

BASSIN IN

BFE

Fishing

Tommy Abbott
On High School
Fishing

Monday
Big Bass
Tournaments

THE BOOT

July 2019

Volume 103

Bryan's MARINE



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FROM THE EDITORS

In the July issue of Bassin' in the Boot we share with our readers a world perhaps unknown to most in the bass fishing arena. A world that includes boat captains, family support, junior leagues and now the Louisiana High School Athletic Association throwing a line into bass fishing in our great state. We spent much time talking with those involved in all aspects of high school fishing from the parents and coaches to the student anglers themselves. We came across some great people doing great things in the state including Mr. Tommy Abbott. Many of you will know the name from him being the Louisiana High School BASS Nation Director of Public Relations or from his Public Relations Director position for Junior Southwest Bassmasters of Denham Springs. Still others will recognize him as a contributing writer for Bassmaster Magazine. To say the least, we are beyond ecstatic to have him as a guest contributor this month. We stay true to our commitment to showcase the Louisiana based company and angler uniquely contributing to the sport and hobby by featuring Rougarou Tackle and Parker Baits out of Farmerville. Companies born with products tested in the waters of Northeast Louisiana, especially Lake D'Arbonne. Turkey Creek in Wisner was our chosen body of water to share with our readers. We even found time to fish a tournament with Benton Bass Club on beautiful Caddo Lake. We hope you enjoy our July issue and take every chance you get to GEAUX BASSIN!

- Charles Anderson & Jeffery Anderson





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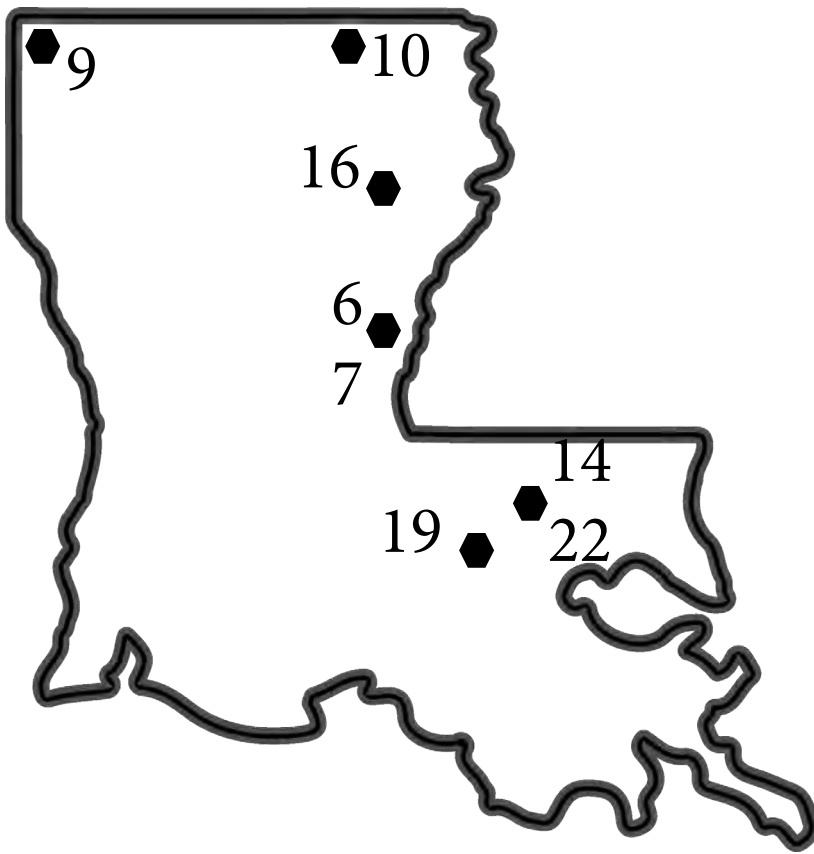
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July 2019
Volume 103



On The Cover

While covering some of the fantastic action in this month's edition we stopped to catch a sunset on the beautiful Lake Concordia, while launched out of our partners' launch at Lakeview Lodge on Lake Concordia. The fishing was great and the views were second to none. Check out Lakeview Lodge on Lake Concordia in Ferriday, Louisiana next time you are looking to go Bassin' In The Boot in the Cen-LA.

Photo Copyright: BayouExposures, LLC
Jeffery Anderson

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Words of the Wise

Pro Tips Collected by Avid Angler Michael Guillot



Over the years anglers have collected tips, tricks, and tools of the trade to gain that extra edge needed to put fish in the boat, and for some, checks in the bank. More often than not, anglers in general are like a secret society of one. Many anglers choose to hold tight their insights for their benefit alone, but from time to time you will find some willing to share valuable information. The following list of tips, tricks, and insights has been collected over the years by Michael Guillot from pros, and other avid anglers and he has chosen to share them with us. Maybe you know them all by now, maybe you know none, but either way, this list is sure to help some develop skills and gain fishing knowledge to boat more bass.

