

Undercurrents

Be involved!

CCA is launching life membership campaign.



undercurrents

The Official Newsletter of
Coastal Conservation
Association Alabama

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CCA ALABAMA

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Conservation Association.

"WHAT HAPPENS IN VEGAS STAYS IN VEGAS." The old axiom may be true in some circles, but when applied to the world of marine conservation this is not the case. What happens in and around Alabama's river system away from the coast doesn't stay in that local river system—it affects the biology of the waterway all the way to the Gulf of Mexico.



A word from the executive director

When a farmer places fertilizer on a field near the river system or its watershed in the northern part of Alabama, some of it washes into the river and changes the nutrient load in the water column. Multiply that incident by thousands and you see what potential there is for changing the water chemistry downstream. According to Dr. Bob Shipp, fertilizer run-off in the Corn Belt is largely responsible for the dead zone off the mouth of the Mississippi River.

Industrial effluent that flows into the river system also adds toxicity to the stream. Parking lots, subdivisions and other commercial developments produce abnormal amounts of wastewater runoff that also downgrade water quality.

Those of us who studied eighth grade science know this, so why am I wasting ink telling you something you already know? It's simple. It's time to say an extra thank you to CCA members in our "off-the-coast" chapters who know the importance of conserving water quality in our Mobile Bay Watershed, which is the culmination of the entire river system in our state. Even the Tennessee River watershed, which normally flows westward to the Mississippi River, pours nutrients into the Mobile Bay watershed by way of the Tennessee Tombigbee Waterway.

The watershed feeds our Bay, and our Bay feeds our treasured Gulf Coast fishery.

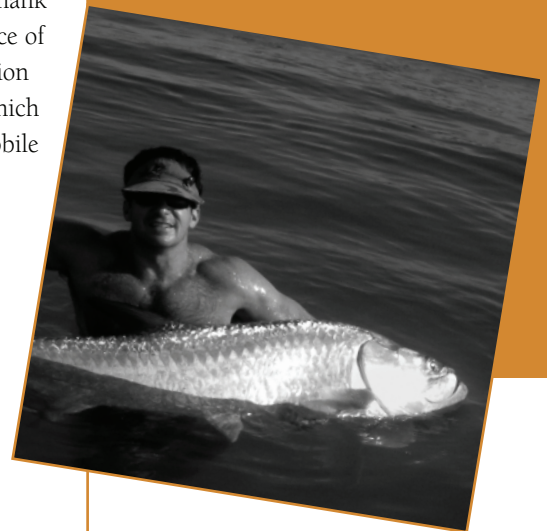
It is interesting to note that all our inland chapters—Monroe County, Tuscaloosa, Montgomery, Birmingham and the Decatur area—are located on waterways that flow into Mobile Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. CCA members in those areas love the coast, and they keep a watchful eye on what flows into the local rivers. They know that whatever happens in their backyard ends up affecting our coastal fishery.

Tom Herder, Director of the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, has graciously agreed to write a brief piece for this issue that explains how off-the-coast activities affect the health of our coastal estuary.

It's great to know that we have "Coastal Conservationists" all along our watershed. It's folks like you who understand the balance between development and coastal conservation.

Thank you for being a part of CCA Alabama. Thank you for being a part of CCA Alabama.

ED WILLIAMSON,
Executive Director



on the cover

A CONSERVATIONIST IN ACTION

BO MEADOR gets up close and personal with a tarpon he subdued recently along the beach near Gulf Shores. Bo wanted to make certain the 90-pounder was fully revived before releasing his catch.



CCA Alabama Announces Life Membership Drive

CCA life members are a special group of individuals who firmly believe in the mission, message and method CCA incorporates in all its endeavors. Since 1983, life members have helped keep CCA Alabama at the forefront of every marine conservation debate in the state, and remarkable results have been achieved.

Is Alabama better off because of CCA's activities? You bet!

Whether it is building artificial reefs, working with state conservation department officials to maintain reasonable limits on recreational and commercial fishing, or lobbying on behalf of recreational anglers in Montgomery, CCA Alabama has established a reputation for **wise leadership in marine conservation.**

The list of **CCA Alabama accomplishments** is lengthy, and space does not allow for a complete accounting in this article. CCA's tools of membership, fundraising, education and advocacy have served us well, and we have done great

things without a regular membership fee increase since the 1970s. **Life members are willing to take their membership to a higher level.**

Life members play an important role in the mission of CCA Alabama. They are willing to invest in the future of Alabama's marine resources beyond the level of regular membership, and they are willing to show their commitment by making a significant contribution to the organization that will be used entirely for marine conservation projects in the state.

