



The Business of Louisiana Alligator – Part Two: Gators to Gucci, Louisiana Family Business Exports to the World (*From Louisiana Seafood News*)

You've heard the expression that "quality is job one" when it comes to making cars. That same thinking applies to raising alligators and delivering flawless skins to market. "Farm-raised gators are all about the quality," said Craig Sagrera of Vermilion Gator Farm, a family-run business.

Given the nature of alligators, however, ensuring quality is no easy task. "I am taking a cannibalistic animal, putting him in a pen with his brothers and wanting him to grow for a year – without a scratch on him," said Sagrera. "I don't want his buddy to scratch him or bite him because I won't be able to sell that skin for top dollar. My customers want my skins stamped 'perfect'."

Sagrega's business exports its products to markets worldwide. Ninety percent of all gators harvested on the family farm end up as watch wristbands – stamped with labels from Gucci, Hermes and others. The other 10 percent are turned into small leather goods, including coin purses, belts and wallets with similar designer labels.

Skins from wild gators are used for a wider variety of purposes. Larger ones can go into garments and briefcases. Smaller ones, around five or six feet, are made into purses. Each product varies, according to the size of the gator. "Our major customer is in Singapore," Sagrera said. "We sell approximately 70 percent of our gator skins to the Asian markets." Depending on quality, Sagrera receives approximately \$20-\$25 per foot for wild alligator skins. Farm raised skins bring a price of \$150 -\$175 per skin.

Gators are raised to meet customer specifications. Every month, Sagrera's operations are in constant contact with customers. This business also demands personal visits to customers' facilities overseas. In dealing with Asian and European tanneries, "We do a lot of international travel to shake hands, discuss the stock on our farm, pricing and the prospects for the market in the future," he said. "What is China consuming? What is Europe consuming? This is all part of the business of Louisiana alligator. If the global economy is doing well, then I am doing well."

While Sagrera travels regularly overseas, he's also on the road around the Bayou State to Vermilion Parish on a farm located 10 miles south of Abbeville, somewhere in the marshes along the Gulf Coast, or smack dab in the middle of nowhere, where Google has yet to map.

Looking over his carnivorous crop, Sagrera observed: “We have had Gucci, Hermes, Louis Vuitton and Swatch – all here on this south Louisiana gator farm.” When it comes to gators, it looks like Sagrera of Abbeville is a brand unto itself, too.

by Ed Lallo and Springfield Lewis/Louisiana Seafood News

Louisiana Saltwater Series Announces 2013 Schedule

The Louisiana Saltwater Series Redfish Series will commence its 2013 season at The Dock/Dockside Bait and Tackle in Slidell and will visit seven different marinas across Louisiana’s coast to create a true test of the best and the most exciting season yet. The coming year marks the fourth anniversary of the LASS redfish trail.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, tournament host, will be commemorating the milestone with new prizes and partnerships, including a weigh-in hosted by *Marsh and Bayou Magazine* at the Northshore Boat-N-Fishing Show.

“Every angler who participates is not only signing up for a day of competition and entertainment, but they’re making their mark in fisheries research,” explained Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) assistant secretary Randy Pausina. “Our tournament is one of the only in existence that offers this unique opportunity to give back to the resource.”

Last year, 1,002 redfish were tagged and released, eclipsing the 2010 and 2011 combined total of 978 redfish tagged and released.

The 2013 LASS Redfish Series dates are as follows:

March 2 Slidell, The Dock/Dockside Bait and Tackle;

April 20 Lake Charles, Calcasieu Point Landing;

May 4 Lafitte, SeaWay Marina;

June 8 Port Fourchon, Port Fourchon Marina;

June 29 Delacroix, Sweetwater Marina;

Aug. 10 Empire, Delta Marina; and

Championship Oct. 4 and 5 Venice, Venice Marina.

All information related to rules and registration will soon be available at www.lasaltwaterseries.com.

Third Cohort of Whooping Cranes Released at White Lake WCA

The 14 juvenile whooping cranes delivered to White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area (WCA) in Gueydan last month were released into the wild Monday. The young cranes join 14 adults which are part of an experimental population being monitored by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF).

“We are making history”, said Robert Love, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries’ (LDWF) Coastal and Nongame Resources Division administrator. “We are very excited about this new level of progress and with this recent cohort being released into the marsh, the Louisiana population now totals 28. That is more whoopers than existed in this state during the last eighty or so years.”



