

CATFISH NOW! **DIGITAL MAGAZINE**

October 2016 - Issue #01



It's time for Catfish NOW!



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Catfish Connections

Welcome everyone to the first edition of CatfishNow digital magazine and social media platform. After contemplating the launch of another digital magazine for two years, the right ingredients have come together - owner, editor, writing staff and sponsors.

After six successful years of pioneering the CrappieNow digital magazines I have been blessed to secure the writing and editing talents of Mr. Ron Presley to serve as senior writer and editor. Additionally, probably the best catfish writer in the world, Mr. Keith "Catfish" Sutton has come on board to share his vast knowledge of catfishing.

Adding their own expertise to the CatfishNow content is a talented lineup of other writers that come from all across the country. They are ready and willing to add their personal touch and knowledge to the magazine. Coupled with my publishing experienced, outstanding writers and a dedicated social media staff, we have the platform to successfully reach the catfish community in so many ways.

I have challenged my staff to push the margins for the best pictures and content for the beginner to the experienced, no matter where they are in the world. Content will be based on helping you catch more fish during the months the magazines are published. Our content will be timely, accurate, challenging, beautiful and rewarding.

Together, we want the magazine and social media to reach all catfishing groups, clubs, guides and tournament trails at the national, regional and local levels. We also want to hear from you so we can post and write about your own successes.

To do all this free of charge for you the reader, we will seek good sponsors who will be rewarded with content and reach to help promote their products and their product development. The bottom line is the desire to contribute to the sport and expand it to the benefit of all.

I also invite you to like our CatfishNow Facebook page, follow us on Instagram and Twitter, and by all means, visit our website at www.catfishnow.com and read the magazine each month.

I encourage you to send us pictures for our monthly photo contest where you might be the lucky winner of a CatfishNow prize pack.

God bless and good luck fishing,
Dan



Front Cover:
Jason McDuffee shows off a nice Mississippi River blue cat from the Memphis area.

Angler Attitudes and the Growth of Catfishing

Catfishing in America has its roots in family and necessity. Catfish have been, and likely will continue to be, a regular menu item on dinner tables all over America. Early days of catfishing also had a recreational component, but the day's catch usually showed up on the dinner table with coleslaw, okra and fried potatoes.

Men and women of all sorts have historically participated in the sport. The ones that are still active in the sport most likely grew up with hunting and fishing as a way of life. Often it was dad, that took them fishing and instilled the love and the passion for catfishing. For others it was a grandmother, an uncle or family friend. Somewhere along the way someone took the time to show them the ropes and implant that passion for the sport in their heart.

Jason Aycock remembers his mentor with pride. Jason is one of those catfish anglers that will invite folks on his boat so they can learn more about catfishing and understand why he is so passionate about it.

"I was fortunate to fish with and learn from one of the best in the business," explained B'n'M Poles Pro Aycock. "Chris Stevens was an outstanding cat man and he took me under his wing and showed

me the ropes. He willingly shared his knowledge with me and I don't mind sharing my catfish knowledge with other interested anglers."

Today the sport is growing rapidly as a recreational activity among more and more anglers. Catfish tournaments are popping up all over the country and catch and release catfishing is becoming a larger part of the catfish culture.

Attitudes are changing and it's all for the best. Even the seasoned pros admit to harvesting the big cats in years gone by. "That's just the way it was," stated Larry Muse. "We caught em' for the dinner table. Now we let the trophies go."

Most catfish anglers have a slang expression for the fish that

"Anglers had their honey holes and secret baits and they didn't want anyone to know about them."

go to the dinner table. The "eaters" are generally considered to be fish no larger than 10 to 15 pounds. Anything bigger goes back. That unwritten rule of conservation among the nation's cat men and cat women is one more element that will



help grow the sport. More anglers will be catching more trophy catfish and the addiction will grow.

Positive angler attitudes on sharing what they know will also grow the sport. Fishing has always been secretive in nature. Anglers had their honey holes and secret baits and they didn't want anyone to know about them. Now days it seems that more and more anglers are willing and able to share what they have learned about catfishing. The more this sharing happens, the more the sport will grow.

George Young (Mississippi River Monsters) is an avid catfish angler who likes to teach others about the sport. He goes so far as to carry a special round weight on board to help his "novice" angler guests learn the technique of

Sharing of information will help more anglers catch bigger fish like the Memphis area blue cat shown here by Larry Muse and Don Dalton.

bumping.

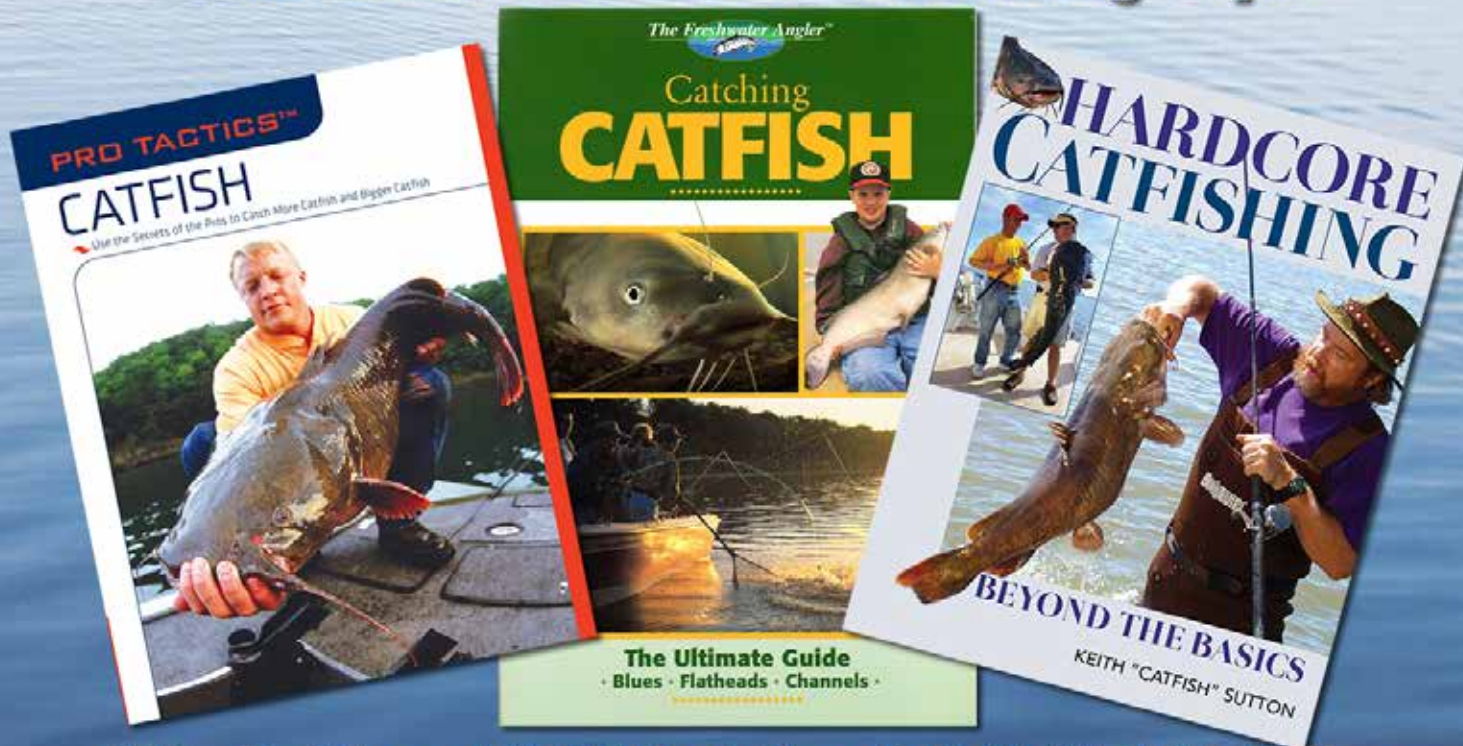
"You have to teach them the right way if they are going to be successful at it," emphasized the B'n'M pro staffer. "The round weight makes it easier for the novice to find the bottom and keep it. The more people learn to bump successfully, the more they will enjoy catfishing and the faster the sport will grow."

