

Quarterly News Letter

Winter 2010/2011



Hunting Season 2010 is here and in full swing! I hope you have or will be able to get out and enjoy the fruits of your labor on your property. The Browns have been after our



Josh Brown with his first geese taken the day before Thanksgiving in Northeast, Texas.

Although he got his first Canada goose a couple weeks ago, his goal this year is harvesting a nice buck.

Aquatics

This quarter I want to talk about fishing techniques for small freshwater lakes and ponds. We prescribe harvesting fish to achieve management goals, but we have never aided our clients with techniques to help them improve catch rates. These are techniques that have worked well for us, our clients or when we witnessed it while working for the state on public ponds and would like to pass them along to you.

For largemouth bass, almost anything that is used in larger systems should be tried in smaller waterbodies. In smaller lakes and ponds the only bait we refrain from using is golden shiners or live bait for big bass. Hooking mortality seems to be much higher with shiners and bream than artificial baits. When live bait is used it is swallowed most of the time and damage to the stomach or throat usually ensues when retrieving the hook. If live bait fishing for bass is still desired and when using soft plastics using circle hooks (which have been used by saltwater anglers for years to reduce gut hooking) should be tried as an alternative. It takes a little while to get the hang of it, but that Lunker bass can be safely released to be

usually suspects – dove, deer, hogs, ducks and geese. So far it has been a great season and now that our son's high school football season has just ended, he has been getting in on the action. We have several waterfowl hunts planned here in Texas and a Georgia deer hunt scheduled the end of this month. I have never enjoyed hunting and fishing more than when I get do it with our son. The more successful he becomes, the less important my success afield is to me.



Josh & Scott Brown and "Dash" with a good mess of ducks taken in Northeast, Texas.



Starting from top left is the smaller Zara Spook, Jitter Bug, Rattle Trap, Rapela, Beetle Spin, Spinner Bait and Tiny Torpedo. All proven good bass lures and the smallest ones for big black crappie and bream.

caught another day. Plastic worms and lizards, along with rattle traps and topwater lures (including my favorite the small Zara Spook) are sure bets on any pond. I keep several colors of each type of lure on hand, to find out which color works best. Many times it is not the lure type that keeps fish from biting, but the color. I prefer the topwater lures or fly rod in spring, summer and fall, and the soft plastics during the winter. Nothing beats the excitement of a good topwater lure strike at dawn or dusk on a small pond! Match the size lure for the size bass desired to catch. If removing bass in your prescribed slot usually 12-14 inches total length, try small to medium size lures and plastics. If trophy bass are your target use

larger lures and plastics. Even a night-crawler hooked once through the front and a second time behind the collar fished like a plastic is irresistible for a big bass. When I am targeting those mid size bass I prefer small Zara spooks, torpedoes, even the "old school" Hula-Popper or Jitter-Bug or small plastic worms, lizards, craw-dads, etc. The small, shallow or mid range diving rattle trap in snag free ponds is also a fish magnet. On occasion you will catch some bigger fish on smaller lures, but generally these sized lures attract that size predator. For big bass I recommend large plastic worms, lizards and larger topwater such as full size Zara spook, rapela's, etc. The smaller bass will hit it, but usually cannot get a hook in their mouth. Also for those target size bass a small hook and minnows (like crappie fishing) will work well too.

For catfish, both bullhead and channel or blue, live worms (including giant Night Crawlers for big fish), liver, or hotdog pieces either on the bottom or about 3-4 feet under a bobber works best in ponds with feeders. For larger catfish try larger hooks with same bait on bottom between 5 and 12 feet deep. Most ponds without an aeration system have pretty poor water quality (low dissolved oxygen levels) in winter and summer below 12-15 feet. Catching a few bream and using them for bait on the bottom also works well for large catfish (greater than 10 lbs).

For bream species, using small minnows, beetle spins, worms, crickets and hotdogs work well, and depending on the time of year, some better than others. Crickets usually work best in warmer months, while beetle spins in colder. The worms and hotdogs generally prove to work anytime if the fish are biting. A #8 hook works best with bait. It helps reduce catching little ones, but won't prevent them from stealing your bait.

One thing to remember when fishing small water bodies is cold fronts coming in can drastically change the bite. Small waterbody fish populations (especially if it is not deep) tend to completely shut down when significant and sometimes even minor cold fronts arrive. We have seen a 70° F day render as many fish as you care to reel in of all species and the next day the air temperature is 20 or more degrees cooler, and not be able to catch a fish or even shock

a fish for that matter (we have tried), because they have retreated to deeper water and completely stopped feeding.

