

## **Structure on Structure**

## **Late Winter Techniques**

## **Milford's Cold Water Cats**



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by Ron Presley

Ty Konkle believes there are three important components of a good catfishing spot. All three involve structure to one degree or another.



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by by Mike Gnatkowski

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by John N. Felsher

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by Ron Presley

Steve Henderson found an outlet for his passion in the boat industry. Building catfish boats is a big part of it.



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**Front Cover:**

Chuckie Ouvry is known for his willingness to help other anglers. In mid-February he helped himself to his personal best on Santee Cooper in South Carolina.

## Catfish Connections

Welcome everyone to the March edition of CatfishNow (CFN). We are pleased to bring you our monthly collection of catfish related content and we hope you will share it with your friends, relatives, and other catfish enthusiasts.



The year has been busy. It kicked off with the announcement of a new national organization aimed at the catfish community. Then, following closely behind was the largest paying catfish tournament in history.

On January 9, 2020, at 1:00 pm the formation of the American Catfishing Association was formally announced. This organization holds great promise for the future of recreational catfishing.

On January 25, 2020, The CatMasters Texoma event awarded the first-place check of \$40,000 and paid out a total of more than \$100,000. Two-hundred sixteen teams competed in the two-day event.

The Catfish Conference took place in Louisville and another gathering of catmen and catwomen is coming soon. The creation of James N. Arwood (Hookers Terminal Tackle), Catapalooza will bring folks together at Pigeon Forge, TN on June 12-14, 2020.

These are a few examples of the growth that the catfish market is experiencing and you do not have to look far to discover more.

Here at CatfishNOW we continue to work hard at promoting the sport of catfishing. Our intent is that the magazine be 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. Because of them, we are able to offer the contents of CFN to our readers free of charge. I hope you will help thank them by considering them when you are in the market for catfish supplies.

Fish with passion!  
Ron Presley, Editor



# Three Degrees of Structure

by Ron Presley

*Mother Hubbard's Cupboard may not be as bare as it seems.*



**D**id you ever feel like you were fishing in Old Mother Hubbard's Cupboard? The fishing hole just seemed to be bare? You had great expectation of finding a fish but reality set in and it was only a wish. Actually, you may have been in the right area, just not the right spot.

We've all been there. You know, that experience where you're sitting there fishing and the guy in a boat 20 yards away is catching fish and you're not getting a bite. The bite can be pretty location specific?

B'n'M prostaff angler Ty Konkle has spent years developing a successful approach to catching big catfish. Not surprisingly, it is related to location, but it is a little more than that.

"I like to drift and I like to anchor," Konkle

Konkle holds a nice Tennessee River blue cat that he caught using his Three Degrees of Structure method.

said. "Drifting is a good way to cover a lot of water. But when I'm sitting on an anchor, I sometimes wonder what would have happened if I would've moved over a little before throwing out the anchor or spot-locking. There is a lot of water to cover and a few feet can make a difference."

Early in his guiding career, Konkle fished what he called two degrees of structure with success. He would head out on the river, find a deep hole, then find a ledge or drop off to



fish. Over time he refined his search for big fish to include a third degree of structure. Once he added that third element to his method, he witnessed an increase in his catch rate.

"Too many people focus on the first degree of structure and nothing more," Konkle said. "Then they wonder why their catch rates are so low. Simply finding a hole in a river is a good start, but if you're fishing the wrong side of the hole it can mean the difference between success or failure."

His formula for successfully boating trophy catfish depends on finding three different pieces to the puzzle. It is not always the exact same three, but a combination that has resulted in many trophy catfish for him and his clients. He explains his system as a process of finding three degrees of structure. He explains it step by step.

### The First Degree

Step one is finding the first degree of

The author is shown here with a nice blue that convinced him that Konkle's method works.

structure. This is the most easily found element of his formula. In a river, for example, it is typically a hole or a deeper stretch of river. In a lake it might be the dam.

"The first step is the easiest and sometimes the only one used by anglers," advised Konkle. "It is simply locating a deeper hole, a dam or maybe a nuclear plant. Anything that provides a major collection point for fish."

"Too many people spend too much time on one spot in one hole," explained Konkle. "There will be a place in the hole that is deeper than the rest. If the fish are in that deeper part and you are off a little bit you are going to miss them."

He goes on to explain that the next spot may be on the other side of the river, or the other







end of the dam. It may just be the other side of the current.

"When fishing an individual hole there will be some place in that hole where the fish are staging," advised Konkle. "There is more to finding fish than just finding a hole.

With that in mind, Konkle moves on to explain the importance of finding that second degree of structure.

## The Second Degree

Step two is finding the second degree of structure. This would be like a drop-off or a ridge in that hole that gives the fish something to travel up and down or alongside.

"The second degree of structure could be thought of as highways that fish move along as they navigate one point to another," Konkle said.

Lake and river maps that show contours can be a help in finding these catfish highways. Today's modern sonar can help anglers scout and map out any area of interest. In fact, sonar can be a major part of a long-term plan to find this second degree of structure as well as the third.

## The Third Degree

Step three is finding that third degree of structure. The third degree of structure is an

Konkle fully supports CPR for trophy catfish. Any cats weighing more than 15 pounds are returned to the water.

object of some kind that gives fish protection and furnishes them with an ambush spot for feeding on unsuspecting forage. Konkle's list of third-degree structure includes many different things. In his experience, this is where the biggest fish are usually sitting.