That attitude of sharing is also demonstrated by well-known catfish angler Larry Muse. The Warrior Cat Tackle pro staffer has been dragging baits through heavy



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structure and catching big cats where other anglers just hung up. After winning one of the largest catfish tournaments in the nation (Monsters on the Ohio) in 2016, Muse revealed his draggin’ rig to Aaron Wheatley following the tournament, and then again on an episode of Catfish Weekly. He just threw it out there for all to see and use.

“Anyone can make one,” said Muse, as he described how he made his draggin’ rig. “By giving this information to anyone that wants it, I feel like I have leveled the playing field. Now anyone has the same chance that I do to catch those big cats in heavy cover. We can’t have the same people winning the

tournaments all the time. We need to share information freely and help grow the sport of catfishing”

Bass fishing legend Bill Dance can be tossed right in there with these other catfish fanatics when it comes to growing the sport. Most anglers know Dance and his long history of sharing and teaching on the subject of bass fishing. Some don’t, but more are learning, that Dance is an avid catfish angler.

Dance agrees highly with the notion of sharing information. “Education is what will grow the sport,” commented Dance. “As more and more successful catfish anglers share their knowledge and educate the recreational anglers, we will witness a phenomenal growth in



the sport.”

Businesses are getting on board too and more specialized catfish gear is coming to the market. Success breeds success and firms like Abu Garcia, Bass Pro Shops, B'n'M Poles, Cabela's, Driftmaster Rod Holders, Monster Rod Holders,

George Young encourages skilled anglers to share what they know with others so they can catch big catfish too.





Warrior Cat Rods, Catch the Fever Rods and Vicious Fishing Line are among the early folks to see the growing catfishing trend.

“We see catfishing in a similar position as crappie fishing a few years back,” said B’n’M spokesman Jason McDuffee. “We expect it to grow and we want to grow with it. That’s why you will be seeing more specialized equipment from B’n’M that will support the catfish industry.”

In 2016 another important achievement in the catfish industry was introduced in Kentucky. Monster Rod Holders, Jim Jones Marine and Business House came together to produce Catfish Conference 2016. It was billed as a catfish community get-together and it did

Jason Aycock is sharing his passion for catfishing with his son, Jase.

not disappoint.

Catfish Conference was all about catfish and educating a public eager to learn about the sport. Catfish tournaments go a long way toward educating anglers too, but Catfish Conference was a melding pot of ideas and opinions that will help build catfishing into a bigger and stronger sport. The 2017 version of Catfish Conference has been announced for Louisville, KY.

CatfishNow is pleased to connect with the growing community



of catfish anglers, vendors and organizations that see the growth potential in the sport. We are pleased to join those dedicated anglers that came before and shared their love for the great outdoors in general and catfishing in particular with the rest of us.

Bill Dance identifies education as the key to growing the sport of catfishing. Dance is shown here with one of his fishing buddies, Roy Harkness.

 - Ron Presley



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Catfish Basics #001

Fresh Bait and Presentation

Savvy catfish anglers realize the importance of fresh bait, but you need to take it one step further. “One of the biggest problems in catfishing can be having the right bait,” says four-time Cabela’s King Kat Angler of the Year, Carl Morris Jr. “You need good fresh bait and then be able to determine the presentation that they are looking for.”

“It is not as important on smaller size fish,” continued Morris. “Typically you can catch 2 to 15 pound fish without much issue. I believe, as they get bigger, they also get a little smarter because they have been caught a few times. Now your presentation becomes more important. The more natural you can present the bait the better your odds of catching the big ones. Good bait along with presentation is always a key to catching bigger fish.”



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Find the Sweet Spots

By Keith "Catfish" Sutton

Locational strategies for catfish in lakes and reservoirs

Veteran catfish anglers call them "sweet spots"—specific types of habitat that attract hungry catfish like kids to an ice-cream truck.

To catch more cats in lakes and reservoirs, you need to know these catfish magnets. Some sweet spots are readily visible and easily identified. Others must be pinpointed using sonar and may be so subtle they're hard to find. Either way, your ability to zero in on these prime waters can mean the difference between catching lots of catfish or catching none.

Here are eight sweet spots you should know.

Bottom Channels and Ditches

Some lakes have prominent bottom channels; others have subtle ditches and drops. All such structures are sweet spots you can find using good electronics.

Main channels act like major highways, leading migrating catfish from one part of the water body to another. Small branches act

as secondary roads, leading migratory fish toward shallow-water habitat. The biggest congregations of catfish often are found at the junction of two or more channels.

If it's trophy cats you're after, remember they usually feed near deep water falling into the channel. Look for them near features on the ledge distinguishing it from surrounding areas—brushpiles, points, adjacent humps, cuts in the bank, etc.

During the day, anchor in the shallowest

water near the drop-off and fish deeper water. At night, do the opposite to catch cats moving shallow to feed.

Riprap

Engineers often place riprap (large rocks along shorelines to prevent erosion) near dams, bridges and causeways on lakes. Riprap appeals to catfish because it attracts forage animals and provides cover, depth and shade. Large channel cats and flatheads, especially, like this habitat.

When fishing a long, look-alike stretch of riprap, focus on objects distinguishing a small section. A pipe or fallen tree may attract catfish. Other times, a difference in the rocks does the trick. Watch for big boulders changing to smaller rocks or slides of rocks creating points.

Inundated Lakes and Ponds

Small ponds and lakes inundated when larger lakes fill are prime locales for trophy cats of all species. These offer easy access to deep-water holding areas and shallow

"... you need to know these catfish magnets."

feeding spots. They're especially productive in large, shallow lakes.

Pinpoint the spot with sonar, and then look within it for points, drop-offs, sunken islands or humps that may attract cats. If scattered trees or stumps exist around the perimeter, fish them carefully.

Wind-Swept Shores

Heavy wind produces a chain reaction on fertile lakes. The wind blows floating

plankton (microscopic plants and animals) against the shore. Minnows, shad and other baitfish that feed on plankton follow their food to shoreline reaches. Catfish that feed on baitfish follow, too. For this reason, fishing shorelines pounded by heavy winds often produces extraordinary catches of catfish. It's a situation every catfish angler should know.