1. Save Shredded Worms – When your plastic worms get torn up, save ‘em. Bass like to ambush wounded prey, so a beat-up worm is perfect to use, especially in shallow water.
2. Red Fools the Fish – In shallow cover – wood, stumps, clumps of grass – I like to use a spinner bait with a red or pink head, and a crank bait with red hooks. The red makes the fish think the bait is injured, and they’ll bite at it.
3. Skip Your Bait – When you cast, stop halfway instead of following through, similar to a check swing in baseball. This makes the lure hit the surface of the water a few feet before your target, so the lure skitters over the water. It’s a good way to get under docks and other structures.
4. Keep Your Hooks Sharp – I use a file to sharpen my hooks every time I catch a fish and before every trip. It takes 30 seconds. Bass have boney jaws, so a sharp hook is more apt to penetrate the fish.
5. Look at Your Livewell Water – When you put a bass in the livewell, they’re notorious for spitting up what they were feeding on. From there you can tell what color lure or kind of lure to throw the rest of the day.
6. Face the Wind – Sacrifice some distance in your casts and fish with the wind in your face. Bass always swim with the current, so it’s better for them to find your bait before they find your boat. Plus, the noise of water slapping your hull will carry away from the spot you’re fishing, which is good.
7. Fish Shallow in the Spring – In the spring bass hang out in spawning beds. Concentrate on shallow areas, especially in pockets and coves protected from the wind because this is where they like to guard their eggs. They’ll bite as much out of irritation with the lure as they will out of hunger.
8. Make Your Bait Seasonal – Bass eat different bait depending on the time of year. The general rule is early in the year they like crawfish, so use peach-colored patterns. In the summer and fall they like shad, so use chrome or silver baits.
9. Fish Before The Storm – The best time to fish bass is before a front comes through, and the worst time to fish them is after. The pressure makes the bass more active, so watch for a wall of clouds moving in. When it’s too pretty out, bass aren’t likely to bite.
10. Bug Those Bass – Bass are ornery fish. You have to keep tapping at it to upset it into biting your hook. Bass position themselves in cover, and like the lure presented to them at different angles. I’ve tossed lures a hundred times onto the same location until finally getting a bite.
11. Bonus Tip - Check Your Line – Often through the day, check your line frequently. Check for abrasions, nicks, and cuts. Especially check fluorocarbon for abrasions, as fluorocarbon has no stretch so the line is more likely to snap than stretch when weakened, and it is never a good thing to have a trophy break off.



Big Bass Mondays



Brad Pritchard
6/24/2019 - 3.51#
Lake St. John



Thomas Long
5/6/2019 - 4.08#
Lake St. John



Donnie Lefebvre
5/20/2019 - 3.77#
Lake St. John



Ronnie Gillespie
6/10/2019 - 3.02#
Lake St. John



Colt Slover
6/3/2019 - 2.38#
Lake Concordia



Sean Maples
4/22/2019 - 1.9#
Lake St. John



Greg and son Kyle Ensminger
5/13/2019 - 3.81#
Lake Concordia



Mike Rice
6/17/2019 - 3.97#
Lake Concordia



Trey Buckles
4/29/2019 - 2.62#
Lake Concordia

Want to see a Big Bass day of the week on your lake? Reach out to us and let us know!

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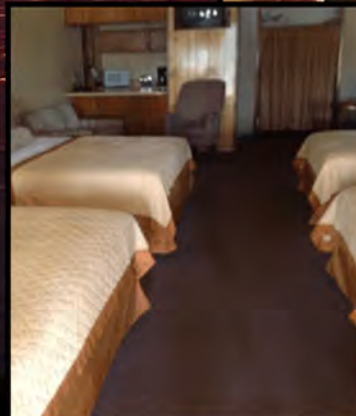
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and 5-8 people. The "Big House"
sleeps 16.

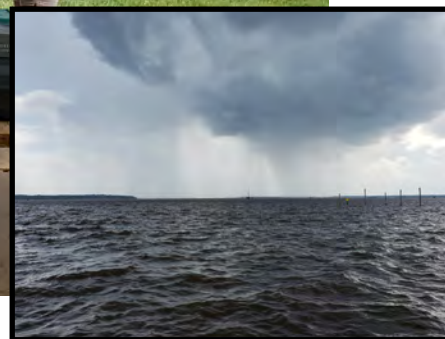
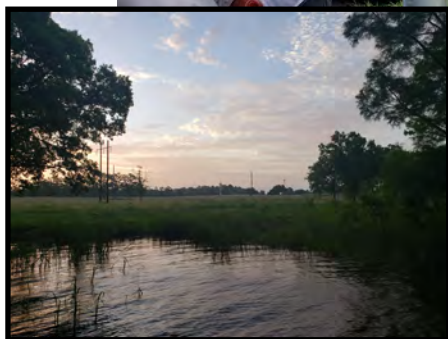
Rooms available from \$90/night.
R.V. Sites available \$35/night.

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Bassin' In The Boot on Caddo Lake with Benton Bass Club

On June 23, Benton Bass Club fished Caddo Lake with 20+ guys fishing out of Earl G. Williamson Park. Eric Williams took 1st place with a 21.68# sack followed closely by Jeremy Dobson with 20.47# bag of greenbacks. Third place went to Jacob Caraway who boated 13.22# of the bass variety. Alan Burson won the trash fish with 5.26# gasper goo. A great time was had on an awesome body of water. We would like to thank Toby Rivers and the gang for letting us tag along. If you or your club would like to have Bassin' in the Boot fish along just let us know on Facebook, Instagram, or email bassinintheboot@gmail.com. Geaux Bassin!