Life members receive a lifetime subscription to TIDE magazine, CCA's award winning publication devoted to marine conservation, the state newsletter, a distinctive acrylic desk cube with CCA's logo imbedded in it, a life member decal and one of CCA's signed and numbered conservation prints. Additionally, CCA Alabama life members will receive special recognition in state publications, and plans are in place for annual life member meetings around the state, where life members can share their ideas with our Executive Committee members and our Marine Science Consultant. The perks are great, but beyond the membership tokens life members get the life-long satisfaction of knowing they are part of an elite group of conservationists who keep a watchful eye on Alabama's treasured marine resources.

Becoming a life member is simple. An investment of \$1,000, made in four equal quarterly payments if you like, is all that is required.

Members who commit to life membership prior to December 31, 2007 will also receive one of CCA Alabama's new life member fishing shirts.

Questions about life membership?
Call the state office at 251.478.3474.

CCA Alabama Executive Committee

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VENTINGfish:

A GUIDE TO RELEASING REEF FISH WITH RUPTURED SWIMBLADDERS

PROPER RELEASE OF MARINE FISHES has become increasingly important to anglers. In order to maintain healthy fish populations, each angler is responsible for carefully handling fish that are hooked, and releasing fish so they can spawn or perhaps be caught again. Reef fish may require special handling during release to decrease mortality.

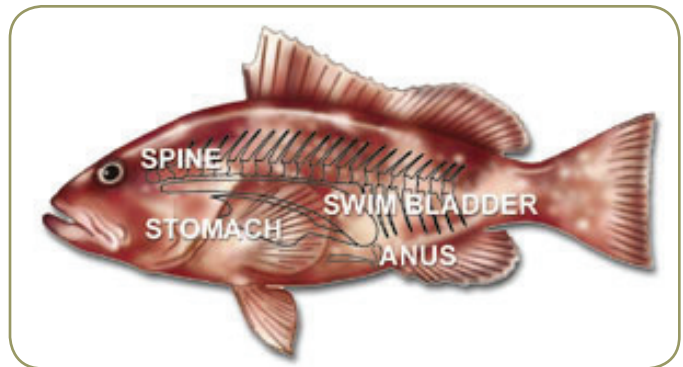
THE PROBLEM

Many marine reef fish have a gas-filled organ called a swimbladder, which controls buoyancy and allows the fish to maintain a certain depth in the water column.

The gas in the swimbladder can over-expand when fish are brought quickly to the surface by hook and line. This can result in serious injury to the fish, and if released in this buoyant condition, the fish may float away and die from exposure to the elements or become an easy target for predators. This defeats the purpose of fishery management laws such as minimum size restrictions and daily bag limits.

SWIMBLADDER BIOLOGY

Many reef fish have a closed swimbladder, an internal organ filled with gases, mostly oxygen, carbon dioxide, and nitrogen. This organ is located in the peritoneal cavity attached to the fish's backbone beneath the dorsal

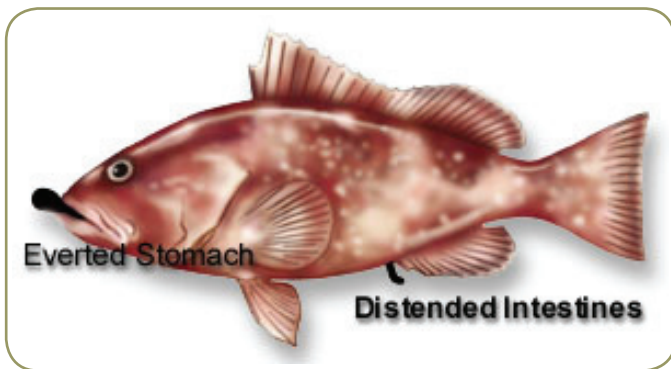


fin. Swimbladders can expand only so far before they burst.

When the swimbladder bursts, the swimbladder gases escape into the fish's body cavity, where they can continue to expand. The pressure exerted by these gases is sufficient to push the stomach out the mouth and the intestines out of the anus. Venting releases these gases from the body cavity, thus eliminating the pressure on the internal organs. If damage is not excessive, the organs will return in place on their own, once the gases are expelled. Venting also will allow the fish to overcome buoyancy problems and swim down to habitat depth, enhancing its immediate survival.

