



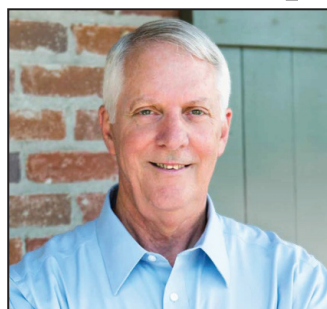
Vol. 48, No. 7

East Ascension Sportsman's League Publication

July 2019

Guest Speaker Murphy Painter

Murphy Painter, a lifelong resident of Ascension and supporter of EASL, was born in Dr. Epstein's hospital, across from Lamendola's Supermarket. The hospital was a converted bar room that Leo Stevens had sold to the Lamendola's.



the State of Louisiana for over 35 years as Chief Criminal Deputy, Investigative Agent with Louisiana Department of Justice and then Commissioner of Alcohol & Tobacco Control. Presently he is

a consultant and a private investigator.

Murphy grew up in Gonzales and graduated from East Ascension with the famous EASL duo, Lyle Johnson & Goosie Guice in 1971. He attended Southeastern and then LSU where he ultimately received a master's degree in Public Administration.

Murphy served Ascension and

Murphy has accumulated information, pictures and documents regarding local history stories and tales of Ascension Parish. He loves to share these with people who are interested. His goal is to continue to serve the people of Ascension as long as the good Lord permits.

July President's Report

Summer has arrived, and the heat is upon us. I work outside, so I can tell you it is hot.

Even though I am sweating like crazy and feel totally worn out, I can't help thinking about fishing. It's just what comes to mind because as a kid that was the main focus most days of the summer school vacation.

It was never too hot to fish. Now that I am older, I know that it can be too hot, so I don't stay out all day. Sometimes I do if I can find a nice shade tree to get under. My next fishing trip is planned for July 4, so you know it's going to be slightly warm. I haven't made up my mind to go float around the cypress trees and try to catch a nice fish dinner or go down to the marsh and maybe catch some crabs and reds.

Either way, I hope to avoid sunburn and catch a meal. What better way to celebrate our freedom? I hope all of you EASL members can also find whatever it is you like to do and go out and do it. Happy fourth of July.

Last month the Terry Melancon Memorial Saltwater Challenge was cancelled due to the threat of bad weather. I didn't know Terry personally, but I'm sure that we would have been great friends. We talked about hosting the event later in the year. Possibly a one-day event, similar to the pan fishing rodeo.

The board hasn't finalized anything, but it is my wish to hold some kind of saltwater event this year in Terry's memory. For those who are interested in this type of event, please let us know your thoughts so we can best host an event in Terry's honor. My hope is that the EASL members would support and participate in this type of saltwater challenge.

Let me or any other board member know

your thoughts, and we will keep you posted on the state of things to come. I think the fall is a better time of the year to catch the three main species we target for this event – speckled trout, red drum, and flounder.

These fish are closer inland, and the weather is cooler. Speaking of fishing, the EASL Kid's Fishing Rodeo is this month, July 27, at the first weekend in August, so mark the calendar. This is our biggest event of the year – every year – and a huge event open to all kids from age two to 14, members or not.

I would like to thank all the people who have, in the past, helped to put this event together. Also, I'd like to thank everyone in advance for this year. Your support and help are greatly appreciated by all the little fishermen that line the banks of Twin Lakes each year.

It is unbelievable how good all of you are at what you do and how easy you make it look to get this done year after year. Thanks again to all of you – too many to name, too many to know. It is crazy how that many people doing so many things can do this with even the first argument are bad feelings.

How can everyone be so happy at the same time? That is special and worth getting up early on a Saturday morning. Great job everyone. Everyone can really pat yourselves on the back and be proud of the job you do to make this a success every year. It just keeps getting better. Thanks for your time and support.

Michael Lambert



The EASL Meeting

Held every 3rd Monday of the month at

The Gonzales Fire Department

724 Orice Roth Road, Gonzales, LA 70737

Monday, July 15, 2019 at 7:00 p.m.

