

## Cobia – The One and Only

Most people are intrigued by the unusual, and fishermen are no exception. There is something special about Cobia, *Rachycentron canadum*, also known as ling or lemon-fish, that gets an angler's heart pounding. Although quite common in the northern Gulf from late spring through early fall, the unusual fish is always viewed as a reward from the sea when one is landed. Another reason for excitement is it's excellent table fare. The flesh of the Cobia is white, flaky and mild flavored, making it a desirable ingredient in many fish recipes.

Cobia are not only an unusual looking fish, but also the only living species in their family and they have no close relatives. Found almost worldwide in tropical, subtropical and warm temperate waters, they are open-water fish, but tend to locate around pilings, buoys or drifting objects. They are often found around floating objects and may rise and position themselves under boats or make inquisitive cruises around boats. Cobias also appear to be attracted to noise. They range from saline bays inshore to offshore waters 4,000 feet deep. They are found over mud, sand and gravel bottoms, over coral reefs and in mangrove sloughs.

In the Gulf of Mexico, Cobia winter in the Florida Keys and move north and west along the Gulf coast to Louisiana and Texas in the spring. The Cobia fishery reflects these migratory habits. In south Florida, Cobia are fished mostly in the winter. Off of Louisiana, the fishery takes place in spring and summer. Some research indicates that Cobia also move offshore to deeper waters during cooler months.

Cobia grow rapidly, reaching 7 inches in a matter of months and 13 to 15 inches by one year old. Cobia are known to live at least 10 years and may reach 15 years of age. The world record for rod-and-reel-caught Cobia is a 135 pounder from Australia, although 150-pound fish have been reported.

Cobia can be very aggressive feeders, often taken by anglers using methods from trolling to bottom fishing. However, they can be extremely tight-lipped, with many anglers sharing stories of frustration when Cobia are seen, are dropped baited offerings, only to swim away in disinterest. A food habits study done in the lower Chesapeake Bay area found 28 different species of animals in the 78 Cobia stomachs examined, but



Cobia. Photo credit: Rex Caffey

swimming crabs were by far the number one item in volume and number, making up 78 percent of Cobia diet.

For additional information on Cobia visit: [www.seagrantfish.lsu.edu/resources/factsheets/cobia.htm](http://www.seagrantfish.lsu.edu/resources/factsheets/cobia.htm).

- Kevin Savoie

### **Stop, Drop & a Rolling Boil**

Visit Louisiana Sea Grant's YouTube page to see a new video about how to best eliminate listeria and salmonella in your boiled shrimp. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0U-TwEF2PM&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0U-TwEF2PM&feature=youtu.be)

### **Excellence in Outdoor Communications**

The Louisiana Outdoor Writers Association (LOWA) honored members during the group's 68th annual conference, Aug. 9-10 in Lafayette. The honorees were selected for awards in the association's 2013 Excellence in Craft (EIC) competition.

The EIC contest, which recognizes excellence within various categories of outdoor-related communications, has been held continuously since 1945. Member entries for the 2013 competition were judged by members of the Outdoor Writers of Ohio.

LOWA membership includes newspaper and magazine writers, editors, columnists, photographers, radio and television broadcast journalists, wildlife artists, Internet journalists, book authors, videographers and public relations specialists.

For more detailed information about the competition or LOWA, visit [www.laoutdoorwriters.com](http://www.laoutdoorwriters.com). The winners and sponsors of the 2013 EIC competition by category:

#### **Magazine Short Feature (less than 1000 words)**

1st Jerald Horst: *His Mom Made Him Do It*

2nd Deborah Burst: *Why do I do this?*

3rd Deborah Burst: *The Lovit Traildogs*

\*Co-Sponsors: Louisiana Forestry Association and Louisiana Association of Professional Biologists