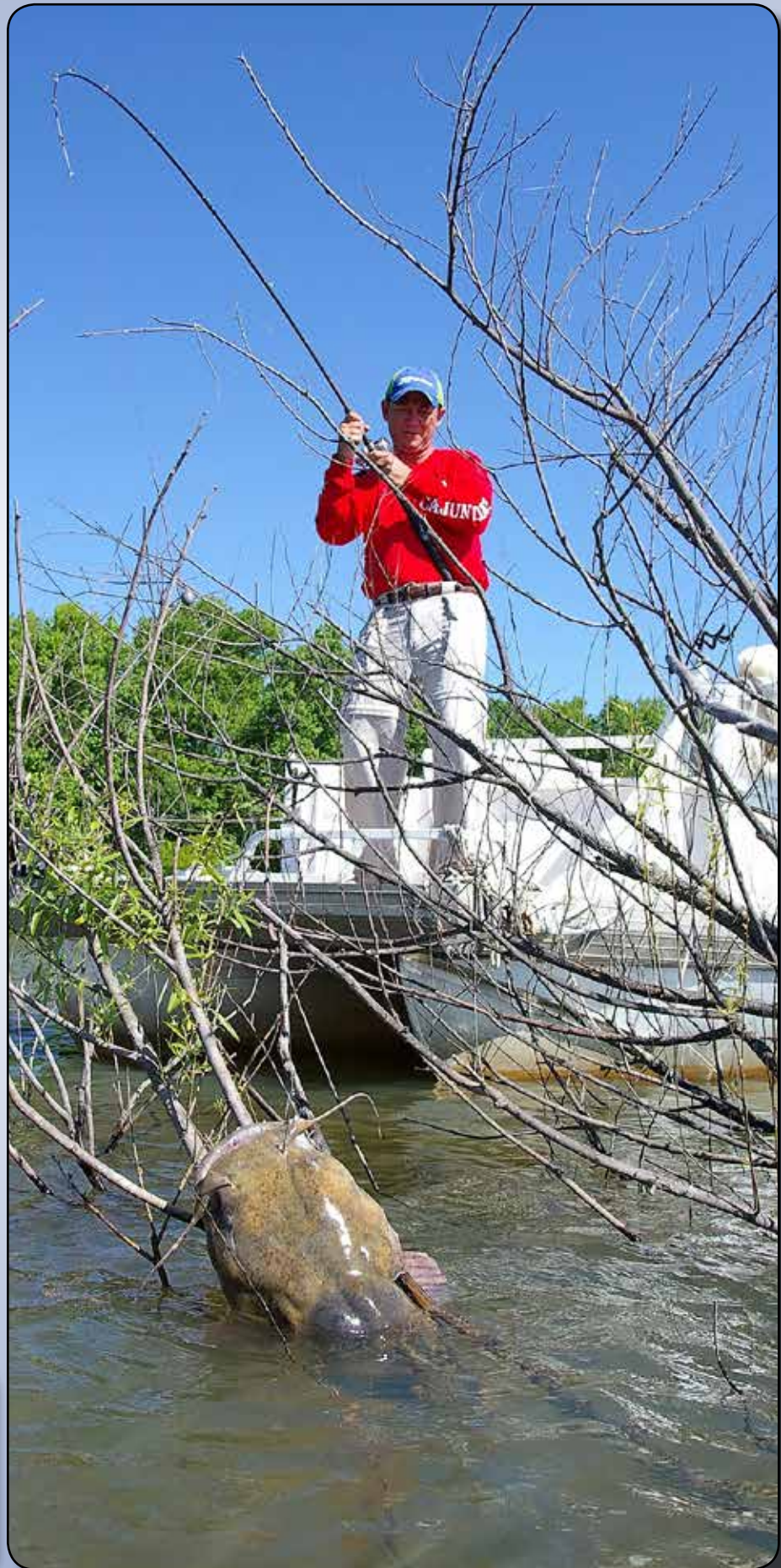
Humps

Locating an underwater hump, rise or submerged island is like finding a map to buried treasure for the cat fan. These structures are among the most productive catfishing spots in any lake or reservoir, especially during summer and winter.

When you've pinpointed a hump with your electronics, learn all you can about it: its size, the steepness of drops on each side, existing cover and so forth. Narrow your fishing area to a few choice zones—points, pockets, rock beds, timbered or brushy areas, etc.—and mark them with buoys.

Note the depth of the hump below the surface. Humps rising no closer than 40 or 50 feet of the surface may be below the summer thermocline with oxygen levels too low to support catfish. The best humps are 5 to 20 feet from the surface and have substantial deep water around them, such as a creek channel running alongside. Humps with timber, brush, rocks or other cover are also very productive.

Brushy thickets and weed beds are hotspots for catfishing, especially when targeting flatheads like this one caught by South Carolina angler Mark Shealy.





Learning the “sweet spots”—specific types of habitat that attract actively feeding catfish—is the best way to zero in on lake and reservoir catfish like this 70-pound-plus blue caught in South Carolina’s Lake Moultrie by Chad (left) and Kevin Davis.

your bait, and probe every opening you see, changing the float’s position until you determine the depth where fish are feeding.

Don’t be shy about fishing tiny, “impossible” looking openings. Chances are, your bait will penetrate quite easily, and catfish in such places are far more likely to strike than those found on edges pounded by every passing angler.

Weed Beds & Thickets

Weed beds and brushy thickets provide first-rate action for savvy catters. Most anglers assume the interior of these hotspots can’t be fished and confine their fishing to the edges. They may miss big cats hiding deep in the cover.

The trick to catching these cats is working methodically to cover every accessible nook and pocket. A heavy jiggling pole is tops for this because it allows you to reach likely honeyholes from a distance with fewer hang-ups. Attach a float above

Tributary Mouths

The area where a creek or river empties into a lake can be a real sweet spot when conditions are right. Catfishing is outstanding after rains when high flow carries forage into the reservoir. In early spring, an incoming creek or shallow stream may bring warmer water that attracts baitfish and, consequently, catfish. Cool- or cold-water stream mouths have excellent potential in summer, especially at night.

Oxbow Run-outs

If you fish for catfish in big river-bottom oxbow lakes, learn all you can about a phenomenon known as “the run-off.” This occurs when a river “falls out of” a connected oxbow, usually in spring or early summer when overflow waters recede from the river bottoms. There comes a point, when the water has fallen low enough, that the only connections between an oxbow and its parent stream are small “run-outs” created by low points in the topography. Sometimes only one run-out exists; occasionally, there are several. All run-outs serve up extraordinary catfishing.

Water constricted in run-outs is swift, and forage animals are pulled by current into the rushing stream of water and adjacent areas. Catfish gather to gorge on the resulting feast. Some hold near cover at the head of the run-out, in the lake. Others position themselves at the run-out’s tail, where the rushing water meets the river. All feed ravenously, and any bait—night crawlers, cut-bait, live fish, crayfish—drifted through or along the run-out area is likely to be taken.

Conclusion

These eight sweet spots are among the most important you should know. But lakes and reservoirs differ greatly in their physical traits, creating fishing hotspots that may not be covered here. To catch more cats, it’s important that you learn to identify key areas that attract actively feeding cats regardless of where you fish. A lucky cast may put you on the right spot, but it’s better to count on knowledge, not luck, to lead you down the path to success.



Keith Sutton



A good bottom contour map and sonar fish-finder are invaluable tools for determining the “sweet spots” to fish on lakes and reservoirs.

Winter Sweet Spot: Power Plant Discharges

Power-plant facilities for generating electricity are a common sight on many large lakes. Water flowing into and out of the plant creates a subsurface current covering a big area in a power-plant lake, and large numbers of catfish often hold near the mouths of discharge and inlet channels and out into the lake where there’s still a hint of moving water. Hot-water discharges are especially attractive to catfish in cooler months because they attract schools of baitfish like shad.

Sometimes the current hugs the shore. In other lakes, it may curve out into the main lake. When you figure out the current pattern, you can fish places where chances of locating catfish are greatly improved.



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Catfish Basics #002


Bumping Bottom

Bumping Bottom is an interactive approach to catfishing that allows anglers to cover different depths and different locations quickly. “You are always holding the rod and always fishing,” says George Young, Jr. “Using this method I have fewer hang-ups and a better strike to catch ratio.”

“I use my B’n’M Bumping Rod to feel every rock, log and contour down there,” continued Young. “The boat is slowly drifting backwards downstream, controlled by the trolling motor. If the bottom comes up you have to reel in some line to stay in touch. If the bottom drops into a hole you have to let some line out to follow the contour.”

