

# *Lagniappe*



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December 1, 2004 Volume 28, No. 12

## LAST CHANCE FOR THE NEWSLETTER

If you did not change your *Lagniappe* Fisheries Newsletter subscription to e-mail (free) or send in the subscription form and \$10 last month, this will be your last newsletter. Budget problems have forced this action.

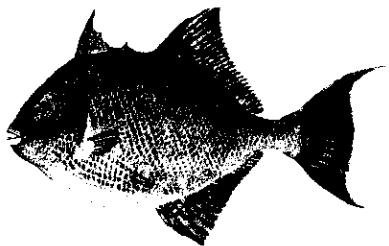
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## TWO NEW SPECIES FOR FISH RECORDS PROGRAM

The Louisiana Fish Records Program will be larger by two species after January 1, 2005. One species added is an offshore fish, the gray triggerfish, *Balistes capriscus*. Snapper/grouper fishermen have found the gray triggerfish to be delicious tablefare and an increasing number of anglers are targeting them. The secret is to use small J-hooks and fresh bait.

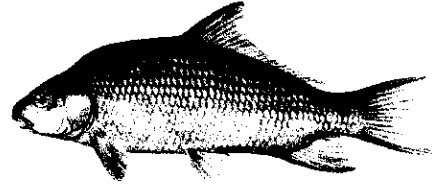


The gray triggerfish is the most common member of its family in the northern Gulf of Mexico. Although they are usually smaller than 4 pounds and top out at less than 10 pounds, their small size is made up for by their succulent flesh and great numbers. They are strong fighters for their size, with a flattened body shape that is similar to bluegills. Like bluegills, they fight by running in large circles, turning their bodies against the angle of retrieve.



Their body color is a drab gray overall and they are covered by a sandpaper-like skin. They have small chisel-like mouths, filled with powerful teeth used to scrape off and eat shelled animals like barnacles and mussels. They are an ideal light tackle fish.

The freshwater representative chosen by the Fish Records Committee is the smallmouth buffalo, *Ictiobus bubalis*. This fish and its close first cousin, the bigmouth buffalo, are some of the heavy-weight bruisers of freshwater. The bigmouth buffalo can reach 100 pounds and the smallmouth can grow to 50 pounds. Both, along with the flathead (yellow) catfish and blue catfish, can be called freshwater big game fish.



In spite of being more prone to take a baited hook than its bigmouth cousin, it has not been a species included in the Louisiana Fish Records Program until now. Its north and central Louisiana nickname "razorback", refers to its highly arched back. In color, the smallmouth buffalo is silvery, with an iridescent green sheen that becomes more pronounced on its back.

It has a sweet white flesh, which unfortunately contains many small Y-shaped bones. In north Louisiana, preparation methods to deal with the bones are numerous. Simplest is either thin-slicing the flesh or scoring each piece with numerous parallel cuts so that the hot cooking oil crystallizes the small bones when fried. "Buffalo ribs" are also considered a delicacy, as the flesh near the ribs has few bones.

Committee chairman Bill Ford says "the new categories were added to create more opportunity for the average angler to be in the record book. In addition to these two species", he adds "anglers still have a lots of opportunities to get their names in the record books for other species, since some species do not have ten entries in them." For these, any size fish entered will qualify for the top ten.

Examples of freshwater fish that don't have the full ten entries include bluegill, flathead (yellow) catfish, channel catfish, white crappie, freshwater drum (gaspergou), and alligator gar. Saltwater species include blue runner (hardtail), gafftopsail catfish, yellowfin grouper, yellowedge grouper, little tunny (bonito), spot, and southern stingray.

Separate categories are kept for fish caught by fly rod and even more openings exist in these categories. Entry of a fish into the Fish Records Program costs \$25. Updated fish records are maintained on three websites: [rodreel.com/lafishrecords](http://rodreel.com/lafishrecords), [Louisianasportsman.com/fishrecords](http://Louisianasportsman.com/fishrecords) and [laoutdoors.com/fishrecords](http://laoutdoors.com/fishrecords).

A paper copy of the records can be obtained by sending a check for \$5 to LOWA Fish Records, P O Box 8571, Clinton, LA 70722-8571. Ford can be contacted at 225/719-1486 or at [fishrecords@yahoo.com](mailto:fishrecords@yahoo.com). The Louisiana Fish Records Program is maintained by the Louisiana Outdoor Writers Association.