"The third degree structure could be a hump or anything that breaks up the secondary structure," advised Konkle. "It could be a sharp change in elevation. For instance, I've seen a drop-off along the ledge that fits the bill perfectly."

"It might be rock piles, sunken timber, big boulders, or maybe even a sunken boat along the ridge or drop off," offered Konkle. "It might even be an old tire in a smaller river, but objects that small go unnoticed in the bigger rivers like

***"...successfully boating trophy catfish depends on finding three different pieces to the puzzle."***



Like everyone else, Konkle likes using skipjack for bait but chances are good he will have some bluegill on hand too.

## Fishing the Bite Window

In addition to applying his Three Degrees of Structure theory, Konkle fishes a very narrow bite window. His bite window is based on experience with active and aggressive fish. Using this strategy requires moving often and having plenty of waypoints.

"In the guide world, you have to do things efficiently," explained Konkle. "Clients do not want to wait for hours to get a fish, especially on half-day trips. The idea is to get your baits quickly in the vicinity of fish. If you are successful you will minimize waiting time, and usually maximize the catch rate."

"In the real world, my experience has shown that the majority of bites occur between that 7- to 12-minute mark. You have to give the fish enough time to find your bait. Once you go beyond that bite window, the chances of catching fish go down dramatically. You can still catch fish on the hole, especially if the active fish are further away from your baits then you intended them to be."

Combining these two concepts—Three Degrees of Structure and the Bite Window—Konkle successfully puts trophy cats in the boat on a regular basis.

the Tennessee.

"Literally, it's like third time's a charm," suggested Konkle. "Typically, the best precision anchoring locations are going to be that third degree of structure."

## The Long-term Plan

Konkle likes to spend a little time on each trip looking at new water, something that he has not investigated before. His goal is to add to his inventory of potential three degrees of structure spots.

An accumulation of recorded spots over time is part of his success. Once any angler has accumulated enough waypoints it becomes simpler to make most every fishing trip a successful one.

There are a lot of variables involved, but when you find a combination that includes Konkle's three degrees of structure you have found a winning combination for catching trophy cats.

 - Ron Presley

**Editor's Note:** For a full explanation of Konkle's Bite Window go to [catfishnow.com](http://catfishnow.com) and read the full explanation in the [May, 2019 issue](#). Konkle can be contacted through his website at [FV-Catfish.com](http://FV-Catfish.com). View his videos on his YouTube channel of the same name.

## Catfish Basics #083

Fish Current Seams/Breaks  
 Capt. Terry Rogers,  
 Hooked on Cats Guide Service

When fishing water with current, I like to look for current seams/breaks. You will find that current seams/breaks usually occur where there is something in the water to disrupt or redirect the normal path of the water flow.

Since catfish are opportunistic feeders, they will often place themselves just inside the current seam/break where the current is slower and wait for an easy meal to come floating by.

Bumping bottom or controlled drifting are usually the preferred presentation but anchoring just above your target and casting out along the seam/break can produce good results as well.







B'n'M How To:  
Transducer Tips  
with Ron Presley  
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# CATFISH GEAR

## Catfish Gear #026 — SeaArk Boats



**D**escribed by some as the Cadillac of catfish boats, SeaArk Boats have set the pace for catfish anglers everywhere. They have nearly 30 years of experience in boat building and it shows. SeaArk has a slogan, “Built for a lifetime,” and they live up to it. Their heavy-duty aluminum boats are the choice of many catfish anglers since their introduction in 2009.

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Their popularity can be witnessed at any catfish tournament across the country. One of the reasons for their popularity is the features that come standard. Take the





ProCat 240 for example. It comes with a self-draining bow deck, 25-gallon bow livewell with rounded corners, dual aluminum side consoles, ProCat walk thru windshield, two lockable 8.6' rod boxes, 80-gallon livewell in rear deck, 59-gallon aluminum belly fuel tank, and a designated area for individualized bait tank with tie-down eyes.

There are different models to choose from and each can be customized to an individual's preferences and fishing style. Add your choice of available options and accessories to create the boat you want, for fishing the way you want. The choice is yours.

Chad Mayfield has been choosing SeaArk since 2004 after fishing with a friend in a 20-foot MV Jon Series. It was the perfect starter boat for Chad.

"I bought my first SeaArk in 2004," recalled Mayfield. "In 2010 I traded for a 20-foot V-pro for the smoother ride. In 2017 I upgraded to the ProCat 240. My main reason for upgrading was for the space, windshield, and larger livewell."

Chad Mayfield is shown here ready to fish at the start of the Annual Owners tournament on Wheeler Lake in Decatur, AL.

He found the ProCat 240 was suitable for catfishing and recreational boating with his family.

"I use my boat for fishing and pleasure," reported Mayfield. "The Procat works perfect for both. The large fuel tank allows us to run all day whether I'm pulling a tube or making a long run in a tournament."

"One of the best things about owning a SeaArk is being part of the SeaArk family," concluded Mayfield. "SeaArk is a great company that supports their owners and catfish angling like no other company."

Check out the various SeaArk models, and their standard and optional equipment at [www.seaarkboats.com](http://www.seaarkboats.com).





