped bass) are all good choices.

3) Nymphs in sizes 8 to 4. Big nymphs such as hellgrammite nymphs, stonefly nymphs, and large emerging nymphs will all take catfish. Examples include Murray’s

Roadkill nymph, Bitch Creek nymph, Murray’s Hellgrammite, and TeQueely.

4) Crayfish / sculpin / leech patterns in sizes 8 to 2. These streamer type flies are bottom-oriented and weighted. Some are tied to ride hook up to minimize snagging. Excellent patterns include Whitlock’s Near-Nuff crayfish, Whitlock’s Near-Nuff sculpin, DDH leech, the Muddler Minnow, the Meat Whistle, and Galloup’s Sex Dungeon. Pic

5) Egg patterns that imitate the spawn





of fish in the water system will work well. Often time cats will forage on the eggs of carp, suckers, and other rough fish. Carp eggs are typically very small and pale, so smaller egg patterns in white or pale yellow will work best. Sucker spawn patterns, used by steelhead fly fishermen, are another good pattern.

6) Berries, nuts, or chum flies. Since catfish are omnivores, it makes sense to carry special patterns that fall outside the norm of more typical flies. Cats are known to feed on mulberries, cottonwood seeds, and can be chummed up with bread and other man-made foods. Trout anglers targeting stocked trout will sometimes fish "pellet flies" designed to imitate the pellets fed to hatchery trout. In the same way, catfish can often fall prey to feeding on "chum", whether man-made or from an overhanging tree. Dead drifting an imitation of this chum can produce great results.

7) Dry flies that imitate big mayflies,

Whitlock's Near-Nuff Crayfish is an excellent choice for catfish. It will fish deep and mimics crayfish – a favorite food source of catfish.
Photo courtesy of Murray's Fly Shop

caddis, or stoneflies on a particular waterway can work very well. In many of the northeast and mid-Atlantic states, for example, there can be a huge hatch of the white mayfly, sometimes referred to as the white miller. This large mayfly can be imitated with a #10 – 14 White Wulff. Other large dry flies to have on hand would be Irresistables, Adams, Slate Drakes and Hexagenia patterns. Waking flies can also be used such as Murray's Bass Skater.

If left to the choice of just one fly for catfish, nothing beats fishing a big leggy woolly bugger. These flies move water in a life-like way that is hard for a catfish to resist. They are a great searching



pattern when there are no special feeding conditions observed. When catfish can be seen feeding, it then pays to imitate the food source as closely as possible and “match the hatch”.

Catfish will feed on mulberries and this fly can closely imitate a plump berry floating down-current from an overhanging mulberry tree. Photo courtesy of Missouriflies.com



- Robert Bruns

WHISKER WHACKERS CATFISH NEWS AND VIEWS

River Rumors

They Don't Call it Winter Blues for Nothin'

by Ron Presley

The challenge of cold water catfishing



The idea of Winter Blues on Wheeler was originally conceived by Chuck Davidson who was a cohost on Catfish Weekly at the time. The idea was to put together a catfish tournament where folks could come together and fish in a winter timeframe as a way to beat those winter blues.

"I just ask people if they would like something this time of year when no tournaments are going on," recalled Davidson. "There were a lot of anglers

Danny Chappell and Bobby Chappell battled the frigid temps to win Winter Blues with a total weight of 164.64 pounds. It included this 78.85-pound blue that won big fish honors.

already hitting Wheeler during the holidays."

The consensus was that people wanted to do it, so Chuck started planning. He determined that because of insurance and other factors he could



not make it happen. He shared his idea with Daniel Parsons who already had insurance through the Alabama Catfish Trail which he directed.

Parsons pulled it off and Winter Blues was born. The new tournament drew about 30 boats to Rogersville, AL. Davidson's idea, and Parson's directorship, began a winter tradition in the catfish community.

The next year, 2015, Parson's solicited the help of Jody Harrison, a well-known service provider to the bass fishing industry.

"I had never even heard of a catfish tournament being done on a large scale,"

More emphasis will be placed on youth fishing at Winter Blues in 2019.

said Harrison. "It interested me and we geared up to provide the stage and master of ceremonies duties at the 2015 event."

Seventy some boats competed in the year-two event, more than doubling the first year's boat count.