“It is when you feel a rock or a log that you expect a bite,” advised Young. “Those fish are using the structure as a current break, just waiting for their next meal to come by. As you drop the bait to the backside of the structure is when you expect a bite. The more distance you can get behind the boat, the more bottom you have covered and the more likely you are to put a bloody chunk of skipjack in front of a Mississippi River Monster.”






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Our mission is to increase the professionalism of our members as we work to grow and protect sportfishing.

Catfish Profiles in Passion



By Ron Presley

There is a cure for the summertime blues

In the folklore of bass fishing is a name that everyone knows and respects. For many years Bill Dance has been catching bass and sharing his wisdom with others on how they could catch them too. What many people don't know, but are finding out, is that Bill Dance has a passion for catfish, trophy blue catfish to be precise.

With his home near Memphis, Tennessee it was only natural that he would develop a love for chasing the whiskered brutes in his home waters of the Mississippi River. He grew up bass fishing and made a career out of it, but lately his name pops up more and more often in catfish circles and his support for the sport is exemplary.

"I have been fanatical about chasing really big catfish for 16 or 17 years now," revealed Dance. "I love the challenge of knowing our biggest fish are right here in the Mid-South. I know that big blue catfish, in excess of 100 pounds, go to sleep hungry every night, practically in my backyard. That thought absolutely keeps me going strong. When you are out there on the Mississippi

River you just know there's always a chance to hook the catfish of a lifetime."

Dance's affliction with catfish fever and the fact that he lives near Memphis has resulted in a nickname that's aptly suited. "My catfishing friends call me Mr. Blue," revealed Dance. "When I think about the nickname it seems a bit ironic. I'm fishing for big blue catfish, often on the Mississippi River in the shadow of the Memphis Bluffs. Those bluffs are only a couple of miles from Beale Street, which is known for another kind of blues."

Why so blue, Mr. Blue? "Well, I'm surrounded by them blue catfish and them musical blues notes. I'm sure you've heard

"When you are out there on the Mississippi River you just know there's always a chance to hook the catfish of a lifetime."



Eddie Cochran's rendition of 'There Ain't No Cure for the Summertime Blues.' Well, I'm here to tell ya', there is. It all takes place right here at Memphis, TN on Mr. Muddy, the Mighty Mississippi, during the dog days of August."

There is definitely a clue in that last statement for anglers wanting to give the Mighty Mississippi a try for big blues. "The month of August is perhaps one of the prime months for catching big blue catfish," instructed Dance. "I like to fish August through December. The reason for that choice is the condition of the river. It is more stable during this time frame. It's typically low, has better clarity, and is more predictable. All this adds up to more consistent fishing results."

Those consistent results were evident

Dance often participates in tournaments as a way to have fun while supporting the sport.

on one fishy September day. "I have had a lot of good days on the Mississippi River," stated Dance. "My best day took place about three years ago while fishing with my good friend George Young. I caught five really good fish about 35 miles north of Memphis. I caught five fish on baits no bigger than a 50-cent piece. We were fishing slow current at a depth of 44 feet. I landed 20-, 28-, 40- and 75-pound blue cats. I then topped off the day with a 110.25-pound blue cat."

The 110.25 is Dances biggest blue





catfish to date and not that far from the Tennessee state record of 112 pounds. "All these fish were caught in 75-yard drifts," explained Dance. "I have had many days where we caught several 40 pounders, with a 50 or 60 sometimes included, but there was never a 75 and 110 pounder in the mix."

Dance's most common technique for chasing trophy blues is a method he describes as controlled-drifting. "You are holding the boat in the current with the trolling motor," explains Dance. "The bow

Dance caught this nice blue while pre-fishing the 2016 Mississippi River Monsters catfish tournament out of Memphis.

is into the current as the boat drifts slowly downstream while you work the bait back a good distance behind the boat. This method is popular for one reason," says Dance. "It catches lots of fish."

"I really like to fish the slow down-

current ends of shoals. I look for depths of 30 to 60 feet. In those depths, it's easy to control your boat and there are lots of food sources. This is where many nice sized, hungry catfish hangout."

Part of his passion for trophy blue catfishing comes from the confrontation offered by the Big Muddy. "Fishing moving water and fishing the Mighty Mississippi, America's biggest river, is a challenge," said Dance. "It's the ultimate challenge. The river is so unpredictable. You are always at the mercy of the river and its many elements. One day it's high. One day it could be low. One day it can be forgiving and favorable, and the next day, it's far from it. Every day is a challenge and so are its big catfish. If you can catch cats, here, you can catch them anywhere."

Mr. Blue's passion for catfishing and his

attitude toward the sport never allows him to have a bad day. "I have been skunked many days on the Mississippi," stated Dance. "That just happens, that's just fishing. At the end of each day, I am well aware that I got to go fishing and any day that I get to go fishing has got to be a good day. Hey, I plan to fish forever - well, that and a little bit more."



- Ron Presley

Dance is shown here discussing catfishing with another catfish fanatic, Vicky Mathenia, just before fishing the Mississippi River out of Mud Island.



CATFISH CONSERVATION

Trophy Catfish for the Future

by Brad Hierstetter



The sport of recreational trophy catfishing has grown at an impressive rate over the last two decades. During this time, the number of anglers who pursue larger catfish has increased

Conservation accomplished today will ensure trophy catfish for future generations.

considerably, a trend that industry has recognized.

Two tournaments held this year, on the same September weekend, exemplify increased angler and industry interest in trophy catfishing. On the Ohio River, 329 anglers participated in the 11th Annual Ohio River Cats Catfish Tournament. To the South, more than 180 boats fished the Mississippi River Monsters Tournament, which was sponsored by over thirty-five industry partners.

Despite the sport's growth, many people, for various reasons, still refuse to recognize the importance of protecting recreational catfisheries. Activities underway in many states, some of which are Government-sanctioned, are jeopardizing some of our nation's finest public trophy catfish waters. Some fisheries managers consider trophy catfish a threat to native species and many people still hold the antiquated belief that catfish are "trash" fish, not game fish.

In these waters, especially those where trophy catfish are not indigenous, some state fisheries managers have labeled trophy catfish a significant threat to native species – thus the adjective "invasive" or "nuisance." As a result, steps have been taken to limit the expansion of trophy catfish populations and/or to reduce their overall numbers.

In Maryland, for example, anglers are encouraged by the Department of Natural Resources to "remove and kill any blue and flathead catfish they catch." Maryland also permits blue catfish to be removed from its waters and transported live to destinations outside of Maryland, with no restrictions on size or numbers.

Paylakes stocked with catfish taken from public waters pose a considerable risk too. They are arguably the most significant threat to our trophy catfish fisheries. Paylakes are privately owned and many are stocked with catfish removed from public waters by licensed commercial anglers who capture catfish using gill nets, hoop nets, and trotlines. These commercial anglers sell their



catches to paylake owners or to people who provide live fish to paylake owners. These owners routinely pay a premium rate per-pound for trophy-sized catfish and charge constituents a fee in exchange for permission to fish their stocked lakes.

The habitat in most paylakes is vastly different than, and inferior to, habitat present in the fish's source waters. The health of most catfish uprooted from public waters and relocated to paylakes quickly deteriorates and a very high number succumb to early deaths. Many of the larger fish are ten years of age or older. Reports posted by education-oriented groups, such as Exposing Paylakes, provide reliable documentation of hundreds of thousands of pounds of catfish being transplanted from public waters to paylakes each year.

Now, more than ever, recreational catfish anglers must unite in support of formal measures that will protect and conserve our public trophy catfisheries. Recreational anglers must accept this REALITY: in the absence of a visible contingent of trophy catfish advocates, the actions of those who do not view trophy catfish favorably will, invariably, harm the public catfisheries that are so near and dear to our hearts.