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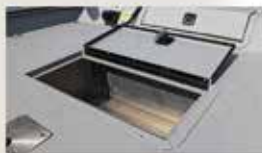
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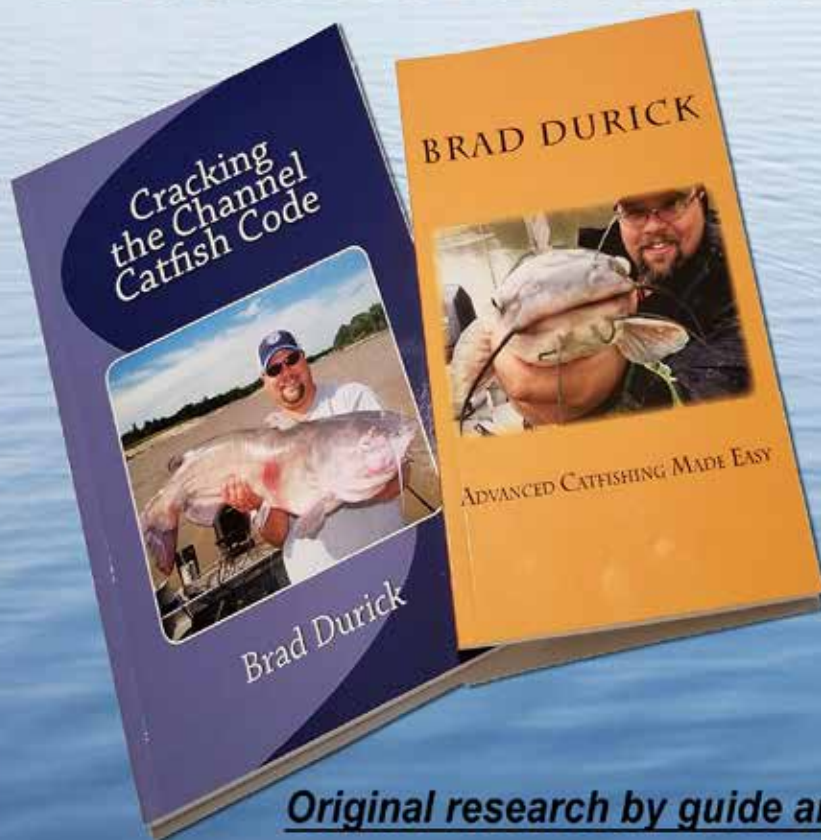
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# Milford Reservoir's Cold Weather Cats

by Mike Gnatkowski

*March can offer up some inclement weather but it's a good month for trophy blues.*



Even though it was mid-March, it sure didn't feel like spring. The wind was howling out of the north and the temperature was in the mid-30s. The brisk north wind was pushing three- and four-foot whitecaps down to the south end of Kansas' 16,000-acre

Shannon Simmer battles a feisty blue cat while guide Ryan Gnagy prepares to boat it. (Photo courtesy gnatoutdoors.com)





Milford Reservoir.

Guide Ryan Gnagy said that fishing would be better on the calmer north end of the reservoir, but it wasn't going to be fun getting there. None of us, except for Gnagy, were prepared for the unseasonable weather and a rough boat ride complete with bone-chilling spray.

I put on every stitch of clothing I'd brought with me. I even found a couple pairs of gloves in the pocket of my Gore-Tex rain suit.

Joining us were avid catfish anglers Trevor and Shannon Simmer of Wamego, KS. Trevor donned an extra raincoat Gnagy had to ward off the spray. The toughest of the bunch was Shannon. She was too geeked to let a little cold weather bother her.

The run was bone jarring. Gnagy's 24-foot Sea Ark Pro Cat 240 plowed through the boiling waves easily, but you still had to check every once in a while,

Ryan Gnagy uses a gripper to wrestle a Milford blue into the boat.  
(Photo courtesy gnatoutdoors.com)

to see if you'd lost any fillings. The cold spray would come over the windshield every once in a while. The closer we got to the north shore, the smaller the waves got, but the wind was brisk.

Gnagy threw out a drift sock. The sock kept us pointed into the wind. Occasionally, Gnagy would have to hit the remote on the trolling motor to keep us pointed into the wind. The idea was to make a controlled drift across a 20- to 30-foot flat that the cats were moving up on to feed.

Gnagy pulled out a slimy cutting board and a hefty gizzard shad. The shad were from 1-1/2- to 3 pounds. Gnagy cut the head off the shad at an angle and





ran the 8/0 Double Action Team Catfish hook through the nostrils. The hunk of fish was enough to choke a horse.

Above the bait was a Styrofoam float to keep the bait off bottom and floating ahead of the string of nine 1/2 -ounce bullet-head sinkers. The weight was hung from a sinker slider separated from the barrel swivel by a sinker bumper.

The rods Gnagy uses are 7-foot 6-inch Team Catfish rods. The line was yellow 65-pound Tug O War braid and with a 50-pound monofilament leader.

Gnagy heaved the rig as far as he could downwind and handed the rod to Trevor and said, "Here. Let this out." Trevor free-spooled the bait until it was 60 or 75 yards downwind. Gnagy went back to rigging more rods and cutting shad. With the complete spread out,

Guide Ryan Gnagy coaches his anglers on the finer points of catching blue cats in the cold weather.

(Photo courtesy gnatoutdoors.com)

there was nothing to do but sit back, wait and shiver.

Gnagy said March is far and away the best month for blue catfish on Milford. "In March, the catfish are warming up from winter and it speeds up their metabolism as the water starts to warm. They are feeding big time! March and April are the top months, but July through November is also really good."

