

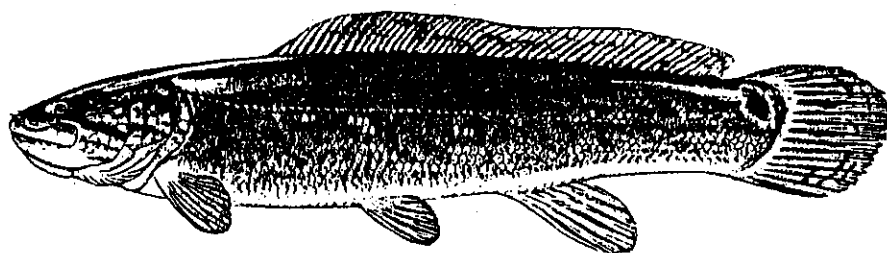


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SEA GRANT PROGRAM



LAGNIAPPE

Dear Friend:

December 14 marked my 20th anniversary as the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service's Sea Grant Marine Advisory Agent for this area. In these twenty years, I have met and worked with some of the nicest and most sincere people I could ever hope to meet, the commercial and recreational fishermen and fisheries related business owners of Louisiana.

Without your suggestions and guidance my work would not be as effective as it is. I welcome all suggestions for topics for this newsletter, my newspaper column and for any of the educational programs that I conduct.

During the time that I've worked here, I've seen many changes in fisheries. I've seen great social stresses on commercial fishing families in coastal fishing communities as a result of economics and regulation. I've seen recreational (and commercial) fishermen express their frustration at being buried under an avalanche of fishing regulations. Twenty years ago, a trawler could legally sell any marine species that came up in his trawl and not need a briefcase full of special permits in order to fish.

Twenty years ago, there were virtually no minimum or maximum sizes and no daily limits on saltwater fish for recreational fishermen. Today, over 50 species of marine and

estuarine fish have these limits. To complicate things, sometimes federal regulations don't exactly mesh with state regulations.

Most frustrating to me is the ongoing feud by recreational and commercial fishermen. It is counterproductive and can make fishing an unpleasant experience. Worst of all, it distracts these two important user groups from the real issues, maintaining healthy ecosystems and improving fisheries management.

On a positive note, Louisiana's fisheries resources are still, with a few exceptions, healthy and strong. We lead the nation in the landings of several commercial species, including shrimp. Recreational fishermen in Louisiana catch 70% of all the redfish caught in the five Gulf states.

Again, I welcome any and all calls, whether they are suggestions or whether they are requests for information. This office is here to serve you.

RECORD BOOKS AND TAX EXEMPT FORMS AVAILABLE

Over the years, many of you have used the Extension Service's Commercial Fishermans and Trappers Record Books to keep a record of your expenses and earnings. With the new year upon us, this is a good time to get your new record book.

Also available are the sales tax exemption applications for commercial fishermen. If you would like an application or record book, call or write my office in Marrero.

MERCURY CONTAMINATION IN FISH

People, including fishermen, often focus on negative publicity and overlook good news. Fishermen often wonder about pollution contamination in the fish they catch and eat or sell. The pollutant that has been most in the news in recent years is mercury, a metal which can have health affects on humans if consumed in large enough amounts. In recent years, advisories on limiting fish consumption due to mercury have been issued in the majority of states in the U. S.

Most Louisiana residents are not aware of the strong sampling programs conducted by the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to check for pollutants in Louisiana fish. DEQ has completed the second year of an intensive three year study on mercury in fish from our waters. They sampled fish from 77 places on 61 water bodies statewide, covering everything from Toledo Bend Reservoir to City Perk Lagoon in New Orleans. The target species were largemouth bass, channel and blue catfish, crappie (sac-au-lait), and bowfin (choupique). They also looked at freshwater drum (gaspergou), garfish, striped bass, white bass (barfish), and buffalofish.

The results were better than a person might expect. Although low levels of mercury were found scattered across the state, only five areas were found with mercury levels high enough to issue a consumption advisory, the Henderson Lake-Lake Bigneaux

area of the Atchafalaya Basin, the Ouachita River from the Columbia lock and dam north to the Arkansas state line, Bayou Plaquemine Brule, Bogue Chitto River, and Black Lake in Natchitoches Parish.

Interestingly, previous research done by DEQ showed very low levels of mercury in fish from the Mississippi River, which is where many people would expect high levels.

Two types of consumption advisories may be issued. A low-level one would recommend limiting consumption of some fish to one or several meals a month for young children and pregnant women or women nursing children, with no advisory for the rest of the population. A higher-level advisory would recommend no consumption of the fish listed in the advisory by young children, and pregnant or nursing women and a limit on the number meals by the rest of the public.

Most of Louisiana's advisories are more of the lower-level type and are only for certain fish from these areas. Fishermen fishing in these areas who want the exact details of the advisories for the areas listed above may call the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals in New Orleans at (504) 568-8537.

