

CATFISH **NOW!** **DIGITAL MAGAZINE**

January 2020 - Issue #40



Overcoming the Winter Blues

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by Ron Presley

Christopher Bauman is surprised that other anglers are surprised when he catches trophy catfish under the ice. Actually, it is not that uncommon an occurrence.



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Catfish Connections

Welcome to a new year and the January 2020 edition of CatfishNOW Digital Magazine and Social Media Platform (CFN). January brings the promise of new beginnings, and our renewed pledge to support the catfish community in a positive way.

Looking back at 2019 there were many goals achieved. Individual anglers posted new personal best, tournament participation grew, and record tournament payouts were established. It is pleasing to see catfishing grow in numerous ways. It is our goal here at CatfishNOW to support the continued growth of the sport by providing free stories, free tips, free how-to-videos, and anything else creatively possible to aid the catfish community.

The new year will be filled with new opportunities for tournament anglers. As I write this opening, I just returned from the Black's Camp Big Cat Shootout where 28 anglers produced a first-place payout of \$7,000. I am making plans to attend Winter Blues on Wheeler in the big fish destination of Wheeler Lake at Decatur, AL.

The Catmasters continue to offer their brand of tournament fishing with plans extending to a three-lake event in Alabama in 2021. The Santee Cooper Big Cat Quest has scheduled their 4th annual event. The Bass Pro Shops Cabela's King Kat trail has set an expanded schedule in place for 2020 that will cover more states and give more anglers a chance fish in tournament competition. Monsters on the Ohio has already set a date for the 11th annual MOTO event. Mississippi River Monsters, through an affiliation with Catmasters is expanding offerings beyond Memphis to Helena, AR and Caruthersville, MO. The All American Catfish Trail is going strong and so is Twisted Cat Outdoors. The list goes on and on as catfish enthusiasts make plans for the new year.

Although I can't list them all here you can check the back pages of CatfishNOW to find tournaments in your part of the woods. If you are a tournament director and are not submitting your scheduling information let us know. All these and many more are indicative of the positive growth the catfish industry is experiencing.

On a personal note, I am very proud to start off a new year promoting the sport of catfishing. I sincerely hope that what we do through the magazine is a positive influence on both experienced and beginning catfish anglers. There are millions of stories to tell and we can only scratch the surface, but over time we can tell a lot of them. If you know of a story that needs to be told we would love to hear from you.

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.

Happy New Year and fish with passion!
Ron Presley, Editor



Front Cover:

Paul Blackwell is not one to let cold weather keep him off the water. As owner operator of Fish-On Guide Service, Blackwell continues to put his clients on trophy Santee Cooper blues in the coldest of weather.

Flatheads Under the Ice

by Ron Presley

A talent for monster flats

It was midday, around 4 o'clock or so on Saginaw Bay/River that flows into Lake Huron. The January air temperatures were very cold with the wind chill index around 35 below. The ice had reached a thickness of 15 – 18 inches. Christopher Bauman, a self-proclaimed "Flathead Guy" had been targeting flatheads and other species under the ice when his rod bent over.

"We had fished that day from just before sunrise," recalled Bauman. "We started out in the morning chasing walleye. We had landed several flatheads and channel cats earlier in the day. My first nice flathead came on a tip up."

On this day, Bauman's Shakespeare Ugly Stick Dock Runner Combo was spooled with Hookers Terminal Tackle 20-pound CatCable. He added a slime green 5/8-ounce jig head from Midwest Sinkers. The rig was baited with a live emerald shiner and treated with Bradley's Bite Enhancer wax.

"I use braid because I can see the line slack up and bow slowly," instructed Bauman. "When that happens, I apply tension to the line and feel for the weight of the fish. If you feel weight, set the hook."

As the fishing day was winding down, Bauman felt the rod load up and set the hook. He knew immediately that it was a solid fish just by the way it pulled. Maybe even a once in a lifetime fish?

"I was jigging a couple of feet off the bottom," recalled Bauman. "I saw my line slack up suddenly. Slack line is often an indicator of hitting a tree branch or bottom debris. So, I began to slowly lift up to avoid getting hung up in the timber."

"Suddenly it was like being walked by a pit bull," continued Bauman. "It was an extremely powerful slow-moving fish. Hooking this fish was like snagging a log on the way downriver, but the flat was moving upriver and spooling me quickly."



Bauman chose to release the big flathead rather than risk its health in a long drive to certified scales.

The area where Bauman hooked the fish had 4 or 5 holes, all drilled in a group. One

was from a 6-inch auger and there were 3 or 4 from an 8-inch auger. Once the fish came up the first time and they saw how big it was they knew they would have to rely on spudding the centers out to make one big hole.

"It came up and turned several times toward the bottom," Bauman said. "It was right under the hole and quite a battle in the current. After many heart-wrenching attempts to grab the fish, it was finally landed by the tail. It was a relief to get it topside."

"...chose not to make the trip in favor of releasing the trophy ..."

The scales that were used to weigh the fish included a spring scale and two digital scales a few minutes later. The big fish bottomed out the spring scale and bent the pin. One digital scale registered 56.02 pounds and the other one registered 55.81. Even the later weight would have easily beat the current state record of 52 pounds, which incidentally was also caught under the ice in Barron Lake on January 12, 2014.

The DNR was contacted and was on the phone with Jay Wesley, Lake Michigan Basin Coordinator, before the fish was on the ice. Unfortunately, Bauman would have had to transport the 49-inch fish to Plainwell, MI for weighing on a certified scale and completion of the survey. With no livewell and temps of 35 below, he felt the health of the fish would be in jeopardy. Bauman chose not to make the trip in favor of releasing the trophy flathead.

"This is not the first time I have let a record flathead go," said Bauman. "I just like to watch them swim away. I'm pretty well known for it around here."

"I have not seen Christopher's flathead catfish in person," said Wesley. "But I have seen several amazing pictures of catfish that would probably break the Michigan state record. Some anglers get lucky —not Christopher. He has a true talent to be able



Light gear, huge fish. Imagine the challenge.