#### **Magazine Regular Feature (more than 1,000 words)**

1st Terry Jones: *Pass a Good Time*

2nd Terry Jones: *Highway Robbery*

3rd John Flores: *Scout's Promise*

\*Sponsor: Louisiana Charter Boat Association

#### **Newspaper Article**

1st Lyle Johnson: *Getting Ready*

2nd Glynn Harris: *White River Smacks of March Madness*

3rd Chris Holmes: *Razorbacks and Diamondbacks*

\*Sponsor: Louisiana Sportsman Magazine

#### **Broadcast (radio or television)**

1st John Jackson: Louisiana Outdoor Adventures – *Louisiana Oysters*

2nd John Jackson: Louisiana Outdoor Adventures – *Capt. Wendy Billiot*

3rd Gary Krouse: Sola TV – *Saline Lake*

\*Sponsor: National Wild Turkey Federation – Louisiana Chapter

### Electronic Media

1st Wendy Billiot: *Plastic Bottles and Prehistoric Fish*

2nd John Flores: *The Cherubim of Grosse Savanne*

3rd Lyle Johnson: *Choot Em!*

\*Sponsor: CCA Louisiana

### Black and White Still Photograph

1st Glynn Harris: *Cautious Optimism*

2nd John Flores: *Close Encounter of the Bear Kind*

3rd John Flores: *The Blind View*

\*Sponsor: General Motors

### Color Still Photograph

1st John Flores: *Roseatte Spoonbills*

2nd Butch Thurmond: *Girl and Bream*

3rd John Flores: *Diligence and Honor*

\*Sponsor: Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation

## LOUISIANA REGULATIONS

### Louisiana Oyster Seasons

The following opening dates were set for the upcoming oyster season:

- Wednesday, Sept. 4, 2013 - the Little Lake, Barataria Bay, Deep Lake, Lake Tambour, and Vermilion/East and West Cote Blanche/Atchafalaya Bay Public Oyster Seed Grounds opened at one-half hour before sunrise.
- Tuesday, Oct. 15, 2013 - all remaining public oyster seed grounds and reservations, including Lake Borgne, Sister Lake, Lake Mechant, the Lake Machias/Fortuna sacking-only area and the Bay Long sacking-only area, will open at one-half hour before sunrise.
- Friday, Nov. 1, 2013 - the oyster season in the west cove portion of the Calcasieu Lake Public Oyster Area (DHH Harvest Area 30) will open at one-half hour before sunrise. The sack limit during this time period is set at 10 sacks per person, per vessel, per day.

The following areas will remain closed for the 2013/2014 oyster season:

- Bay Gardene Public Oyster Seed Reservation
- Bay Junop Public Oyster Seed Reservation
- Lake Chien and Lake Felicity Public Oyster Seed Grounds
- 2011 clutch plants in Mississippi Sound and California Bay

## Lagniappe Fisheries Newsletter

Editor: Julie Anderson

Web coordinator: Melissa Castleberry

Copy editor: Roy Kron

Layout/design: Jessica Schexnayder

- 2012 cultch plants in Hackberry Bay, Sister Lake, Lake Fortuna and Bay Crab
- 2013 cultch plants in 3-Mile Pass and Drum Bay
- The east side of the Calcasieu Lake Public Oyster Area (LDHH Harvest Area 29)
- Sabine Lake Public Oyster Area

Closure dates will be determined by LDWF secretary Robert Barham on an “as needed” basis, based on biological and harvest data, or if enforcement issues are encountered. The secretary is also authorized to take emergency action to reopen areas previously closed if the threat to the resource has ended, and to open areas if substantial oyster resources are located.

Public notice of any opening, delay or closure of a season will be provided at least 72 hours prior to such action, unless such closure is ordered by the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals for public health concerns.

### **Recreational Offshore Landing Permit**

In an effort to capture the most comprehensive data possible, the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission approved measures to add additional species to the free, required offshore landing permit. The permit is required for all anglers, including anglers not normally required to possess a recreational fishing license, possessing tunas, billfish, swordfish, amberjacks, groupers and snappers and hinds. This permit is now also required for the possession of gray snapper, wahoo, cobia and dolphin.

To make the process as easy as possible for anglers the commission also removed the permit reporting requirement for yellowfin tuna. The recommendations also remove the permit requirement for any person on a paid trip aboard a charter vessel.

