



Photo by John N. Felsher

David Sikes shows off an amberjack he caught while fishing with Reel Surprise Charters in the Gulf of Mexico south of Orange Beach. Hardtails can be excellent bait for amberjack.

RECORD: Amberjack can be landed with hardtails, ruby lips, squirrelfish

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live baits include mullets, squirrelfish, large menhaden and ruby lips, also known as tomtate, a small grunt with orange-red mouths.

“Hardtails are really good baitfish for amberjack,” Walker explained. “Ruby lips are another good bait. A big amberjack can eat a big fish. The one Brian caught had a mouth that looked like it could swallow a basketball!”

Most people use live bait for amberjack, but the predators sometimes hit artificials. Fly rod enthusiasts chum the water to bring them to the surface and then sight-cast to in-

dividual fish in the slicks. Anglers can also catch them by vertically dropping heavy lead jigs tipped with plastic trailers or spoons. Anglers also catch them by trolling live baits or diving plugs parallel to reefs or just over the tops of them. Circle the reef several times and use various lures in diverse colors at different depths to determine the best patterns for that day.

The fall amberjack season in Alabama opened on Aug. 1, 2019, and runs through Dec. 31, 2019. Alabama anglers can keep one greater amberjack per day at least 34 inches long in fork length.

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