Meal sponsored by:

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Silhouette Match Calendar

The dates have been set for the championship matches in Louisiana this year - so mark your calendars for the following - (contact Dustin Flint, 225-719-1112, or Jerry Tureau, 225-803-2773, for Silhouette and Rifle competition info):

The Louisiana Highpower Silhouette State Championship in Zwolle is October 19-20, 2019; and The Drue Wands Memorial Louisiana Lever Action Silhouette Championship in Gonzales is December 7-8, 2019.

EASL Monthly Silhouette Match is the 4th Saturday; check with Jerry or Dustin.

EASL Wild Game Recipe CHICKEN SAUCE PIQUANTE (Something Old)



PREP TIME: 1 1/2 Hours
SERVES: 6

STORY:

Although I created this recipe myself, I have vivid memories of my grandmother and mother cooking sauce piquante. I came from a big family of 12 and whenever lunch or dinner came around, we always seemed to have lots of company. In those days, we raised our own chickens, grew our own fresh vegetables, rice, corn and sugar cane, and our milk came right from the cow! Although it was hard work to cook back then, we sure had a great time. A few years ago when Hurricane Andrew came through, everybody was without electricity and most of the young people had no idea what to do under those circumstances. Our 6 children, with all of their children, came to our house and I cleaned out the freezer of chickens and vegetables and cooked up a sauce piquante large enough to feed our family and anyone else in the neighborhood. This recipe is also good with seafood or game. Thelma Lemoine - Lafayette

INGREDIENTS:

- 6 chicken breasts
- 1 1/2 cups oil
- 1 cup flour
- 1 (6-ounce) can tomato paste
- 1 cup chopped onions
- 1/2 cup chopped celery
- 1/2 cup chopped bell pepper

- 2 tbsps diced garlic
- 1 (10-ounce) can Rotel tomatoes
- 1 (16-ounce) can whole tomatoes
- 1 quart chicken stock
- 2 tbsps sugar
- 1 tsp salt
- black pepper
- cayenne pepper
- 1/2 tsp oregano
- 2 tbsps Worcestershire Sauce
- 1/2 cup sliced green onions
- 1/4 cup chopped parsley

METHOD:

In a heavy bottom dutch oven, heat oil over medium-high heat. Season chicken breasts using salt and peppers and sauté until golden brown. Remove from oil and keep warm. Add flour to pot and, using a wire whisk, stir until dark brown roux is achieved. Add tomato paste and continue to stir 5-6 minutes or until the sauce is a nice brown color. Add onions, celery, bell pepper and garlic. Sauté 3-5 minutes or until vegetables are wilted. Add tomatoes and chicken stock. Blend well into the roux mixture, bring to a rolling boil and reduce to simmer. Add chicken, sugar, salt and peppers. Blend well. Add oregano and Worcestershire. Allow to simmer 45 minutes or until chicken is tender. Finish with green onions and parsley. Serve over a plate of steamed white rice.



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EASL Big Fish Contest Contacts

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6037.

To report weight for Big
Speckled Trout
call Warren Singer at 225-715-1707;
email: warren@icscla.com.

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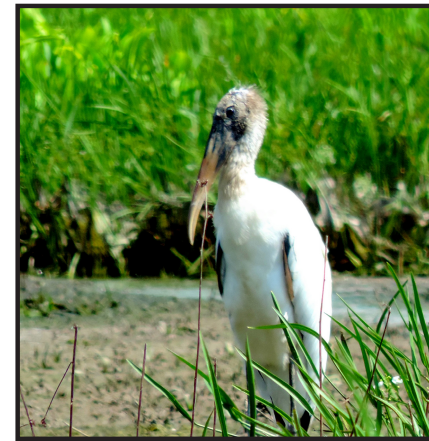
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PURPLE GALLINULES AKA BLUE PETERS

Jay V. Huner, Louisiana Ecrevisse, Boyce, LA

Good numbers of wood storks show up in Louisiana in late spring, and they remain into the fall. These huge wading birds simply cannot be missed whether feeding in drying crawfish ponds or sloughs along rivers, swamps or marshes or soaring on thermals high in the sky. Flock size can exceed 100 or more individuals.



Wood Stork
decades.

Despite old wives' tales, Wood Storks don't deliver babies to expectant mothers. However, standing over three feet tall with wingspans exceeding five feet, they might be imagined by some as being able to do so.