Invite some family or friends over to fish and follow it up with a fish fry. It has become a tradition at Ochwalkee Creek Plantation with me in July to catch catfish and fry them up with friends. This is a perfect time to take out some of those bass that are prescribed to be removed every year to check stomach contents to see what they are eating, or check their length-to-weight ratio and see if there is plenty of forage. Another way is to invite a youth, veterans or church group to come and help remove some of those fish and enjoy themselves. We understand removing 300-400 one pound bass is more work than fun, so find ways to make it fun for you and others. Nothing beats a one pound bass filleted out or whole catfish fried in corn meal or Bisquick with hush puppies and red beans and rice or home fries.



Dash, Scott and Herc working the Westervelt Hunters Feeding the Hungry Pheasant shoot in February 2010!

Upcoming Events

We encourage all our clients to participate in the upcoming Westervelt Continental Style Tower Pheasant Shoot, with proceeds going to Alabama's Hunters Feeding the Hungry Program. We will be involved again this year as a sponsor and me and the dogs will be at a stand fetching up birds for participants. Last year was our first time participating, and it is great! I was a little reluctant before it happened, but it is done very well and does not feel or look like a typical tower shoot. Several participants said it was their first time, were skeptical like me if they would like it, and all said they would definitely be back in February 2011, because they had a blast. There is a morning and afternoon hunt, with all attendees (40 during each session) getting treated to a home cooked meal at Noon, either after your morning hunt or before your afternoon hunt. There are also accommodations at Westervelt Lodge to stay the night before or after your hunt to relax, have dinner and libations with friends, or while making new friends. It is a great opportunity to entertain business clients or reward outstanding employees within your own company. If interested in

participating or sponsoring contact Dave Edwards of Westervelt Wildlife Services (205) 562-5443 for the exact date (usually a weekday during the last full week in February), times and cost. This event did sell out last year, and I encourage you to register early if interested.

We want to remind everyone of the Southern Sportsman Aquatics & Land Management new Lunker Fish & Bruiser Buck Programs. A commemorative plaque will be presented to landowners who experience an exceptional fish being caught from their waterbodies or whitetail deer harvested from their land that we manage on a regular basis. The landowner need not be the successful angler or hunter, but we do need a quality photo, date and time caught or harvested, total length, girth and weight of the fish or antler measurements of the deer. The categories for fish are bluegill, redear sunfish, black crappie,

channel or blue catfish and largemouth bass. The size categories are as follows: largemouth bass ≥ 25 " or 10 lbs, channel or blue catfish ≥ 33 " or 20 lbs, bluegill ≥ 10 " or 0.75 lbs, redear sunfish ≥ 11 " or 1.0 lbs and black crappie ≥ 14 " or 2.0 lbs. Whitetail deer qualify if it scores ≥ 140 inches. Plaques will be presented to qualifying land owners during winter site visits for achievements the previous year. In the next news letter we will have a picture of the fish plaque, as we have had one Largemouth Bass Lunker Award Winner in 2010 and is being manufactured as I write this.

I encourage newsletter feedback and suggested topics (really, I am starting to run out of new material), upcoming events that readers may be interested in attending (need four months in advance) and any of our clients with fish or game pictures to please submit to me via E-Mail and we can include them in the Quarterly News Letter and/or add them to the "Photos" page of the company web site or Blog. Also, if you are inclined to write a short paragraph to be published on the "Testimonials" page of our web site, please do so, as I am always updating it and would like to have more of those up from our satisfied customers. All previous Quarterly News Letters and links of interest can be found at: <http://www.southernsportsmanaquaticsandland.com>.

If you are pleased with the services and products you receive from Southern Sportsman Aquatics & Land Management, please tell your friends and associates about us. The best compliment you can give us is a referral. We are always looking for additional clients from Texas to Florida. We have had an enormous increase in electrofishing requests for this coming year (2011), and are almost completely filled up for electrofishing in Spring 2011. If you know of someone who is considering having it done, they need to contact us now, so we can fit them into our schedule, otherwise it will be fall 2011 before we can get to them.

If you want us to order or bring feeders (parts), aeration/fountain (parts), pond fertilizer, build and deploy fish attractors, bird nesting boxes, etc. during winter site visits please contact us immediately so we can make all the necessary arrangements to get things ordered and on the schedule. We have considerably more free time in winter and summer to perform these types of tasks than spring or fall. Anyone needing fish ordered, please contact us now, as we will order and get you on the spring stocking list at the hatchery.

Scott G. Brown, Owner

From all of us here at Southern Sportsman Aquatics & Land Management we wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and Safe, Happy & Prosperous New Year!