Trevor noticed one of the rod tips bounce. "Oh, that's just a little one playing with it," said Gnagy. "You'll know it when one takes it." The rod bounced



again, but this time it kept bending.

Trevor cleared the rod and leaned into the fish. The cat put up a spirited battle, but the heavy tackle and line took a toll. Gnagy slipped the Floating Catfish Grip into the cat's mouth and hoisted the 7-pound blue into the boat. We were on the board.

***"You'll know it when one takes it."***

Soon after, another rod bounced and Shannon planted her feet and leaned into the rod. You could tell she'd been on the business end of a fishing rod before. The cats were cold too, but it was a while before Shannon started making headway. Close to 10 minutes elapsed before Gnagy slipped the gripper into

the blue's mouth. The cat was pushing 20 pounds.

We'd come to the end of our drift and Gnagy instructed us to reel up so we could make another drift. He said he was going to set up a little deeper, in 25 to 35 feet of water, for our next drift.

Having been through the drill once, we got the lines out much quicker this time. One of the rods started to bend under the weight of a heavy fish. The cat came grudgingly thrashing and rolling near the boat. Gnagy used the gripper to wrestle him into the boat. Trevor struggled to hold the twisting 30-pound catfish aloft on the scale. It was the biggest of more than a dozen blues we caught that day.



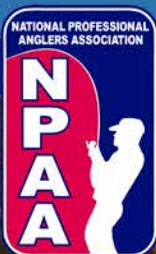
- Mike Gnatkowski

**Epilogue:** Contact Ryan Gnagy at 785-213-2590 or on Facebook at Prime Time Catfishing. You can find great lodging right on Milford Reservoir at Acorns Resort. Contact them at <http://www.acornsresortkansas.com> or call 785-463-4000. For more information contact the Geary County Convention and Visitors Bureau at 800-528-2489 or online at [www.junctioncity.org](http://www.junctioncity.org).






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### NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL ANGLERS ASSOCIATION

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## Catfish Basics #084

Look for Current – Kevin Davis,  
Black's Camp and Restaurant

Santee Cooper is known for catching big fish in shallow water. With years of observation as a guide and proprietor of Black's Camp and Restaurant, Kevin Davis has some advice for catfish anglers fishing Santee Cooper in March.

His reasoning is based on an annually recurring event. March is the time that the spring herring are coming into the lakes from the ocean.

"Anchor up in 4 to 15 feet of water," advises Davis. "Always look for current, bait up with fresh spring herring, and wait for the rod to go down. If you fish 30 minutes without a bite it's time to MOVE!"

"Look for those same conditions and set up again," continued Davis. "This is a pattern that has worked for years."

It is a good idea to set the timer on your phone to ensure a notification when the 30 minutes is up. Following this simple plan is likely to hook you up with some great Santee Cooper cats in March. And don't overlook the shallow water!



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# Winter Whiskers

## Cold Water Fishing Means Tickling a Catfish's Whiskers

by John N. Felsher

***Successful cold weather fishing requires proper bait placement and patience.***

Wisps of fog rose from the frosty water as the boat slowly drifted backward. Carried by the current, lines played out behind the craft as the bait bounced along the bottom some 40 feet beneath the near-freezing surface.

Suddenly, a line stopped and then began moving against the current! The angler grabbed the heavy rod, cranked up the slack and set the hook on another frigid finny fighter.

Catching lethargic catfish in cold water usually means finding them first. In late winter or early spring, whisker fish frequently seek the deepest holes they can find. They won't move far or fast, but might hunker down in cover waiting to ambush any tempting morsels that drift irresistibly close to them. To find cold cats in their deep winter lairs, people might need to scan considerable territory with their electronics. Once they find the fish, though, anglers can usually catch them until the water warms in the spring.

### **Patience is Critical in the Winter**

"Patience is critical when fishing for catfish in late winter or early spring," advised Will Temme, who runs the Poor Boys Catfish Tournament in Evansville, Ind. with Brent Jones of Seymour, Ind. "Whenever the water gets around 50 degrees, I'll anchor on some of the

nastiest structure I can find. If I can't find structure like that, I'll concentrate on structure down in deep holes and along ledges. If I mark fish in a certain spot, they may not want to bite at first. I might fish a spot for two hours. If I don't catch a fish, I'll find another spot. As the day wears on, catfish might begin to move around a bit and want to grab something to eat."

***"...we almost have to hit the catfish in the face..."***

When fishing systems with significant current, Temme employs a tactic he calls "back bouncing." He points the bow of the boat into the current, but fishes off the stern. He controls the boat speed to make a controlled drift downriver at slightly less than the current speed.

"Sometimes, catfish are not in the cover, but they're just buried in the mud," Temme explained. "They are not doing much except waiting for something to come by. That's when I like to do back bouncing. For example, if the current is moving at two miles per hour, I'll set the boat to run at one mile per hour. I keep the button on my reel pushed





to feed out line behind the boat. I'll periodically pick my bait off the bottom so it just bounces along. The line stays well back behind the boat while the bait goes over little crevices and hits rocks or other cover."

### Back Bouncing Rig

For back bouncing, Temme fishes a three-way swivel rig. He attaches a single hook to a three- to four-foot leader on a chain swivel, which keeps the line from twisting in the current. Then, he rigs a sinker line about four to five inches long. He uses a sinker light enough for the current to carry it slowly downriver while the bait hovers just over the bottom. Where legal, Temme uses multiple rods. He ties a slip-sinker

This nice January blue was caught by Will Temme's son, Hunter when he was 7. The 65-pounder came from a warm water discharge while anchored on the Ohio River. (Contributed photo)

rig on one rod, a three-way rig with a peg float, which keeps the bait off the bottom, on another line and a three-way rig without a peg float on a third rod.