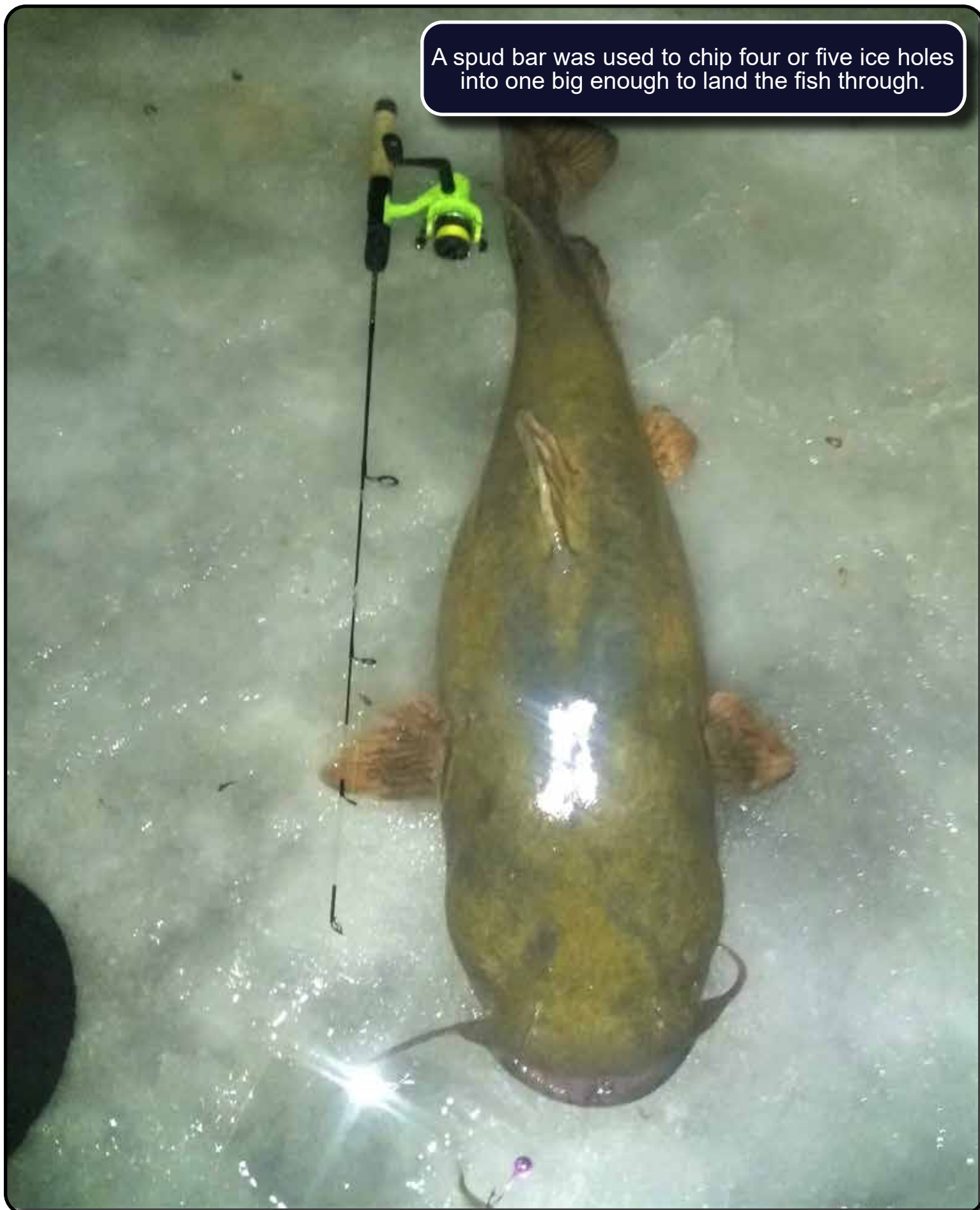
to catch these monster cats on a regular basis."

Up Your Chances of Flatheads Through the Ice

Bauman enjoys catching flatheads, but also enjoys sharing his passion for catching



A spud bar was used to chip four or five ice holes into one big enough to land the fish through.



them through the ice. His experience has proven that flatheads do not have to be a rare catch if anglers adopt a few proven principles and spend some learning time on the ice.

"Flatheads through the ice are finicky creatures," offered Bauman. "We've had days where we have jigged flathead haunts all day and never came up with a fish. We've also had days where we would find dozens of them feeding on a secondary flat because of a string of unseasonably warm days in succession. Appropriate conditions and structure are important and there is no substitute for knowing the layout of your holes."

Bauman is referring to what's under the ice as a guide to where anglers drill their holes. He explains that with time on the water anglers will locate the primary and secondary feeding flats, the main holes, and the structure. It is not different than what boat anglers refer to as learning to "read the water."

Bauman is typically using 3/4- to 1/15-ounce ball jig heads with heavy gauge sickle hooks. He likes a heavy head to help him maintain bottom contact, but light enough to mimic a natural bait presentation as closely as possible.

"The sickle hooks help keep the live bait or plastic on the hook," explained Bauman. "Sickle hooks also sit shallow on a bait and reduce foul hookups on fish that are stacked in a hole."

"My favorite bait is an emerald shiner or a small shad," said Bauman. "Hook it through the eyes and turn the hook back through the belly. I also like soft plastic minnow or shad replicas. It's fun to try and fool them with plastic. I have noticed that cut minnows usually reward me with a channel cat or big walleye where a 3- to 4-inch emerald minnow will produce a slow-moving giant flat if one is to hit."

He describes the presentation as slow or "obnoxiously slow." Bauman's strategy is to move so slow that he is imitating a dying shad or baitfish as he presents the bait to a flathead that is itself moving slowly.

"The water is so cold under the ice that the flathead's metabolism is slowing," instructs Bauman. "So, it makes sense to slow down the presentation. It also makes sense to use a good scent attractant and fish close to natural forage."

"Honestly," continued Bauman. "The only difference between targeting a walleye and a flathead is the cadence. I use a dead stick approach to get a flat to bite. They are without a doubt much slower to take a bait under these cold conditions. The bite is more subtle too. I go from trying to feel every bite, like I would when channel catfishing, to watching my hi-vis yellow line for movement."