Adult wood storks have snow white bodies. The trailing edges of the wings and the tail are black. The bill is gray and the featherless head and upper neck are dark gray. The dark, gnarly heads surely led to the colloquial name, "gourd head". The heads and upper necks of first year birds are covered with small, whitish downy feathers. Their bills are yellowish. Over the course of several years they lose the small feathers and the bills, heads and necks darken.

What do Wood Storks eat? They eat mostly fish and crawfish. Although they once nested in swamps along the northern Gulf of Mexico, nesting is restricted to Georgia and Florida in the USA and the tropics northward to Yucatan. Breeding occurs in the winter and post breeding dispersal of birds begins in early spring.

Most of the storks in Louisiana come from Yucatan although a small percentage have been shown to move east from the Georgia and Florida. The birds arrive when spring floods subside concentrating fish and crawfish sloughs across the landscape. They forage in shallow water sweeping their bills, slightly open, back and forth in muddy water, snapping shut on prey when touched. Because they don't have to see their prey, they can and will feed at night.

According to naturalist and artist, John James Audubon, the Wood Storks he observed

and collected around Bayou Sara, Louisiana in 1819, were in the habit of muddying shallow waters to suffocate fish and crawfish making them much easier to catch as they rose to the surface gasping for oxygen. Audubon referred to the birds as "wood ibis", a common name used for many

However, despite flying like ibises with outstretched, ucurved necks, storks are not ibises.

So, what's this got to do with crawfish? Crawfish ponds, now over 200,000 acres in southwestern and south-central Louisiana, are managed to be flooded in from mid-fall into late spring and dry from early summer into early fall. Crawfish and rice farming are closely integrated in the same fields there.

When the ponds are drained, they become wading bird cornucopias. Literally thousands upon thousands of storks, egrets, herons, night-herons, spoonbills AND storks feast on the multitude of prey concentrated in the ponds.

Wood Storks were always in the region before the advent of crawfish farming in the 1960s. They were attracted to the drying, food-rich sloughs associated with the Mississippi River and Atchafalaya Basin. The Atchafalaya River is the Mississippi River's major distributary. Crawfish farmers first started noticing Wood Storks in their drying ponds in the 1980s.

Today, many of the storks now concentrate in southwestern and south-central Louisiana crawfish ponds, changing their orientation away from the river sloughs!

Did Wood Storks stop breeding in Louisiana because they were heavily hunted? I've found no reference to such activity. Audubon who apparently ate many of the birds he painted opined that they were unpalatable. The storks are federally protected birds and the Georgia-Florida populations is officially classified as threatened!



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EASL BASS CLUB NEWS

By: Jim Hebert

"TERRY MOLEA & KEN VILLENURVE WIN OUT OF AMELIA" "Dirk and Brandt keep their streak alive!"

Terry Molea and Ken Villenurve caught fish all day to capture the win on Lake Verrett. Dirk Anderson and Brandt Fairchild just sashayed in to the weigh-in thinking "another day, another check". This makes 6 in a row for them, and they are in the lead for Angler of the Year points.

The Bass Club met at the Gonzales Fire Department on June 11 to plan for the upcoming Tournament on June 15. First, we all enjoyed a delicious dinner of meatball gravy and rice, a side dish of red beans & sausage and French bread. Dessert was cookies of course. Thanks, Warren Hebert for the meal that we all enjoyed.

While that was going on, George signed up 13 boats to fish the tournament. He then gave a short financial report. After, I awarded Tony Arceneaux with the \$20 monthly EASL Big Bass winnings for April.

Mike then took nominations for tournament locations. Nominations were, "trailer anywhere", "Bayou des Allemands", "The Ditch" and "Amelia Landing". After the voting was complete, the winning location was the Amelia Landing. They then voted for a 3:00 p.m. weigh in time. The weigh masters chosen were Molea and Villenurve.