I challenge everyone who enjoys catfishing to publicly and actively support catfish conservation. This includes those anglers who fish purely for fun, tournament anglers – including those





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with formal sponsorships – members of catfishing clubs, catfishing guides, owners of catfishing-related businesses, and members of the media.

Speaking both practically and generally, the amount of time necessary to be a meaningful conservationist is minimal. A few simple, yet productive, actions that you can take include: supporting groups with a conservation focus; asking your local fisheries managers to implement and enforce measures to discourage the transportation of trophy catfish from public waters to paylakes; consistently practicing Catch, Photograph, and Release (C.P.R.) of larger fish; and harvesting selectively.

Whatever action you take, do not knowingly leave the fate of our great sport up to others. Engage now and do your part to ensure that future generations can experience excellent trophy catfishing.

 - Brad Hierstetter

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How to Find and Catch Large River Cats

by John Phillips

"What are those white things floating on the surface of the water?" I asked John Hill, my friend who fishes the Tennessee River regularly. Hill answered, "Those are Asiatic clams. Each summer these clams will have a die-off, which signals a catfish bonanza. The catfish will move in and feed on these mollusks as they begin to die. If you'll pick-up some of these clams off the surface, put them on a No. 1 hook, add a piece of shot lead 8 inches up the line and let the clams float back-down to the bottom, you'll catch all the catfish you want."

You also can use your depth finder in a large river to locate big, underwater boulders and underwater drop-offs and ledges that only may drop from 3 to 5 feet. These current breaks out in the middle of a river often will hold numbers of catfish, because they provide ambush points for the catfish and current breaks where the fish can hold. Catfish also will concentrate on the inside bends of main rivers. Too, I enjoy finding river cats where small run-offs pour into the main river.

Sometimes after a summer storm, little feeder creeks and streams will bring mud-stained water with an abundance of insects, worms, grubs and microorganisms into the river. The baitfish will concentrate on the edges of the mud line. In these kinds of places, the catfish have the option of feeding on the food brought-in by the running water or the baitfish attracted to that stained water. Often within an hour after a run-off begins, catfish will stack-up in these types of areas.

To take river cats in the summer, travel the middle of the river, and watch your depth finder. You'll notice most of the fish you see in the middle of the river will hold in about the same depth of water. Anchor upstream of the school, use a slip bobber to set the depth at which you'll fish, and then bait. You often can locate catfish in little puddles in a large river. A small funnel of water may be trickling from the main river into a small pond, a drainage ditch or a side creek will



hold catfish that use these small channels to get into these backwater regions. Because these areas seldom have fishing pressure, you may pinpoint high concentrations of catfish in these out-of-the-way places.

You'll consistently produce catfish where shallow flats break-off into the main river channel, especially after dark in the summertime. The catfish often will move-up to the lip of the break or even into the shallow water to feed when the stars come out. By fishing with a float to keep your bait just off the bottom or by using an egg-shaped slip sinker with a barrel swivel, 20 inches of leader and a No. 6 hook on the bottom, you can catch the catfish as they move onto the flats.

To learn more about catching cats check out "Catfish Like a Pro", available in both Kindle and print formats at <http://amzn.to/W900eu>. Click on the look inside feature and you can read the table of contents and 10 percent of the book free.

“Chutes, Ladders, and Sore Thumbs, Too”

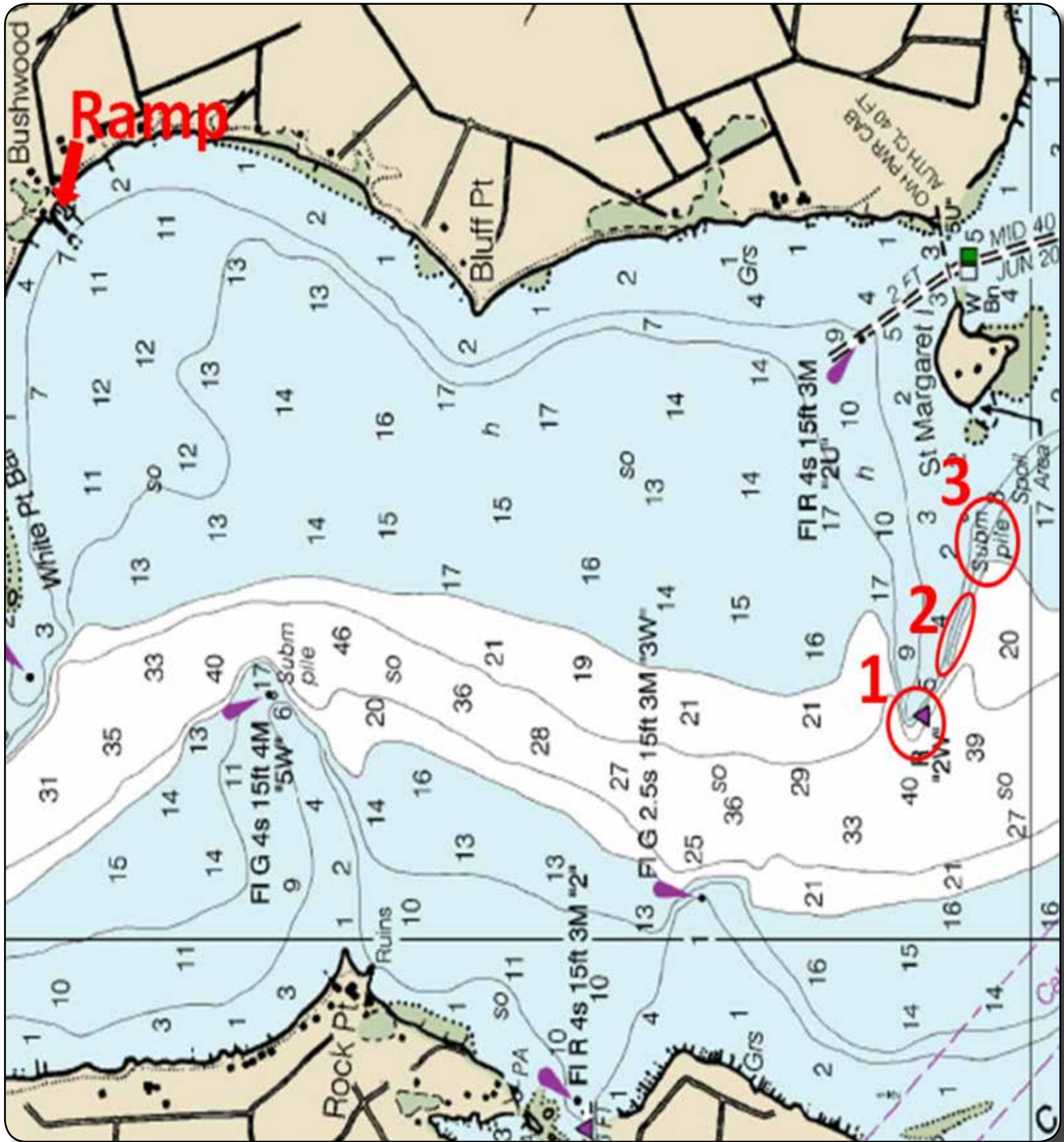
by Brad Hierstetter

“Reliable Spots for River Blues and Channels”



Catfish heavily relate, and often feed in close proximity, to structure; therefore, identifying structure is a very important skill that will allow river anglers to immediately increase their likelihood of more consistently catching blue and channel catfish.

These fallen trees, the tops of which lie in over 10 feet of water, are an excellent example of visible structure.



