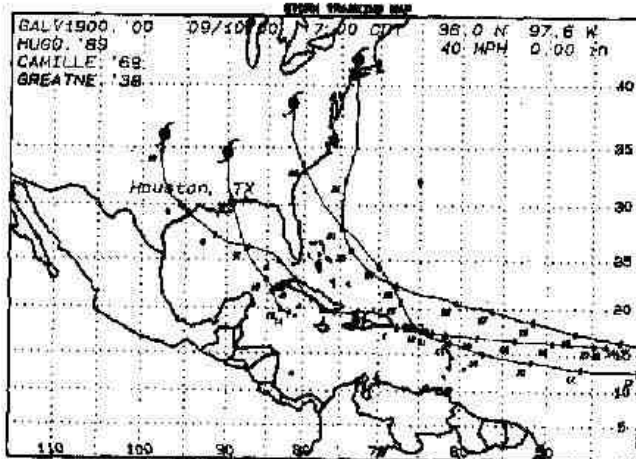**Bob Stearns**

COMPUTER PROGRAMS FOR FISHERMEN

Every so often I run across computer software that is genuinely interesting to the angler and boat owner. Some of you may remember the column I did on Carl Andren's "The Loran Program" (January 1987 issue)—at that time one of the first of a new class of angling software. Then there was "TideMaster," a very detailed tidal prediction program by Zephyr Services ($39 per state, 1900 Murray Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15217), which I covered in the February 1988 issue. Both of these have proven useful and practical. So as time went by and computers continued to play a role of increasing importance in nearly every aspect of life, it seemed inevitable that we would see more and more of these outdoor-oriented programs.

Most fishing software, like the two mentioned above, is commercially written and sold for prices that run from around $30 and up. But many of you may not be aware of another class of computer programs called Shareware. These are usually written by individuals who do so as much for their own satisfaction (or personal need) as for financial gain. One of the programs I'm going to discuss this month comes from that source. It's called FISHBASE.

You can buy Shareware from one of several companies that specialize in such stuff for just $2 to $4 per disk. If you like the program and

The Storm Genie feature of the STORM software program will compare storm tracks on the screen based on several different parameters.

plan to use it regularly, you are asked to make a small contribution, typically $5 to $25, to the author. It's all on the honor system. All the Shareware I've run across to date is written for IBM and compatible systems, but there are probably some programs out there for the Macintosh and Apple, too. All of the software covered here is for IBM and compatibles, although other versions might also be available.

FISHBASE Stores Info

This new Shareware program (disk no. 2113) comes from an outfit called The Software Labs (3767 Overland Ave,. #112, Los Angeles, CA 90034; Tel. (800) 359-9998). They'll send you a big catalog for the asking.

FISHBASE version 2.1 comes on one disk ($3.49), either 5.25-inch 360 KB or 3.5-inch 720 KB (add $1 per 3.5). It requires just 242 KB of disk space for the programs, so you can still add lots of files and

still run it from a single 5.25-inch 360 KB floppy. If you try it, and like it enough to use regularly, you should send ten bucks to its author, Dick Olsen. This also gets you the latest version at no additional charge, which is now up to 4.x, I believe. The 18-page manual comes on the disk and your printer makes a hard copy. By all means take the few minutes needed to print it out; you'll definitely need it while you are getting acquainted with the program.

The program is an easy-to-use, menu-driven database that allows you to quickly sort by any of the various parameters you record, such as air temperature, lure color, lure type, water temperature, date, location, etc. It also allows you to edit the various entries.

When you run the program and select the new entry option, you'll see a box on your screen with the data parameters to be entered. Since the original program is written for the fresh water angler, it provides a space for some data we salt water guys probably wouldn't record. I corrected for this by recording tide phase, time of catch, and wind speed and direction in place of pH, humidity and barometric data, respectively. Where the screen asks for water pH, I simply represent the tidal stage by positive and negative numbers: +3 for the third hour of the rising tide, -5 for the fifth hour of the fall, etc. Where it

asks for humidity, I input the time of day the fish was caught on a 24 hour clock. For example, 9:30 am becomes 0930, and 2:45 pm becomes 1445. And where it asks for barometric pressure, I input the wind direction and speed (e.g. 045 15 for northeast 15 mph).

You're asked to name the data file you wish to create. For most of us, the best bet would probably be by species: bluefish, marlin, tarpon, sailfish, etc. That way you can sort for the various parameters that affect each species separately—with the idea of determining the parameters that most affected your success. Perhaps, for example, by comparing wind direction and lure color you might see a correlation.

Under the menu heading "Other Goodies," there's one selection that I feel makes the entire program worthwhile all by itself. It's moon-phase data, and it allows you to pick the full or new moon dates as far back or forward in time as you want. For example, for June 1991,

the full moon will be around the 28th and the new on the 6th. Checking the version I'm using as I write this against the 1990 calendar, I found it to be accurate within two days. This is a big help in planning future trips and tournaments!

The Loran Program

First introduced about four years ago, Carl Andren's innovative program has since undergone several major revisions and is now in version 3.0. Those of you who used the original version probably remember that you had to also have BASIC on the disk to make it run. The new version is totally self-contained and comes as two programs: LORAN-.EXE for computers that do not have a math co-processor chip, and LORANM.EXE for those that do.

The Loran Program comes on two 360 KB 5.25-inch disks and requires 640 KB, plus the space required by the files you create to store your own loran data. That means it will easily fit on the 3.5-

inch 720 KB disk used by many portable and laptop computers. The 5- by 7-inch printed manual that comes with the disks is just 42 pages long and an easy read.

Some of the big changes since the earlier versions include a trip planner, an on-screen map (color or mono graphics capability needed) that handles up to 7000 positions per file, and a search feature by position or key word.

You can convert TDs from one chain to another, or from old loran A locations to loran C. And of course you can print all of that information on paper. If your computer has graphics capability, you can even print your own maps.

The Loran Program sells for $60 from the Andren Software Co., P.O. Box 33117, Indialantic, FL 23903-0117. Telephone (evenings only) (407) 725-4115.