FISH WILD!

Lake D'Arbonne in Farmerville, La was added as a 2nd host for the 2019 Ronald McDonald's House Big Bass Tournament. Due to the high water on Ouachita River, an additional water body was allowed for the annual fundraiser tournament. I'm in Farmerville but not for the tournament. I'm here to meet with the guys from Rougarou Tackle. Sitting just a rock's throw up Hwy 33 barely off the banks of D'Arbonne, I am waiting at K&M Coffee, Corks, and Camo, the local bait and tackle shop. I'm not in K&M for the great coffee, the hospitality or the large selection of tackle; I'm here to meet up with a Louisiana Legend, sort of.

Anyone from Louisiana is familiar with the Rougarou Legend and it's werewolf like tendencies. Born of Cajun French Louisiana folklore, the Rougarou is a creature with the body of a man and the head of a werewolf or dog. Prowling the swamps of the Louisiana, the mythical creature feeds upon wayward children staying out too late or entering the woods at night. The myth has kept a many children of Cajun country out of the woods and home by curfew. Legend has evolved inspiring a display at the Audubon Zoo in New Orleans with the mythical creature standing upright, glowing red eyes, werewolf head and the shoes of the many disobedient children at his feet.

Rougarou Tackle was founded by two "Louisiana Boys" from Northeast Louisiana.

Growing up in Farmerville fishing Lake D'Arbonne and other area waterways, Justin Bailey and Adam Foret developed a passion for fishing. Justin swears the friendship started because Adam lived on Lake D'Arbonne; nonetheless it has grown into not only a lifelong friendship but a company.

Playing football at Farmerville High School the two graduated a year apart and although work and life have separated Adam and Justin geographically they are as close as ever and neither has lost sight of their roots in Union Parish.

With a dedication to offer quality products at an affordable price to the everyday angler, Rougarou Tackle is serious about serving the fishing industry. Providing tungsten and handmade quality jigs the priorities are quality, affordability, and superb customer service. The giving back doesn't stop with these priorities. The guys at Rougarou know that the future lies in the young anglers and their participation in the sport. This knowledge is the basis for the foundation of the Team Rougarou Junior Angler Program that pairs young anglers with experienced mentors and provides access to professional-grade fishing equipment.

Providing high quality tungsten at affordable prices for the everyday angler is the





High quality Rougarou Tungsten shown against the company packaging (blister pack removed for photo) in 1.25 ounces, as clearly marked on the side of the weight.



Rougarou Smashmouth Football Jig in "Scum Perch", available in 1/2 and 3/4 ounce, handmade with a little Rougarou Voodoo to help you haul in the big one.

basis of the Rougarou Tackle brand. With high quality tungsten at a fraction of the price of most national brands buying from the guys at Rougarou just makes sense. I took notice on the shelves at K&M and also done some pricing online and the Rougarou brand tungsten sells for just over half the cost of the national brands. With 3 packs going for around six dollars can you really afford not to give them a chance to provide tungsten for you? Price is not the only driving point; stay tuned to the upcoming release of the Voodoo Series featuring forever no chip tungsten with the weight right on the side of the tungsten.

The Voodoo Series will simplify a problem all worm fisherman face in determining the size and weight of the tungsten. Everyone has picked up tungsten and not known what the weight. That no longer is a problem when you buy the Voodoo Series tungsten from Rougarou Tackle. Jump online and get some of the top grade tungsten with the weights stamped right on the side. The selection doesn't stop there however, Rougarou has more to offer.

Let's talk jigs. Do you need a football head jig that just flat out catches fish? In fact, Justin says, "Our jigs are made to catch fish, not fishermen!" He went on to explain, "I know my jigs catch fish, I've caught hundreds of fish on them." They aren't as flashy perhaps as the next guys' jig but it's not about the flash it's about the hookset. The selection is limited in number but not in quality. Take a look at the six football jigs offered including the "Scum Perch" that Justin was reluctant to release. It hurt me to turn it loose to the public because this color just flat out catches fish Justin told me. Justin chooses to use the

Mustad Hook in the Rougarou Jig. Soon to add new products and wider selections it's all about keeping up with demand. Hoping to add a flipping jig soon the next item to be cranked out will be the Rougarou Spinnerbaits.

Catching the night time fishing bug from his dad, Justin loves spinnerbait fishing especially at night. Justin adds, fishing in the dark when you aren't expecting it "a 3 pound bass can jerk a rod out of your hands!" Fishing night tournaments on D'Arbonne is where you will find Justin as often as a tournament is held.

Spreading out and offering more of a selection is the goal the guys at Rougarou have. Getting big is not a fear for the guys at Rougarou, Justin says "there is no too big." They just want to provide a quality product to the anglers in the bass industry at an affordable rate to further promote the sport. With this in mind, Adam and Justin had a third gentleman join us to discuss Parker Baits from Jayme Parker in Farmerville. The intention is the guys at Rougarou will pair with Jayme to provide jig trailers and plastics to pair with the tackle offered for the bass angler. Plans are in the works to add Parker Baits to the Rougarou website.