When year three rolled around Parson's was covered up with family and work obligations and Winter Blues on Wheeler was cancelled for 2016. When



Harrison heard of the cancellation he contacted Parsons and asked him to partner up for the event.

Parsons agreed and made the announcement that the 3rd annual Winter Blues was back on. Harrison's help was just what was needed to pull it off. It was another success for Winter Blues, for Parsons, and for Harrison. There were 78 boats and more than twice as many anglers participating in year three. That success set the stage for Wheeler Blues on Wheeler presented by Bottom Dwellers Tackle on January 6, 2018,

Leslie VanDerau and her organization, Heroes Outdoor Therapy, will sponsor a \$500 bonus for the top finishing veteran in Winter Blues 2019.

Prefishing Winter Blues 2018

The Alabama temperatures turned frigid. Prefishing anglers were battling freezing temperatures that froze boats to trailers and trolling motors to decks. The unyielding temperatures threatened to shut down the ramps. Anglers were



asked to drain trailers and boats at the bottom of the ramp as much as possible to avoid a sheet of ice on the ramps. Bags of thawing salt were stationed at the ramps in case it was needed, and it was.

Anglers like Paul Blackwell didn't let the cold temperatures keep them off the water. In fact, Paul reported some pretty good prefishing.

"We rode Lake Wheeler all day looking at areas I'd found on the Navionics App," reported Blackwell. "We never wetted a hook Thursday. We marked a few good fish and several decent unders."

"Friday, we looked at the same areas where we marked fish. We were just babysitting them and making sure they were still there. Friday afternoon we put a couple rods in the water to see if they were active and caught a couple, so we knew we had a plan."

Then, reality set in. The cold weather had been taking a toll all day long as splashing water froze to ice and covered rod holders, trolling motors and anything else it could reach.

"It was brutal," said Blackwell. "The

Paul Blackwell used a torpedo heater to thaw out his ride and prepare for Winter Blues on Wheeler. Paul Blackwell photo

whole boat was iced over. The live well pump froze and my Ultera trolling motor broke. It froze and broke the worm gear housing when it deployed. The water just splashed up and froze on whatever it hit."

The evening and night before tournament day it was angler helping angler. Electric blankets, light bulbs for heat, and commercial heaters aided anglers in thawing out their fishing machines.

"I happened to be staying with Mr. John Stephens," said Blackwell. "He had a torpedo heater in his garage and it just took a minute to thaw everything out."

Lisa Hill was one of many lady anglers competing in the cold temperatures. She, and her partner James Prince are frequent tournament anglers. Their competitiveness, endurance, and

passion for the sport are typical among catfish anglers. They tend to do whatever it takes.

"James and I both have a intense desire to compete," said Hill. "We're in competition mode as soon we start prefishing. We usually go full force from sunup to sundown."

With a home base in Texas, Lisa and James don't normally face frigid temperatures in their fishing endeavors, but they adapted well to what they faced at Winter Blues.

"Though I didn't realize it at the time, what I ate and drank, the amount of rest that I got, in addition to what I wore, all played an important role in my cold weather preparedness," said Lisa.

"I found, for me personally, in the very cold temperatures, I was not as hungry or thirsty. My skin was noticeably dry from lack of hydration and being in the windy cold. As I settled in for the evening, I was exhausted, crashing quickly with no energy."

"All that said, I can honestly say I enjoyed fishing in the brutal teen and 20-degree temperatures," concluded Hill. "I Wanted to be out in the cold trying to catch my PB on Wheeler Lake. If I were

"...anglers were battling freezing temperatures that froze boats to trailers and trolling motors to decks."

given the opportunity to fish the same circumstances again, I would do it in a heartbeat!"

Congrats to the Winners

There were 190 teams, from as far away as California, competing for a guaranteed \$10,000 first place payoff and the possibility of a \$50,000 payday if they broke the Alabama state record

for blue catfish.

Top honors and bragging rights for the 2018 Winter Blues on Wheeler went to Danny Ray Chappell and Bobby Chappell. The South Carolina team weighed in a total weight of 164.64 pounds, including the big fish of the tournament at 78.85 pounds. Their win earned them a check for \$10,000 dollars for best weight and the Bottom Dwellers Tackle Big Fish Award of \$500.