Concerning mercury advisories, it is important to note that the U. S. Food and Drug Administration advisory level for mercury was set to protect consumers at levels **10 times lower** than the lowest level found to have any affect on humans. In Japan, where mercury poisoning first made the news, the **lowest** level of mercury concentration in fish was **nine times higher** than the highest reported anywhere in Louisiana.

With the exception of a one-time appropriation of \$200,000 by the 1996 Louisiana Legislature, DEQ conducts all of its sampling programs with no money from state general funds. Funding sources that DEQ typically uses are federal grants and self generated funds from permit fees and penalties.

Source: Mercury Contaminant Levels in Louisiana Biota, Sediments and Surface Waters. Second Annual Report. Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality. August 1996.

KEMP'S RIDLEYS NESTS UP AGAIN IN 1996

After a big jump in 1995, the number of Kemp's ridley sea turtle nests again increased quite a bit in 1996. This turtle rests on only one beach in Mexico and its decline has brought on TEDs in an effort to save it.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>NUMBER OF NESTS</u>
1978	924
1979	954
1980	868
1981	897

1982	750
1983	746
1984	798
1985	702
1986	744
1987	737
1988	842
1989	878
1990	992
1991	1155
1992	1275
1993	1184
1994	1568
1995	1938
1996	2068

STUDYING THE FISHERMEN

In recent years, the roles of the sociologist and the economist have become more important in developing fishery regulations. This is because not only fish, but also fishermen are involved in fisheries management plans. When TED regulations were put in place on the shrimp industry, very little was actually known about commercial shrimpers themselves.

With finfish bycatch regulations on shrimp trawls in the near future, researchers conducted a gulfwide survey of the current social conditions of shrimpers. Unfortunately, there is no previous study to compare it to except one done with Alabama shrimpers in 1987. Some of the results are listed below:

- * Gulfwide, shrimpers average 42.6 years old with 10.4 years of education and 21.9 years of shrimping experience. Slightly over 70% have other work experience, but the majority of the experience was before they began shrimping and therefore is over 20 years ago.
- * Gulfwide, 73% of the shrimpers own their own boat and 44% have relatives working on the boat. When asked to list the primary waters they work, 32% said inshore waters, 41% said nearshore waters and 27% said offshore waters.
- * The average length of a shrimp boat gulf wide is 59.6 feet with 1.6 crewmen. They spend 182.3 days at sea on average.
- * The average captain gulfwide earns \$13,610 a year. There is no previous gulfwide figure to compare it to. However, Alabama captains experienced a 36% decline in income from 1987 to 1994.

- * Average annual catch per vessel is \$77,837 and the average vessel has experienced a \$40,000 decline in value of the vessel to \$94,603 in 1994.
- * Alabama shrimpers in 1994 showed a decline in job satisfaction compared to 1987 in relation to enjoyment and worthwileness of work, peace of mind, number of hours worked, length of trips taken and mental pressures. Satisfaction was even lower gulfwide in 1994 than in Alabama.
- * The level of mental distress among shrimpers is significantly higher than for the general population. Shrimpers suffer three times the depression rate, twice the panic disorder, ten times the generalized anxiety rate and twice the rate of overall mental distress than the population in general. One-third of all shrimp fishermen are distressed to the point that if they were to see a doctor they could expect to receive treatment.
- * Only three-fifths of the shrimpers interviewed believed that they will be able to survive the first year if bycatch regulations are put on them. Only two-fifths believe they will survive the following 2 to 3 years.

Source: Shrimp Fishermen on the Eve of Bycatch Regulations: A Report to the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, by J. S. Thomas, C. Formichella, G. D. Johnson, and C. A. Riordan. University of South Alabama. October, 1995.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Volunteers and boats are again needed for the annual Barataria Basin Wetland Restoration/Christmas Tree Recycling Project. This project uses discarded Christmas trees to make barriers in the marsh. These barriers trap sediment in the water and build land.

Volunteers will be needed on January 18, February 1, and February 22, beginning at 8:00 a.m. each day to make bundles from the individual Christmas trees. Lunch will be provided and the minimum age is 15.

Volunteers and shallow draft boats will also be needed on March 1 and March 8, again beginning at 8:00 a.m. On these days, the Christmas tree bundles will be placed in the marsh. Lunch will be provided, however the minimum age for this project is 17. Volunteers should bring gloves, hat, sunblock, and a life jacket.

Anyone who would like to volunteer themselves and/or their boat may call the Jefferson Environmental Department at 736-6440.

LOUISIANA LEADS IN REDFISH CATCH

The latest federal stock assessment again shows Louisiana dominating the redfish catch of the five Gulf of Mexico states. In 1995, the Louisiana catch was an incredible 77.5% of the total catch (by numbers of fish) of all the gulf states. The other four states shared the remaining 22.5% of the catch. The catch statistics by state are shown below.