Saturday morning weather was warm, humid and windy with high



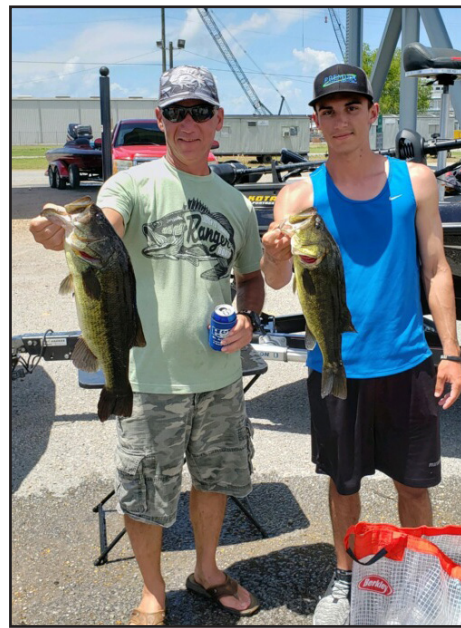
1st Place, Terry Molea & Ken Villenurve

water everywhere. Terry let all the boats go at safe daylight. I did not fish this tournament, so I don't really know all the details of the day.

At 3:00 p.m. Terry and Ken started weighing the fish. From the weigh in sheet for the day I would have to say that it was a very good day for fishing as 11 of the 13 boats came in with their limit. There were two fish weighed in over 4 pounds and two over 3 pounds. All three of the winning teams had a kicker that made the difference in getting a check or not.

When the weigh in was complete, George announced the winners.

Molea & Villenurve won the Tournament with 5 fish weighing in at 12.55 pounds. Second place

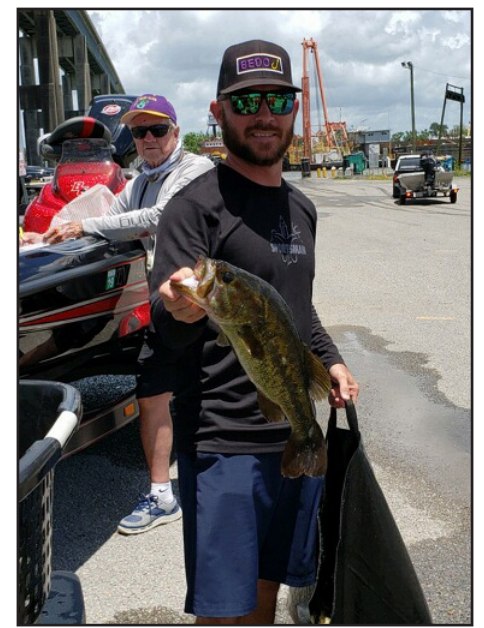


2nd Place & Big Bass,
Dirk Anderson & Brandt Fairchild

winners were Dirk Anderson & Brandt Fairchild with their limit weighing in at 12.42 pounds.

They also won "Big Bass" with their lunker that weighed 4.33 pounds.

Third place went to new member,



3rd Place Jason Beck

Jason Beck, with a limit that weighed 11.21 pounds.

Congratulations to the winners of the June Tournament. Our next event is scheduled for July 13. For more information on the EASL Bass Club, visit the website www.easlonline.org.

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FLOUNDERING AROUND

Outdoor Corner with Lyle Johnson

The southern flounder is just about one of my favorite fish to eat of the many we have to choose from in south Louisiana. My introduction to the flat fish is not quite what most folks experience.

Hurricane Betsy ravaged Louisiana in September of 1965 when I was twelve years old. The eye passed right over Gonzales. The town was knocked out by the big storm – no electricity, no water – you know the drill.

Our family had all eight of us kids along with mom and dad. A decision was made to head to my paw-paw Marchand's camp on Chinquapin canal.

Us kids couldn't believe our fortune. School was closed, and we were headed to the camp. Life couldn't be better as far as we were concerned, but the decision was a practical one for our folks.

There was propane to cook with at the camp and an artesian flow well across the canal that flowed 24 hours a day. Bottled water wasn't even thought of back then, so we had it made in the shade even though we had no electricity.

Along with the hurricane came flood waters and the fish began to swim on top trying to get some oxygen to breathe. We

saw every species, even some flounder. We were a long way from salt water so that was pretty strange. It would be six more years before I saw one again.

My brother Cliff, myself and a good friend Dale "Jackson" Babin were bass fishing in Blind River. We had been catching some bass using a bait called a Thin Fin. It mimicked a shad, and it worked well on the points as the bass schooled in the summer.