Coming Next for Winter Blues

Winter Blues on Wheeler presented by Bottom Dwellers Tackle made huge strides in 2018, but 2019 is likely to be better. Surveys taken this year will be studied thoroughly to determine what the catfish anglers want. Tournament director, Daniel Parsons, and weighmaster, Jody Harrison, are determined to deliver a bigger and better than ever event in 2019.

With an eye towards educating the public on what catfishing is all about, a new camera angle will be established for the live feed from the weigh-in. Solutions to the poor WiFi signals will also be investigated.

"The wow factor of the big fish is huge," declared Harrison. "People that have no interest in fishing will watch catfishing because of their size. The media drives all this stuff. We will try to get more sponsors and more money coming in so more money can go into the tournament."

"We need to work on the live stream," said Harrison. "Southern Stream Live has always done a great job for me. He has some digital equipment that can probably help with the signal."

"Next year the camera will be up on a platform or a man-lift to get a good shot down on everything," offered Harrison. "We were able to get it this year, but it can always be better. I would love to have multiple cameras too."

Whisker Wear Apparel supported a special prize for top finishing woman

in the 2018 event and an increased emphasis on cat women will be pursued in 2019. More emphasis on kids and veterans can also be expected.

Leslie VanDerau runs an organizer called Heroes Outdoor Therapy (HOT). The 501c3 organization raises money to pay travel expenses for veterans to attend events like Winter Blues on Wheeler. A joint partnership is being established with HOT and Leslie has committed a \$500 prize to the top finishing boat with a veteran.

The Winter Blues organizers also want to push kids more in 2019. They are recognized as the future of the sport.

"They are our future," said Harrison. "If we can keep them fishing it keeps them out of trouble. It keeps them off the streets, keeps them off dope, alcohol, drugs, and more. We simply need to do a better job of drawing children into the sport."

The \$50,000 bonus for catching a state record blue cat may be increased and additional social opportunities are being considered.

As the tournament surveys are evaluated more changes are bound to surface. In fact, Harrison and Parsons welcome ideas that will improve Winter Blues on Wheeler. They suggest messages on Facebook as the best way to communicate with them.

Concluding Remarks

"Winter Blues has completely outgrown expectations," concluded Parsons. "We are grateful for the amazing support from the city, the anglers, and all our supporters."

"Daniel and I just weigh fish," said Harrison. "It is all the anglers that make it happen. I want 250 boats next year."

Epilogue: Eye of the Beholder

When catfish anglers think and dream about Wilson and Wheeler Lakes, they see big catfish. It is easy to

understand why. Many, many personal best catfish (other species too) have come to anglers fishing in the Northern Alabama lakes.

For angler's friends and families, what they see is different. They see shopping opportunities; other recreational opportunities; and excellent lodging and restaurant opportunities. They can definitely find plenty of things to do while the anglers are angling.

Florence, AL, for example, makes an excellent home base for the angler/non-angler group visitors. The anglers can be on the water in minutes and the non-anglers can be off following their own interests in Florence and the surrounding area.

A good place to start is the Florence Tourism Visitors Center. Just a few miles from Wilson Dam, this state of the art facility, and its friendly staff, operates every day but Sunday to aid visitors with advice and recommendations on the area.

The facility is located in McFarland Park just yards from Pickwick Lake. It includes displays and exhibits related to area attractions and history. One of my favorites is the large aquarium filled with local fish. The music history of the area is well documented too. Catfish Weekly used the facility for a remote broadcast preceding the Winter Blues on Wheeler catfish tournament in 2018.

The big catfish of Wilson and Wheeler are huge magnets that draw people to the area, but the abundant attractions and the friendly, welcoming people of the area are reason enough to visit.



- Ron Presley

Editor's Note: Scott Brauer of Gasport NY is the owner of Makiplastic. His company specializes in high detail aquatic insect imitations. Scott is an avid panfish angler, but as you will see by the photos in his story, he doesn't mind tuggin' on a nice cat now and then. As a veteran of the fishing industry his thoughts on being a part of the fishing industry are just as applicable to the catfish community as any other. It is easy to see by his comments why he fishes, and it is captured concisely in the subtitle of his piece.

People are the payday



There are many reasons why people look to get into the fishing industry. Some of which are questionable and some of which are honorable. There are two questions I get asked often. First, "How do I get into this business?" Second, "What do I do when I get there." The answers are different for each person, but if I could give anybody some advice, it would be this:

1. Listen more than you talk.

While Brauer's passion is for panfish, he likes to tangle with catfish too. He is shown here with a nice Tennessee River blue.