"A slip-sinker rig keeps the bait right down in the mud," Temme clarified. "The peg float on one three-way rig keeps the bait off the bottom. The rig without the peg float will also keep the bait off the bottom, but not as high."





Sometimes, Temme deploys planer boards, brightly colored floating blocks designed to run either to the left or right when pulled behind a boat. Planer boards spread the lines as far from the boat as one wishes to fish so the angler can search significantly more water.

### **Demon Dragon Rig**

"I like to use planer boards when dragging baits," Temme confirmed. "I always drag my baits upriver. With planer boards, we can spread lines farther away from the boat shadow while still dragging baits right along the bottom. When using planer boards, I use the same basic three-way rig, but instead of using peg floats I'll use a Demon Dragon rig."

Just a Zara Spook topwater bass lure with the hooks removed, a Demon

Kelly Godbolt shows off a blue catfish he caught while fishing at Lake Wateree near Camden, S.C. (Photo by John N. Felsher)

Dragon gives a bait more buoyancy. It also generates wobbling vibrations and rattling sounds when pulled behind the boat. Anglers attach the main line to the eye of the plastic floater and rig a leader for the hook off the back of it.

"A Demon Dragon is like fishing with a peg float, but it keeps the bait higher up off the bottom," Temme detailed. "Some people use a cork or plastic float the same way, but I like that really loud rattle on a Spook. In my opinion, the rattle seems to attract more catfish and makes them hit more aggressively too."



## Bait Placement Matters More than Selection

With bait frequently scarce in late winter or early spring, hungry blue and channel catfish might eat practically anything they can grab without expending too much energy to snatch it. Therefore, use smaller baits such as bite-sized shad or skipjack chunks for tempting lethargic cold-blooded fish that typically don't eat much in cold water. Flatheads prefer live or fresh baits. As the water warms in the spring, anglers can use larger baits. Bait type doesn't matter as much as placement so put any morsels as close to a catfish's whiskers as possible.

"When the water is cold, we almost have to hit the catfish in the face to catch them," Temme quipped. "We need to keep the bait moving to put that morsel in front of as many fish as possible. If the bait is five feet away, the catfish might not go out and grab it in cold water."

On freezing days, hardy anglers who bundle up against the elements and fish with great patience can put some monster catfish in the boat while others sit home by their heaters and fireplaces waiting for spring.



- John N. Felsher

Greg Schlumbrecht shows off a blue catfish he caught by a bridge on a cold day.  
(Photo by John N. Felsher)



# Catfish Profiles

## in Passion: Steve Henderson

by Ron Presley

*Surrounded by fishing every day.*



**S**teve Henderson has been around boats and fishing all of his life. It was inevitable that his early childhood and later his career would include both.

"I started fishing on the Arkansas River from the time I was old enough to walk," recalled Henderson. "My Dad owned a boat dealership and was an avid bass tournament fisherman so I was introduced to competition from an early age."

He recalls the tournament that sealed the deal for him and strengthened his desire to tournament fish as a way to satisfy his competitive nature.

Steve Henderson's love for fishing is why he does what he does. He is shown here in the shop with Bill Yeargin, President and CEO of Correct Craft, SeaArk's parent company.

"I can remember fishing a father/son tournament when I was about 8 years old," said Henderson. "Tournament rules allowed weighing any species of fish. We came in second place with a striper and I won some money and a trophy. From that day forward I





was hooked.”

The boat dealership provided both employment and fishing opportunities for Henderson. He has progressed steadily in his fishing ambitions and his chosen career in the boat business. He now serves as President of SeaArk Boats.

“I have been in the business all my life,” Henderson said. “I started out washing boats and mowing grass. I graduated to rigging, then parts and accessories, then sales, and finally to manager. Travis Boating Center acquired our dealership in 1999. I managed the Little Rock location for 5 years before going to work for SeaArk in early 2003.”

Henderson credits his love for the sport as the reason for choosing his career path. The boat business, a love for fishing, and a drive to compete have served him well.

“My love for fishing is why I do what I do,”

Henderson caught his personal best 55-pound blue while fishing with SeaArk prostaffer Aaron Wheatley on Wheeler Lake in Alabama.

continued Henderson. “What I enjoy most about fishing, in addition to being on the water and enjoying nature, is the fight. When you get that initial hit and the fight begins there is no better feeling. The anticipation of winning the fight and seeing what is on the other end is the ultimate rush.”

Henderson continues to fish bass tournaments at various locations in his home state of Arkansas. And, his job has led him to some fairly exotic destinations to catch bucket list fish in other parts of the world.

“With work I don’t get to fish as much as I





would like to,” reported Henderson. “I still fish bass tournament on the Arkansas River and other lakes around the state. Being in the boat business I have been blessed to be able to catch marlin in Cabo San Lucas, salmon in Alaska, redfish in Venice, LA, catfish with our awesome prostaff, and my favorite Peacock Bass in Brazil. I will fish anywhere anytime for anything if given the chance.”

Henderson loves catching catfish and fishes with SeaArk prostaff as much as he can. He caught his personal best 55-pound blue white fishing with Arron Wheatley on Wheeler Lake in Alabama.