## SHRIMP SEMINAR REMINDER

This is a reminder about the Shrimp Management Seminar scheduled from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 1, by the LSU AgCenter's Sea Grant Marine Extension Program and the National Fisherman Magazine. The schedule is as follows:

1:00 pm. The Draft Shrimp Business Options Paper: Constituent Comments and Future Plans. John Ward and Gordon Helm, NOAA Fisheries

2:00 pm. Challenges and Opportunities: View from the State Level—Texas. Robin Riechers, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

2:40 pm. Challenges and Opportunities: View from the State Level—Alabama, Vernon Minton, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

3:20 pm. Challenges and Opportunities: View from the State Level—Louisiana. John Roussel, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

The seminars are held in conjunction with the International Workboat Show at the Ernest M. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans. Attendance is free.

## FISHING IN BIG RIVERS

Louisiana is easily blessed with far more than its share of big rivers, yet it seems that most of the state's recreational fishing occurs in other areas. To determine fishermen's use patterns and attitudes about fishing in large rivers, LSU fisheries biologists conducted a survey in the spring of 2003 for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

Surveys were sent to every 35<sup>th</sup> licensed angler in the state. A total of 13,605 surveys were mailed and 3,256 completed surveys were returned. The survey focused on the Mississippi, Atchafalaya, Pearl, Ouachita, Mermentau, and Calcasieu Rivers, the Red River above Shreveport, and the Sabine River below Toledo Bend Reservoir. The survey was on the anglers' fishing activities in the year 2002.

Only 649 respondents said that they did not fish in 2002. The most common reason given for not fishing was "did not have time," followed by "health/business/family" reasons. The fishing effort by area for the fishermen that did fish is shown below.

Habitat	Number of Anglers	Total Days	Percent of Total
Lakes, Reservoirs, Oxbows	1,575	20,799	37.1
Coastal Marshes	1,237	17,108	21.3
Large Rivers	857	10,027	12.5
Farm Ponds	723	9,110	11.3
Small Streams	614	1,429	9.2
Gulf of Mexico	783	6,053	7.5

A total of 1,416 fishermen who didn't fish in large rivers in 2002 supplied reasons why. In descending order of importance, they were: None of the specified rivers are near my house; My favorite fish is not abundant in the rivers; I don't know how to fish big rivers; Concerns about pollution; Concerned about safety; Poor quality fishing; and Lack of boat launches.

The fishermen in the survey were asked to name their favorite river and the number of days they fished it. The Red River was named by 23% of the respondents, followed by Atchafalaya (20%), Mississippi (15%), Ouachita (12%), Sabine (10%), Calcasieu (10%), Mermentau (6%), and Pearl (5%). Interestingly, the average number of days fished was highest for Pearl River, followed by Sabine, and then Ouachita.

Fishermen were asked to identify their favorite species of fish. Boat fishermen placed largemouth bass number one (67%), and shore fishermen ranked blue catfish (60%), and channel catfish (48%) highest. Overall, crappie (sac au lait) were listed as a favorite species by the second largest number of fishermen (48%), but among bank fishermen crappie were behind catfishes, bass and bluegill. Somewhat surprisingly, because they are quite common in large rivers, was the low ranking for white bass and striped bass. Neither was listed by more than 15% of the fishermen in either group.

Some species were more clearly favored in some rivers than in others. Fishermen targeting bass, crappie and bluegill listed the Atchafalaya and Red Rivers as their most favorite locations. Fishermen targeting white bass generally fished the Red and Sabine Rivers, and these two rivers plus the Mississippi River were favored locations for striped bass fishermen. Fishermen targeting flathead (yellow) catfish most often listed the Mississippi, Ouachita, and Red Rivers. Channel catfish fishermen preferred the Mississippi and Red Rivers and fishermen targeting blue catfish gave the Mississippi, Atchafalaya, and Red Rivers as favorite rivers.

The Red River was a clear favorite, no matter which species of fish is pursued. Much of the upper Red River in Louisiana is more "lake-like" than the other rivers, because of the locks and dams on the river.

Source: *The 2003 Louisiana Fishing Survey—Louisiana's Large Rivers*. William E. Kelso, D. Allen Rutherford, Jonathan C. Fisher, Rachel C. Walley, Gretchen M. Sanders, and Debra G. Kelly. LSU Agricultural Center. 2003.

## **FISHERIES CO-MANAGEMENT**

During the last 20 years, marine fisheries management has increasingly meant government agencies working to put tighter fishing regulations in place, battling with hostile fishing organizations whose members feel that they are being victimized by poor science and hidden agendas. The confrontations have driven fishery managers to look at different approaches.

**Co-management** can be defined as a partnership arrangement in which the fishermen and government share the responsibility and authority for management of the

fishery. It is a new management philosophy in which fishermen become active members of the fisheries management team. Decisions are made in collaboration with fishermen who use and depend on the resource.