2. You will have to work harder and fish harder than most of the people you know.

3. It can all go away even years later with a few bad choices.

4. Most of what you can do for a company



will be done without much compensation.

5. There will be significant time when you are not able to fish because you have to appear.

6. You will miss family events on behalf of the industry.

7. For most anglers this business will cost you not pay you.

8. Many people, even friends, will not truly want you to succeed.

9. You will need to have very thick skin and become a master of self-control.

10. It doesn't matter what you build, how many hits or likes you get, how successful you are, or how many logos are on your jersey—you are just not that big of a deal.

If you are still reading and can live with

Day or night doesn't matter for Brauer. He caught this nice cat on Lake Erie.

what I've said so far, and more, keep reading.

Without question, in my mind, the only reason of value to be in this industry is the people, relationships and experiences. But all of these must be sought out, nurtured and earned.

I have been fortunate to have sat with, eaten with and fished with some of the finest people in my life because of fishing. I have reached out and been reached out to by quality people that genuinely care about me and my family. I have come to love them and



WHY WE CATFISH

theirs too. I have shared a helm and a hut, in some of the most beautiful places on earth.

I can tell you truly the thing I value most, is the people and conversations, whether on a lake or in the lobby of a hotel over coffee. To share your passion alongside the men and women of this industry is the only reason to want to be an ambassador for this sport.

Only you can answer the question—"Is the cost too high?"



Scott Brauer

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.

CATFISH CALENDAR

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

MAR 17th	CABELA'S KING KAT	TENNESSEE RIVER (WHEELER LAKE)	CLUB
MAR 17th	CATFISH MAFIA	GOLDSBORO	CLUB/DAY
MAR 17th	CATHUNTERS ASSOC. OF THE SOUTH	ALABAMA RIVER	CLUB
MAR 17th	FISHIN BLUES	ELLSWORTH	SHOOTOUT
MAR 23rd-25th	TUG-N-JUGS	KEYSTONE	CLUB
MAR 24th	CATFISH CHASERS TOURNAMENT SERIES	MILFORD LAKE	CLUB
MAR 24th	CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLJACKS	CREEK TOWN	CLUB
MAR 24th	GET-N-HOOKED	KEYSTONE	CLUB
MAR 24th	HOLD'EM HOOK	ELK RIVER	CLUB
MAR 24th	TRI-COUNTY CATFISH ASSOCIATION	KUCHIES	CLUB
MAR 25th	WHISKEY CITY CATFISH CLUB	TANNERS CREEK	CLUB
MAR 30th - 31st	CABELA'S KING KAT	CUMBERLAND RIVER(OLD HICKORY LAKE)	SUPER EVENT
MAR 31st	SOUTHEAST OHIO CATFISH CLUB	ROCKY FORK LAKE	CLUB #1
MAR 31st	JKV CATFISHING	OHIO RIVER	CLUB
APR 7th	CATFISH MAFIA	LOWER POTOMAC	Battle on the Potomac
APR 7th	CENTRAL TEXAS CATFISH TRAIL	LAKE LIMESTONE	CLUB
APR 7th	FLATHEAD BLUES ON CHANNEL2	HOOVER RESERVOIR	CLUB
APR 7th	INDIANA CATFISH	TURTLE CREEK	OPEN TOURNAMENT
APR 7th	MISSISSIPPI CATFISH TRAIL	MOON LAKE	CLUB
APR 7th	SOUTHEASTERN CATFISH CLUB	LAKE WATEREE	CLUB
APR 7th	WEST TN CATFISH ANGLERS	RIPLEY-ASHPORT	CLUB
APR 8th	WHISKEY CITY CATFISH CLUB	TANNERS CREEK	CLUB
APR 13th - 14th	CABELA'S KING KAT	TENNESSEE RIVER (WATTS BAR LAKE)	SUPER EVENT
APR 13th-15th	TUG-N-JUGS	SKIATOOK	CLUB
APR 14th	CATHUNTERS ASSOC. OF THE SOUTH	CHOCTAWHATCHEE	CLUB
APR 14th	GET-N-HOOKED	SKIATOOK	CLUB
APR 14th	KANAWHA RIVER CATFISH CLUB	NITRO	CLUB
APR 14th	MICHIGAN CATFISH ANGLERS TRAIL	ST JOE RIVER	CLUB/EVENT #1