Jayme Parker met Justin and Adam through mutual friends and a friendship just clicked. Jayme would come over while Justin was building jigs and got interested in making his own baits after being out of fishing for some time. Since Justin had the jig production in full swing, Jayme looked in to making plastics. After getting the hang of pouring plastics, injecting molds and little tricks of the trade Jayme has become the go to guy for area anglers in the Farmerville, Lake

D'Arbonne area. Offering bass baits predominately, Parker Baits also has crappie jigs available. The quality surpasses the mass production guys on the big box store shelves and is custom made to your specifications.

“Not that I am the best, there’s a lot of guys that do this, but in my mind I’m the best” Jayme’s confidence is in his ability to make top quality baits and keep the price competitive and in the average angler’s affordability range. Currently offering a dozen baits in most five dollar bags the value is definitely present in every bag Parker Baits sells. Not only is the value there but the selection is limitless.

Parker Baits offers a wide selection of worms, crawfish, and other trailers and plastics in traditional colors and unique colors. Jayme said, “Most of what I deal with is custom colors and obsolete colors.” Jayme went on to say he gets so happy “it’s like kids with birthday gifts when you hand baits to 65, 70 year old men and they say ‘Man this is it’ and the smile ear to ear just tickles me.” With mostly stock molds, Parker Baits will eventually branch out into original designs. Look for great things coming from Parker Baits and their partnership with Rougarou Tackle. Jayme serves on the prostaff team for Rougarou Tackle and helps out with the Junior Angler Program that Rougarou helps promote on D’Arbonne. The guys at Rougarou and Parker Baits care about their hometown, Lake D’Arbonne, and the future of bass fishing, these are good people doing good things in their community.

So if you’re looking to buy from a great Louisiana company that gives back, you’ve found it. Look no further than Rougarou Tackle and Parker Baits. Committed to Louisiana, specifically the Farmerville area these guys are doing great things for the bass industry right here in the Boot! So don’t be spooked by the name, Rougarou Tackle, get out there and “Fish Wildly!”



Parker Baits offers various soft plastics, including hammer hand craws, pig and creature style baits, lizards, worms, and much, much more.



Check out Rougarou Tackle at:
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[@parkerbaitco](https://www.facebook.com/parkerbaitco)

Or click their logos to be taken to their pages!



Do you or someone you know have a product or service contributing to the Louisiana Bass Fishing Industry? If so we would love to talk to you about a feature article to introduce your Louisiana company to our subscribers. Since our business is promoting the bass industry in Louisiana these articles are risk free and enable you to join our growing list of partners across the state. Like what you see? If you are interested in targeted advertisement, let us know and we can discuss getting your message delivered directly to its target audience, the Bassin' in the Boot Community, across various media forums. Shoot us an email at bassinintheboot@gmail.com

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BOAT FLIP



EVERYTHING

What did you do this weekend? “I hung out with my dad,” probably isn’t every newly graduated senior’s favorite answer. That is unless that senior is Wyatt Ensminger and “hung out” means bagging a two day 10 bass limit of 25.5lbs on beautiful Lake Concordia. How did dad feel about “hanging out” with his son Wyatt? Well his Facebook post said, “Great weekend watching this young man displaying his God given talent. I’m impressed every time I watch him.” I would say both guys had a pretty good weekend.

Wyatt and dad, Tom, were fishing as part of the Jr. Southwest Bassmaster’s two day tournament held on Lake Concordia. One of the very same lakes that Major League Fishing held their World Championship on last summer and aired Saturday, June 22, 2019 on CBS. The Lake is an oxbow once part of the Mighty Mississippi, long since cut off by the levee system the Army Corps of Engineers built to guard against flooding. The resulting lake has long been thought of as one of the premier lakes in Central Louisiana if not all of Louisiana. The tournament was hosted by Lakeview Lodge on the south end of Lake Concordia.

Lakeview Lodge owners Paul and Angel Rogers have a most hospitable way of making every guest feel right at home. Having a variety of accommodation configurations is perhaps the greatest



Wyatt and Tom Ensminger holding up Wyatt's day one bag of 15.11 pounds in the Jr. Southwest Bassmaster hosted at Lakeview Lodge on Lake Concordia.

asset of Lakeview. They have rooms featuring 2 double beds, rooms with 1 king bed, one room with 2 king beds, 2 double beds and a sleeper sofa or if needed there is the "Big House" with over 1,500 square feet of living space including a full kitchen and 2 bathrooms and nine beds scattered through the house to sleep up to 16 people. An on-site boat launch, picnic tables, a small pavilion, several piers, sitting area and rentable RV spaces make Lakeview Lodge the perfect location for hosting tournaments or a lake vacation for a family getaway. The next time you're wanting to kickback, relax and fish, make the call to Lakeview Lodge. Lakeview plays host to the Bassin' in the Boot Big Bass Monday Tournaments twice a month.

In the 15-18 year age group, Wyatt bested a field of anglers that are no slackers. With 10 bass, Hanson Chaney from Walker had a 21.78# bag total for 2nd place while Jordan Sylvester of Baton Rouge posted a 17.84# bag with 7 bass. Aaron Borne from Baton Rouge had the biggest bass of the weekend, a 4.66# greenback. What better way for sons and fathers to spend Father's Day? I simply can't think of one.