Co-management came to prominence in Maine in 1995. There, legislation shifted some decision-making authority for conservation and management of the lobster fishery from state officials to area lobstermen who know and depend upon the fishery. Lobster management policy councils, comprised of locally-elected lobstermen, now decide the appropriate conservation measures for their region within constraints set by the legislature: trap limits, fishing hours and days, and number of traps per string.

As with limited entry, there is no blueprint for co-management. Each co-management effort should be tailored to the particular fishery and should not be viewed as a strategy to solve all problems within every fishery. Its real aim is to make management of a fishery more efficient, with more appropriate rules and less conflict, while at the same time meeting the needs of the fishermen and keeping the fishery biologically healthy.

Fishermen are usually represented in co-management through associations or other organizations. Other partners in the process could include seafood buyers and processors, marine businesses, environmental groups, and universities.

While co-management does give fishermen a strong role in management, it does not give them total control. The government will always hold the balance of power in co-management. How much responsibility can be given to fishermen will vary with the fishery. For example, for species that spend most of their life cycle in one area, a large amount of management responsibility can be placed in the hands of fishermen. The balance of responsibility can change over time as the partners develop trust and a record of success.

To establish co-management, fishermen must be willing to take on the responsibility of being involved. The cost in terms of time can be high, much higher than in current management systems, where fishermen usually critique management from a distance. For some fisheries the investment cost in time, resulting in lost income, may not be worth the expected benefits.

Political support must also exist to create and pass co-management legislation. In some cases, fisheries management agencies may be less-than-enthusiastic about changing management to share power and responsibility.

In spite of these obstacles, interest in co-management is likely to grow as frustrations with current management approaches grow.

Source: *Fisheries Management: A Fact Sheet for Connecticut Fishermen*. Robert Pomeroy, Connecticut Sea Grant College Program. 2004.

## **COMMERCIAL CRAB TRAP GEAR LICENSES UNDER MORATORIUM**

People interested in joining the ranks of commercial crabbers in Louisiana for the first time will be in for a surprise when they apply for their license this year. Commercial crab gear license are limited in 2005 to certain previous crab gear license holders.

Act 831 of the 2004 Regular Session of the Legislature specifies that "for commercial license year 2005, no person shall be issued a commercial crab trap gear license unless that person possessed a valid commercial crab trap year license during any one of the years 2002, 2003, or that portion of 2004 prior to November 15, 2004."

The act was passed at the request of the Louisiana Crab Task Force. During the year 2005, the task force will be developing a limited entry plan for the commercial crab fishery. The moratorium is an effort to prevent speculators from buying numbers of licenses under the assumption that licenses would become valuable if a limited entry plan is put into effect.

The task force is considering a management change, both to professionalize the fishery by creating stability, and to slow the decades-long growth in the number of crab traps in the water. Historically, as more people entered the fishery and added their crab traps, everyone's catch per trap dropped. This forced crabbers to fish with even more traps per person, which again drove down catch per trap, creating a vicious investment cycle.

In the mid-1970's, a crabber who owned 300 crab traps was considered large. Now many crabbers must fish 600-800 traps to produce the same catch.

## **HOME BOYS: BASS HOME RANGES**

Almost all animals, including fish, have home ranges. A home range can be defined several ways, but it is essentially a limited area of travel that contains what the animal needs to live and reproduce. Understanding the home range and movement patterns of an animal helps biologists to determine the environmental needs of the species and how human activities affect the species.

Most studies on largemouth bass home range size have been done in freshwater lakes and rivers, and show a range of 0.02 to 19.34 acres. The largest average home range found for bass in lakes was in a Florida lake and was 51.9 acres. But this was in a lake that had been disturbed by having all of its plants removed by grass carp.

No connection seems to exist between the sizes of the water bodies and the average sizes of home ranges. Bass home ranges do appear to be larger in water bodies which lack of food. Some research also indicates that some individual largemouth bass have home ranges and that others in the same lake are roamers.

Very little research has been done on home ranges for bass in waters influenced by tides, what would be called "marsh bass" in Louisiana. Although research in

Louisiana and Alabama showed that tidal water bass move fairly long distances because of salinity changes, no determination of home range size was done. One study that was done, was in the lower Potomac River. There, average home range size was found to be 492 acres.

