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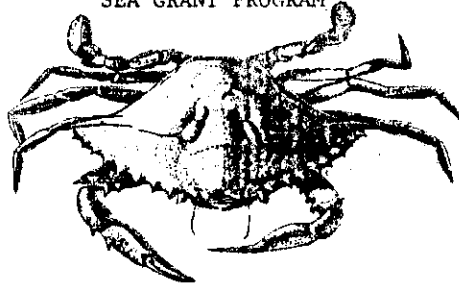
After this newsletter went to press I received a supply of the new 170 page U.S. Coast Guard Navigation Rules for vessels. This is a real fine book and covers everything from putt-putt outboard to ocean liners. I can send one copy per person free. Just call my office or drop me a line.

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SEA GRANT PROGRAM



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LAGNIAPPE

TO CATCH A SNAPPER

For a good many years the most desirable offshore fish has been the red snapper. However if you've made any deep sea fishing trips lately you've probably noticed that there are very few to be had.

The dramatic decline of the red snapper catch off of our coast has been the subject of a lot of arguments recently. Most people seem to feel that the reason for it has been the snapper boats out of Florida.

Recently however, E. L. Nakamura of the National Marine Fisheries Service in Panama City, Florida, completed a study which indicates that not all the guess work has been right so far. There can be many reasons for the decline of a fishery many of which are not fully understood. However, if over-fishing is the cause here, the study seems to indicate that perhaps the sport fishermen is more of a problem than the commercial snapper boats are.

According to this study from 1965 to 1970 sport fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico caught 2 to 3 times as many snappers and groupers as did the commercial boats. This might seem a bit unreasonable until one considers that in 1973 there were 348,595 private sports boats fishing the open Gulf.

While all the facts are probably not in yet, these figures are worth considering in the great debate over the decline of the red snapper.

HELP IN HABITAT IMPROVEMENT OFFERED

The Department of Wildlife and Fisheries has a program available offering assistance and recommendations for improving habitat for increased production of wildlife and fish on private lands. This is of special importance for land owners and trappers.

This technical assistance is free and can be requested of any of the department's eight district offices in Minden, Monroe, Alexandria, Ferriday, Lake Charles, Opelousas, Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

The game division will advise on wildlife and waterfowl, the fish division on fish, especially lakes and farm ponds and the refuge division will help on fur bearers and alligators.

The service is available for all types of land and water including marsh lands.

UP TO YOUR _____ IN ALLIGATORS?

One question that is put to me wherever I go in the state is "When will the gator season open here?" There has been an alligator season in southwestern Louisiana every year but one since 1972 and the word of the success over there keeps spreading.

The success of the Louisiana alligator management program is due entirely to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. The department began intensive alligator research in 1959 to learn more about the biology of the alligator and in 1965 they closed the whole state to alligator hunting since the regulations then in effect were not based on good scientific evidence.

In 1972, the first of the present controlled harvest seasons was opened. In the area to be opened, the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries made transects by helicopter and counted the number of alligator nests. Previous research had shown that 5 % of the total population would be nesting females, so this gave them a pretty accurate count. The number of gators was counted for each different type of marsh and a harvest allotment of one alligator per 100 acres of fresh marsh, one gator per 150 acres of intermediate marsh, one gator per 700 acres of brackish marsh and no gators in salt marsh.

Not everyone was allowed to go out and hunt alligators however. The hunt had to be controlled to prevent over-hunting. In order to be issued an alligator-hunting license, an applicant had to show proof of ownership or signed notarized permission from the land owner. He was then issued tags based on the number of acres he controlled and on the type of marsh he had.

Since the initial hunt in Cameron and Calcasieu Parishes, Vermillion parish has been added to the hunting area. Plans are now in the works to extend the plan over the whole coast of Louisiana. The problem is that the U.S. Department of Interior still lists the alligator as an endangered species. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries has had a petition in to the Interior Department to delist the gator from the endangered species list since April 1976. At the present time, they feel that very likely it will be delisted near the end of this year. If this happens soon enough, the Department will set up controlled alligator hunts in other areas across the coast.

However, not all areas of the coast will get a season. Areas where there is too much poaching and not enough land owner co-operation will probably not get a season right away. Also the original formula for number of acres required per alligator tag will vary somewhat from the formula given above, depending on the area.

Another important point to consider is that, the days of an open season with unregulated night-lighting are over and any future open seasons will be under controlled conditions.

FISH TASTE TESTS

In recent years there has been a growing shortage of fresh fish for the retail fish markets in the New Orleans area. This is especially true for such highly prized fish as speckled trout. However, Louisiana has very large quantities of fish such as croaker and mullet which are not being harvested and sold. A common belief is that these fish are not as good tasting as our redfish and trout.

In 1975, the Mississippi Extension Service conducted a taste test of four kinds of fish, speckled trout, flounder, croaker and mullet, to see if there really was a big difference in the taste of these fish. The researchers used both people from the coastal area who are used to eating fish and people from inland areas, as taste-testers. The four kinds of fish were labeled only with numbers so the testers didn't know what they were eating.