Cliff was working his lure as usual when he got a strike and proceeded to play the fish. As it got near the boat, Jackson looked in the water, then looked at me and shouted, "It's an X-ray!"

He meant to say sting ray but got a little tongue-tied.

I looked down and said, "I think that's a flounder. I think it's good to eat, get it in the boat."

We all looked at the fish flopping around on the floor of our bateau for what seemed an eternity. We didn't know just to grab it with its two eyes on the same side of the head and being flat and all. But we finally got it in the ice chest and started back fishing. As fortune would have it, we caught two more flounder that day.

For the next few years we caught several flounder every summer while bass fishing, most of them on plastic worms. We got good at cooking them, mostly baking, and eating them as well. Like I said earlier, it's one of my favorite fish to eat.

Not too far down the road on my foray into salt water fishing, I got re-acquainted with the flat fish on a more regular basis. Like most other anglers we often caught flounder by accident, not design, while in pursuit of redfish and speckled trout.

Flounder will hit many of the same baits or lures used for catching speckled trout, redfish



Baked flounder—There it is; the finished product. The big flounder Deborah caught that was stuffed with a home made crab stuffing with sliced lemon baked to perfection by the angler who caught it. Photo by Deborah Johnson

and other fish. Instead of catching flounder to complement our target fish, redfish and specs, we began to figure out a little bit on where to find them. On a rising tide they like to get as close to the shore as they can as their flatness allows for them to get really shallow.

Flounder are masters of camouflage and their horizontal make-up allows them to bury themselves in the sand or mud.

They blend perfectly while buried in the sand or mud waiting for anything to swim close enough to feed on. They dart

instantly from their hiding spots to devour baitfish or passing shrimp with impressive speed for such a strangely shaped fish.

The cuts and sandy points along the Louisiana Gulf Coast are flounder central especially during October and November. Flounder move out of the current and onto the sand flats to feed on the bait moved around on the flats by the natural ebb and flow of the tide. Oyster reefs are also another key spot for them to hang around. On a high tide there is usually plenty of water depth for them to locate between the oyster bed and the shore.

Flounder can actually be fished all year round, but they're easier to catch in the

fall, between September and November, when they migrate toward the ocean. They spawn during the spring and summer, and when they're large enough, they swim to the ocean to spend the winter there before coming back.

There is another way to catch flounder that used to be really popular that has somewhat fallen by the wayside. This activity takes place at night and a strong light along with a gig. The gig is sort of like a two or three pronged pitch fork.

You can do it by yourself, but it's much more fun with a couple of companions for the social value but mostly for the extra eyes. A Coleman lantern used to be the light of choice back in the day and would still work fine but just about any light would do.

Because of their ability to bury in the sand to hide from unsuspecting prey, this makes them really hard to spot. A calm night so there are no ripples on the water to limit your vision and clear water is a must for this activity. An incoming tide is the best at well as they like to get really shallow.

If you've never tried this method, it will probably take a little while for you actually spot them. You'll probably scare some of them off before getting used to just what they look like. Oh yeah, there is another fish that looks a little like a flounder you might have to pay attention to; a sting ray.

You don't have to worry about Jaws, the water is way too shallow.

Ten flounder is your limit and the minimum length requirement is 10 inches. Broiled or baked is the go-to recipe, but fried flounder is off the charts as well. So, until next time, remember to keep the slack out and set the hook hard, be safe in the outdoors and may God truly bless you!!



Deb Flounder—The before photo; the chef (Deborah) actually caught the flounder fishing on the bridges before Grand Isle. Photo provided

Sportsman's Calendar

July 15	Board Meeting, 6pm
July 15	EASL Regular Meeting, 7pm (3rd Monday)
July 27	Silhouette Match (4th Saturday)
July 27	EASL Kid's Fishing Rodeo
Oct. 5	EASL Squirrel Rodeo

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LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

by **Goosie Guice**

GRASSROOTS

As soon as I awoke, I peeked through the small window of my assigned room and immediately noticed that a fairly strong westerly wind was making its presence known on the small trees outside.

At that point I began to accept the fact that for the fifth time in the last several years another chance at an offshore snapper trip at Grand Isle would once again get canceled. When the decision to postpone was finally made, I began to try to reschedule what I would do with the rest of that day.