"Anglers looking to target flatheads responsibly in midwinter should be prepared for lots of time on the water and lots of disappointment," concluded Bauman. "Catching flatheads under the ice is challenging, but once anglers get the hang of identifying feeding patterns and the mechanics of presentation they will be hooked!"



- Ron Presley

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Catfish Basics #079

Slow Down
James Linderman -Vexan Rods

I am a converted crappie angler. The thrill of the hunt and the pure power of the fish is drawing me to catfishing. It's been a long time since I had a fish on with that much power and know all I can do is hold on. I enjoy the fact that the men and women anglers have been very helpful to a newbie. Also, the tournaments are very family oriented and fun.

I have found that when the water is cold the fish are normally deeper. They still gotta' eat and they are going to go where the bait is. Anglers are likely to find them staged up in deep wintering holes waiting for bait to swim by. I use my Vexan Rods to target them in their deep-water haunts.

I find the bite to be very light in the cold water. They are not going to take it down like they do in the spring and summer months.

On a river system that has dams and current they are going to get in a hole behind rocks or anything that gives a current break. They just don't want to use energy when it's cold. They will lay down there and wait on something to swim in front of their noses.

That's my take on January cold water fishing. If you want to be successful slow down your approach to winter cats.





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Dealing with the Winter Blues

by Brent Frazee

Brrr. It might be cold, but the blue cats are biting



Chris Jones' idea of a great time of the year to catch big blue catfish differs from that of most fishermen at Lake of the Ozarks.

Sure, he looks forward to the warm, sunny, days of spring. But he also looks forward to the cold, gloomy days of winter when his boat is the only one on the lake.

Let the others think that the big blue cats are hibernating, buried in the mud somewhere. Jones knows better.

The big blues have a tolerance for winter like no other catfish, he will tell you.

Phyllis Jones was bundled against the winter cold when her son Chris guided her to a 56-pound blue catfish several years ago.

"Blue cats like cold water," said Jones, 49, who runs the Catfish Pursuit guide service. "They're not like the channels and flatheads that will get inactive once the water temperature drops into the 40s.

"The blues will still be feeding. A lot



of times, I think the fishermen will be a lot more uncomfortable than the fish."

There weren't many other uncomfortable fishermen on the water this day. Only one other vehicle and trailer was in the parking lot. And that fisherman was nowhere to be found.

By now, Jones is accustomed to that sight. Other outdoorsmen were either hunting, watching football or huddled by a fire someplace. But Jones knew it was time to go fishing.

"Some of the biggest blue cats that have come into this boat were caught in winter," Jones said.

He shivered, then laughed, saying, "One thing for sure. You don't have a lot of competition for the fish on a day like this."

The cold truth

A trip several years ago served as proof that the big ones will bite in the dead of winter.

Jones started by using his throw net to

Chris Jones knows that winter is one of the best times of the year to catch big blue catfish at Lake of the Ozarks.

collect the shad he would be using for bait. He got lucky this time. The baitfish can be tough to find once they descend to the depths during winter. But Jones marked a school on his Lowrance sonar unit and got all the bait he needed in just two throws.

Moments later, he was busy cutting those baitfish into two chunks—the head and a body. Both would work well for the hungry catfish.

He positioned the boat along a ledge near a bluff in the mid-lake area and anchored at the front and back. Then he made long casts to get several baits fanned out at different depths.

It wasn't long before the rods bounced in the holders. When one cat started pecking at the bait, I assumed it was a small one.



Chris Jones starts his winter fishing trips at Lake of the Ozarks by using a throw net to catch fresh bait.



But Jones has learned not to underestimate the bites he gets in the winter.

"Some of the biggest fish we have caught just pecked around at the bait at first," he said. "In this cold water, they're not always going to just slam it."

True to Jones' words, I watched as the rod slowly bent toward the water, then began to vibrate under the tow of a large fish.

"...biggest blue cats ... were caught in winter."

"With these circle hooks, the blue cats hook themselves," Jones said. "You don't have to put a big hookset on them like you were fishing for bass. Just start reeling."

I did, and after a spirited tug-of-war, I watched as a large blue cat wallowed to the surface. It looked big to me—and it was—but Jones wasn't impressed.

Weighing the fish, he announced, "Twenty-two pounds. That's a good fish, but we're after the big ones."

With that, Jones slid that steel-blue fish back into the water and we waited for "the big ones" to show up.

They never did. We caught and released 30 blue cats that day, fish that weighed from four or five pounds to over 20 pounds. But the giants eluded us.

"Those big ones don't come along ever day," Jones said. "But they're in here. You never know when that next bite is going to be something special."

Something special

Jones' customers have caught some of those special blue cats in the cold of winter.

He'll never forget the first time he guided at Lake of the Ozarks in 2011. It was a frigid winter day, but the fishermen who set up the trip wanted to go out anyway.

Turns out, it was a good decision. Duane Marsh, a high-school classmate of Jones,

caught a 63-pound blue cat that day.

For almost 10 years, that ranked as the biggest fish one of Jones' guide clients pulled into his boat, until that record was broken by a 71-pound fish in 2018.

"We were anchored right along a ledge," said Jones, who lives in Nemo, Mo. "That fish pecked a little but it didn't bury the rod."

"When Duane reeled down to it, he thought he was snagged at first. Then it started peeling off line."

Another trip also stands out for Jones. He took his mother, Phyllis Jones, on a winter trip several years ago, and she had a day to remember.

"It was cold, and she didn't dress for it," Jones said with a laugh. "But she didn't want to come in. She started off by catching a 38-pound flathead, which was the biggest fish she had ever caught. Later, she caught a 56-pound blue, which really put up a fight."

"When she got that fish into the boat, we were both jumping up and down we were so excited."

Keys to catching them

This isn't your grandpa's catfishing. Jones leaves little to chance when he fishes in the winter.

He doesn't simply cast a bait out randomly and hope that a big catfish swims by. Instead, he relies on his high-tech electronics to help him locate everything from the baitfish to the big cats to the holes they use in the winter.

On a recent outing, he idled across a deep flat until the side-scan function showed several blotches on his Lowrance HDS 12 sonar unit.

