

STORY & PHOTOS BY HUGHES SKINNER

FISHING for Trash ...OR NOT?

My name is Hughes Skinner and I have been bowfishing for five years and guiding for two years. I first started bowfishing when I was 13 years old. As a lover of archery and fishing, when I discovered bowfishing I immediately fell in love with it and haven't put it down since.

People think that the fish I am going after would be called "trash fish," and I thought the same until I had the privilege of taking outdoor enthusiast Jim Shockey, bowfishing, and we ate a variety of fish that we shot that day including Asian Carp, Buffalo Carp, Alligator Gar, Long Nose Gar, and Bighead Carp. I had no idea that all these fish were so good to eat, especially the alligator gar. Many people that say these fish are "trash fish" have more than likely not tried them because of the "nasty" stereotype they have. I know this from personal experience because I was the same way. These fish are a delicacy and I now see them as a world class sport fish. Through the years I continue to learn something new about bowfishing every time I go. It could be anything from the best weather to shoot in, the best time to shoot or the best water level in which to shoot.

I would like to share some of my experiences in hope that you will learn a few things to look for to be a successful bowfisher. The first thing I want to share with you is the type of gear I use for bowfishing. The most important would be your bow. The best bow on the market for bowfishing is the Osprey Bow. This bow is specifically designed and set up for bowfishing. Another piece of gear would be the attachments to use

on your bow. I would recommend a Muzzy reel with a thin diameter line. For example, monkey wire is my personal favorite. You also need to get a Muzzy reel seat for your Muzzy reel to sit on. Another important piece of equipment is the careful selection of arrows with which you plan to shoot. I recommend the AMS Yellow Jacket arrows, as I have had a lot of success with these. Once you have this gear, you are now one step closer to getting on the water. Anytime between April and September is a good time to try bowfishing, especially if the water is above 70 degrees. This is the temperature gar and carp come to the surface to "sun". I love to fish on the Mississippi River but when fishing a

river you need to look for an oxbow. This is a stretch of water off the main channel and is mostly clear. If you are fishing on a river system you will need to note the water level and whether the river is rising or falling. When the river is falling the gar come to the surface of the water to get oxygen and this allows you a full view of the gar which means a better chance of success.

Bowfishing is an addiction and is one of the fastest growing sports in America. One of the best feelings to me as an outdoorsman is being able to put numbers and sizes of fish in the boat. It's a lot of fun and it is a lifestyle I will never regret. Now go out there and shoot some fish!



Hughes Skinner