DETERMINING WHICH FISH TO VENT

Scientific studies have shown that species with large swimbladders such as red grouper, black sea bass, and gag derive immediate benefit from venting. Your ability to judge which fish should be vented will improve with practice and experience. After reeling in a fish, closely observe its condition. If the fish is bloated and floats (is unable to control its buoyancy) or if the fish's stomach is distended out of the mouth, the fish should be vented. If the fish appears normal, not bloated, and is able to swim down to habitat depth on its own, venting is not necessary.



VENTING PROCEDURE

IT IS BEST TO VENT THE FISH as quickly as possible with a minimum of handling. If the fish's stomach is everted out of the fish's mouth, do not attempt to push it back into the fish's body. Expelling the swimbladder gases will allow the stomach to return to its normal position within a few hours. Hold the fish gently but firmly on its side and insert the venting tool at a 45-degree angle approximately one to two inches back from the base of the pectoral fin.

insert the tool only deep enough to release the gases — do not skewer the fish. The sound of the escaping gas is audible and deflation is noticeable. If a fish is extremely bloated, use the hand holding the fish to exert gentle pressure on the fish's abdomen to aid deflation.

Keep a good grip on the venting tool during the entire process, so that an unexpected jerk from the fish does not dislodge the tool and cause injury to others.

The fish's everted stomach should not be punctured. This practice is not as efficient in releasing gas from the body cavity and results in additional injury.

Return the fish to the water as soon as possible. If necessary, revive it by holding the fish with the head pointed downward and moving the fish back and forth to pass water over the gills until the fish is able to swim unassisted.



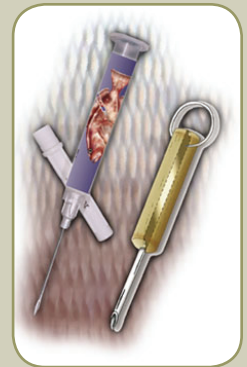
VENTING TOOLS

A venting tool can be any hollow, sharpened instrument that allows gases to escape. Ice picks and knives are not suitable because simply puncturing the fish is undesirable and can result in a mortal injury.

The Novak Venting Tool, designed and developed by Florida Sea Grant in cooperation with Mote Marine Laboratory researchers, can be purchased from Aquatic Release Conservation, Inc. (www.dehooker4ARC.com), or by calling its toll free number, 1-877-411-

4272. Florida Sea Grant is not aware of any other commercial suppliers of venting tools.

It is also possible to make your own venting tool. The modified hypodermic needle pictured is an excellent choice for a fish venting tool. A hollow, sharpened stainless steel cannula mounted on a hollow wooden dowel also works. Cannulas (16-gauge recommended) can often be purchased from farm supply and feed stores. The tool should be cleaned between uses and kept in a safe and accessible place. Chlorine bleach is a good disinfectant. Be sure to cap or place a cork on the tip of the tool after use to prevent personal injury.



Information on this page is based on the best available research regarding reef fish venting as interpreted by a Florida Sea Grant Advisory Panel assembled to review this research. Although the authors realize the need for further study of the influence of venting on long term reef fish survival, sufficient information exists to warrant providing guidelines to assist anglers in successful release practices.



New Face at CCA Alabama

CCA Alabama has a new Membership and Events Coordinator. The newly created position has responsibility for numerous support activities including membership entry and retention programs, inventory control, event planning and office management. "Sybille Matievich brings superior organizational skills to the position," said Edward Leatherbury, State Chairman.

Sybille, a native of Germany and a resident of the Mobile area, has a background in the non-profit as well as for-profit sectors, both nationally and internationally. Her experience includes founding a German social & cultural association in California and serving as Director of Corporate Development for a New England based biomedical manufacturing firm.

"Her charming accent and affable personality make her an ideal person for the much needed slot at the office," added Dan Dumont, State President.



Orange Beach Billfish Classic a Huge Success

Fifty boats participated in the tenth annual Orange Beach Billfish Classic, held during the first week of August. The OBBC, billed as the only catch-and-release billfish tournament on the Gulf Coast that donates the net income to conservation causes, had a waiting list of boats at the entry cutoff date, according to Beth Reed, tournament director.

The Orange Beach Marina hosted the event; and anglers, captains, and crews enjoyed great food and hospitality, undaunted by a summer squall that blew through the area during the Thursday evening dinner hour. The boats left the marina Thursday at 9:00 PM and returned Saturday before 8:00 PM.

Seventy-nine billfish were successfully tagged and released during the two days of fishing. "The weather was great, and

the fishing was fantastic" said Manning McPhillips, one of the founders of the tournament.