Thousands Harvested and Percentage of Harvest by State

Year	Florida		Alabama		Miss.		Louisiana		Texas		Gulf	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
79	680	13.3	15	0.3	140	2.7	2905	56.9	1366	26.7	5107	100.0
80	950	21.4	29	0.6	179	4.0	2038	45.9	1250	28.1	4445	100.0
81	1375	42.8	53	1.6	153	4.8	921	28.7	709	22.1	3211	100.0
82	875	22.1	56	1.4	140	3.5	2438	61.5	455	11.5	3963	100.0
83	1494	25.0	13	0.2	126	2.1	3766	63.0	502	9.7	5981	100.0
84	1561	34.2	24	0.5	68	1.5	2383	52.2	530	11.6	4565	100.0
85	592	16.1	28	0.8	28	0.8	2668	72.7	352	9.6	3668	100.0
86	915	18.1	59	1.2	133	2.6	3669	72.7	272	5.4	5049	100.0
87	184	5.3	35	1.0	92	2.6	2827	81.3	341	9.8	3478	100.0
88	30	2.5	16	1.4	56	4.6	858	71.2	244	20.3	1205	100.0
89	234	14.7	9	0.6	62	3.9	1057	66.5	228	14.3	1589	100.0
90	142	14.2	24	2.4	31	3.1	617	61.8	184	18.4	998	100.0
91	279	20.1	24	1.8	37	2.6	874	63.0	172	12.4	1386	100.0
92	388	15.7	50	2.4	37	1.5	1770	71.6	219	8.9	2472	100.0
93	197	7.6	52	2.0	41	1.6	1917	74.2	377	14.6	2585	100.0
94	234	11.5	44	2.2	60	3.0	1385	68.2	308	15.2	2031	100.0
95	253	8.1	73	2.3	80	2.6	2436	77.5	301	9.6	3145	100.0
79-95	611	18.9	36	1.1	86	2.7	2031	62.9	464	14.4	3228	100.0
88-95	220	11.4	38	2.0	50	2.6	1364	70.8	254	13.2	1926	100.0

WHO FISHES FOR BASS ?

Largemouth bass have become the most popular freshwater recreational fish in the United States. Among freshwater fishermen, 43% of all of them fish for bass. Bass fishermen also fish more days per year than the average fishermen, averaging 12 days on the water.

The states that have the highest percentage of bass fishermen among their anglers are Florida (63%), Oklahoma (61%), and Maryland (61%). Louisiana is eleventh at 52%. The states with the lowest percentage of bass fishermen are Colorado (10%), Idaho (12%), and Oregon (14%).

On average, bass fishermen are younger than other fishermen and have a lower percentage of women than other fishermen. They are also more educated. In the U. S. 81% of all people have a high school degree or more, and 83% of all fishermen have this level of education. The average for bass fishermen is 86%,

Finally bass fishermen have a higher family income than other fishermen or the public at large. Only 38% of bass fishermen come from households below the national average in income as compared to 40% of all freshwater recreational fishermen.

Source: Black Bass Fishing in the U. S. Report 91-4. U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. July, 1996.

THE GUMBO POT

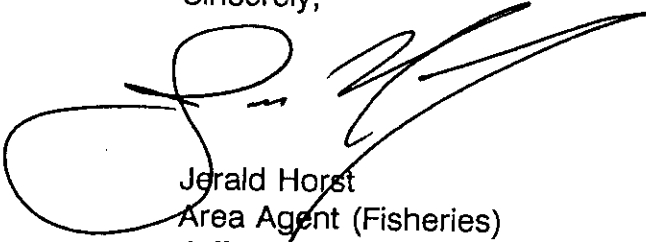
Crawfish Fettuccine

This month's recipe comes from Melanie Murray of Eunice, Louisiana, the heart of crawfish country. This dish is low-fat, but still just delicious. If you don't have crawfish, you may substitute shrimp.

1/4	c reducec calorie margarine	1	lb light pasteurized process cheese,cubed
1 3/4	c chopped onions	1 1/2	lb crawfish tails
1 1/2	c chopped red bell pepper	1	Tbsp worcestershire sauce
1	c chopped green onions	1/4	tsp black pepper
4	cloves minced garlic	1/4	tsp red pepper
1/4	c all-purpose flour	1/4	tsp thyme
1 1/2	c skim milk	1	lb fettuccine

Cook fettuccine. While fettuccine is cooking, in another pan, melt margarine, add onions, bell peppers, and green onions. Saute 5 minutes. Stir in flour. Gradually add milk, stirring with whisk. Add cheese and stir till it melts. Add crawfish, worcestershire sauce, black and red pepper, thyme and oregano. Cook until heated. Add pasta, stir and warm. Serves 6.

Sincerely,



Jerald Horst
Area Agent (Fisheries)
Jefferson, St. Charles, St. John