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SPORTS

Spring is a great time to be outdoors

By Luke Clayton

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If I had to choose a month as my favorite for outdoor activities, it would probably be October. Bow season for deer opens then and I am always busy hunting or guiding hunters on our Kansas property or working on writing assignments here close to home. October brings the onset of cool weather and there is much to do in the outdoors in upcoming months. But, April is also a great month to be a sportsman or outdoors lady! My schedule of the past week and plans for this week includes some fun springtime activities.

My friend Bryan Shrum from Tennessee produces my hour-long hunting and fishing show each week and every spring he travels to Texas, often with a couple of his buddies, to hunt wild hogs with Mark Balette and I down in Trinity County at Mark's hunting ranch. Weather was near perfect last week for a springtime hog hunt with just a hint of chill in the air during early morning and late afternoon.

The cooler weather sparked the hogs to be up and moving and each of our friends from The Volunteer State scored with a couple of good eaters. These guys are all veteran outdoor cooks but have never tried their hand at making smoked sausage.

After sampling some of my homemade smoked summer sausage at camp, they each vowed to devote a good part of their pork to sausage. I instructed them to simply order a sausage making kit in the flavor of their choice from Butcher & Packer Supply.

For a very few dollars, they can get all the spices, cure and casings to transform their pork into some tasty sausage. I'm betting on next year's spring hog hunt, they will bring the sausage, cheese and crackers!

Shrum brought along a gift for me that I will cherish the remainder of my days; a Shakespeare Wonder Rod, vintage 1958. I remember back in about that year, when I was eight, receiving my first fishing rod which just so happened to be a Wonder Rod. My friend refurbishes old rods and reels as a hobby and this one looks like new. To top it off, he included a refurbished Mitchell spinning reel. I can't wait to put my new rig to work on white bass and spawning channel catfish. The solid "feel" of the perfectly meshing metal gears in the old reel brought back memories of when I owned a brand new Mitchell. Today's reels have some great improvements, especially in the drag system but there is just something special about owning one of these old reels, especially a refurbished one that works like new!



Bryan Shrum enjoys just about everything outdoors related. When he's not fishing or hunting, he enjoys refurbishing old fishing tackle. Here's Bryan at work putting the finishing touches on a 45-year-old spinning rig that works as good as new. *photo by Luke Clayton*

CATFISH SHALLOW -- The timing of the recent rainfall could not have occurred at more opportune time as far as catching lots of catfish is concerned. At LAKE FORK, guide Seth Vanover (www.lakeforkcatandcrappie.com) says the shallow water bite for channel catfish is going strong. "We're catching lots of good eating size channel catfish from water 3 feet deep. The trick is fishing wind blown banks in isolated coves just off the main lake." Seth is using punchbait on #4 treble hooks under floats and catching good numbers of fish in the 2-5 pound range. The influx of fresh water has pushed lots of earthworms and crawfish into the lake and the catfish have moved shallow to take advantage of the abundant food supply.

At LAKE TAWAKONI, veteran catfish guide David Hanson (903-268-7391) reports the "eater" size blue catfish went on a feeding frenzy just before the heavy rainfall hit the area and conditions are now even better for putting together a mega fish fry.

"The blue catfish bite is as good as it gets right now," tips the guide. "We're still catching an occasional trophy size blue but the big news right now is the fast action on fish in the 3-6 pound range, which are the very best for eating. Fresh shad is the number one bait. We're using a Santee Rig with a 3 foot leader, pegging the floater about 8 inches above the bait."

Hanson says the trick to getting into the fast action now is fishing the outside edge of the flooded willows or around stands of weeds or brush, the fish are definitely relating to cover.

TURKEY TIME About the time you are reading this, I plan to be hunting turkeys down near Glenrose on the White Ranch with my long time friend Randy Routh (www.teamredneck.net). Randy has guided at Lake Whitney for striper for many years and reports the catching is now excellent, thanks to successful striper stockings the past few years.

Randy and I will be hunting near a log cabin that was constructed by Charles Goodnight and his men back in the late 1800s. Quanah Parker's son, White Parker also hunted this ranchland many years ago. I'm looking forward to setting up a turkey hunting camp with Routh and spending a couple of days on this land that is steeped in history. I'll be hunting with my compound bow; I thought it fitting! Granted, my Darton 3800 compound bow is a far cry from the short little bows used by the Comanche but I'm betting Mr. Parker would have

been impressed with the bow I'm using. He just happened to be hunting the land a full century before me and WAY before the compound bow was though of!

Listen to Outdoors with Luke Clayton on radio stations from Nebraska to Texas or online anytime at www.catfishradio.com.

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