I was told that I was welcome to stay that day and night if we wanted to and enjoy the social life for the remainder of the stay. Believe me, I'm one that's all in for an all-day party, but in the back of my mind was an air conditioning problem at home that needed attention. That priority overrode the all-day party so the trip north from our little island paradise was soon underway.

Somewhere along the trip back I remembered that the Bayou State Rabbit Hunters Federation was holding their annual banquet at Lamar-Dixon in Gonzales that evening. After dealing with my air conditioning problem for the day, I made it on over to the banquet to support another outdoor orientated group that I have recently become a member of.

As I entered the building, I was immediately exposed to a fairly large crowd of participants. This organization is around four or five-years-old. In the scheme of things, it's really in its grassroots stage and becoming bigger by leaps and bounds. The attending crowd was very enjoyable to say the least.

The group consisted of many different races of people – mothers, babies and entire families. Some were hunters, some only ran dogs and some did neither of the two. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves and it appeared that some money was raised in the effort to continue their mission as an organization.

The original founders of the organization were mainly from parishes west of Baton Rouge. As time passes, their membership is constantly exploding.

Rabbit hunters have experienced a hard go of it in the last ten or fifteen years. Local weed patches and small woodlots absent of whitetails that the rabbit dog man is attracted to have become less available due to rapid clearing and human development.

The explosion of whitetail deer and deer hunters – which I am one of – and many of their members are also, have had a stranglehold on the time available for the beagles to be in the woods. This organization has been responsible for working out some of these problems with landowners and hunting clubs. They have also been the force in acquiring areas and seasons for small game hunting and dog hunting opportunities on several wildlife management areas.

Hopefully they'll be other snapper trips to be a part of in my life, but all was not lost on that day. I had a very eventful time in that two-hour time span. Not only did I reminisce old times with many of the attending members that I've been acquainted with for years, I also won another shotgun in one of the raffles and acquired several new acquaintances.

A local rabbit hunter once told me that as soon as the last day of deer season came to a close that his phone would start ringing with people begging to be taken on a rabbit hunt. It's ironic that the same group of people that has kept them out of the woods for two months now wants to be a rabbit hunter at that point. There's a lot more than hunting involved with developing a pack of first-class bunny chasers.

For twelve months a year these dog owners feed, train and vet these troops. The number of folks now doing that deed is decreasing mainly because of unavailable land to carry on their sport. That's not good for the future of hunting.

I would personally like to thank every rabbit hunter that has invited me to be a part of their outings throughout my life. Many of these people have passed away, but believe me, I have always told them how much I appreciated the opportunity that they gave me. To this day I still think of them often.

If you're interested in the future of small game hunting, hunting in general or want to support a very family-oriented group of outdoors men, women and children then give the Bayou State Rabbit Hunter Federation a shout. This year's annual banquet is coming up Saturday August 3, 2019 at Carl F. Grant Civic Center in Plaquemine, LA; 225-718-4467.

You won't be sad you did and for sure someday this grassroots group will become a major force in protecting our right to hunt. One thing is for sure, we'll either fight together for each other and succeed or we'll fight against each other and fail and you can take that one to the briar patch...

**Till Next Time,
Support The Mission
James "Goosie" Guice**

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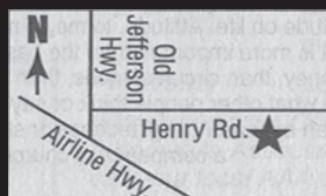
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EAST ASCENSION SPORTSMAN'S LEAGUE ANNUAL KID'S FISHING RODEO

SATURDAY, JULY 27, 2019

Here we are again in July, and it's time for our annual Kid's Fishing Rodeo. We moved it this year to July for many different reasons so just note that it may be in July or August next year.

Our event takes place at the Twin Lakes Park on Highway 74 in Dutchtown. If you haven't been there before, it's in the trailer park, all the way to the back.

On Saturday July 27, our day will begin with registration at 6:30 a.m. Fishing begins at 7:00 a.m. and ends at 9:00 a.m. When you register, you will receive a goody bag. There will be doughnuts for breakfast to get you started with your fishing.