Wyatt jumped out on day one with a 15.11# bag to take the lead and never looked back. That day one bag is impressive and I know smaller bags have

won adult tournaments on Concordia. Day two had an early weigh in at noon or who knows what the culled total would have been for the two day total.

Wyatt is no stranger to fishing tournaments as he just finished his senior year at Central High School where he fished on the Bass Team his dad Tom founded. In all Wyatt estimates he has fished over 200 tournaments including Jr. Southwest Bassmasters, Central High School and other tournaments entered through his fishing career. He fished competitively at Central High and helped the Wildcats win the 2017 Louisiana State Championship. Central has had numerous anglers go on to compete at the national level by winning and/or placing in state qualifying tournaments. June 22nd saw the Central High School Bass Team host a benefit tournament at Henderson at the Basin Landing to raise money to help fund their team fishing in the BASS National Championship in Tennessee at Kentucky Lake.

B.F.E. Fishing is an acronym that brings to mind a team located somewhere off the map but this B.F.E. stands for something completely different. "Boat Flip Everything" is a favorite way for Wyatt to land his catch; although dad would rather he uses the net more often. The enthusiasm takes over and the fish is landed not always allowing time for the net. That same excitement has landed B.F.E Fishing sponsorships with Wicked Weights Quality Tungsten and Kajun Limb Outdoors.

Now that Wyatt has completed high school his plans are to attend Southeastern in Hammond and re-establish the bass fishing team there. He hopes to fish competitively on the collegiate level and told us, "I'd like to fish competitively for a living someday." Wyatt has a humble spirit and just talking to him one can tell he is grateful for the opportunities he has had because others were willing to help out and even make sacrifices on his behalf. From his parents to his boss he explains, "everyone has been real supportive of me and my dreams to fish." Wyatt Ensminger is an angler to keep your eye on. He's passionate but humble, energetic but strategic in his actions; it wouldn't be a surprise to turn the television on one day to him boat flipping everything, including a professional bass fishing tournament win.

Check out BFE Fishing, Wyatt Ensminger on Facebook [@BoatFlipEverything](#) to keep up with his competitive journey!

TURKEY CREEK LAKE

Turkey Creek Lake is a young reservoir created by the impoundment of the creek beds of Turkey Creek and West Turkey Creek, with minor tributaries from Prickett Bayou, and during high water the backing up of Boeuf River. The Turkey Creek area we know today began as a result of Act No. 159 of the 1938 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature, establishing the Turkey Creek Game and Fish Preserve.

With changes in 1963, and an abolishment of the preserve in 1981, the fishery was opened to the public and the operation of the lake handed over to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) who continues to maintain the state owned lake.

The 1953 impoundment, and the later raising of impoundment in 1963, yielded the 3,080 acres and 33 miles of shoreline we know today. With water levels controlled by a spillway and a drawdown structure, typical water levels vary only 2-4' seasonally. Public access to the southern end of the lake is primarily through Franklin Parish Police Jury's Turkey Creek Park at 158 Ready Road, Wisner, LA 71378. The park has a public boat launch, as well as a public fishing pier. There are also several private boat launches around the lake. Unseasonably high water this year prevented some boats launched at the public launch from accessing the northern portion of the lake due to low clearance under the LA-562 bridge. This was the case the day we visited the lake. The overall average

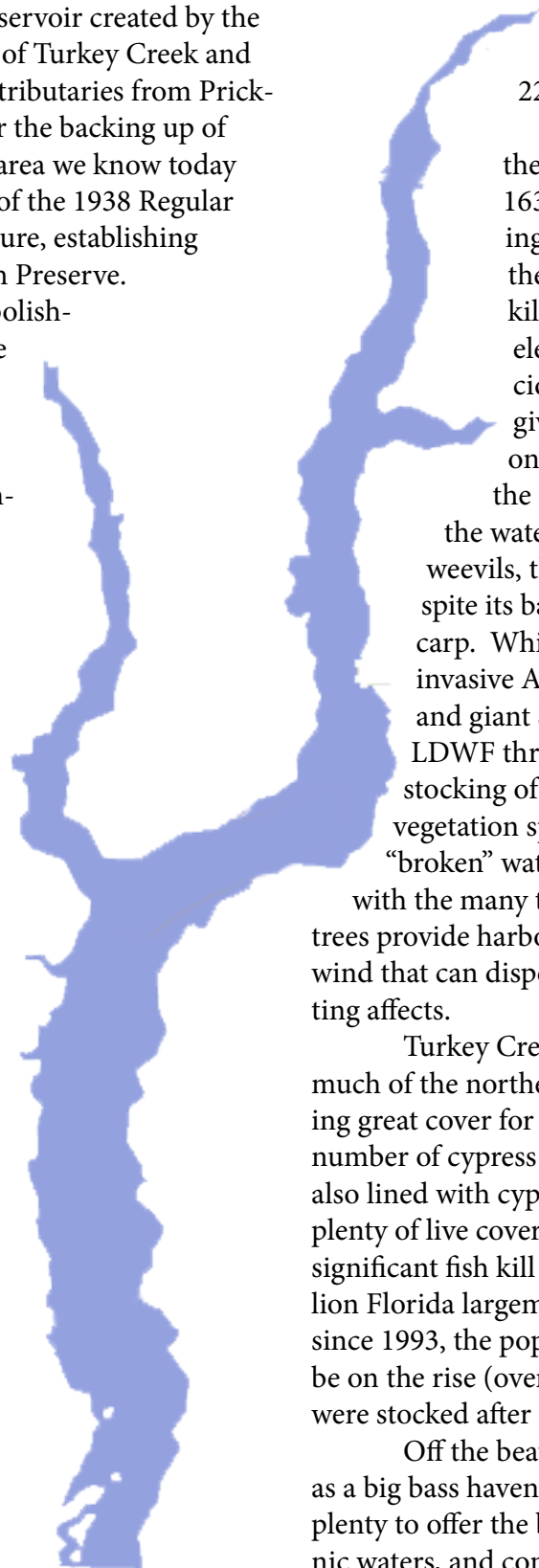
depth of the lake is approximately 8' with a maximum depth of about 22' near the LA-562 bridge.