Whooping cranes. Photo credit: LDWF

The cranes arrived in southwest Louisiana on Nov. 29 from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Md. LDWF is working cooperatively with US Fish and Wildlife Service, USGS, the Louisiana Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit and the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation to establish a non-migratory population in the state.

The whooping crane is protected under the federal Endangered Species and Migratory Bird Treaty Acts and by state law. Anyone encountering a whooping crane is advised to observe the bird from a distance.

Whooping cranes are large-bodied, white birds similar to white ibis, white pelicans and wood storks, all of which must be distinguished from legally-hunted snow geese. However, a red head and black facial markings along with a height of five feet and a wingspan of 7 to 8 feet make them very distinctive. In flight, whooping cranes display black wing tips and fully extended neck and legs, which extend well beyond the tail.

Juvenile whooping cranes are primarily white with some cinnamon-brown feathers remaining on their body, primarily on their head and neck. Their wing tips are black like an adult, but they lack the red head.

Anyone witnessing suspicious activity involving whooping cranes is advised to report that information to LDWF’s Enforcement Division by calling 1-800-442-2511 or using the tip411 program, which may offer a cash reward for information leading to arrests or convictions. To use the tip411 program, citizens can text LADWF and their tip to 847411 or download the “LADWF Tips” iPhone app from the Apple iTunes store free of charge. CitizenObserver, the tip411 provider, uses technology that removes all identifying information before LDWF receives the text so that LDWF cannot identify the sender.

Lagniappe Fisheries Newsletter

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LDWF Launches New iPhone App

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) launched its first iPhone application on Dec. 19. The application is free and available on the App Store.

LDWF's iPhone app offers the most vital information needed for outdoor enthusiasts. It is simple, quick and to the point, providing relevant information while participating in outdoor activities.

"This is great news for anglers, hunters and anyone who enjoys the outdoors," said Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) secretary Robert Barham. "We're giving our citizens a tool that can improve their outdoor experience, no matter what skill level they may hold."

The iPhone app took some of the best parts of the department's website, and recreated them into a version more adaptable to today's lifestyle. The app offers current hunting and fishing regulations, freshwater and saltwater fish identifications, size restrictions and bag limits for specific water bodies, waterfowl identification and regulations, schedules for the wildlife management areas and much more. A snake identification page is also included, which is a useful resource no matter what outdoor activity is underway.

LDWF plans to keep the momentum going with the iPhone app and push out regular revisions in the coming year. The agency is also planning a larger version for the iPad.

The LDWF app can be downloaded from the App Store at <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/louisiana-department-wildlife/id53619693...>

LOUISIANA REGULATIONS

Rules for Large Coastal Sharks

A Declaration of Emergency will modify the commercial harvest possession limits for Non-Sandbar Large Coastal Sharks. The commercial possession limit will increase from 33 to 36 for the 2013 commercial harvest season.

The National Marine Fisheries Service, in 2008, promulgated rules that established an increase in the commercial possession limit of Non-Sandbar Large Coastal Sharks from 33 to 36 sharks beginning with the 2013 commercial season. This action will provide consistency with federal regulations and increased opportunity for Louisiana shark fisherman to harvest more sharks.

In a related action, the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission also took action on a Notice of Intent to permanently modify the commercial Non-Sandbar Large Coastal Shark possession limits.

Interested persons may submit comments relative to the proposed rule to Jason Adriance, Fisheries Division, Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, P.O. Box 98000, Baton Rouge, LA 70898-9000, or via e-mail to jadriance@wlf.la.gov prior to Feb. 7, 2013.

The Non-Sandbar Large Coastal Sharks group includes great hammerhead, scalloped hammerhead, smooth hammerhead, nurse, blacktip, bull, lemon, silky, spinner and tiger sharks. Sandbar sharks are included in the Large Coastal Sharks group, however harvest and possession is prohibited without a special federal shark research permit issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Fall Shrimp Season

The fall shrimp season closed in state inside waters within portions of Lake Pelto, and Terrebonne and Timbalier Bays on Thursday, Dec. 20 at sunset.

