Night fishing can be success or disaster

BY PHILLIP GENTRY
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As summertime heat and recreational boat traffic make the daylight hours less than hospitable to serious anglers, many turn nocturnal in the pursuit of crappie, stripers, catfish and other fish that readily bite after hours.

Many anglers also view night fishing as a traditional summer pastime, as they get to spend the night on the water with friends and family between bites.

How you go about night fishing can spell the difference between a successful outing and just losing sleep. Keep these five points in mind when you hit the water.

1. LIGHTING

Whether or not you intend to use lights to attract fish to your bait, having proper lighting is critical to night-fishing success. Being able to see to navigate the boat, prepare rigs, unhook fish and fix the inevitable mishap that arises will require the ability to see. If using batteries, make sure they are fresh and charged. Some anglers rely on portable generators, which may be noisy but ensure you don't lack for lighting power.

2. TACKLE

When possible, rig rods during the daylight and carry spares. In the event of a malfunction, it's easier to swap a rod than fix a problem. Rod holders, both while fishing and during transportation, make it much simpler to stay organized and keep lines spaced apart when fishing with multiple rods. Keep repeated-use items like hooks, weights, nets and pliers within easy reach so you can find them in the dark.

3. ORGANIZATION

Most night fishing occurs from a stationary position. Arrange anglers so each has space to move, a comfortable area to fish and the ability to tend to rods without having to step over or under obstructions. Clear pathways so each angler can freely move about the boat without tripping.

4. ANCHORING

Whether using a bottom anchor or tying off to fixed objects like trees or bridge pilings, make sure your anchor points are secure. Keep anchor lines clear in the event weather, conditions or simply moving to another spot makes it necessary to move.

5. LOCATION

Regardless of your quarry, fishing at night typically involves intercepting fish as they move from deepwater haunts to shallow ones in search of food. Target areas that provide a variety of depths in close proximity. Other considerations to keep in mind are structure, current, thermoclines and the presence of baitfish.

IN OTHER NEWS

Volunteers are needed to participate in the Summer Turkey Survey program sponsored by the S.C. Department of Natural Resources.

Annually since 1982, SCDNR conducts the survey to estimate reproduction and recruitment of wild turkeys in South Carolina. The survey involves agency wildlife biologists, technician and conservation officers, as well as many volunteers from other natural resource agencies and the general public. The survey is conducted in July and August each year.

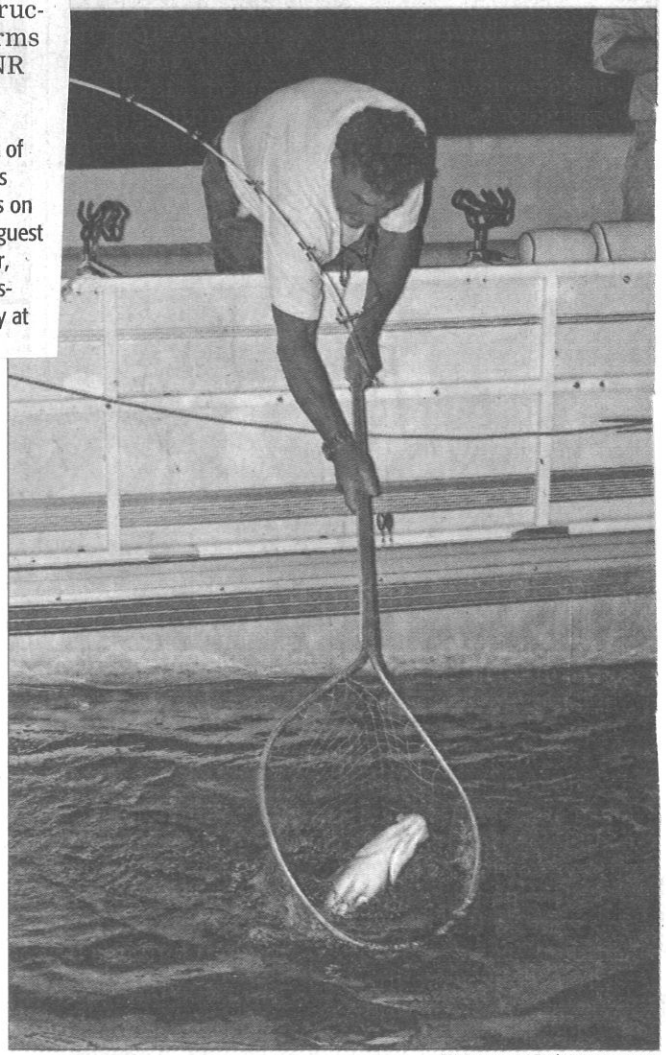
According to Charles Ruth, DNR's Deer and Wild Turkey Program coordinator, "The Summer Turkey Survey is designed to monitor annual nesting success of hens and survival of their young, which has the greatest influence on wild turkey population dynamics. The information allows biologists to calculate many factors essential for sound turkey management, including average brood size, percentage of hens with and without young, gobbler to hen ratio and overall numbers of turkeys seen. Combined with harvest data, this allows DNR to make scientifically based recommendations to the S.C. General Assembly in order to manage the wild turkey population now and in the future."

If you are interested in participating in the survey, additional information, including instructions and recording forms can be found on the DNR website.

PHILLIP GENTRY is the host of "Upstate Outdoors," which airs from noon to 2 p.m. Saturdays on 106.3 WORD FM. This week's guest on the show will be Dan Kibler, editor of South Carolina Sportsman magazine. Contact Gentry at pgentry6@bellsouth.net.

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Successful night fishing requires some advance preparation to make sure things go as planned after lights out.