Today the lake is thriving from the continued improvements to the 163 square miles of watershed, reducing pollutant runoff into the lake. In the 1970's and 1980's a series of fish kills and pollution samples showed elevated presence of numerous pesticides and herbicides; not surprising given the location in the middle of one of the richest farmland areas in the state. Due to improvements in

the watershed, stocking of both fish and weevils, the lake continues to thrive, despite its battles with invasive vegetation and carp. While the lake does have issues with invasive Asian carp, the duckweed, hyacinth, and giant Salvinia are combated annually by LDWF through herbicide application and the stocking of weevils that eat the Salvinia. These vegetation species continue to persist due to the "broken" water on the northern end of the lake with the many thick cypress tree groves. The dense trees provide harbor for the vegetation from effects of wind that can disperse and reduce the vegetative matting affects.

Turkey Creek Lake has flooded timber across much of the northern portion of the lake, providing great cover for bass, particularly given the large number of cypress trees. Much of the shoreline is also lined with cypress and hardwoods which provide plenty of live cover, as well as laydowns. With the last significant fish kill in 2010 and with well over 1.3 million Florida largemouth bass fingerlings being stocked since 1993, the population of largemouth bass should be on the rise (over 1 million of the FLB fingerlings were stocked after 2011).

Off the beaten path and not widely recognized as a big bass haven, Turkey Creek continues to have plenty to offer the bass angler from ample fishing, scenic waters, and convenient amenities. So the next time



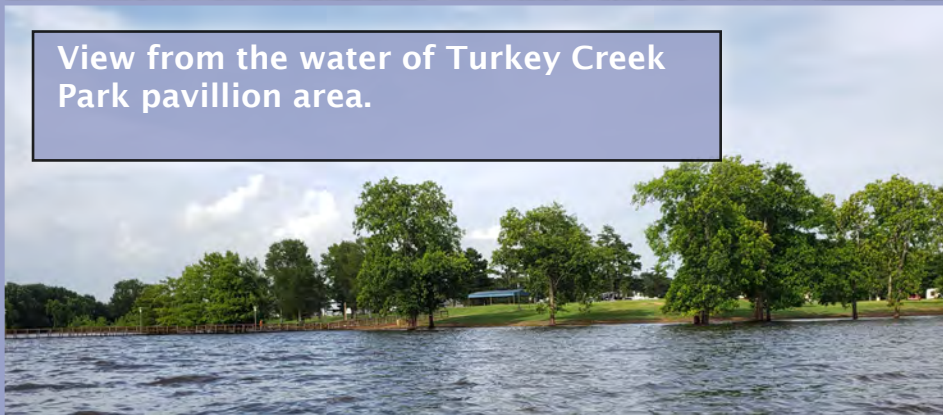
you are passing through the north-eastern portion of Central Louisiana, remember to stop by and do a little Bassin' In The Boot at Turkey Creek Lake.

High water conditions made the LA-562 bridge impassible for boat traffic much of June 2019.

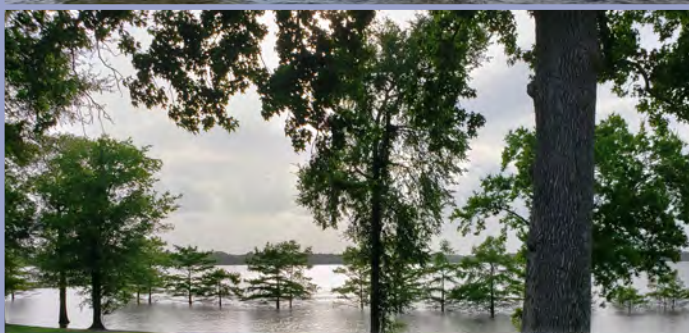
Turkey Creek Lake near Wisner, LA, in Franklin Parish. A hidden gem in the northeast portion of the heavy agriculture lands of Central Louisiana. Be sure to check out the Turkey Creek Park next time you launch on Turkey Creek Lake, Located at 158 Ready Road, Wisner, LA 71378.



View from the water of Turkey Creek Park pavillion area.



Turkey Creek Park features numerous amenities including a pavillion and playground, fishing pier, bathrooms, and more.



Much of the lake features flooded timber, particularly cypress trees, but with higher water, even more cover for bass.



Take a Break From The BassHoles This Weekend!