This closure includes state inside waters within the Terrebonne Basin south of 29 degrees 13 minutes 00 seconds north latitude from 90 degrees 18 minutes 00 seconds west longitude westward to 90 degrees 34 minutes 00 seconds west longitude, and those inside waters south of 29 degrees 06 minutes 00 seconds north latitude from 90 degrees 34 minutes 00 seconds west longitude westward to 90 degrees 46 minutes 00 seconds west longitude.

The fall inshore shrimp season was briefly extended in these waters, however, recent samples collected by LDWF biologists indicate that average white shrimp size in the areas to be closed is smaller than 100 count per pound. This action protects these small white shrimp and provides increased opportunity for growth to larger, more valuable sizes.

Following this closure, shrimping in state inside waters will only be allowed in:

- State inside waters east of the Mississippi River from the Mississippi/Louisiana state line southward to the eastern shore of South Pass of the Mississippi River.

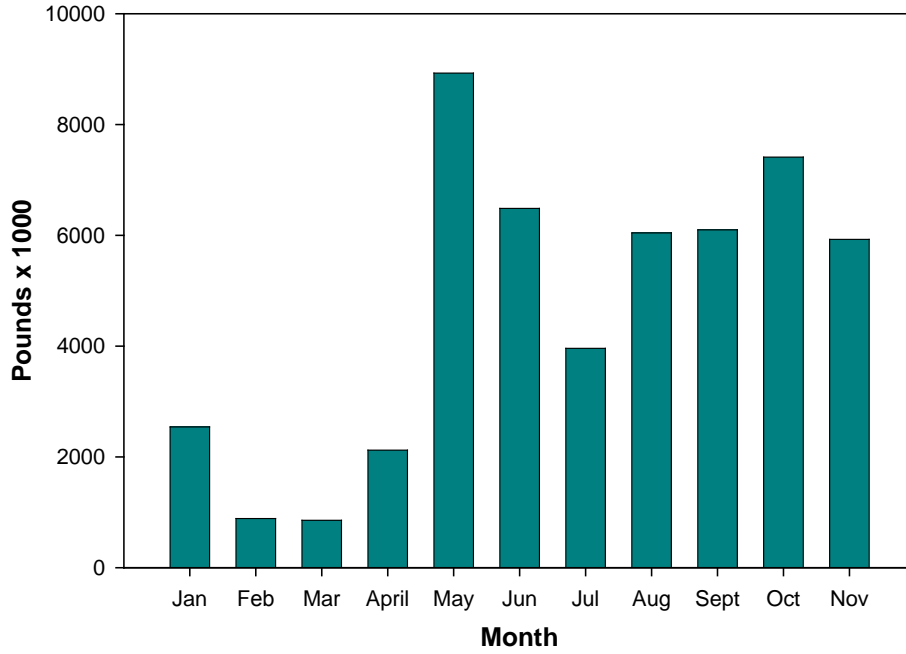
Shrimping in state outside waters will only be allowed in:

- The portion of state outside waters, south of the Inside/Outside Shrimp Line as described in LA R.S. 56:495 seaward a distance of three nautical miles, from the Atchafalaya River Ship Channel at Eugene Island as delineated by the Channel red buoy line westward to the western shore of Freshwater Bayou Canal at 92 degrees 18 minutes 33 seconds west longitude which will close to shrimping on Monday, Jan. 7.
- All state outside waters east of the northwest shore of Caillou Boca as well as state outside waters west of Freshwater Bayou Canal and fishery jurisdiction waters claimed by the state beyond the three nautical mile closure zone.