“Where I live in Arkansas, they just don’t grow like they do in other areas,” conceded Henderson. “But every opportunity I get to go to places like Wheeler—I jump at the chance.”

SeaArk Boats is known for its support of the catfish community. They regularly provide boats, prize money and other assistance to various tournaments and catfish related causes. Much of this is due to Steve Henderson.

“I love competition,” stated Henderson. “In fact, this is the reason that we started

The extremely popular Owners Invitational Tournament is a highlight of the year for SeaArk boat owners. It takes a lot of volunteers to pull it off.

supporting catfish tournaments. Back in the early 2000’s, I started to hear of catfish tournaments. I searched hard to find one to support. It was tough until I ran into a guy named Ken Freeman. Ken had big ideas and we supported him with boats and was able to get Suzuki Engines on board. Catfishing has really grown over the years and now it’s not hard to find a tournament to sponsor. Now I get calls daily.”

Being in the boat business means that Henderson is surrounded by fishing every day when he goes to work.

“I am blessed to wake up every day and build a product that people use with family and friends to make memories enjoying the great outdoors,” stated Henderson. “Catfishing is a



big part of our business. Every day is spent building catfish boats, talking to customers, discussing marketing strategies for advertising to the fisherman, considering tournament sponsorships, planning the SeaArk Owner's Tournament, developing future product, and prostaff interaction."

With respect to building boats, his business side is always attentive to the economy, current and future.

***"...every opportunity I get to go to places like Wheeler—I jump at the chance."***

"The economy is always my biggest focus," related Henderson. "Currently the economy is good but downturns are always expected about every seven years and we are in our tenth growth year. So, we need to be sure that we are listening to and designing new product that the customer wants if market share shrinks."

Henderson recognizes conservation as one of the most important issues in the catfishing industry. Additionally, he is pleased to see the formation of the American Catfishing Association (ACA) as a potential unifying

link in accomplishing conservation goals and more.

"Conservation and protecting the environment should be the most important thing to all sportsman," declared Henderson. "We have to preserve and protect for our future and our children's future. The catfish community has grown enough that it needs a voice to support and promote conservation. I am excited that there are organizations popping up like the ACA to help achieve this."

"As an individual, I hope people remember me as a good guy that loved God my family and friends. A person that cared deeply about my work-family and our customers and supported both to the fullest. Finally, I hope I had a small impact on the industry I love."

"The catfishing industry has been great to SeaArk Boats and we plan to continue to support anything that can help it grow and prosper," concluded Henderson. "That support includes tournament fishing, conservation, or anything that sheds a positive light on the sport."

"The people in this industry are unique and some of the best folks that I have had the pleasure of meeting and we are proud to be a part of it."

 - Ron Presley



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# CATFISH CONSERVATION

Trophy Catfish for the Future

by Ron Presley

## ***South Dakota Proposes Strengthening of Flathead Regs***

**Editor's Note:** *News like this gives hope to the catfish community that public input into catfishing regulations can be beneficial. South Dakota is considering changes to flathead regulations based on a public petition. As of this writing a public hearing was scheduled to take place on March 5, 2020.*

**PIERRE, S.D.** – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission has proposed to establish a length limit on flathead catfish. A final determination whether to move forward with the proposed change will occur at their March meeting.

The new rule would allow for one flathead catfish over 28 inches per day on inland waters. The original proposal was made at the November commission meeting and included all waters in the state, including border waters, and originated from the public petition process. At their December meeting, the commission reduced the scope of the change to inland waters only, instead of statewide.

John Lott, Fisheries Chief, informed the commission that a meeting will be taking place in February to discuss catfish management with Iowa and Nebraska. The goal of the meeting will be to develop common regulations for catfish on border waters.





# 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 Pickett/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 Gallipolis (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

Cabela's King Kat Classic - Milford Lake, KS 10/30/20 - 10/31/20

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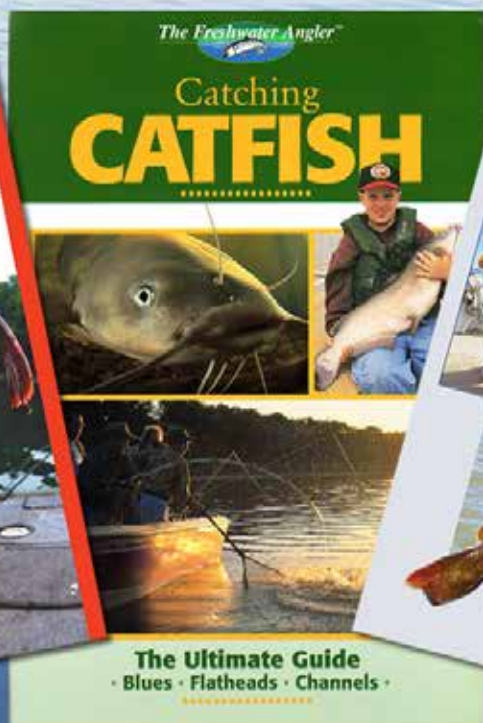
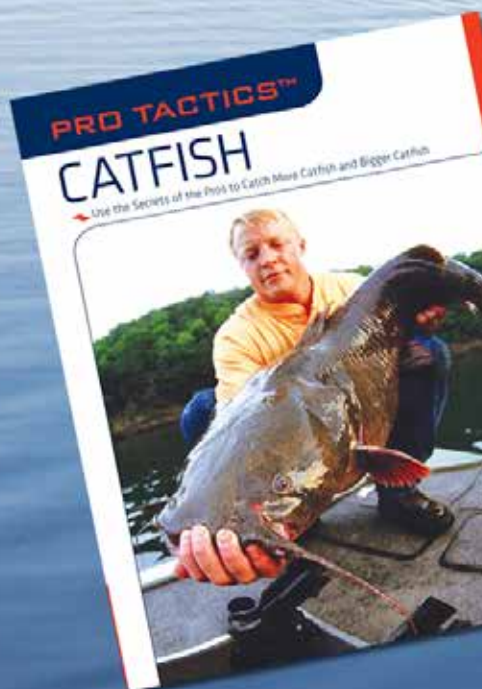
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(Fishermen, check with club/association for exact dates, changes, cancellations and rules.)