CLUB	FACEBOOK
ALABAMA CATFISH TRAIL	FACEBOOK
BIG CAT QUEST	FACEBOOK
BIG SIOUX CAT ANGLERS	FACEBOOK
CABELA'SKING KAT TOURNAMENT TRAIL	FACEBOOK
CAROLINA ANGLERS TEAM TRAIL C.A.T.T	FACEBOOK
CATFISH CHASERS TOURNAMENT SERIES	FACEBOOK
CATFISH CONFERENCE	FACEBOOK
CATFISH COUNTRY	FACEBOOK
CATFISH NATION OUTDOORS	FACEBOOK
CATFISH MAFIA	FACEBOOK
CATHUNTERS ASSOC. OF THE SOUTH C.A.T.S.	FACEBOOK
CENTRAL MISSOURI CATS	FACEBOOK
CENTRAL TEXAS CATFISH TRAIL	FACEBOOK
CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLJACK CATFISHING	FACEBOOK
FISHIN BLUES	FACEBOOK
FLATHEAD BLUES ON CHANNEL 2	FACEBOOK
GET-N-HOOKED	FACEBOOK
HOLD'EM HOOK CATFISH TRAIL	FACEBOOK
ICATS	FACEBOOK
INDIANA CATFISH	FACEBOOK
J.K.V. CATFISHING TOURNAMENT TRAIL	FACEBOOK
KANAWHA RIVER CATFISH CLUB	FACEBOOK
MICHIGAN CATFISH ANGLERS TRAIL	FACEBOOK
MISSISSIPPI CATFISH TRAIL	FACEBOOK
MISSISSIPPI RIVER MONSTERS	FACEBOOK
MONSTERS ON THE OHIO	FACEBOOK
OHIO VALLEY CATFISHING	FACEBOOK
OHIO VALLEY RIVER CATS	FACEBOOK
OLD DOMINION CATFISH CLUB	FACEBOOK
RED RIVER VALLEY CATFISH LEAGUE	FACEBOOK
SCHEELS BOUNDRY BATTLE CATFISH TOURNAMENT	FACEBOOK
SOUTHEASTERN CATFISH CLUB	FACEBOOK
SOUTHEAST NEBRASKA MO RIVER CATFISH CLUB	FACEBOOK
SOUTHWEST OHIO CATFISH CLUB	FACEBOOK
TRI STATE KATS	FACEBOOK
TRI-COUNTY CATFISH ASSOCIATION	FACEBOOK
TUG-N-JUGS	FACEBOOK
TWISTED CAT OUTDOORS	FACEBOOK
WEST TEXAS CATFISH TRAIL	FACEBOOK
WEST TN CATFISH ANGLERS	FACEBOOK
WHISKY CITY CATFISH CLUB	FACEBOOK
WICKED WHISKER TOURNAMENT TRAIL	FACEBOOK

CENTRAL TEXAS CATFISH TRAIL

CEDAR CREEK

FEBRUARY 10th

1. ZWZ	152.99
2. RICHARDSON	114.01
3. HOUSTON GUIDE SERVICE	92.61
4. CAMO CATTIN'	89.99
5. DREAM TEAM	73.8

BIG FISH

1. ZWZ	50.01
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WEST TN CATFISH ANGLERS

MUD ISLAND

FEBRUARY 10th

1. Ronnie Strickland/Joseph Strickland	99.8
2. Jeff Kirkpatrick/Justin Russell	91.18
3. Chris Peyton/Mike Conrad	81.18
4. Allen Houston/Rick Baker	52.15
5. Barry Wilson/Joe Hardy	51.27

BIG FISH

1. Ronnie Strickland/Joseph Strickland	68.38
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CABELA'S KING KAT

LAKE TAWAKONI

FEBRUARY 17th

1. Kevin Parks/Ryan Gnagy	181.26
2. Steve Jones/Travis Brown	167.52
3. Roger Gerloff/Marty Gerloff	164.3
4. Justin Cook/Jason Shaw	153.92
5. David Hanson/Daniel Hanson	141.8

