

My friend and fishing partner Jason King took the time recently to compile some statistics related to the "big" trout he's caught since the beginning of 2009. One fact becomes clear when these stats are analyzed--Jason is a hell of a fisherman! Like me, Jason thinks of "big" trout as those measuring 27 inches or longer. Since 2009, on his own rod, he's caught and weighed 150 fish meeting or exceeding that standard! He caught "quite a few other 27s and 28s" from 2009-12, but wasn't weighing those back then, so he omitted them from the spreadsheet. That's an impressive sample size, especially for one angler!

Jason knows where he caught all these fish, and the lures he used to catch them. In deference to him (and indirectly to me), I will not mention the areas which produced the highest number of fish, but I will pass on the information related to the types of lures he used. 58% were caught on soft plastics. I know he almost always uses a rat-tailed Bass Assassin or a MirrOlure Provoker. 29% bit twitch baits (mostly sinking FatBoys) and 13% blew up on topwaters (which, for Jason usually means a Super Spook Junior). I find these facts to be somewhat insignificant, in the following sense. I'd say those percentages closely mirror the amount of time Jason fishes with each of those types of lures. If one fishes with lure X half of the time, one can reasonably be expected to catch half their big fish on it.

Mostly, the stats Jason has compiled related to lures reflect his belief in the efficacy of soft plastics over other types of lures. In other words, he (correctly in my opinion) perceives soft plastics to be capable of producing more bites more of the time when compared with twitch baits and topwaters, so he keeps one tied on more than half the time he's fishing. Not surprisingly, he catches a lot of "big" trout, partly because he keeps an effective lure on the line most of the time.

99 of the 150 trout documented measured 28 inches or longer, with 11 of those stretching between 30 and 32 inches. That's impressive indeed! I'm sure some other folks out there have caught 100 or more trout measuring 28 inches or longer since the beginning of 2009, but I'd also say the list of names reads more like a Haiku than a Bible.

Most people don't catch that many trout over 28 inches in their entire lifetime. Consequently, most people can't accurately guess the weights of the long trout they do catch. I have not, to this point, mentioned the weights of the fish. Jason did dangle all the trout included in this data from the Boga before he crunched the numbers for us. I find the average weights significant and enlightening. They prove that most people who don't use a scale to measure the weights of their fish EXAGGERATE when they estimate.

The 51 27 inchers Jason weighed averaged 6.39 pounds. The 57 28s weighed 6.92, the 31 29s--7.45, the 9 30s--8.16, the single 31 weighed 9 and the lone 32 weighed 8.75. His heaviest trout, a 10 1/4 pounder, was 30.5 inches.

It is important to remember that 27 inches means anything between 27 and about 27 7/8. So, all the fish between 27 and 28 averaged less than 6 and a half pounds. All these people out there calling all their 27 inchers 7 pounders are exaggerating. For the record, not one of the 28 to 28 7/8 inch fish Jason put on the Boga dragged the device down to the 8 pound mark. Still, we have a world full of anglers who believe all their 28s weigh 8 pounds. To them, I say, "Not so much".

Significantly, Jason's numbers related to the size/weight ratio of the trout he catches closely

resemble the numbers I've compiled. And my sample size (because it includes fish I and my clients and partners caught for over a decade) is bigger.

And yes, we know fish on the Upper Coast, particularly in Galveston and Sabine, weigh more per inch than fish in our area. I would say the difference is not as big as some people would want us to believe. I seriously doubt the "average" 28 incher anywhere weighs 8 pounds. Some do, but most do not.

The longer the trout, the more the weight will fluctuate from day to day, season to season. This past year, Jason caught a 30 1/4 trout which weighed 8 3/4 pounds on a Sunday. The following Friday, in the same exact spot, a customer of mine caught the fish, and it weighed 7 3/4 pounds. The fish had just ingested a mullet when Jason caught it; its belly was obviously distended and full. When my client caught the fish, it was empty and hungry.

Which brings up another point related to which aspect of a fish's size is more important--weight or length? To me, it's clearly length. Fish don't shrink and stretch; they get longer as they get older. Their weights do go up and down with the weather and the fish's associated binges. Was Jason's catch of the 30 1/4 inch fish more "significant" than my clients? I don't see how--it was the SAME fish.