2019 TURKEY HUNTING CONTEST

Well another turkey season is in the books.

The winners were announced at the June meeting for this year's turkey

hunting contest. The results were short and sweet. Only three people entered this year, and they all won in their class.

Cody Braud shot two birds in Mississippi and won the out of state class. It had a 9 7/8" beard with 5/8" and 3/4" spurs and scored 33 1/2.

Goosie Guice bagged two birds also and won the Louisiana class. His bird had a 9 1/2" beard with 1/2" spurs and scored 29.

Cason Tanner won the youth class with his bird. It scored 44 1/4 with 10 1/2" beard and 1 1/8" and 1 1/4" spurs. That big turkey was out of Texas. The winners all got a beautiful tail mount of their prize bird courtesy of Thad Bellows and Fins to Feathers Taxidermy.

EASL would like to thank Bellows, and the participants of this year's event. I'd also encourage all you other hunters out there to make it a little harder on these guys next year. Thanks also to Chef KD for taking the pictures of the presentations of each of their prize mounts. Good job.

Written by: Michael Lambert



1st Cason Tanner youth class and Cabela's gift card winner



2nd Cody Braud out of state winner



3rd James (Goosie) Guice La. State winner

The fishing rodeo is open to children ages two to 14. You must have your own pole, whether a cane pole, rod and reel or live bait. We will have a few crickets on hand, but if you want worms – which are my choice – you have to bring those yourself.

You are not allowed to use artificial bait. Also, bring a bucket to put your fish in for the weigh in. Remember, all fish caught will be weighed no matter how small. We do not keep turtles, eels or any other items you catch, only fish.

After the fishing is over, we will have jambalaya and hot dogs to eat. As you weigh your fish the results will be tallied to see who has the biggest fish and the most fish in each age group. Even if you don't catch a fish, you might win a bike, but you will definitely receive a prize!

Before we give out the trophies, we will be giving away eight bikes. These will be given out according to age groups. Our groups are 2 to 4 years old, 5 to 7 years old, 8 to 10 years old, and 11 to 14-years old. This is also how we separate into groups for the trophies.

There will be the biggest fish overall and for most fish boys and girls. So, three trophies will be given out in each age group.

I would like to thank all of our sponsors and those that come out each and every year to help us make this such a successful endeavor for our club. Without all of us working together as a team we could not do any of the wonderful things we do.

If you have any questions or would like to help, please call me at 225-571-4588 or email me at bmworks@eatel.net.

Thank you, Bettye Lambert
Chairman Kid's Fishing Rodeo

The East Ascension Sportsman's League's



59th Annual Kid's Fishing Rodeo

Sat. July 27, 2019 @ Twin Lakes Park (Hwy 74 in Dutchtown)

This is a FREE event for children ages 2-to-14 years old

PARENTS NEED TO KNOW:

1. Bring a rod & reel or cane pole for your child to use.
2. Bring live bait (crickets or worms). No artificial lures allowed.
3. Bring a bucket to hold the fish caught.
4. Parents can help bait the hook, but the child must land the fish.
5. Parents do not need to be EASL members for their kids to fish.
6. Bring folding chairs.

REGISTRATION BEGINS AT 6:30 A.M.

FISHING IS FROM 7:00 TO 9:00 A.M.

CHILDREN COMPETE BY AGE GROUP AND GENDER, SO THERE ARE MANY, MANY WINNERS!

LOTS OF DOOR PRIZES, SO EVERY CHILD WINS A PRIZE.

FREE HOTDOGS AND JAMBALAYA

CHILDREN MUST NEVER BE LEFT UNATTENDED!!!!

For more information, contact Bettye Lambert (225) 571-4588

CASUAL OBSERVATIONS Embrace the "Challenge"

by Torrey Hayden



Each summer many of us have looked forward to our Saltwater Challenge. This year the event was cancelled due to potential threat of bad weather. Less than ideal conditions have been the norm for most "Challenges". I can remember James and I had quite the adventure on one occasion.

Keelon, James, Len, JD, and Dad drive down from north Alabama each year to enjoy a weekend of fishing and the comradery of fellow EASL members. Depending on which boat I bring, I can only take one or possibly two of them fishing with me. The rest of the group must fish from the shore or hitch a ride with someone in their boat.