"Those are shad," said Jones, who is a member of the pro staff for both the Independence (Mo.) Bass Pro Shop and Lowrance Electronics. "We're in business."

He maneuvered his boat until he was over those marks, then tossed a weighted throw net into the cold water. When he quickly pulled it up, it was glistened with silver gizzard shad.



He got out his cutting board and cut two baits—the head and a body chunk— then baited his hooks.

“Fresh shad is the key,” he said.

In the winter, the blue cats often stack up in holes. Find one good fish and chances are, others won't be far away.

Using the color down-scan function on his sonar unit, Jones can even get a good idea of which marks are made by big blue cats.

“See those marks suspended off the bottom?” he said, pointing to elongated color marks on the screen. “Those are paddlefish. You can even zoom in and see their paddles.

“Those big marks on the bottom are probably catfish.”

Jones usually anchors to fish those deep holes instead of drifting. The catfish are sluggish in the cold water and usually don't chase a bait.

He uses medium-action Ugly Stik Tiger rods, Bass Pro Shops Revolution 7000 reels and 80-pound test braided line. He utilizes a three-way swivel and uses the least amount of weight he can get by with. In many applications, that means a two-ounce weight, but he will use heavier if it's windy or there is current.

“In the winter, I've found that they are especially sensitive to weight,” he said. “If they pick up a bait and feel something heavy, a lot of time they will drop it.”

Jones laughs when some customers tell him that using the modern electronics is “cheating.”

“They help you find the fish,” he said, “but they can't make them bite.”



- Brent Frazee

2020 Schedule

2/08/20	Cross (Santee Cooper), SC
2/14&15/20	Lake Ray Hubbard, TX
3/07/20	Lake Tawakoni, TX
3/14/20	Wheeler Lake, AL
3/28/20	Milford Lake, KS
4/04/20	Old Hickory Lake, TN
4/11/20	Lake Wateree, SC
4/18/20	Lakes Pickwick/Wilson, AL
4/18/20	Tuttle Creek Lake, KS
4/25/20	Lake Wylie, NC
5/02/20	Watts Barr Lake, TN
5/09/20	Callipolis (Ohio/Kanawha Rivers), OH
5/16/20	Truman Lake, MO
6/13/20	Carlyle Lake, IL
8/01/20	Dixon (Rock River), IL
8/08/20	Helena (Mississippi River), AR
9/12/20	Pekin (Illinois River), IL
9/19/20	Jeffersonville (Ohio River), IN
9/26/20	Grand Rivers (TN/Cumberland Rivers-KY/BKLY Lakes), KY
10/03/20	Grafton (Mississippi/Illinois Rivers), IL
10/10/20	Williamsburg (James River), VA
10/17/20	Caruthersville (Mississippi River), MO

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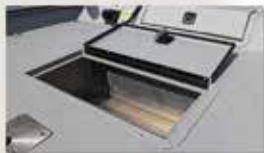
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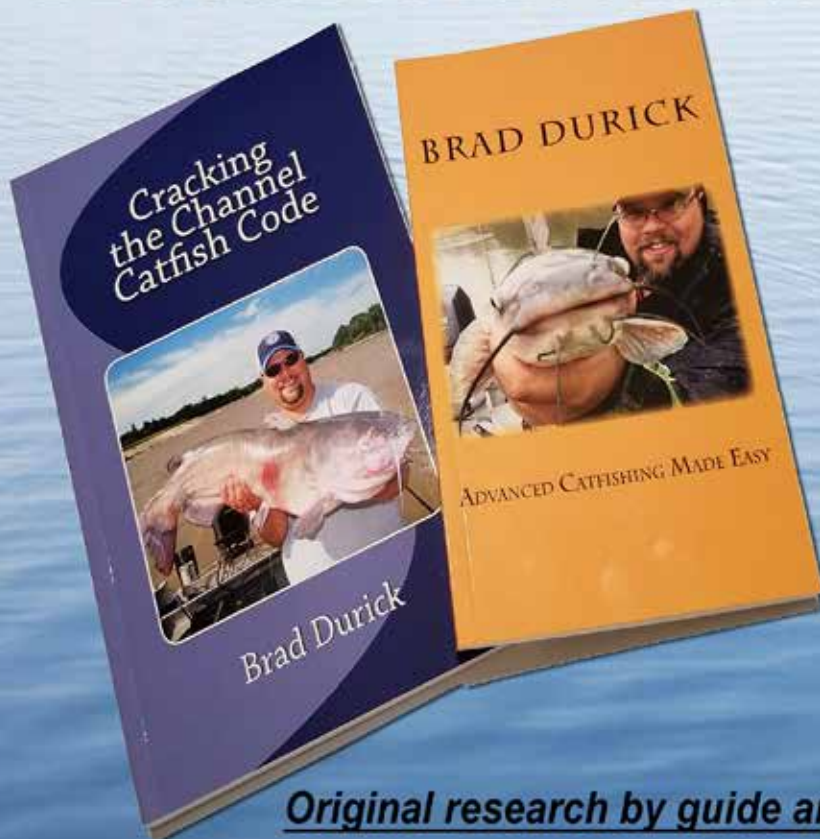
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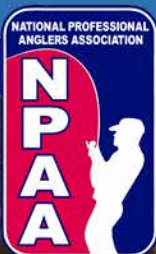


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Catfish Basics #080

Winter Dikes and Blow Holes –
Brent Riddle, Chillicothe Missouri

Editor's Note: Brent Riddle is an avid catfisherman and the creator of the Monstercat and Alphacat boats from Miracle Marine.

In the wintertime I like to focus on box dikes or the back side of blow holes in the dikes. I am talking about when the water drops into the 40s and less.

Fresh shad has always been my go-to bait that time of the year. Depth has never really been a factor. Sometimes I will find them in the 50-foot holes and sometimes in 20-foot holes. I just trust my electronics to find them and keep moving around until the bite happens.

It depends on the river gauge, but in normal winter conditions you can pull up to the dikes and tie off to fish. Or, you can pull up to the bank on the back side of the hole and fan rods out to several different depths.

If I locate fish at the tip of wing dikes I will go above the hole and anchor. This positioning allows me to put bait right in front of them.