BIG FISH

1. Steve Jones/Travis Brown	63.6
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CATFISH MAFIA LTD

LOWER POTOMAC

FEBRUARY 17th

1. R Hiblebrand Sr/R Hiblebrand Jr	96.8
2. Jack W/Shawn H	92.8
3. Glen/Cody	82.2
4. Andrew/Cody/Justin	81.2
5. Chad/Jesse	76.2

BIG FISH

1. Jack W/Shawn H	64.2
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GET-N-HOOKED

THUNDERBIRD

FEBRUARY 17th

1. Whisker Fever	55.12
2. Mr. & Mrs. Horton	51.26
3. Catfish Addiction	47.56
4. Rollin Flatties	39.62
5. Sleeping Dawg	37.92

BIG FISH

1. Mr. & Mrs. Horton	22.04
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JKV CATFISHING

CUMBERLAND RIVER

FEBRUARY 17th

1. Tom Petrowski/Henry Neafus	65
2. Casey Tutorow/Andrew Haun	62.5
3. Adam Winder/Kelly Kreisle	50.15
4. Tony Fueller/Neville Watkins	38.45
5. Peabody/Conway	34.45

BIG FISH

1. Tom Petrowski/Henry Neafus	65
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CATHUNTERS ASSOC. OF THE SOUTH

LAKE TALQUIN

FEBRUARY 24th

1. Adam Sloan/Dennis Sloan	15
2. Glenn Flowers/Sandy Flowers	12.6
3. Tyler Walker/Seth Alday	7
4. Allen Sheperd	6.8

BIG FISH

1. Adam Sloan/Dennis Sloan	7.2
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CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLJACKS

HATCHECHUBBEE

FEBRUARY 24th

1. Cat Busters	47.4
2. Rig-em Up	27.1
3. No-Fishing Polywog	21.05
4. Team Livingston	17
5. Bait Bandit	4

BIG FISH

1. Cat Busters	29.75
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Tournament Results

FISHIN BLUES

WAURIKA

FEBRUARY 24th

1. Chris Baldwin/Adam Shriver	68.4
2. Shiloh Womack/Dalton Dale Harless	41.9
3. Austin Jamison/Billy Testermen/Dustin Curtis	40.4
4. Mike Orr/Brian Orr/Tim Orr	37
5. Shawn Talley/Jay Teakle	36.3

BIG FISH

1. Chris Baldwin/Adam Shriver	24.3
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CENTRAL TEXAS CATFISH TRAIL

LAKE BELTON

MARCH 3rd

1. Catastrophic	65.5
2. Slime Time	38.31
3. DRTW	37.81
4. Wildcats	32.69
5. Stump Jumper	32.22

BIG FISH

1. Catastrophic	23.85
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GET-N- HOOKED

3 FORKS ARKANSAS RI VER

MARCH 3rd

1. Arklahoma	91.42
2. Melendy/Forshee	63.9
3. Predator	52.12
4. Catfish Addiction	49.32
5. Catch And Release	37

BIG FISH

1. Catfish Addiction	34.48
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INDIANA CATFISH ASSOCIATION

MORSE RESERVOIR

MARCH 3rd

1. Casey/ Nick/ Andrew	32.8
2. Mary/Jane/Terry	26.9
3. Jordy/Chad	13.9
4. James/Jeff	6.2
5. Morris/Floyd	5.4

BIG FISH

1. Mary/Jane/Terry	8.6
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MISSISSIPPI CATFISH TRAIL

TOMBIGBEE RIVER

MARCH 3rd

1. Doug/Jolly/Jeff
2. Adam Long/Kevin Earnest
3. John Howard/Chris McCalough
4. Jackson Lewis/Tanner Prestage/Boo
5. Brad Box/Wesley Box

BIG FISH

1. Doug/Jolly/Jeff

SOUTHEASTERN CATFISH CLUB

FISHING CREEK RESERVOIR

MARCH 3rd

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1. Gary Morton Jr/Caleb Sturgis/Gary Morton Sr | 67.04 |
| 2. Anthony Williams/Josh Christopher/Cameron Christopher/Layne Christopher | 59.36 |
| 3. Jeff Manning/Michael Paciocco | 51.37 |
| 4. Jeff Outz/Kenny Sudderht | 47.74 |
| 5. Dieter Melhorne/Grayson Melhorn | 46.67 |

BIG FISH

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| 1. Dieter Melhorne/Grayson Melhorne | 33.93 |
|-------------------------------------|-------|

Flathead Candy

