

Don't forget your kayak during summer vacation

BY PHILLIP GENTRY
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The beauty of June is that no matter what flavor of water you dump your Tupperware boat into, there's plenty of action to be found.

June also brings about the beginning of the summer season, when the kids are out of school and beach and lake houses fill up with vacationers. What better way to preserve some quality fishing time between visits to the putt-putt course, the fried-food warehouse and the sunny shore than to throw the kayak on top of the family station wagon and slide into the water a few mornings before the circus starts?

June is also the time when the nod for best shallow-water fishing in the Carolinas tips from freshwater over to saltwater. Baitfish will have moved back into the creeks and bayous of the inshore coastal areas, and plenty of flounder, redfish and trout can be found, along with some black drum, sheepshead, whiting and small sharks.

It's hard to beat a top-water bite from the times the sun's rays first start to peak over the horizon until the sun is fully visible in the east — give or take — about two hours later. Many vacation hotspots in coastal areas may have lights that shine on the backwater at night, but not on the beach in deference to nesting sea turtles.

Those lights attract shrimp, crabs and minnows all night long, setting the table for a good top-water bite for the



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When heading to the beach or the lake this summer, don't forget your kayak.

paddler who can flank the area you want to fish in and sling a Zara Spook, MirrOlure or any number of 3-to-4-inch top-water baits around docks or wharfs where the night life fades away with the rising sun.

Fortunately, after the sun gets up, many of those same fish retreat under the docks, wharves or other manmade structure rather than completely vacate the area. When the top-water bite is over, you can spend the remainder of your morning on the water before the kids start hollering to go eat by casting weighted plastics or hard jerkbaits up under the overhead cover.

Another option for the paddler who comes equipped with a stake-out pole or folding anchor is to line up with the incoming tide and soak some fresh shrimp or small chunks of crab on a Carolina rig in a deep hole, channel or ditch, especially if that ditch is the gateway between the creek and a large patch of marshland.

On the freshwater side of things, the same basic pattern, minus the tidal influence, will also produce fish. Rather than targeting redfish or trout, that spook, Pop'R or floating X-Rap will call in largemouth bass to start the day. Once the sun pushes fish under the docks, floating worms, shaky heads or jerkbaits will again produce.

If you prefer to soak some bait, you can pull the stern of your kayak up on a shallow point and fan cast lines outfitted with cut shad, whole night crawlers or stink bait for blue or channel catfish. Give each location about 30 to 45 minutes before paddling on to the next one.

PHILLIP GENTRY is the host of the "Upstate Outdoors" broadcast from noon to 2 p.m. Saturdays on 106.3 WORD FM. This week's guest on the show will be South Carolina Department of Natural Resources turkey project coordinator Charles Ruth, who will discuss recent changes in turkey-hunting regulations.