CATFISH CONSERVATION

Trophy Catfish for the Future

by Ron Presley

TBW Approves Conservation Minded Regs for Freshwater Trotlines, Other Gear

AUSTIN – The Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission approved changes to the regulations on passive fishing gear (jug lines, minnow traps, perch traps, throwlines, and trotlines) to facilitate the removal of abandoned gear from public waters, make the presence of passive fishing gear identifiable to all users of public waters, and minimize the unintended take of aquatic resources.

Before approving the proposed changes, commissioners, in response to public input, reduced the valid period for gear tags from 10 days to six days (instead of the proposed four) to shorten the time between angler inspections of their gear and reduce the negative impacts of abandoned passive fishing gear in Texas public waters. Scientific investigations conducted by the department show that fish mortalities as a result of “ghost fishing” (the continuing of effect of unattended passive gears) can increase after four days. Such devices can continue to fish and represent a danger to fish and other aquatic organisms when they are abandoned. Requiring the gear tag and the accompanying gear to be checked more frequently than 10 days should reduce those unintended mortalities.

“Current regulations do not require the removal of the fishing device from the water when the date period on gear tags needs to be updated. Reducing the number of days from 10 to six will not change that, but it does require the



angler to check the gear and retain or release any resource that is caught,” said Jarret Barker, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Assistant Commander for Fisheries Enforcement. “The device can remain in the water while the gear tag is updated.”

In addition to the changes in the length of the valid period for gear tags, changes were made to information required to be displayed on the gear tag. Anglers were given the option of including the 12-digit customer number from their license instead of their address.

“This allows some anonymity so someone can set out their gear without disclosing their personal information to

other anglers while still allowing game wardens to identify the gear's owner by using their customer number," Barker said.

Other approved changes add the requirement that minnow traps, throwlines, and trotlines have floats attached to aid in distinguishing active fishing gear from abandoned fishing gear and litter. All floats used on juglines, minnow traps, throwlines, and trotlines must be at least 6 inches in length and not less than 3 inches in width. For these four gears, floats for recreational anglers can be any color other than orange, while commercial fishing license holders will be required to use orange-colored floats.

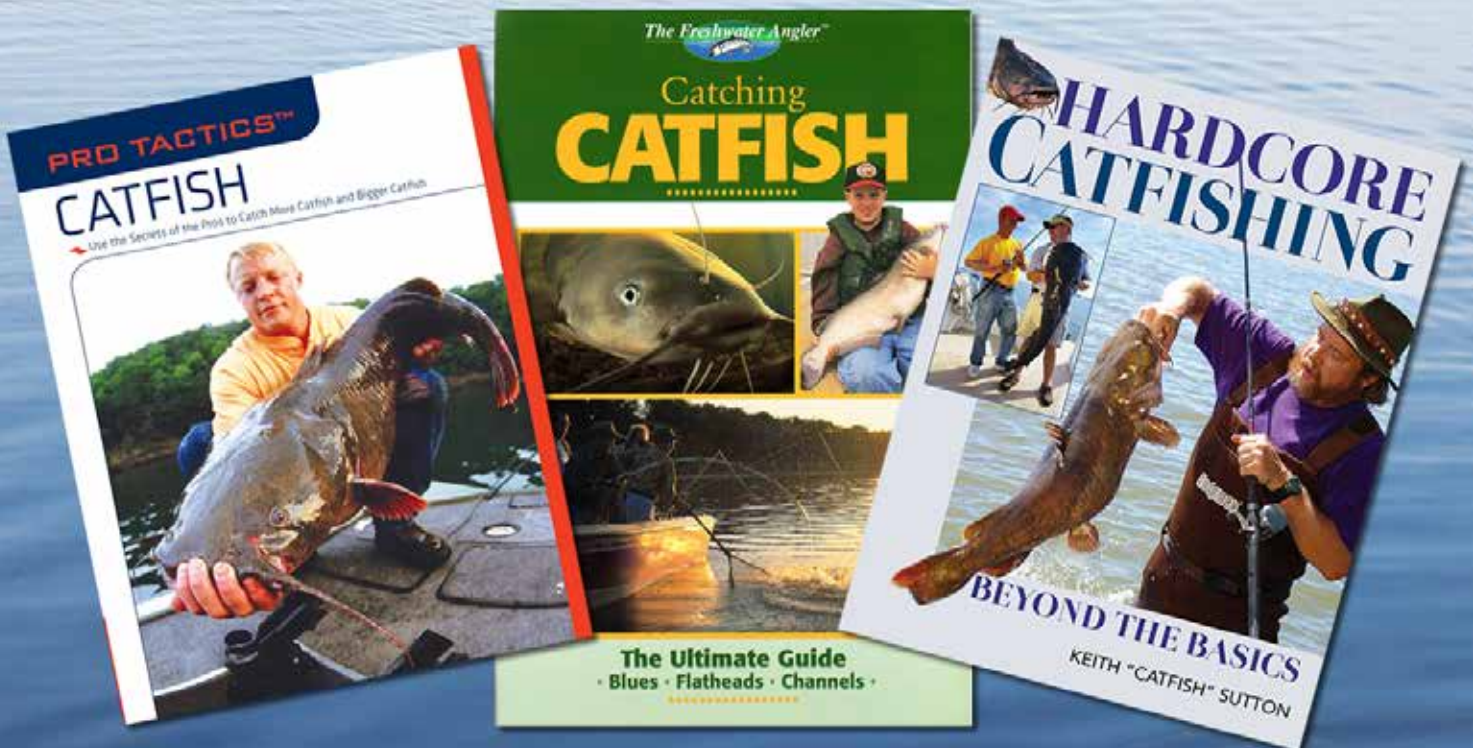
These changes will go into effect on February 1, 2020. "The other reason I like ice cattin' with a group of people is for the comradery," concluded Hansen. "The first time I ever went ice fishing for cats I did it with a bunch of friends. We fished, told fishing tales, cooked food out on the ice, and just had a good relaxing time. So, to this day if I'm going to go ice cattin', I always try and get a group together. Sharing a fishing experience with others is always more fun!"