The permit is available at no cost to the public. To obtain a Recreational Offshore Landings Permit visit: <http://rolp.wlf.la.gov/Permit/Apply>

## **GULF OF MEXICO REGULATIONS**

### **New Bag Limit for Vermilion Snapper, the Annual Catch Limit for Yellowtail Snapper, and the Elimination of the Reef Fish Venting Tool Requirement**

NOAA Fisheries announces a final rule that establishes a bag limit for vermilion snapper within the reef fish aggregate bag limit, sets the annual catch limit for yellowtail snapper, and eliminates the reef fish venting tool requirement. The final rule was effective Sept. 3, 2013.

#### *Vermilion snapper*

The rule sets a 10-vermilion snapper bag limit within the 20-fish aggregate reef fish bag limit (see box below). Vermilion snapper is not overfished (the population is healthy) or undergoing overfishing (catch rates are not too high). However, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council received input from some fishermen that the vermilion snapper population may be declining. In addition, recreational landings have been increasing in recent years and could contribute to the vermilion snapper annual catch limit being met before the end of the fishing year. This would result in a closure of vermilion snapper fishing. To minimize the risk of this occurring, the council recommended a 10-fish vermilion snapper bag limit within the 20-fish aggregate reef fish bag limit.

*Yellowtail snapper*

The rule increases the Gulf of Mexico yellowtail snapper annual catch limit from 725,000 pounds to 901,125 pounds. A recent assessment determined the yellowtail snapper population is considered to be healthy. Therefore, the council recommended the annual catch limit be increased.

*Reef fish venting tool requirement*

The rule eliminates the requirement to use venting tools when fishing for reef fish. Some scientific studies have questioned the usefulness of venting tools in preventing barotrauma in fish, particularly those caught in deep waters. Barotrauma is damage caused by a quick change in pressure when fish are brought to the surface. In addition, some fish caught in shallow waters may not need to be vented, and attempts at venting may cause damage to fish by improper venting and increased handling times. Finally, the current requirement interferes with using other devices such as fish descenders. These devices can be used by fishermen to return fish back to depth. Because of these factors, the council recommended the venting tool requirement be rescinded.

*Other information*

This bulletin serves as a Small Entity Compliance Guide, complying with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996. This bulletin provides only a summary of the information about the rule. Discrepancies between this bulletin and the rule as published in the *Federal Register* will be resolved in favor of the *Federal Register*.

Copies of the final rule are available by contacting NOAA Fisheries' Southeast Regional Office at 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Fla. 33701, or by downloading it off the Southeast Regional Office's Web site for reef fish at

[http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/gulf\\_fisheries/reef\\_fish/2013/yt\\_vs\\_framework/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2013/yt_vs_framework/index.html) once it has published.

## **Exempted Fishing Permit for a Pilot Study by Gulf of Mexico Headboats Evaluating an Allocation-Based Management System**

NOAA Fisheries has issued an exempted fishing permit (EFP) to the Gulf of Mexico Headboat Cooperative. The cooperative consists of headboat owners/captains. The cooperative intends to evaluate the efficiency of an allocation-based management system, using a limited number of headboats in a two-year pilot study.

This study, to be conducted in the Gulf of Mexico, is intended to (1) assess whether such a system can better achieve conservation goals established in the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico, (2) evaluate the effectiveness of a more timely electronic data reporting system, and (3) evaluate the potential social and economic benefits of an alternative management strategy for the headboat segment of the recreational fishing sector within the Gulf of Mexico reef fish fishery.

The cooperative requested an EFP that authorizes their members to harvest a specific amount of red snapper and gag at any time during the 2014 and 2015 fishing years. Their allocation is based on the cooperative participants' 2011 aggregate landings of red snapper and gag as a percentage of the total landings in that year for each species. Those percentages were applied to the expected red snapper and gag recreational catches allowed for 2014 and 2015.

The cooperative was allocated 148,089 pounds whole weight (ww) for red snapper, based on the proposed red snapper recreational catch of 5.39 million pounds ww. The cooperative was also allocated 42,114 pounds gutted weight (gw) of gag, based on the current gag recreational catch of 1.519 mp gw. These weights will be translated into numbers of fish.

NOAA Fisheries has authorized a maximum of 20 headboats to participate in the cooperative. The cooperative currently consists of 11 headboats, and it may add additional vessels before the 2014 fishing year begins.