In a 2 and 1/4 mile stretch of river this chart shows three quality invisible structures within a few yards one another: 1.) a shallow point that drops into a deep channel, which is marked by a visible red buoy; 2.) a steep ledge dropping into deeper water; and 3.) a submerged pile.





What exactly is structure? Simply stated, structure is any change, drastic or subtle, in bottom contour or composition. Before exploring the two main categories of structure always remember that structure is a blue or channel catfish's dining room, so fish near it whenever possible.

The first structure type, visible, refers to objects such as a shoreline log jam, a riprap (rock or concrete) bank, a partially sunken wreck, or a bridge. Generally, anglers who arm themselves with an acute sense of awareness can fairly easily identify these structures, many of which will “stick out like a sore thumb” when viewed in relation to their immediate surroundings.

Some anglers find locating underwater anomalies to be a bit more challenging. Examples of this second major structure type, invisible, include: ledges (commonly called “drop-offs”), holes, humps, log or rock piles, and changes in bottom hardness. Aside from

The author's tournament partner, Mike Dodge, holding a 68-pound blue catfish caught in November from a main river ledge.

being productive year-round and, generally, easier to locate, ledges are my favorite type of invisible structure, thus my reference to the popular board game “Chutes and Ladders” within this article's title to assist with remembering not to overlook them.

Three geographical principles, applicable to nearly all rivers and creeks, can also be useful when deciding where (or where not) to fish: 1.) The current on outside river bends moves more quickly than the current on inside bends; 2.) The deepest part of any river stretch is typically on the outside river bend; and 3.) Complex snags, which are comprised of more than one structure, are often found near river bend holes.

Your preference of targeting blue or channel catfish should also factor into your selection of fishing spots. Blue catfish favor “bigger” waters with faster currents. Blue catfish also remain active in a much broader range of water temperatures. In fact, many trophy blue catfish are caught during the cooler months of October through March, in water temperatures as cold as 33 degrees Fahrenheit.

to moderate currents and, according to most experts, thrive in water temperatures between 70 and 80 degrees Fahrenheit. I will add one caveat with a general statement from my personal experiences: on bigger rivers inhabited by both blue and channel catfish, large blue and large channel catfish can regularly be caught from deep ledges when the water temperatures start to consistently rise from their winter lows and consistently drop from their summer highs.

In contrast, channel catfish prefer slow

RELIABLE CHANNEL CATFISH LOCATIONS BY SEASON	
WINTER (coldest water for an extended period)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep holes or pockets away from the main river flow • Deep areas bordering the main channel • Deep holes at the mouths of tributaries • Behind anything that reduces current 	
SPRING (rising water temperatures)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In early Spring, channel catfish might still spend most of their time in deep holes • Moving, but still avoiding direct current • The core of holes and shoreline holding areas • Flooded sloughs • Backwaters 	
PRE-SPAWN (rising water temperatures and stabilizing river flows)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Into smaller feeder rivers • Temporarily concentrate around upriver barriers such as dams, riffle areas (or rapids), and behind wing dams • In spots offering both food and protection from current 	
SPAWN (water temperatures of 75 degree Fahrenheit or higher)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June is the most common spawning month across the channel catfish’s geographic range • Shallowest and narrowest stretches of river • Crevices near rocky riffles • Undercut banks, muskrat holes, and objects in the water • Flooded timber in backwater lakes and sloughs 	



POST-SPAWN/PRE-SUMMER (water temperatures between upper-70 degrees and mid-80 degrees Fahrenheit)

- Logjams
- Deep, cover-laden holes
- In high water, try the lower ends of tributaries, flooded timber, side channels, and backwater areas

SUMMER (annual maximum water temperatures)

- Holes
- Woody structure
- Snags
- Flooded timber in backwater lakes and sloughs
- In higher water, try the lower ends of tributaries, flooded timber, side channels, and backwater areas

TURNOVER/FALL (water temperatures cooling from 80 degrees Fahrenheit)

- Below rock riffles in October
- Bigger, deeper water and deep wintering holes

An effective way to identify invisible structure prior to venturing towards the river is to review a nautical chart, if one exists for your particular waterway. On charts maintained by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), two or more contour lines running closely together indicate a ledge; the more lines in close proximity to one another, the steeper the ledge. An icon, bordered by a dotted line, resembling a football with its laces up marks a sunken wreck.

Additionally, abbreviations such as “hrd” (hard), “Le” (ledge), “Obstn” (obstruction), “Rk and Rky” (rocks and rocky), “so” (soft), “Ru” (ruin), “Subm piles” (submerged piles), “Wk” (wreck), and others indicate invisible structures that may be worthy of further investigation. Be sure to review “U.S. Chart No. 1” for a thorough description of the “symbols, abbreviations and terms used on all NOAA, NGA and international nautical charts...” The latest edition of U.S. Chart No. 1 can be found

online, here: <http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/mcd/chartno1.htm>

“...always remember that structure is a blue or channel cat’s dining room, so fish near it whenever possible.”

If you are fortunate enough to own or fish from a boat equipped with a chart plotter, it is likely that the chart plotter’s pre-installed map will, to some degree, mirror the nautical charts described above. If its factory-installed map lacks adequate granularity, most modern units can be upgraded with more detailed maps for an additional fee.

If the river that you are fishing has not yet been formally mapped, time on the water dedicated primarily to scouting may be the only available means of “marking” specific structures. If you are fishing from

shore, purposefully choose locations in the vicinity of both visible and invisible structure.

Once on the river, cast your fresh, preferably native and/or oily, baits well above your chosen structure. Doing this will afford you the maximum opportunity to catch active fish immediately near your baits, as well as any that may be holding above the structure.

Recall that catfish can taste food without actually putting it in their mouths. This biological fact, coupled with directing your initial casts well above the structure and allowing the current to carry your bait's scent trail downriver (toward the structure), is what may pique the interest of fish positioned above the structure.

Fishing near reliable river structures will allow you to more consistently land

blue and channel catfish across a greater variety of conditions and seasons. This primer will enable you to more easily locate these productive structures, which truly are catfish magnets.

I would like to close with a reminder about the importance of conservation to our sport's present and future. Please remember that not everyone views catfish as the precious natural resource they are. Do your part to support sustainable recreational catfish fisheries by harvesting your catch selectively, by practicing Catch-Photograph-Release of larger fish, and by actively supporting regulations that foster quality fisheries. Recognize, too, that, now, more than ever, the recreational catfishing community must unite and, as an organized entity, actively promote catfish conservation.

 - Brad Hierstetter

CATFISH "SPEAK"

Gut pocket: It's the belly part of a bait fish that holds the guts. It looks like a taco.

Larry Muse, MS

CatfishSpeak - The Language of Catfishing

Like any other sport, catfishing has a verbiage of its own. From catfish slang to useful phrases, catfish anglers communicate in a special language. CatfishNow plans to keep you up to date with this angler blending of the English language and catfish jargon that we call CatfishSpeak.

CATFISH COOKIN'

By Gene Westbrook - MagnoliaCollectionRecipes.com

WHOLE BACON-WRAPPED & CREOLE FRIED CATFISH



2 medium-size whole catfish, cleaned

Salt

1 egg

1-cup milk

$\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 cup Tony Chachere's Seasoned Fish Fry Mix

4 strips of bacon

Vegetable oil for frying

Toothpicks

Lemon wedges for serving

Wash the whole cleaned catfish and pat dry with paper towels, then salt both sides and the cleaned inside cavity; set aside.

Beat the egg in a shallow, flat bowl; then beat in the milk until very well blended. Add the two whole catfish to the mixture. Turn the catfish a couple of times; then allow them to soak for about one minute.