- Ron Presley

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Black's Camp Big Cat Shootout 2019

by Ron Presley

How they Fished



The Black's Camp Big Cat Shootout is intended to be a big fish, big payout tournament. Teams pay \$500 each to enter the tournament, knowing that 100 percent of the entry fees will be distributed to the top few teams. One place is paid for every 10 boats entered. With 28 teams entered in 2019, \$14,000 was split between the top three teams. An optional Big Fish Pot was entered by all the anglers in a winner take all format to create another possible check of \$1,400.

Kevin Davis, owner/operator of Black's Camp, simply challenged anglers to show him their biggest two fish on two successive days of fishing. Up to four anglers per boat were allowed, but only

Mike Durham and Brad McCall relied on consistent weights to claim the top spot at Black's Camp Big Cat Shootout 2019.

two fish per boat, per day. His simple format resulted in a tournament that put minimum pressure on the fish as they rolled through a relatively fast weigh-in before being returned to the water.

Friday, December 13, the first day of the tournament, challenged anglers with cold windy weather and tough fishing conditions. Nevertheless, all but one team brought fish to the scales. In total the weighed fish came to more than 1,500

pounds. The average Arkansas blue weighed in on day one went more than 28 pounds each.

At the end of the day the Kentucky team of Chris and Bobby Jackson and John Walker were in the lead with two fish that weighed 105.6 pounds. One of those bruisers was Big Fish of the day at 63.8 pounds.

The runner-up team on day one was Jeff and Dylan Brinkley with a Big Fish of 62.6 pounds and a total weight of 88.95 pounds in their two fish. The top six teams had more than 70 pounds and an average fish weight of near 40 pounds.

The good bite on day one left the field with a tight range of day-one weights. Some anglers would only be fishing for Big Fish on day two, but most were still in the running. It was anybody's tournament to win or lose.

Day two started with calm winds, light rain, and hopeful anglers. As predicted, the rain ended early and left a small window of good fishing. Then, around 9:30 am the wind began to pick up.

"Once it began to blow it came up fast," reported Shootout angler, Ray Waldrop. "From then on it was very rough conditions."

All kinds of stories began to surface as anglers made it back to the weigh-in at Black's Camp. Five-foot waves and water in the boats were reported often. Where they could, anglers reported moving from the open lake to anywhere offering some protection from the wind. One captain reported an encounter with three larger rollers in succession. He said he kind of rolled over the first two, but the third one stopped the boat in its tracks as the nose buried into the wave. Another boat that had been tied to a stump rose up on a wave that let it back down on the stump

"...4 fish off of that one hump and couldn't tell enough difference...to cull ..."



Bobby and Chris Jackson and "Big" John Walker claimed the runner-up spot with a bag that included Big Fish of the tournament. Chris Jackson (L) was presented the winnings by weighmaster, Mark Coborn.

and damaged the rail on his pontoon. Needless to say, day two was tough fishing on Santee Cooper.

When the weigh-in was complete the consistency of Mike Durham from Liberty, SC and Brad McCall, from Anderson, SC, claimed top honors. They added 73.78 pounds to their day-one weight of 79.25 pounds for a two-day total of 153.05 pounds. Those four fish earned them a first-place check of \$7,000. Durham and McCall finished third in the Shootout last year.

"Day two was rough," Durham said. "We caught one fish where we caught fish yesterday before the wind blew us off. We moved to some fish that I had found on the other side of the lake earlier in the week. There were so many boats around we couldn't fish em'. So, we just rode until we found something we liked. We let the wind blow us across it and got lucky and caught another good fish."

Durham and McCall caught all their fish on whole gizzard shad.

"We would cut one side off or just put a





cut in them to make them bleed,” explained Durham. “It seemed like cutting one fillet off worked good, or cutting up the back and leaving the fillet to flap worked good.”

“The whole gizzard shad was a big part of catching fish for us the last couple of days,” added McCall. “I really do believe finding 20 to 25 feet of water was a bigger deal. That is a little shallower than we normally fish. Mike came down and stayed the week before the tournament to get some prefishing in and it paid off.”

“The fish we caught on day one, I found while prefishing,” offered Durham. “In one drift I had a 55, 39, 36, and more. I caught 14 fish in the area.”

“There was one real productive hump,” added McCall. “We drifted over the hump and had a big fish that came off. A few minutes later another rod went down. I reeled down on it. I guessed it was right

Third place went to the team of Bradley Williams and Robin Lineberry. Robin was the only female participant in the Shootout.

at 40 pounds. We caught 4 fish off of that one hump and couldn't tell enough difference in them with the scales to cull them.”

The runner up spot went to the father/son team of Bobby and Chris Jackson from North Carolina and “Big” John Walker from Kentucky. After leading day one they finished at less than one pound out of the lead with 152.10 pounds in a super close finish. They earned a check for \$4,200. The team also had Big Fish of the tournament. Their 63.8-pound blue earned them the Big Fish Pot for an additional \$1,400 in prize money.

"We had two pretty good days of fishing," reported Chris Jackson. "It's was rough weather and rough water. We fished the lower lake (Moultrie) both days. We had a really good bite yesterday on gizzard shad."

"We fished the same area on day two," continued Chris. "The fish were there, but we just couldn't get them to bite. It got really windy and it seemed to shut them down. We had 25 MPH winds out there today. We had to cull a 40 yesterday—we needed it today!"

The third spot went to Bradley Williams and Robin Lineberry with 4 fish weighing 144.05 pounds. The North Carolina team endured tough weather conditions to earned a check for \$2,800.

"It was a windy day," reported Williams. "We started off over on the west side of the lower lake trying to stay out of the wind. We got a good fish on early and broke him off. Then, about an hour later we caught out biggest fish. The wind got the lake rough, so we moved around a lot."

"We actually didn't put gas in the boat yesterday," admitted Williams. "So, we took the boat out of the water and went and got some gas. Then we drove all the way back over to the other side of the lake back in a little finger of water up in a cove. We drifted in about 9 feet of water and caught two more 40's in that shallow water."

"It was windy and tough," added Lineberry. "The waves were just breaking everywhere and it was really scary out there. It is hard to control the boat in those conditions."

The team caught their fish on cut white perch which they caught in the upper lake using a Sabiki Rig preceding the tournament.