MAR 21st	ALABAMA CATFISH SERIES	BONNERS POINT LAKE JORDAN	SERIES
MAR 21st	GET-N-HOOKED	KEYSTONE LAKE	CLUB
MAR 21st	KERR LAKE MADKATTERS	STAUTON VIEW BOAT RAMP	DAY
MAR 21st	INDIANA CATFISH ASSOCIATION	LEAVENWORTH	OPEN
MAR 28th	CABELA'S KING KAT TOURNAMENT TRAIL	MILFORD LAKE	TRAIL
MAR 28th	CATFISH MAFIA	SUNBURY	CLUB
MAR 28th	HOLD'EM HOOK CATFISH TRAIL	INGALLS HARBOR	TRAIL
MAR 28th	SOUTH WEST OHIO CATFISH CLUB	ROCKY FORK LAKE	CLUB
APR 4th	CABELA'S KING KAT TOURNAMENT TRAIL	CUMBERLAND RIVER/OLD HICKORY LAKE	TRAIL
APR 4th	CATFISH CHASERS TOURNAMENT SERIES	PERRY LAKE	CLUB
APR 4th	INDIANA CATFISH ASSOCIATION	TURTLE CREEK	OPEN
APR 4th	SOUTHEASTERN CATFISH CLUB	LAKE WATEREE	CLUB
APR 11th	CABELA'S KING KAT TOURNAMENT TRAIL	LAKE WATEREE	TRAIL
APR 11th	CUMBERLAND RIVER CATMAN'S ASSOC.	OLD CUMBERLAND CITY RD	TRAIL
APR 18th	ALABAMA CATFISH SERIES	HIGGINS FERRY LAKE MITCHELL	SERIES
APR 18th	CABELA'S KING KAT TOURNAMENT TRAIL	PICKWICK/WILSON LAKES	TRAIL
APR 18th	CABELA'S KING KAT TOURNAMENT TRAIL	TUTTLE CREEK	TRAIL
APR 18th	CATFISH MAFIA	CITY ISLAND	BIG MONEY
APR 18th	INDIANA CATFISH ASSOCIATION	WASHINGTON	DAY/POINTS 1
APR 18th	KERR LAKE MADKATTERS	STAUTON VIEW BOAT RAMP	DAY
APR 18th	M&J CATFISH WAR	GORDON BOAT RAMP	TRAIL
APR 18th	MICHIGAN CATFISH ANGLERS TRAIL	ALLEGAN DAM	TRAIL EVENT #1
APR 25th	CABELA'S KING KAT TOURNAMENT TRAIL	LAKE WYLIE	TRAIL
APR 25th	HOLD'EM HOOK CATFISH TRAIL	WILSON LAKE	TRAIL
APR 26th	SOUTH WEST OHIO CATFISH CLUB	ABERDEEN BOAT RAMP	CLUB



# Tournament Results

## BASS PRO/CABELA'S KING KAT

LAKE RAY HUBBARD

### FEBRUARY 14th - 15th

1. Steve Jones/Travis Brown	263.8
2. Daniel Miles/Paul Miles	263.5
3. Eric Horton/Jordan Horton	249.4
4. Jimmy Lane/Jason Farmer	124.9
5. Jerry Izhcomer/Michael Smith	79.6

### BIG FISH

1. Steve Jones/Travis Brown	45.5
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## KERR LAKE MADKATTERS

STAUTON VIEW BOAT RAMP

### FEBRUARY 22nd

1. Team Keatts	75.61
2. Team Stanley	73.73
3. Team J-Bird	73.28
4. Team Anderson	66.76
5. Team Catnasty#2	63.29

## HOLD'em HOOK CATFISH TRAIL

INGALLS HARBOR

### FEBRUARY 29th

1. Chad Bryant/John Hoagland	74.9
2. Daniel Mata	61.8
3. Robin East/Ron Goucher	42.7
4. Daniel Champion/Luke River	39
5. Randy Belew	24

### BIG FISH

1. Chad Bryant/John Hoagland	55.7
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## BASS PRO/CABELA'S KING KAT

LAKE TAWAKONI

### MARCH 7th

1. Mickey Casey/Kelly Lowman	152.3
2. Mark Thompson/John Jamison	148.1
3. Lance Nolan/Chase Nolan	123.6
4. Michael davis	117
5. David Spivey/Lisa Hill	98.2

### BIG FISH

1. Michael Davis	67.8
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**INDIANA CATFISH ASSOCIATION**

TANNERS CREEK

**MARCH 7th**

1. Justin Browning/Micah Kendall	83.2
2. Jeffrey Mitchner/Corey Peterson	63.9
3. Andrew Han/Nick Han/Joey Enoch	39.5
4. Terry/Mary Jane	33.2
5. Cory Cooper/Tommy Connor	30.7