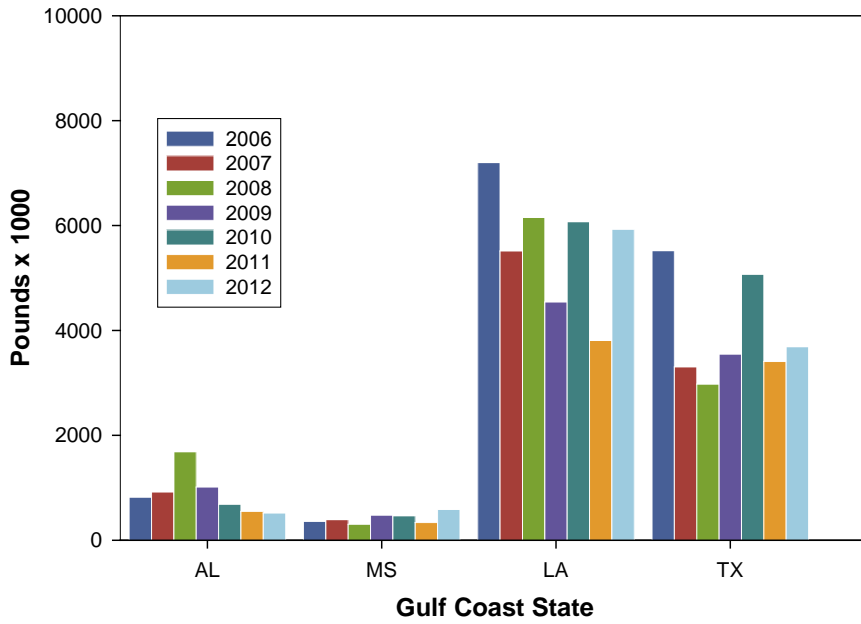
Louisiana Shrimp Watch- November

Louisiana specific data portrayed in the graphics are selected from preliminary data posted by NOAA on their website. All data portrayed are subject to final revision and approval by NOAA. Shrimp landings are ex-vessel prices, inclusive of all species harvested. Missing, inadequate or withheld reports are portrayed as “zero” in these graphics. Price graphics reflect central Gulf states only (Texas and Florida are reported independently). For more information, please refer to: www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st1/market_news/index.html.