"We used both perch and mullet," Williams said. "Not a single fish came on mullet. They all came on perch."

The lakes of Santee Cooper continue to grow their reputation as a big catfish

destination. They are a perfect location for a major tournament and Black's Camp Big Cat Shootout promises to be just that. Mother Nature reared her ugly head again, but the anglers were not to be outdone. They battle the inclement weather to bring big cat after big cat to the scales. Given the two-fish weigh-in just about any fish that came to the scales was a good one. Congrats to all the teams that fought the bitter weather to produce a successful tournament.

Thanks are due also to the tournament director, Kevin Davis and weighmaster, Mark Coburn for keeping everything running smoothly. Stay connected with the Black's Camp Big Cat Shootout to learn the dates and details of next year's event.

The Remaining Top Ten

- 4th Place Todd Padgett & Tiff Light – 141.6
- 5th Place Timothy London & A. J. Christian – 135.0
- 6th Place Dennis Glover & Trad Ridgeway – 121.00
- 7th Place Jim Page & Alex Summer – 118.45
- 8th Place Jeff Brinkley & Dylan Brinkley - 112.05
- 9th Place Richard Chaplin & Jimmy Girdler – 108.2
- 10th Place David Stanley & Chuckie Ouvry – 104.55

For more information on the area visit the website at www.santeecoopercountry.org and www.berkeleycountysc.gov and www.blackscamp.com.



- Ron Presley

Why We Catfish

A Guest Editorial by Odell “Bank Boy” Allen

Editor’s Note: *Forty-seven-year-old Odell Allen has followed his passion for fishing to a calling that includes influencing his neighborhood kids. He actively shares his fishing knowledge with local kids by taking them fishing and giving them their own rod and reel. He also shares catfishing with the public through his YouTube channel—Bank Boyz Gar and Catfishing*

My name is Odell Allen. I was born and raised in Grand Prairie TX, in a community called Dalworth. I was raised bank fishing the waters of the Trinity River and lakes around the DFW area in Texas. As a kid, I was introduced to catfishing by my grandmother, Georgia Fisher, and father, Odell Robertson, at a very young age.

We fished the river and lakes around the city using shrimp, chicken liver, and worms (for me) as bait. We fished for channel catfish, mud catfish, and bluegill, but seemed to catch some of everything but mainly catfish.

We always kept the smaller catfish for eating while releasing the bigger ones. I was taught that the most important thing was to release the big fish and only keep the smaller ones. Because the bigger fish are better at producing and protecting the babies.

My dad always challenged me to grab the catfish by the bottom lip and try to endure the pressure from the bite, lol.

He was just having fun, but at the same time saying, “You gotta’ be a man to be able to grab it by the lip.” So, I had to prove I was a man.

In my teenage years, I’d get out of school and straight to the river I’d go. Fishing for catfish with my cousins, Chris and Wayne Scott. We would hop on our bikes with our bait and tackle and ride for miles to the river. We had the time of our lives getting muddy and tired while catching catfish until the sun went down.

Sometimes our adventures would get us in trouble for coming home so late and muddy. But our parents were always proud of the catches we brought home. Those fish went to the dinner table too.



Odell has a passion for fishing, but a special passion for flatheads.



We eat a lot of fish in my family, only eaters though.

As we got older the fish started getting bigger, then the real challenges began. We had to learn how to catch the fish without breaking the line. We had to learn how to use the drag and the rod to tire out the fish and keep it from breaking the lines.

Fishing is always an adventure because you never know what you might catch. One of my best memories was in the summer of 2017. I was fishing at Joe Pool Lake Dam in Grand Prairie TX using a small 7-foot Glow Stick rod. I was using worms to catch bluegill that I planned to use for night fishing. I hooked a 45-pound flathead catfish, on worms. That flat turned out to be my personal best flathead. I successfully landed it,

Odell Allen is shown here with one of the children he has taken fishing. He does it for the smiles and the knowledge that they are better off on the water than in the streets.

weighed it, took some pics, and released him back into the water! My passion is catching Monster Fish and I love catching flatheads.

Now that I'm in my adult years, I've opened a successful fishing group called BANK BOYZ GAR & CATFISHING. I use this as a platform for sharing ideas and making educational fishing videos on how to rig lines and what bait to use to catch catfish in different seasons.

I also guide kids and adults on amazing fishing trips. Those trips are an opportunity





to pass on the knowledge of catfishing while making memories. Seeing the smiles, joy, and happiness on the faces of others is the best reward.

My new passion, and mission, are to get the troubled youth out on the lakes and rivers and off the streets. I want them to be into fishing and hunting instead of gangs, drugs, and crime. I know from experience that the streets are tough for some of the kids.

The majority of the kids that I have taken fishing are now hooked. Their parents call me and say that all they talk about is going fishing. They get addicted to fishing and that is all they want to do.

I'm showing them that fishing and the outdoors is a lot more fun than video games, running the streets in gangs, and doing drugs. The fun of catching a

Day or night, Odell says to use big bait for big fish.

monster fish will hook anybody. I want to see the kids learn what nature has to offer and how it is better for them than what the streets have to offer.

In the big picture, I catfish because I love the peace of being by the water. I use the time to clear my mind as I sit waiting on that BIG CATFISH to fold my pole over. I always use big pieces of bait, because the bigger the bait the bigger the fish. So, when I finally get that bite, I know it's big and I am soon to experience the adrenaline rush of a long fight. And that's why I love catfishing.

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by Terry Madewell

The image shows a Lowrance electronic display with three main sections. The left section is a map view with depth contours and a track. The top right section shows depth (61.9) and temperature (40.0). The bottom right section shows a sonar image with a large fish target and depth (80). The display is labeled "LOWRANCE" at the top.



temperature plays a major role,” King said. “If the water temperature dips to the mid-40’s range catfish are going to be much slower in their feeding activity. They will bite and they may bite aggressively, but it requires the fisherman to adjust to daily patterns.”

King said one example is when he’s consistently catching catfish on a controlled drift pattern and the water temperature dips, his first adjustment is to slow the drift speed.