It's one of my most favorite celebrations of the year coming this weekend. A weekend to celebrate the freedoms we have in the greatest country on the planet. It is a wonderful weekend of fireworks, bar b que, family functions and celebrations to commemorate the birth of a nation, and not just any nation, the United States of America. It however will be a weekend without bass fishing for me. I mean it. You shouldn't even try to put your boat in the water this weekend; it will only ruin your day. I know the 4th is actually Thursday but many lakes and water bodies are used for weekend festivities such as boat parades, flotillas, and liberty loops, not to mention the party barges, tubers and jet skis that will be out all day leading up to the fireworks over the lakes. Yes sir save your sanity, leave the rods in the locker and the tackle in the box and enjoy the lake in a different way, just don't try to fish! So in a different light this month's "Basshole" actually is not really that inconvenient when you consider we are so very fortunate to live in the land of the free. What's one weekend of no bass fishing? God Bless America!

Don't Forget to Renew Your
Fishing Licenses! LA
Annual Licenses expired on
6/30/2019

Happy 4th of July!



LHSAA Getting in on Bass Fishing



High school bass fishing has seen an explosion in recent years. We all have experienced the BASS Elite Series, FLW Tour, and the MLF Bass Pro Tour all increase television, social media, and internet coverage as well as the anglers themselves upping their own exposure through social media accounts galore. A phenomenon similar to the pro golf upswing we saw with Tiger Woods and his domination of the sport starting in the late nineties. The coverage has played a role to say the least. Another major player in pushing the sport is the availability of products. With most every company in the bass fishing industry offering prostaff and junior prostaff positions for reduced price and sometimes even free tackle and gear the sport has become more economical for the average family. Lastly, I think the part of the lure (pun intended) into high school fishing is the quality time families, especially sons/daughters and fathers and/or father figures spend on the water together in a healthy, sportsmanship oriented atmosphere you get in a bass fishing tournament.

So when the Louisiana High School Athletic Association decided back in April to throw their hat in the ring and allow schools to compete in a state sanctioned bass fishing tournament trail everyone began wondering what that might look like. LHSAA has since outlined some rules and regulations and have decided how qualifying and state championship tournaments will be fished. I asked around the state and there are a number of people on both sides of the issue. Should LHSAA govern high school fishing in the State of Louisiana or should it be left alone as anglers compete in other bass fishing organizations and open tournaments as previously seen?

There are some pros to LHSAA getting into high school bass fishing as Bernie Cooley, Principal at Vidalia High School states, "I believe that the addition of Bass Fishing into the LHSAA is a wonderful thing. This addition adds opportunities for our outdoor enthused students and a platform for them to showcase their talents in the fishing arena. Every opportunity to provide avenues to help students move forward with their dreams is valuable, and this addition offers a valuable opportunity as well as a chance to involve more students in school activities. Students participating also get to experience one of Louisiana's greatest resources; Bass fishing." It's only fair to say that currently Vidalia High School does not have a bass fishing team but plan to add one this coming school year. We agree with Principal Cooley in the fact that anything you can do to get kids involved in something, especially team oriented, outdoors and nature focused activities involving exercise; we should try it.

There are cons to LHSAA getting into high school bass fishing as well. Some schools especially in the extended Baton Rouge, Shreveport, and Monroe City areas have established non-school sanctioned teams already. Some of these school teams are doing very well. In fact Central High's Wyatt Ensminger is featured this month in our magazine and two of his teammates along with three of Walker High School's teams all qualified to fish the Mossy Oak Fishing Bassmaster

National High School Championship August 8-10 on Kentucky Lake in Paris, TN. These teams have memberships of 20+ kids some fishing nearly 30 tournaments a year including BASS tournaments, opens and junior tournaments. There is already a very successful participation level, outlets for the teams to fish and rules, leagues, and organization established. Many of these students will fish in excess of 100 tournaments through high school getting more tournament time than some pros the year or two before they enter the professional ranks. After reading through the rules LHSAA put out governing the sanctioned events one in particular stands out above the rest. Taken directly from the rules:

There is no limit to the number of students each school can have on their team roster. Each team can enter up to six boats in LHSAA regional competition. Each boat may have up to four student contestants, only two of which may be in the boat at any one time, assigned from the team's roster. No student may be assigned to more than one boat. During competition boat with more than two students assigned may return to the takeoff site and exchange students under the supervision of the tournament director. No unsupervised exchanges are permitted. No changes may be made to boat assignments once regional competition begins. Although as stated in the opening paragraph of the 2019-20 LHSAA Regional and State Championship Rules: "Participation in LHSAA bass fishing does not restrict students from participating in non-LHSAA competitions or from participating on non-school teams at any time. For LHSAA competition, however, student contestants must be part of a LHSAA member school team." The issue of restricting teams to essentially 12 students will drastically reduce the participation numbers of some schools. I understand that only 11 are allowed on the football field and 5 on the basketball court, etc but this isn't the same. This is and has always been a sport where everyone competes against everyone including team members; but all are

allowed to compete.