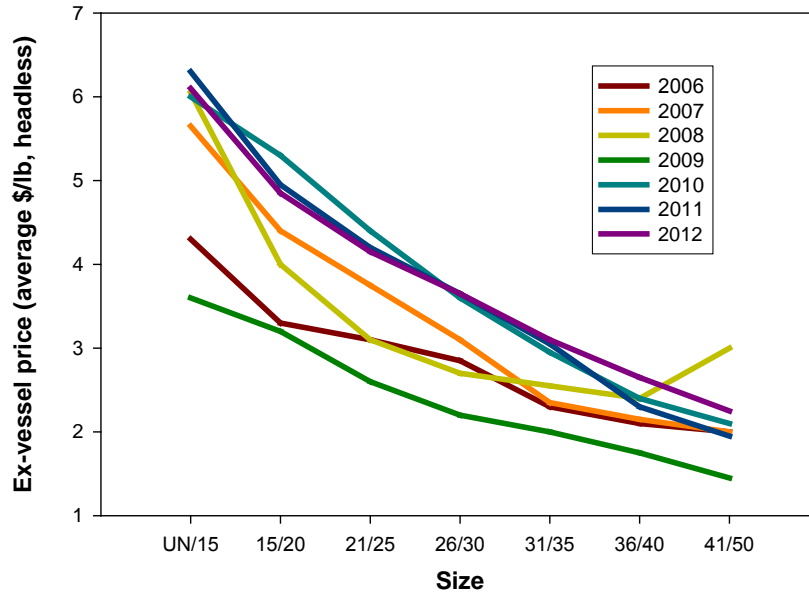
Louisiana 2012 Shrimp Harvest



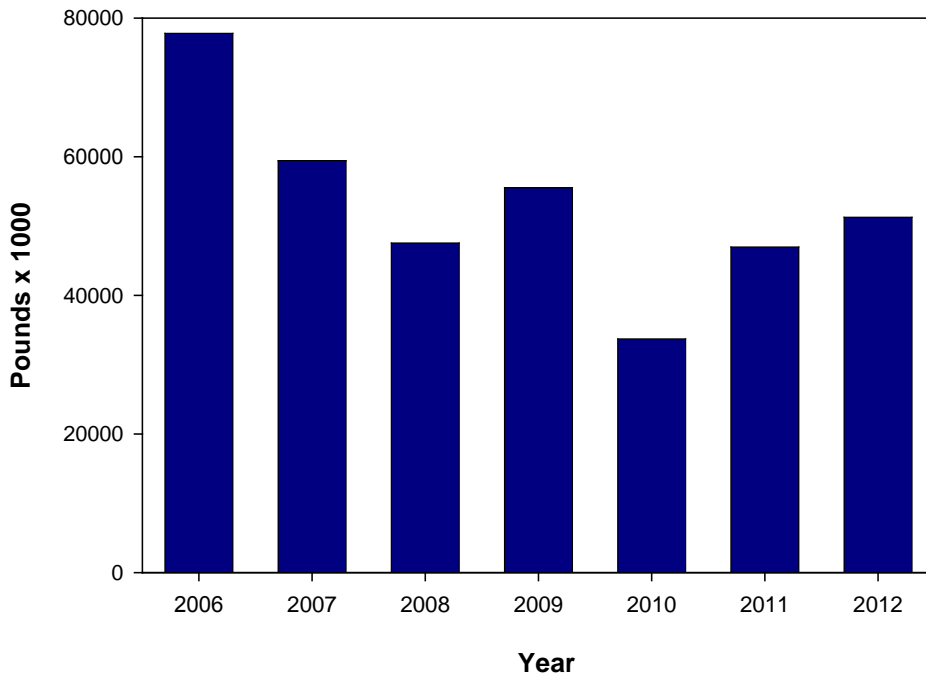
November Shrimp Harvest



November Northern GoM Shrimp Prices



Louisiana Year to Date Shrimp Harvest



The Gumbo Pot

Recipe courtesy of *Chef Susan Spicer's Crescent City Cooking* and *Louisiana Kitchen & Culture*. For more recipes or to subscribe to their magazine or free newsletter, please visit <http://louisiana.kitchenandculture.com/>

Susan Spicer's Crabmeat Gratin

Cheesy Bread Crumb Topping

- 1/2 cup dry bread crumbs
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley
- 1 tablespoon butter, melted
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/4 cup grated Grana Padano or Parmesan Cheese

Crabmeat Gratin

- 1 tablespoon butter, plus more for buttering dishes
- 1/2 cup finely chopped onion
- 1/4 cup finely chopped celery
- 1 (14-ounce) can artichoke hearts (or 2 fresh artichoke bottoms, cooked until tender), diced
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 tablespoon sherry or brandy, optional
- 3/4 cup milk
- 1/2 cup cream
- Hot sauce to taste
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh tarragon
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/4 pound button mushrooms, thinly sliced



Photo courtesy of <http://louisiana.kitchenandculture.com>

- 1 pound best-quality cooked crabmeat (lump, jumbo lump, or a combination of lump and claw)
- 1/4 cup finely chopped scallions

Method:

For the topping, combine all ingredients in a small bowl and set aside. Preheat oven to 400°F and butter 4 individual ramekins or a 1-quart baking dish. Melt the 1 tablespoon butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat. When it begins to bubble, add the onion, peppers, celery, artichokes, and garlic and sauté for about 3 minutes, stirring. When the vegetables have wilted and are just barely beginning to color, sprinkle in the flour and stir. Cook 2 minutes more, then whisk in the sherry and milk. Bring to a boil, whisking as it thickens. If the mixture becomes too thick (if it seizes up and pulls away from the side), add a little more milk to loosen. After about 2 minutes, add the cream and bring the mixture back to a boil, whisking the entire time. Lower the heat and simmer for about 5 minutes more, until the mixture is smooth and any raw flour taste is gone. Season to taste with salt, pepper, and hot sauce, then stir in the mustard, tarragon, lemon juice, and lemon zest. Remove from heat and set aside.

Heat the olive oil in a medium sauté pan over medium-high heat and sauté the mushrooms until golden brown. Add the mushrooms to the cream sauce. Put the crabmeat in the mushroom sauté pan and heat until it is warmed through and the liquid has evaporated, about 2 minutes. Take one last look for shells at this point. Add scallions to the crabmeat mixture and stir, then remove from heat. Fold the crabmeat into the cream sauce. Taste and adjust seasonings — it may need more lemon juice.

Divide the mixture evenly among ramekins or pour into the baking dish. Sprinkle with the topping and bake for 6-8 minutes, until browned and bubbly. Serve immediately.

If you have a favorite seafood recipe that you would like to share, please send it to Julie Anderson janderson@agcenter.lsu.edu for inclusion in future issues.



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We would like to hear from you! Please contact us regarding fishery questions, comments or concerns you would like to see covered in the Lagniappe. Anyone interested in submitting information, such as articles, editorials or photographs pertaining to fishing or fisheries management is encouraged to do so.

Please contact Lagniappe editor Julie Anderson at janderson@agcenter.lsu.edu.

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