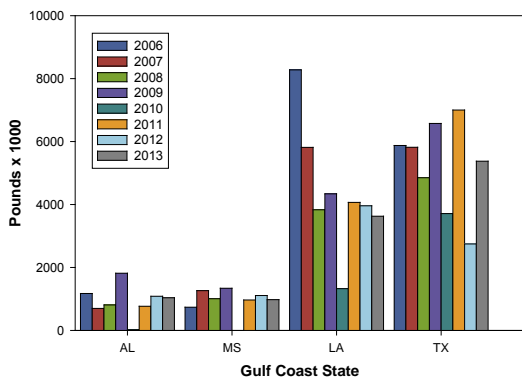
All vessels in the program will be required to purchase, install, activate, and maintain a Vessel Monitoring System. A participating captain will “hail out” as the vessel leaves the dock, and “hail in” at least one hour prior to landing, alerting law enforcement and port agents to his/her return. Landings will be reported at the end of the trip using electronic reporting software approved by NOAA Fisheries, and allocations will be monitored through the NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office’s Catch Share Program Web site.

Academic researchers, in collaboration with the cooperative, intend to conduct a socio-economic study of the anticipated effects of the change in headboat cooperative management using currently available data sources. Simultaneously, they will develop additional survey instruments to gather economic data for an analysis of the effects of the pilot project on cooperative vessels after its first and second years. Data collection will emphasize impacts of the pilot project.

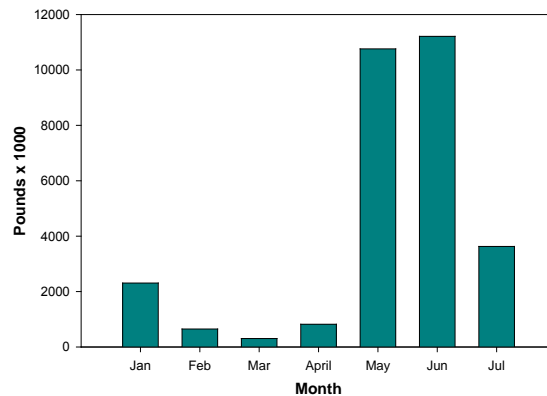
## Louisiana Shrimp Watch

Louisiana specific data portrayed in the graphics are selected from preliminary data posted by NOAA on its website. All data portrayed are subject to final revision and approval by NOAA. Shrimp landings are ex-vessel prices, inclusive of all species harvested. Missing, inadequate or withheld reports are portrayed as “zero” in these graphics. Price graphics reflect central Gulf states only (Texas and Florida are reported independently). For more information, please refer to: [www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st1/market\\_news/index.html](http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st1/market_news/index.html).

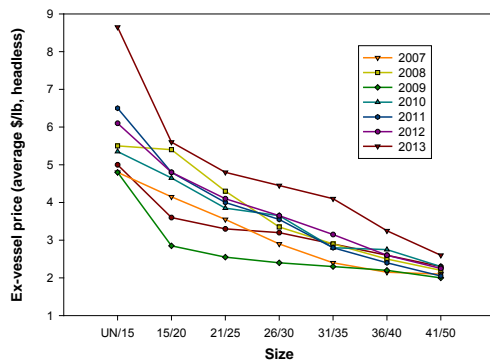
July Shrimp Harvest



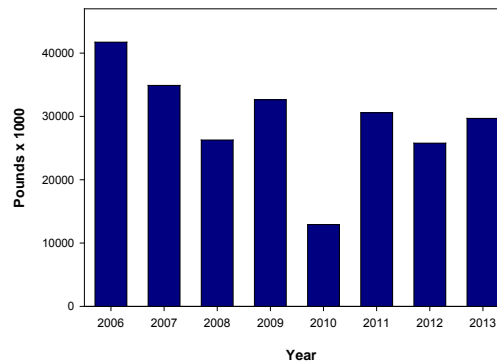
Louisiana 2013 Shrimp Harvest



July 2013 Northern GoM Shrimp Prices



Louisiana Year to Date Shrimp Harvest January-July



## The Gumbo Pot

Recipe courtesy of *Louisiana Kitchen & Culture* and the *Passionate Vegetable Cookbook* by Suzanne Landry. For more recipes or to subscribe to their magazine or free newsletter, please visit <http://louisiana.kitchenandculture.com/>

