

Look for bream on the beds this weekend

BY PHILLIP GENTRY
FOR THE JOURNAL

The old fisherman's adage when it comes to bream fishing is that the best time to catch bream is the first full moon in May. I've lived by that adage my whole life, and one thing I can tell you is that the adage is true.

As it happens, the first full moon in May will occur this weekend. Of course, many anglers find great success the entire month and have been reporting some pretty good success already, particularly with the warm weather we've had this spring.

Bream are a gregarious species of panfish. Most fishermen can probably trace their first fishing roots back to this more-than-willing fish.

This time of year the most numerous of bream species, namely bluegills, move into shallow waters to nest and lay eggs. The males prepare the nests and guard the nest from predators once the females have deposited eggs.

This guardianship is what makes the fishing for big bull gills so exciting. Males, decked out in almost solid black spawning colors, will strike at anything that comes near the nest with a vengeance.

It's also for this reason that fly rods and popping bugs make a great bedding bream arsenal. With the growing popularity of fly fishing over the years, tackle manufacturers began putting less expensive and more user-friendly fly rods and combos on the market.

A good quality fly rod combo can be had for about the same price as any baitcast or spinning outfit. Like spinning and baitcasting, it takes a bit of practice to learn to effectively handle a fly rod.



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When bream go on the beds this weekend, test out your five senses to locate these aggressive fish.

As for lures, match the size of the bait to the size of the fish. Bream have small mouths, and bugs and flies with smaller hooks in the size 10 range will hook more fish.

Larger baits with larger hooks are acceptable for the biggest bream and the not-so-occasional large-mouth bass that shows up.

Locating a bream bed is more than half the battle. Bream prefer to bed in shallow water surrounded by plenty of structure. Typical bedding habitat will be muddy or sandy bottoms in shallow water around structure such as docks, brush or rocks.

Locating bream beds requires the use of at least four of the five senses.

Look for visual signs of bedding such as saucer-like depressions in the

bottom in clear water or telltale wakes of bream swimming in shallow water. Foamy, bubbles may also be present in backwater eddies from bream fanning as well as stirred up, muddy water. Look for beds to be located in the shallow flat areas in the upper reaches of most lakes.

If an area contains a large bream bed close to shore or if fishing without a boat, a good idea is to walk the bank or wade in the area and cast to the fish. Care should be exercised not to let your shadow cross the bed to keep from spooking fish.

Bedding bream put off a distinctive sweet, "fishy" smell when spawning and anglers who approach from down wind can often nose their way into the

right vicinity.

If all else fails, feel your way to the local bream bed by fan casting into likely looking areas or down a shallow, tree-studded bank in the hopes of catching that one fish that will give away the bed.

If you're in an area suspected of holding bream, listen carefully for the sounds of fish "smacking" the surface, indicating the males are feeding on water bugs that had the misfortune of skating across a bed.

Once located, keep the boat off the bed. Using a trolling motor or positioning a boat too close to the bed will scatter the fish and you may have to wait a day or at least several hours for the quality fish to return.

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If you are looking for some close-to-home venues to find bedding bream, try these suggestions for finding bream this weekend.

— **Farm ponds.** From cattle water holes to small private lakes, farm ponds are the number one choice for bedding bream.

— **Lake Oolenoy** on Hwy. 11 near Table Rock in Pickens County.

— **Table Rock Reservoir** at Table Rock State Park.

— **Backwater impoundments** of Lake Hartwell. There are several areas where culvert pipes connect a backwater pond to Lake Hartwell and are public accessible. Look around Hwy. 133 in Clemson and River Road off Toccoa Hwy. past Westminster.

— **Lake Tugaloo** near Long Creek.

— **Lake Jocassee.** Like Tugaloo, the far backs of coves are best and get better closer to June due to the colder, deeper water.