I witnessed firsthand a most dedicated duo in Jim and Cindy Breaux who run the Junior Southwest Bassmasters of Denham Springs during a two day tournament earlier this month on Lake Concordia in Vidalia, La. The structure, professionalism, attention to detail along with a live Facebook broadcast of the weigh in puts the junior anglers in as close to a professional bass fishing atmosphere as I've seen. Over the fishing season, these junior anglers learn more than just fishing, they learn skills that will help transcend them to the next level of collegiate fishing and possibly professional ranks one day. The key to their success after talking to several parents involved in the Junior Southwest Bassmasters of Denham Springs is simple; it's all orchestrated by Jim and Cindy but carried out by volunteers. No one is paid for their service they simply do it for the kids.

In a April 11, 2019 article from The Advocate Newspaper, Assistant executive director Adam MacDowell said, "We've been contacted several times about bass fishing, both by schools and groups like FLW and Bassmaster that host youth and high school events, this is a sport a number of states have adopted as a sport, and there is a great deal of interest here." I agree there is a great deal of interest in the state, I only hope that LHSAA will pair with some of the organizations and continue the great things already going on in the world of Louisiana High School Bass Fishing. We all want to see the sport continue to grow and what better way for it to grow than to offer more opportunities to more student anglers.

To further read the rules and regulations of LHSAA you can visit our website <http://www.bassintheboot.com> and download the pdf file.

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Because They Are Coming

A perspective on high school fishing by Tommy Abbott

High School Bass Fishing in Louisiana has grown exponentially over the last five to six years. It provides opportunities for some kids that aren't involved with other extracurricular activities, to compete in a sport. What's not always known is that many of the anglers fishing in the high school ranks were involved with many other activities. Some compete in multiple sports while others make a choice to commit full time to bass fishing because they are absolutely obsessed with it. Take note... high school bass fishing isn't just for the boys! There are a large number of young ladies in, and joining the ranks, who can compete with the best anglers around.

Another great thing about the sport at the high school level is that there are anglers of many different skill level and dedication. Some kids just want to go out and have fun fishing and enjoy the camaraderie of the sport while others are hard core competitors who live and breath fishing.

Those involved in high school bass fishing are like a family. The anglers can give it everything they have to beat their competition during the tournament, then be their best friend at the weigh in. The families get to know each other and many life long friendships are made through the sport. It's very common to see families from different schools traveling together to events where their kids compete against each other.

One thing that so many people don't consider is the economic impact of organizations like Louisiana High School BASS Nation which has seen as many as 250 boats, only from the state of Louisiana, show up to compete in a single tournament. That's 250, two anglers teams and a captain in each boat for a total of over 750 people in the tournament. That coupled with the families and fans who travel to see them weigh in,

all spending money in the communities where these tournaments are held, from fuel to hotel rooms, to eating in restaurants, the numbers are impacting those communities in a very positive way.

For organizations like Louisiana High School BASS Nation, their goal is simple, provide the opportunity for these kids to fish and compete in the sport they love.

One of their mottos is to "Keep them off the street and in the boat!" It also extends to keep them off the video games and couch to keep them active and engaged. Also helping them develop good strong values for conservation and a love for nature.

It's a common thing for these kids to spend Friday and Saturday night prepping their boat for a weekend of fishing instead of out running around and having the opportunity to get into trouble.

The sport is changing lives. Many young people are finding a place where they fit in. Others are having it change their lives by giving them something to give them a purpose. It becomes their reason to do well enough in school so they can keep up their grade point average above the minimum level required to be eligible to compete.

There are even instances where some kids were on a downward spiral in life and bass fishing helped turn their lives around. It helped them rededicate and focus on school and fishing. Sometime a dream is all a kid needs to help dedicate them to something they love.

Then for those who dream of becoming a professional angler, it gives them and opportunity and path to chase that dream. Some Louisiana high school anglers have

trickled into the pro ranks in the past few years but get ready because there is an explosion taking place of kids who are about to take the fishing world by storm. Kids who have 50-150 tournaments under their belt by the time they graduate high school, starting as young as age seven through the Jr Bassmasters master organizations around the state.

Get ready because they are coming!



About the Author:

Tommy Abbott is a name widely recognized in the Bass industry, but particularly for his voice in Louisiana High School Bass Fishing. Mr. Abbott is a humble gentleman with a career as a sales rep from Central. However, his impact in the industry's public relations is evident from the many "hats" he wears. Tommy Abbott is a bass fisherman. He is the father of Jared Abbott, and has served as his Boat Captain for his career fishing for Central High School. As if that weren't enough, Tommy serves as the Director of Public Relations for Louisiana High School BASS Nation, and the Public Relations Director for Junior Southwest Bassmasters of Denham Springs. He has also been a featured writer for Bassmaster Magazine, with numerous articles to his credit, including a feature five part series on "Being a high school captain."



Above: Father and Son duo Tommy and Jared Abbott pose for a waterside photo at a Central High School Fishing Team event.

Below: Tommy and Jared on the water, Bassin' in the Boat.



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Happy 243rd Birthday America!

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It was these words that closed the greatest document any subject penned to their leader. A message of defiance with absolute resolve, declaring all had the “...unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” As we celebrate this 243rd year of the greatest experiment in democracy, we wish you all safety and obtainment in your pursuit of happiness. May God bless you all, and may God Bless the United States of America.

Be safe, enjoy the water, and take some time to geaux Bassin’ in the Boot!



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