The results were that most people who tasted the fish really couldn't taste much difference between them. The croaker and flounder tied for the best with speckled trout as third and mullet as fourth, however, there was very little difference between them with all being considered good. The croaker came in with the most honors being listed as sweetest, smoothest, most pleasant.

The mullet and speckled trout tied for having the least fresh tast. Source: Mississippi Sea Grant Advisory Service Publication 941 D.Etzold, R. Stevens, C. Veal.

ARE YOU EXEMPT FROM SALES TAXES?

In 1975 the Louisiana State Legislature passed a bill which makes owner-operators exempt from the payment of state sales taxes on any purchase of equipment or supplies used in their commercial fishing operation. This exemption is called "a tax exemption number" by commercial fishermen and it applies not only to all purchases of supplies and equipment but also to all repairs on this equipment including the vessel itself. It also exempts the fishermen from state sales taxes on diesel fuel and lubricant such as oil for the vessel.

The application for this exemption can be gotten from the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries at 400 Royal Street, New Orleans, 70130 or you can call or write me at my office and I'll sent you one. All you have to do is fill out the short, easy-to-do application and send it with xerox copies of your fishing license and either your coast Guard documentation papers or your boat number registration card and you will get an exemption certificate number. There is no charge or fee and the arrangement is very simple and easy.

This can be of tremendous benefit to the Fisherman because often half or more of what he earns is reinvested back as expenses and not having to pay state sales taxes on this amount could save a nice little chunk of money.

SEAFOOD RECIPIES

For those of you who like to cook or have to cook---I've just gotten in a series of eighteen seafood recipes on 3x5-inch cards. These are especially good recipes since they are all for our local Gulf seafoods and not for those out-of-state seafoods that we never see. If you would like a packet of these recipes, contact me at my Gretna office.

REFUGE REGULATIONS

J. Burton Angelle, secretary of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries announced the fishing regulations for the following refuges and wildlife management areas: Rockefeller, State, Marsh Island, Pointe au Chien, and Salvador.

Shrimp may be taken by cast net only, 100 pounds maximum per boat during open season inside and 10 pounds during closed season. Size counts must meet open season regulations.

Oysters may be taken from natural reefs, but must be shucked there and the shells thrown back on reef. A maximum of one gallon per boat is allowed.

Fish may be taken by rod and reel or hand line and can't be sold commercially. Crabs may be taken only by hand lines or sets and no lines can remain overnight.

Crawfish can be taken in unrestricted areas at no more than 100 lbs. per boat or group and traps can't be set overnight.

Everything harvested can only be taken in the daytime and nothing may be sold.

RACOONS IN LOUISIANA

The Louisiana coon is an important part of the fur trapping industry in this state. Last year coon brought extremely high prices and prices are still expected to rise more in the future.

There were two types of racoons in the state based on fur quality. The north Louisiana or silver coon has a darker pelt and is much more valuable than the coastal or marsh coon. In fact, the color difference is so noticeable that the north Louisiana coon is often called a black coon and the coastal marsh Louisiana coon is called a red coon. Last year the north Louisiana coon brought an average of \$14 per hide and marsh coon only \$6 apiece.

In the fur trade the Louisiana coon is called a "coat coon". This is because the "Knap" or length of the fur is short. Racoons from the northern part of the United States are called trim coons because the fur is 2 to 3 times as long and is too bulky to use for coats, however they make excellent trim.

OUTBOARD MOTOR THEFT

One of the major problems to commercial and sport fishermen who use outboard motors is motor theft. It has been estimated that 200,000 outboards are stolen yearly in the U.S.

While there is almost no way to stop a truly determined thief who has a lot of time to do the job, the harder you make it for him, the more likely that he will pass you up for easier pickings.

If you are interested in steps you can take to prevent such theft call me at my office in Gretna and I'll fill you in.

THE GUMBO POT

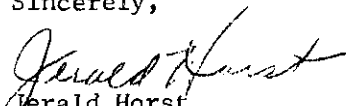
Marinated Crab Salad

- 2 doz. boiled crabs
- (or 2 lbs. picked crabmeat)
- 1 8oz bottle Italian Dressing
- 1/3 cup minced parsley
- 2 cloves pressed Garlic
- 2 cup green olives
- 1/2 cup black olives
- 2 lemons (cut up)
- 1 stalk celery (sliced)
- 1 bell pepper (thin sliced)
- 2 or 3 carrots (sliced)
- 1/3 cup vinegar
- 1 cup olive oil
- 1 can artchoke hearts

Boil and clean crabs, crack claws leaving tips on. Mix vinegar, olive oil and Italian dressing and pour over crabmeat. Then add all the other ingredients and mix well. Marinate covered in refrigerator for at least 12 hours. Stir occasionally. Makes about one gallon and serves 12 to 15 people.

I'd like to thank Claire Loverde for this delightful prize-winning recipe. The taste is out of this world.

Sincerely,


 Gerald Horst
 Asst. Area Agent (Fisheries)
 Orleans, Jefferson, St. Charles