In the past I have been able to hire a guide to take the rest of the crew fishing. We can't do that anymore because it is too much of a challenge for some participants to fish against people who don't have boats and require a guide to take them fishing for their one trip to Grand Isle each year for which they must drive approximately a one-thousand-mile round trip.

Just my opinion is that those in opposition to guides are tired of losing to James and I fishing out of a 70-year-old jon boat. The powers that be, want to discourage our friends from coming down. Therefore, the entire group will not want to participate. I have been wrong before and will be again. However, I am also right on some occasions.

The guide we would have hired is a friend of mine and our host for the weekend. We hire him as a courtesy and to thank him for his hospitality. He knows the group well. If James goes with him, we are charged extra. I take James with me.

At dawn James and I launched on the side of the road by pulling the boat out of the back of the pick-up and flinging it into the water. Then we attach motor, load gas tank and all the gear. As we launched, the sky to the east was an ominous shade of red, not the happy reddish orange of a normal sunrise.

We had a great game plan. Wade the surf first thing in the morning for trout, then catch our redfish and get a nice flounder on the back side of the beach fishing the marsh. The plan worked to perfection. By 9:30 a.m. we had all the fish needed to win several divisions.

As we were taking our 10:00 a.m. peanut butter and jelly sammich break, I noticed one of the clouds had a big tail hanging down to the water and was headed toward us. James asked what we should do. I recommended wading out into the water and



James and Torrey victory photo

submerging. It would be harder for a water spout to suck us up out of the water than pluck us off the beach.

The water spout dissipated and the white wall of rain behind it had my full attention. I told James to help me pull the boat completely out of the water. He questioned the exercise but assisted. Then I recommended to him that he put on a life jacket, sit down beside the boat and hold a seat cushion over his head.

"I am not going to put a life jacket on and hold a seat cushion over my head," James said. "There is no way we will be washed off the beach."

I did not argue or explain, he was a full-grown man.

We saw a lightning strike off in the distance. James said we could count seconds to determine how far lighting was away from us. Then all of a sudden flash – kaboom – and our ears started ringing.

"How far was that lighting strike away, James," I asked. "Damn close I only made it on wuh on my distance count."

I put on a life jacket, grabbed a seat cushion and hunkered down beside the boat as the rain hit. James now realized the life jacket was for keeping warm and the seat cushion was to protect him from hail and heavy rain. After a few minutes of very cold,

heavy rain and hail, James was hunkered down next to me wearing a life jacket holding a seat cushion over his head.

After about 20 minutes, the rain passed. Our boat was full of water. It would have sunk if we had not pulled it up on land. We then had to take the motor off, take out the gas tank, fishing rods, tackle boxes, bait bucket, two coolers and everything else in order to turn the boat over and empty the water.

The 1950's era Sears and Roebuck boat does not come equipped with modern technology therefore no drain plug.

There was a break in the deluge, so we reassembled the boat and made a run for the truck through the marsh. Another rain storm hit. The boat was filling fast on our trip back. I switched on the bilge pump which was James bailing for all he was worth with a 12 oz plastic Mountain Dew bottle with the top cut out.

We came in hot when we reached the side of the road and made a dash for the truck to ride this storm out.

James was focused on bailing and did not notice we were about to come to an abrupt stop. When we hit, he fell backwards, spread eagle amongst the coolers and gear. He resembled a turtle on its back and had to be extracted in order to make the mad



Winningest Boat in the history of the Saltwater Challenge

dash to the truck.

James and I will always remember that trip. We overcame the challenges of having a small boat with very limited capabilities and surviving a weather event. It was very satisfying when the awards were given for us to win the biggest cash prize. We even won more than the big bad guide boat, again.

I suggest the cyber-fishing option to those who want conditions to be perfect and everything to be fair and equal. Go online, look up photos of fish then bring the photos to a climate-controlled gathering spot for judging. Everyone orders McDonalds fish sandwiches to be delivered from Uber Eats for the fish fry. Then everyone is awarded a participation ribbon.

For James and I, give us a challenge.

It's A Fact!
**The Mississippi River
is at it's deepest at
Alger's Point, a location
on the lower Mississippi
River in New Orleans.**