### ***Blackened Red Snapper with Corn Relish***

#### Ingredients:

4 red snapper filets, patted dry

#### Seasoning mix:

1/2 teaspoon thyme  
 1/2 teaspoon oregano  
 1/2 teaspoon cayenne  
 1/2 teaspoon paprika  
 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper  
 1 teaspoon onion powder  
 1 teaspoon organic cornstarch or arrowroot

#### Relish:

1/4 cup fresh or frozen corn  
 1 cup tomatoes, coarsely chopped  
 1 avocado, cubed  
 1/4 cup red onion, minced  
 1/4 cup cilantro, chopped  
 2 cloves garlic, minced  
 2 limes (one for garnish, one for juicing)  
 1/2 teaspoon salt



Photo credit: Louisiana Kitchen & Culture

**Method:** To make relish, combine corn, tomatoes, avocado, onion, cilantro, garlic, lime juice and salt and refrigerate until ready to serve. To make seasoning, combine all the ingredients in a small bowl and transfer to plate. Press both sides of filets in mixture and set aside. Preheat oil in a medium sized frying pan on high heat. Test oil for readiness by dropping a little seasoning in the pan. If it begins to sizzle immediately, it is ready. Place a few filets slowly into the oil and fry on both sides until fish is tender and flaky. Serve with relish and lime wedges.

If you have a favorite seafood recipe that you would like to share, please send it to Julie Anderson [janderson@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:janderson@agcenter.lsu.edu) for inclusion in future issues.



For more information, contact your local extension agent:



**Thu Bui** – Assistant Extension Agent, Fisheries  
St. Mary, Iberia, and Vermilion Parishes  
St. Mary Parish Court House  
500 Main Street Rm. 314  
Franklin, LA 70538-6199  
Phone: (337) 828-4100, ext. 300  
Fax: (337) 828-0616  
tbui@agcenter.lsu.edu

**Carol D. Franze** – Associate Area Agent  
Southeast Region  
21549 Old Covington Hwy  
Hammond, LA 70403  
Phone: (985) 543-4129  
cfranze@agcenter.lsu.edu

**Albert 'Rusty' Gaudé** – Area Agent, Fisheries  
Jefferson, Orleans, St. Charles and St. John Parishes  
Phone: (504) 433-3664  
agaude@agctr.lsu.edu

**Twyla Herrington** – Associate Area Agent, Plaquemines Parish  
479 F. Edward Hebert Blvd., Suite 201  
Belle Chasse, LA 70037  
Phone: (504) 433-3664  
Fax: (504) 392-2448  
therrington@agcenter.lsu.edu

**Thomas Hymel** – Watershed Educator  
Iberia, St. Martin, Lafayette, Vermilion,  
St. Landry, & Avoyelles Parishes  
Phone: (337) 276-5527  
thymel@agctr.lsu.edu

**Alan Matherne** – Area Agent (Fisheries & Coastal Issues)  
Terrebonne, Lafourche, and Assumption Parishes  
511 Roussell Street  
Houma, LA 70360  
Phone: (985) 873-6495  
amatherne@agcenter.lsu.edu

**Kevin Savoie** – Area Agent (Southwest Region)  
Natural Resources-Fisheries  
Phone: (337) 475-8812  
ksavoie@agctr.lsu.edu

**Mark Shirley** – Area Agent (Aquaculture & Coastal Resources)  
Jefferson Davis, Vermilion, Acadia, St. Landry, Evangeline,  
Cameron, Calcasieu, Lafayette, Beauregard, & Allen Parishes  
Phone: (337) 898-4335  
mshirley@agctr.lsu.edu

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We would like to hear from you! Please contact us regarding fishery questions, comments or concerns you would like to see covered in the Lagniappe. Anyone interested in submitting information, such as articles, editorials or photographs pertaining to fishing or fisheries management is encouraged to do so.

**Please contact Lagniappe editor Julie Anderson at [janderson@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:janderson@agcenter.lsu.edu).**

**Julie A. Anderson**  
Assistant Professor  
LSU Agcenter & Louisiana Sea Grant  
114 RNR Building  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
Phone: 225-578-0771  
Fax: 225-578-4227  
[janderson@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:janderson@agcenter.lsu.edu)