Pour the Tony Chachere's Seasoned Fish Fry Mix into a shallow pan long enough to hold the catfish. Remove one catfish from the egg and milk mixture and immediately dredge in the fish fry mix twice on each side, including the cavity area. Place the coated catfish on a cutting board and wrap one-half of the catfish with a strip of bacon securing the bacon in several places with toothpicks. Continue wrapping and securing

the remainder of the catfish with a second slice of bacon. Repeat the dredging and bacon wrapping with the other catfish.

Pour enough vegetable oil for frying into a cast iron skillet (or other heavy skillet); then heat the oil to a high temperature, but not smoking. Carefully slip both bacon wrapped catfish into the hot oil and reduce the heat to between medium-high and medium. Cook until nicely browned and done. Fish cooks quickly and is done when the fish color changes from translucent to white, and the fish is flaky when lifted with a fork.

Drain the fried catfish on a couple of layers of paper towel.

Serve hot with lemon wedges on the side.

Serves: 1 or 2.



River Rumors

Mississippi River Monsters and Monsters on the Ohio have one very common element - Monster Catfish! The sport of catfishing is growing and big tournaments are part of it. Two recent tournaments, one in Memphis, TN on the Mississippi River and one in Owensboro, KY, on the Ohio River, are testaments to the sports growing popularity.

On Saturday, Sept. 10, 2016 the catfish community witnessed the inaugural Mississippi River Monsters catfish tournament. Organizer George Young Jr. and his tournament volunteers intend it to be the first of many tournaments to shine a light on the great fishing out of Memphis and catfishing in general. The event brought 184 teams and more than 400 anglers to Memphis to chase whiskered critters.



Congratulations to George Young Jr. and his staff at Mississippi River Monsters. Young reports that registration is open for the next event on Sept. 16, 2017. Congrats also to the Masingale brothers, Jason and Daryl for winning it in 2016.

Read more at

<http://www.catfishnow.com/masingale-brothers-win-mississippi-river-monsters-tournament/>

A few hundred miles away, on Oct. 8, 2016, Aaron Wheatley was staging his seventh Monsters on the Ohio event. A record setting 192 boats registered for the catfish affair. Monsters on the Ohio began in 2010 with a few avid catfish anglers and has grown each year since to the 192 boats in 2016. The beautiful setting at English Park in Owensboro, KY attracts a big crowd to welcome the anglers to the scales and angler after angler claim the tournament to be their favorite.



Congratulations to Aaron Wheatley and his staff at Monsters on the Ohio for another successful tournament. Congrats also to Jeremy Ransom and Travis Robertson. They caught 104.4 pounds of Ohio River catfish to win the 2016 Monsters on the Ohio crown. Read more at <http://www.catfishnow.com/jeremy-ransom-and-travis-robertson-win-monsters-on-the-ohio-in-owensboro-ky>

Tournament Results

SOUTHEAST NEBRASKA MO RIVER

BROWNSVILLE

SEPTEMBER 4TH

1. Tim Hager/Lori Hager	11
2. Larry Dorsch/Timothy James Hager	10.15
3. Tommy and Nephew	5
4. Kaleb Vice/Rodney Keithley	2

BIG FISH

1. Tim Hager/Lori Hager	11
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OHIO VALLEY RIVER CATS

RISING SUN

SEPTEMBER 9th - 10th

1. Johnson/Johnson	196.8
2. Loudermilk/Jones	124
3. Team Shattered Cat	118.8
4. Petrowski/Nefus/Petrowski	116.4
5. Butler/Wilson	113.8

BIG FISH

1. Petrowski-Nefus/Petrowski	69.6
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TRI STATE CATS

KUTCHIES

SEPTEMBER 10th

1. Kelvin Horn/Caleb Howard	18.84
2. Joby Beavers/Melinda Apply	12.28
3. Aaron Post/Chrissie Stabile	7.1
4. David Limoges	5.86

BIG FISH

1. Kelvin Horn/Caleb Howard	11.65
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SOUTHEASTERN CATFISH

LAKE WATEREE

SEPTEMBER 10th

1. Lee Hardee/Joshua Coggins	91.45
2. John Terry/Jason Knight	68.2
3. Clay Henderson/Jason Henderson/David Henderson	57.8
4. Sam Williams III/Amy Williams/Sam Williams IV	52.3
5. Dean Birch/Paul Blackwell	49.25

OLD DOMINION

JAMES RIVER

SEPTEMBER 10th

1. Todd Glidewell/Trevor Morgan	89.5
2. Sam Kirby/Charlie Temple	70.1
3. Jason Pope/Patrice Brooks/Colton Pope	49.2
4. Mike Haynes/Doug Coffey	48.15
5. Bruce Conner/James Keatts/Terry Keatts	46.95

CATFISH CHASERS

MILFORD LAKE

SEPTEMBER 10th - 11th

1. Frank/Diehl	120.15
2. McCarter/Failes	114.65
3. Neufeld/Postier	112
4. James/Smith	110.4
5. Easley/Koney	93.45

BIG FISH

1. Johnson/Johnson	29.65
2. Parks/Fischer	25.6

MISSISSIPPI RIVER MONSTERS

MISSISSIPPI RIVER

SEPTEMBER 10th

1. Daryl Masingale/Jason Masingale	151.02
2. Jonathan Cooksey	125.7
3. Zed Moore/Josh Moore	116.7
4. Wade Kininski/Jason Huggins	110.7
5. Brad Stout/Billy Littleton	

TRI-COUNTY CATFISH ASSOCIATION**SEPTEMBER 17th**

1. Mark Farrow/Jerry Cline II	52.7
2. Tom Walsh/Tim Walsh	49.15
3. Harold Smith/Cole Smith	45.55
4. Danny Sapp/Jeff Sapp	43
5. Bob Julson/Perry Kane	40.7

BIG FISH

1. Harold Smith/Cole Smith	25.7
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INDIANA CATFISH ASSOCIATION

PETERSBURG

SEPTEMBER 17th

1. Lloyd/Rob	36
2. Corey/Travis	28.8
3. Chuck/James	17
4. Bruce/Mark	15.7
5. Ron/George	12.7

BIG FISH

1. Lloyd/Rob	19.1
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JKV TOURNAMENT TRAIL

OHIO RIVER

SEPTEMBER 17th

1. Richie Blakley/Smitty	71.5
2. Mark Northerner/Andrew Sandage	68.14
3. Keith Tarrence/Gary St.Clair	51.1
4. Chris Nesmith/Danny Glover	49.4



Tournament Results

5. Wayne King/Jennifer King/Connor 45.2

BIG FISH

1. Mark Northerner/Andrew Sandage 32.8

TRI-STATE CATS

KUTCHIES

SEPTEMBER 24th

1. Aaron Post/Chrissie Stabile 63.25

2. Brian Coan/Bubba Coan 20.16

3. David Limoges 16.31

4. Joby Beavers/Melinda Apply 5.28

5. Marvin Hines/Trevor Hines/Adam Belt 4.39

BIG FISH

1. Aaron Post/Chrissie Stabile 43.29

KANSAS CITY CATFISH

INDEPENDENCE PARK

SEPTEMBER 25th

1. Dale Smith/Clint Gesling 82.1

2. John Trager/Dave Clark 60

3. Derek Allen/Anthony Jacoby 59.6

4. Andrew Carnes/Randy Morgan 55.5

BIG FISH

1. Dale Smith/Clint Gesling 56.4

CABELA'S KING KAT

OHIO RIVER

SEPTEMBER 23rd - 24th

1. Carl Morris Jr/Rob Parsons 210.36

2. Nathan Weathers/Andy Carter 166.64

3. Aaron Wheatley/Rusty Morris 157.22

4. Dale Kerns/Matthew Kerns 149.2

5. Scott Cress/Carl Crone 140.02

BIG FISH

1. Carl Morris Jr/Rob Parsons 77.18

CATHUNTERS ASSOC. OF THE SOUTH

CHOCTAWHATCHEE

SEPTEMBER 30th

1. Steve Nousiainen/Mitch Kurtis 37.2

2. Glen Flowers/David Reeves 35.1

3. Jason Westberry/Devin Adams 30.8

4. Scott Barrow/Jasper Baily 23.8

5. Joey Meeks 22.6

BIG FISH

1. Joey Meeks 22.6

CABELA'S KING KAT

CUMBERLAND RIVER

SEPTEMBER 30th - OCTOBER 1st

1. Fonzi Malaikham/Adam Dehner 170.88

2. Scott Cress/Joe Bensman	151.7
3. Chris DeBow/Rob Benningfield	145.2
4. Steve Collins/Kevin Tindle	132.1
5. Joey Pounders/Jay Gallop	130.14