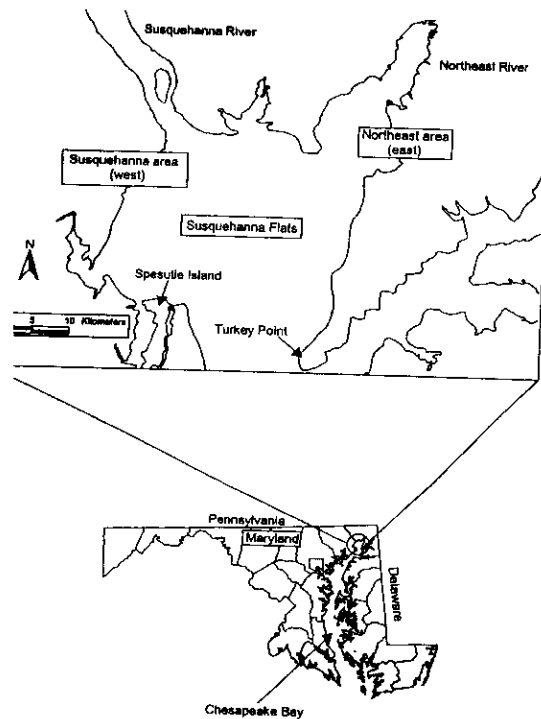
Maryland Department of Natural Resources biologists conducted another study on tidal bass home range sizes on the Susquehanna Flats, the extreme upper end of the Chesapeake Bay. This large area (30,146 acres) has salinity ranges of 1 - 2.5 parts per thousand (full strength seawater is 35 ppt) and an average tide range of nearly two feet. At low tide, two-thirds of the area has an average depth of less than three feet.

Bass were collected by electrofishing (shocking) from two areas, Susquehanna (West), and Northwest (East). The two areas were very different. The west area had substantial water currents and a lot of water plants. The east side had very little current, almost no vegetation, many wooden pilings, boat docks and much fallen timber. Sixteen bass from the west and 22 bass from the east had tiny radio transmitters placed in them after capture and were released where they were caught. The bass were tracked three times a week for the first month to two months, and then once a week after that. The fish ranged in size from 14.4 - 21.6 inches and 1.6 - 5.5 pounds.

The average bass was relocated 27 times during the study. Home ranges were as small as 25 acres and as large as 6,029 acres. The overall average size was 949 acres. Bass home ranges from the West Area ranged in size from 32 to 961 acres, with an average of 608 acres.

The situation for East Area bass was not as simple. Four of the 22 tagged fish had huge home ranges and in fact, showed migratory behavior. Their home ranges were from 3,618 to 6,029 acres, with an average size of 5,288 acres. The other 18 fish had home ranges of 25 to 1001 acres.

The four migratory bass crossed the bay from the eastern shore to the western shore for two consecutive years, in what was suspected to be a spring spawning migration. They returned to the eastern shore after 2 - 3 months, both years. The migration occurred even though enough spawning habitat existed on the eastern shore and other bass spawned successfully there.



Home ranges for tidal bass in the Chesapeake were much larger than those found in freshwater lakes. The researchers did not feel that food scarcity was a factor in the large home ranges, as bass growth and condition was excellent. Rather, they suggested that the environment, with its constant tidal changes, salinity changes and freshwater inflow changes, was the main reasons for the large home ranges.

Sources: *Home Range of Largemouth Bass in the Tidal Upper Chesapeake Bay*. Alan A. Heft and Carol A. Richardson-Heft. Proceedings of the Fifty-sixth Annual Conference, Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. 2002.

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## THE GUMBO POT

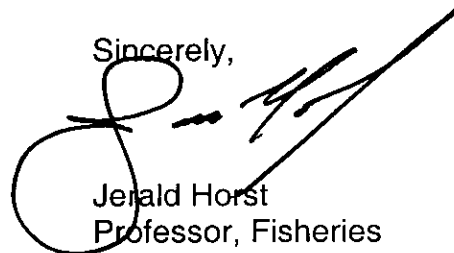
### Jacked Shrimp

This month's recipe comes from one of our Mississippi readers, Jack Rauenhorst of Sumrall. I had eaten bacon-wrapped, breaded, and fried shrimp before, but not with cheese on them. This is a very good dish.

1½	lb 10-15 count shrimp tails	½	lb bacon slices, halved
	Old Bay Seasoning	2	eggs
	Creole Seasoning	1	cup heavy cream
	salt & white pepper		cooking oil
½	lb sliced pepper jack cheese	1	cup flour

Peel, devein and butterfly each shrimp. Sprinkle with Old Bay and Creole Seasonings, salt and pepper to taste. Place most of a slice of pepper cheese in the split of each butterflied shrimp. Pinch the shrimp closed and wrap each shrimp in a half slice of bacon. Pin closed with a toothpick. Whip eggs and cream together. Add salt and pepper to taste to the flour. Dip each shrimp in the egg wash and dredge in the flour. Repeat the process, again dipping the shrimp in the egg wash and dredging in the flour. Fry in cooking oil until golden brown. Remove toothpicks before serving. Serves 4.

Sincerely,



Jerald Horst  
Professor, Fisheries



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