“I’ll drift at 0.5 miles per hour and faster most of the year, but when the water’s cold I slow it down to 0.4 and if that doesn’t work, I’ll go slower,” he said. “In addition to speed control, it’s crucial to find forage and big catfish marks on the graph so I know I’m working the right areas. I don’t randomly drift.”

King said his bread and butter tactic when the water gets cold is a controlled drift using his electric motor.

“I use my graph to scan the ledges, drops, points, bluffs, and deep holes,” he said. “This

Zakk Royce with a big wintertime blue caught on a small chunk of cut bait.

searching pattern holds true for drifting or anchoring techniques. When I see forage and big fish marks that are catfish I’ll fish.”

King said fast-paced action occurs in cold weather when drifting but catfish occasionally prefer the bait stationary instead of chasing a moving target.

“If drifting doesn’t produce, I’ll anchor and fan cast baits around the boat into different depths of water along the target,” he said.

He’ll give an anchored setup about 45 minutes, but usually he’ll have fish hooked in the first 15-to-30-minutes if the fish are in a bite mood. If action is slow, he’ll move to another spot.

King said excellent winter catfishing can occur anywhere on a given lake or river but





he prefers to target the middle-to-the-lower-end of the large lakes he frequently fishes.

Zakk Royce guides out of Lake Gaston in North Carolina and has multiple triple-digit sized fish to his credit. He also routinely catches large numbers of catfish, primarily blue catfish, throughout the winter.

"I love winter fishing primarily because the trophy fish bite is the most consistent of the year and we still catch lots of catfish," he said.

Royce said the majority of his winter fishing will be in deep water but catfish may move shallower in low light conditions.

"Deep water is relative to the lake or river you're fishing but follow the forage and you'll be in the right area," he said. "Occasionally mornings are good for shallow water action but my experience has been during late afternoons the forage may migrate into shallower water on points or humps or even move into creeks or coves. The catfish will follow and feed heavily. Also, don't overlook

Catfish of all sizes are taken during the winter and Royce said using planer boards has increased his productivity.

shallower water during winter."

Royce (919-724-2474) said his primary tactic is a controlled drift using his electric motor to move the boat on a specific route. Like King, he'll scan ledges, humps, and points and work specific contours where forage and fish are present.

"One very productive pattern on Gaston, and other lakes I've fished during the winter, is fishing a channel ledge," he said. "I may work the bottom in the deepest water or along the shallower top of the ledge where it falls into the deep water. Sometimes fish will be at a specific depth along the drop."

Royce said he also uses planer boards to spread his bait presentations further away

from the boat. He'll often run two planer boards on each side of the boat as well as pulling lines far behind the boat.

"...water temperature plays a major role..."

"Planer boards allow me to work baits much further from the boat and in some cases, I'll have baits working the top and bottom of a ledge and multiple depths in between," he said. "I think having baits away from the boat is more productive in cold weather. I also pull baits farther behind the boat, often 250-feet or more."

Royce said he prefers natural baits from the water he's fishing and he'll often scale down bait size during winter because bigger is not always better.

"With cold water, the metabolic rate of fish is slower and I've found using the forage catfish are currently feeding on gives me the edge," Royce said. "I'll carry plenty of bait with me to keep fresh bait on the line."

King said to fish whenever you can but the second and third day after a frontal passage is usually best for winter fishing.

"If you can be selective on the days you fish, that third day after a front, with a bit of warming, can be THE time for best winter action," he said.



- Terry Madewell

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

JAN	11th	CENTRAL TEXAS CATFISH TRAIL	LAKE WHITNEY	TRAIL
JAN	11th	CUMBERLAND RIVER CATMAN'S ASSOC.	CLARKSVILLE MARINA	TRAIL
JAN	11th	SOUTHEASTERN CATFISH CLUB	LAKE WATEREE	CLUB
JAN	25th	HOLD'EM HOOK CATFISH TRAIL	INGALLS HARBOR	TRAIL
JAN	25th	M&J CATFISH WAR	FLORENCE MARINA STATE PARK	TRAIL
FEB	1st	OLD DOMINION CATFISH CLUB	HOPEWELL MARINA	CLUB
FEB	1st	SOUTHEASTERN CATFISH CLUB	LAKE WYLIE	CLUB
FEB	8th	CABELA'S KING KAT TOURNAMENT TRAIL	SANTEE COOPER	TRAIL
FEB	8th	CUMBERLAND RIVER CATMAN'S ASSOC.	CLARKSVILLE MARINA	TRAIL



SOUTHEASTERN CATFISH CLUB

LAKE WYLIE

DECEMBER 7th

1. Team Adversity	71.35
2. Team Bottoms Up	69.1
3. Team Blind Squirrel	62.6
4. Team Carolina Blues	61.5
5. Team Katfish Mafia	60.85

BIG FISH

1. Team Cat Baby	46.85
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CUMBERLAND RIVER CATMANS ASSOCIATION

CLARKSVILLE MARINA

DECEMBER 13th

1. Keith Smith/Donnie Cross	75.25
2. Joey Stecker/Chris Petty	50.95
3. Robert Scott/Justin	19.85

BIG FISH

1. Joey Stecker/Chris Petty	41
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TENNESSEE RIVER CATFISH CLUB

CHICKAMAUGA LAKE

DECEMBER 14th

1. Josh Brown/Trevor Nederhoff/Doc Lange	107.24
2. Ryan Lawrence/Tiffany Lawrence	88.18
3. Ray Ferguson/Donnie Fountain	86.2
4. Chris Ward/Chris Carter	81.1
5. Eric Williams/Amy Starnes/Malik Hengar	80.12

BIG FISH

1. Josh Brown/Trevor Nederhoff/Doc Lange	60.06
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OLD DOMINION CATFISH CLUB

HOPEWELL MARINA

JANUARY 4th

1. Adam Cook/Melissa Cook	113.96
2. Joey Keefe/Howard Staton/Chris Krammes	91.93
3. Trey Thorpe/Zebco Rick	77.6
4. Ryan Smiley/Leo Smiley	55.79
5. Bruce Conner/James Keatts/Sharon Leigh	51.08

BIG FISH

1. Adam Cook/Melissa Cook	66.85
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Never too cold to fish.