**BIG FISH**

1. Jeffrey Mitchner/Corey Peterson	41.8
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**OLD DOMINION CATFISH CLUB**

HOPEWELL MARINA

**MARCH 7th**

1. Joey Keefe/Howard Staton/Chris Krammes	61.88
2. Christian Moore/Dean Irwin/Joe Custalow	56.97
3. Kenneth Bennett/John Pappas	55.72
4. Rick Ruppe/Cole Ruppe	46.63

**BIG FISH**

1. Kenneth Bennett/John Pappas	49.61
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**SOUTHEASTERN CATFISH CLUB**

FISHING CREEK

**MARCH 7th**

1. Team Kitty Catchers	82.5
2. Team Knot Workin'	64.65
3. Team Whoppy Jaw'd	62.75
4. Team All Slimed Up	60.6
5. Team Zero	60.35

**BIG FISH**

1. Team Whoppy Jaw'd	40.25
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**Editor’s Note:** *Thirty-one-year-old Jenny Simpson was hooked on fishing early in her life. But it wasn’t until her husband took her trophy catfishing that she developed a true passion for the sport. Her catfishing exploits don’t go unnoticed. Ask some of her friends about Jenny and they are likely to respond, “Oh, you mean ‘Queen of the Cumberland.’”*

***I want to tell the world about it.***



I grew up in Murfreesboro TN. where I caught small channel cats fishing with my dad. At the time, I didn’t even know that big trophy cats existed. I always enjoyed fishing and learning from my dad growing up.

My best memory was just being there with my dad fishing. I have moved away from my parents and hardly ever seen them now. When they do come, I always ask him to go out on the boat with me and he won’t. It makes me realize that every time my daddy took me fishing and taught me how to bait my own hook and when to “snatch the pole” to hook the fish was my favorite part. That was what got it all started for me.

I live in Dickson, TN now where I fish often on the Cumberland River. My husband Clay Crafton introduced me to trophy catfishing. I will never forget that first trip.

It was a blue catfish that first got Jenny Simpson hooked on trophy cats. This photo is one of many she has caught since.

We went to Cumberland City, TN and out on the “catwalk” where he taught me how to catch skipjack. We then found a good spot a little way down where we set up and fished from the bank.

We had been sitting there for about 15 minutes when I got a bite. I cranked down and reeled in a 25-pound blue. At that moment I was hooked! The feelings I had at that moment were indescribable. I knew this is exactly what I wanted to do and it could only go up from here.

Until that day I had no idea that catfish





got that big. I thought 25 pounds was huge! Not knowing until years later down the line that I'd be catching 50-pounders regularly. My personal best blue is 64 pounds and my personal best flathead is 54 pounds. My goal for 2020 is to break the state record for flathead and I won't stop until I do.

That trip was a learning lesson for sure. I learned things like what an 8/0 circle hook was, how to catch my own bait, how to cut the bait and bait my own hook. Everything about that trip stood out to me. It was very educational. That trip helped me become the fisherman I am today.

By taking me fishing and introducing me to trophy catfishing Clay taught me everything I needed to know to take off on my own. Had it not been for that trip I wouldn't be a part of the only all-female team in my area.

My teammate is Brittany Jackson. We fish local tournaments and road tournaments too. We fished the Chick Fight Tournament on Wheeler last year. It was that tournament when we started using the name "Whisker Sisters."

Flatheads hold a special place in Jenny's heart. In fact, her fishing goal for 2020 is to catch the state record.

Now, given the fishing knowledge I have learned I can pass it on to my kids and so many others. I have talked to and taught them what they need to know to become successful in this wonderful sport of catfishing. Ninety-five percent of the time when I hit the water my 5-year-old is right there with me. My kids love fishing.

My favorite times on the water is with my family, and hearing my daughter Kaylee telling me she wants to grow up and be like mommy catching big fish. It makes me very proud.

Everything about fishing is important to me. It's time that I can spend with my family passing on my knowledge and love for the sport to my kids and maybe one day they could pass on to their kids.

Every day I have people looking at my fish pictures and they tell me they want to go





fishing with me. My response is always the same. "I'm always ready so when you are ready, we will go."

There are several amazing anglers out there so it's hard to narrow it down to who I look up to. My hero would be, all those anglers that get out in the rain, sleet, snow, or sun, just like I do, and do exactly what we all love to do.

Every time I go fishing is memorable, because not every fishing trip is the same. Every time I go fishing, I make new memories. The water is my "home away from home" and I could sit out there for hours (and I have), and catch 5 small fish and be just as happy as if I caught one giant.

Don't get me wrong, I'm a trophy catfisher! The feeling I get when I see my rod tip touch the water from a big blue or that soft, slow pull from a giant flathead is unexplainable.

Team Whisker Sisters, Jenny Simpson and Brittany Jackson, are shown here following the 2019 King of the Cumberland Tournament which they won.

Catching trophy catfish is what I love, but I'm just as happy catching the small ones as I am the big ones.

If it had not been for that first trip with Clay and that 25-pound blue, I wouldn't have the title, "Queens of the Cumberland," and I wouldn't be here today writing this story. I catfish because it's what I love to do. Catfishing is my drug and I'm addicted, and I want to tell the world about it.

 - Jenny Simpson



***See ya' next time.***