CCA receives annual funding from the proceeds of the tournament. The income is spent entirely for conservation projects in Coastal Alabama.

From the Government Relations Committee

The 2007 Alabama State legislative session was marked by turmoil and disappointment because of the shutdown in the Senate that prevented about 90% of bills introduced from having a chance to pass.

Your CCA Government Relations Committee worked diligently during the entire session to get a bill enacted that would ban the use of monofilament commercial gill nets in Alabama's coastal waters. A workable compromise was drafted and agreed on by Manning McPhillips (lobbyist for CCA's Government Relations Committee), Representative Jamie Ison, and the Alabama Seafood Association (The gill netters' group), but the Senate debacle at the end of the session prevented its passage.

"We're intensifying our efforts, and we won't stop until the use of monofilament gill nets in our commercial fishery is banned. It took Texas several years to get the ban passed, and it took Florida three years to get their ban enacted," said McPhillips. We expect to see a ban in place in Alabama in the near future."



A LEGACY OF CONSERVATION

JOIN THE SPECIAL GROUP OF PEOPLE who have made a lifetime commitment to marine resource conservation, and become a life member of CCA. With your onetime \$1,000 membership contribution, you will receive this distinctive CCA life member display piece.

To become a life member of CCA Alabama contact:

ED WILLIAMSON
CCA Alabama
Executive Director

P. O. Box 16987
Mobile, AL 36616
251.478.3474

Inland Activities Impact on our Coastal Estuary

THE MOBILE BAY ESTUARY, one of the most diverse and productive environments in the United States, is the zone where freshwater from the rivers of Alabama meet and mix with the saltwater of the Gulf of Mexico. The Mobile Bay watershed - or the land area that drains into the Bay - covers two thirds of the state of Alabama and portions of Mississippi, Georgia, and Tennessee. With the 43,662 square miles of land it drains, the Mobile Bay Estuary is the sixth largest watershed on the continent. With an average flow of 62,000 cubic feet per second, the Estuary is the fourth largest on the continent in terms of freshwater inflow. In fact, 15-20% of this nation's fresh water flows through this basin.

With such tremendous multi-state inputs, land and water use decisions made in Birmingham,

and even Atlanta, have direct impacts on the water quality and quantity of the Bay and the Gulf. Water runs downhill, and a raindrop that falls in northwest Georgia can eventually enter Mobile Bay. During periods of intense regional rainfall, a large volume of water can enter Mobile

Bay at once, carrying with it sediments, nutrients, and chemicals that gathered upstream. Water flow cuts at hydro-electric dams on the Coosa or Tallapoosa Rivers or pet wastes or over-fertilization in front yards in Birmingham all affect the water that flows into the nurseries where our game fish grow and develop.

*Submitted by TOM HERDER,
Director of the Mobile Bay
Estuary Program*



CCA Alabama UPCOMING EVENTS

For information or tickets,
call: 251.478.3474

- **EASTERN SHORE FALL OUT**

Thursday, October 4th
Oak Hollow Farm
Fairhope

- **MOBILE FALL BANQUET**

Thursday, November 1st
Mobile Country Club
Mobile



CCA Alabama
Coastal Conservation Association
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(Please print)

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, ZIP _____

Phone () _____

E-mail _____

PLEASE CHECK:

- New Membership
- Gift Membership to Friends
- Renewal Dues

- \$25 REGULAR MEMBERSHIP:** Membership card, window decal, bumper sticker, color patch, TIDE magazine.
- \$100 REGULAR MEMBERSHIP:** All of the above plus a CCA print of your choice.
- \$15 ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP:** per each family member: All member privileges except TIDE. Send names.
- \$200 SPONSOR:** Bronze lapel pin, print, plus member gifts.
- \$500 PATRON:** Silver lapel pin plus member gifts.
- \$1000 LIFE MEMBERSHIP:** Gold lapel pin, one of CCA's signed and numbered conservation prints, an acrylic desk cube with embedded CCA logo, a life member decal, and one of CCA Alabama's new life member fishing shirts with a commitment prior to Dec 31, 2007. Additionally, life members will receive special recognition in state publications and a lifetime subscription to TIDE magazine.
- \$10 NEW TIDE MEMBERSHIP:** Rising TIDE newsletter, logo patch and decal, iron-on T-shirt transfer, redfish sticker. For members 17 years and under only.

METHOD OF PAYMENT (CHECK ONE):

- Check
- Visa
- MasterCard
- American Express

Credit Card #: _____

Exp. date: _____

Signature: _____

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Coastal Conservation Association

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