Fishing at Best in Atchafalaya
Largemouth Bass Primary Catch in Swampy Area

Swamp fishing in Louisiana's Atchafalaya Basin is at a peak, and it should stay that way with the snow melting up North. Times Picayune 5/3/80 1:16

The connection between the two might appear to be somewhat far-fetched, but it's very real. The flow of water down the Mississippi River directly affects the water level in much of South Louisiana's great swampland, and this level becomes fairly stable only in the fall and winter months. And with water stability comes great fishing, primarily for largemouth bass.

This swamp represents one of America's few remaining large areas in which the sounds and signs of modern civilization are few and far between, usually being represented by an outboard motor on a fisherman's or trapper's boat. It is a big area, roughly 75 miles from north to south and 20 to 25 miles wide, extending down both sides of the Atchafalaya River south from Highway 190 to the vicinity of Morgan City.

There is not one highway across this area, and hardly a town in it big enough to have a name. The fisherman launches his boat at one of many docks and launch sites on the perimeter of the area, and penetrates it through a vast network of bayous, lakes and oil fiel
des.

Fishing is good in the swampland all year, but only the native who knows the territory from long experience can consistently find fish at high water levels. When the water level stabilizes, it's a different story. Fish are to be found in virtually every canal, bayou and lake, and little catches of bass are almost routine.

There are two basic ways to fish the swamp. One is to fish the canals dug over the years by oil companies which have wells far back in the interior, and the other is to head into the interior and fish the little-known lakes deep in what amounts to a near-jungle. A total stranger with a basic knowledge of angling would have no difficulty in finding good fishing spots in the canals, since it's mostly a matter of moving around and trying different canals until you locate a spot where you get a strike almost every cast. To fish the lakes far back in the swamp requires a slightly more venturesome spirit, plus a few readily available suggestions from a native angler or boat dock operator and perhaps a map to help the fisherman find his way back to the dock with his stringer full of bass.

The swamp is fished on both east and west sides of Atchafalaya River. On the east side, there are the settlements of Roun, Sorrel, Pigeon and Pierre Part, from which a fishing expedition may be launched. The primary starting point on the west side is Henderson with its well-equipped boat docks, and there are also excellent fishing areas further south, out from the towns of Franklin and Morgan City.

To the visiting angler, fishing the great swamp can be an experience unlike anything he has encountered before. This is wild, primitive, unspoiled country, and the fisherman will find peace and quiet in which to enjoy his sport. It is common to go for hours without seeing another person. The banks of the streams are lined with a lush near-tropical growth, and the interior lakes are full of gigantic free trunks, some rotted off near the water and some still lowering into the sky in mute testimony to the vast forest which once covered this land.

It is almost as much an attraction for the nature lover and the camera fan as for the bass fisherman. Almost.

FISHING THE BAYOUS—Louisiana's maze of bayous is a never-forgotten discovery for each generation as few boyhood pleasures surpass walking to the old fishing hole with buddies. Bass, crappie and catfish are often caught in the shade of moss-draped oaks by youngsters using bamboo poles and worm-baited hooks.

—Photo by La. Tourist Commission.

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