BIG FISH

1. Chris DeBow/Rob Benningfield	50
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KANAWHA RIVER CATFISH

KANAWHA

OCTOBER 1st

1. Adam Scott/Tyler Booth	68.3
2. Jeremy Jeffers/Troy Jarrell/Bub Hohnson	59.1
3. James Pauley/Karen Pauley	52.25
4. Todd Anderson/Greg Adkins/Noah Elbin	51.95
5. Neal Craig/Mikey Jordan	49.15

BIG FISH

1. James Pauley/Karen Pauley	38.55
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CATFISH COUNTRY

BRUSH CREEK

OCTOBER 1st

1. Darren Wright/Dianne Pennington	59.8
2. Ray Butler/Scott Wilson	49.05

BIG FISH

1. Darren Wright/Diane Pennington	22.6
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OLD DOMINION

JAMES RIVER

OCTOBER 1st

1. Joey Keefe/Randy Waid	131.95
2. Thomas Mallory/Jason Pope	78.25
3. Bryant Newton/David Barnett/Greg Belknap	58.85
4. Ryan Smiley/Chris Weaver	49.7
5. Charlie Temple/Justin Hubbard	47.05

BIG CAT QUEST

NEW MADRID

OCTOBER 1st

1. Davis Harrison/George Harrison	113.35
2. Brad Gray/Aaron Stephenson	101.1
3. Lonnie Fountain/Dann Fountain	95.8
4. Aaron Churchwell/Jake Herman	95.1
5. Donnie Fountain/Grady Garrett	33.75

BIG FISH

1. Brad Gray/Aaron Stephenson	40.3
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CATFISH CLUBS

CLUB	CONTACT	WEBSITE
ALABAMA CATFISH TRAIL	DANIEL PARSONS (205)209-2794	ALABAMACATFISHTRAIL.COM
BIG CAT QUEST		BIGCATQUEST.COM
BIG SIOUX CAT ANGLERS	DICK HINRICHSEN 712-490-6392	BIGSIOUXCATANGLERS.COM
CAROLINA ANGLERS TEAM TRAIL C.A.T.T	BRETT COLLINS(803)413-7521	CATTRAIL.ORG
CATFISH CHASERS TOURNAMENT SERIES	DAVID STUDEBAKER/785-289-0007	CATFISHCHASERS.COM
CATFISH CONFERENCE	FEB. 25-26	CATFISHCONFERENCE.COM
CATFISH COUNTRY		CATFISHCOUNTRY.COM
CATFISH NATION OUTDOORS	(240)409-6284	CATFISHNATIONOUTDOORS.COM
CATHUNTERS ASSOC. OF THE SOUTH C.A.T.S.	GLEN FLOWERS	CATSClub.US
EXTREME CATFISHING	CHAD WAUGH (206)343-1074	EXTREMECATFISHING.COM
FISHIN BLUES	TIM ORR 580-917-8129	FISHINBLUES-CATFISHIN.COM
J.K.V. CATFISHING TOURNAMENT TRAIL		FACEBOOK
INDIANA CATFISH	SCOTT WISEMAN (812)614-1288	INDIANACATFISH.COM
KANAWHA RIVER CATFISH CLUB	NEAL CRAIG (304)389-7030 CABELA'S	FACEBOOK
KANSAS CITH CATFISH	BRADKILPATRICK@KCCATFISH.COM	FACEBOOK
CABELA'SKING KAT TOURNAMENT TRAIL	JEREMY COE (270)804-5012	KINGKATUSA.COM
MISSISSIPPI RIVER MONSTERS		FACEBOOK
MONSTERS ON THE OHIO		MONSTERSONTHEOHIO.COM
OHIO VALLEY RIVER CATS	FRANK 812-584-2135	FACEBOOK
OLD DOMINION CATFISH CLUB		OLDDOMINIONCATFISHCLUB.ORG
RED RIVER VALLEY CATFISH LEAGUE	BRAD DURICK 701-739-5808	RRVCATFISH.COM
SE NEBRASKA MO RIVER CATFISH CLUB	LORI	FACEBOOK
SOUTHEASTERN CATFISH CLUB	BRIAN SNIPES JOSHUA COGGINS	FACEBOOK
SOUTHWEST OHIO CATFISH CLUB	VANCE NADOSKY (513)379-2655	SWOCC.NET/NO WEB
TRI-COUNTY CATFISH ASSOCIATION	TOMMY WALSH	TRICOUNTYCATFISH.NET
TRI STATE KATS	712-389-5418	FACEBOOK
WEST TN CATFISH ANGLERS	JUSTIN RUSSELL	FACEBOOK GROUP
WEST TEXAS CATFISH TRAIL		FACEBOOK GROUP
WHISKY CITY CATFISH CLUB		WHISKYCITYCATFISH.COM
WICKED WHISKER TOURNAMENT TRAIL		WICKEDWHISKER.COM

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

OCTOBER	15th	CAROLINA ANGLERS TEAM TRAIL	WYLIE-BUSTER BOYD	CLUB
OCTOBER	16th	CATFISH NATION	FORT WASHINGTON	CLUB
OCTOBER	22th	ALABAMA CATFISH TRAIL	LAKE GUNTERSVILLE	CLASSIC
OCTOBER	22nd- 23rd	INDIANNA CATFISH	OHIO RIVER	CLUB
OCTOBER	22nd- 23rd	BIG CAT QUEST	JAMES RIVER	CHAMPIONSHIP
OCTOBER	29th	BIG CAT QUEST	PICWIK	CATFISH DERBY
OCTOBER	29th	JKV CATFISHING TRAIL	ANGEL MOUNDS	FALL CHAMPIONSHIP
NOVEMBER	5TH	EXTREEME CATFISHING	OHIO RIVER	CLUB
NOVEMBER	5th	SOUTHEASTERN CATFISH	FISHING CREEK	CLUB
NOVEMBER	5th	OLD DOMINION	JAMES RIVER	CLUB
NOVEMBER	12th	CAROLINA ANGLERS TEAM TRAIL	FISHING CREEK	CLUB
NOVEMBER	20th	CATFISH NATION	FORT WASHINGTON	CLUB
DECEMBER	3rd	SOUTHEASTERN CATFISH	LAKE WATEREE	CLUB
DECEMBER	3rd	OLD DOMINION	JAMES RIVER	CLUB
DECEMBER	10th	CAROLINA ANGLERS TEAM TRAIL	WATEREE	CLUB
DECEMBER	17th	JKV CATFISHING TRAIL	GREEN RIVER	CLUB
DECEMBER	18th	CATFISH NATION	WHITES FERRY	CLUB



*Congrats to Mississippi River
Monsters on a successful
inaugural tournament in
Memphis!*



See you next month