

# ODU Magazine

SPRING FISHING

**Santee Cooper  
Says It All  
Sneaky  
Sheepshead**

***Take a Kid Fishing***

**Suwannee Bass Thrive In The Pristine  
Water Of Florida's Big Bend**

**Calling Turkeys On Pennsylvania's  
Public Lands**

**Warm Up with Hot Spring Panfish**





A scenic view of a river or lake with a rocky shoreline. In the foreground, a person is fishing in the water. The background features a line of trees with some autumn-colored foliage. The sky is clear and blue.

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Photo by Vic Amadio

*© Kathy Barker*



One of the things that I have noticed over the years is how customer service has been changing for both the good, bad and sometimes just plain ugly. Some companies have moved their customer service overseas then moved it back. I myself can very easily be spoiled by good service and even willing to pay more for what I consider both excellent products and exceptional customer

service. Case in point, I don't know how many of you have ever visited an Apple store (but if you haven't you should), but in my book, every company could learn a thing or two if they visited one of their stores, call them or just visit their website. In my opinion, everything, they do is geared around customer satisfaction and all of us here at ODUMagazine.com want you to have a pleasant experience every time you open the magazine, whether you are a valued reader or advertiser. Please let us know how we are doing and what we can do to make your experience more enjoyable. And NO I do not own any Apple stock, I just like everyone's attitude when I walk into the store!

I have mixed emotions about what I am about to say and how it will be perceived, but what the heck; first let me say the companies that I am about to mention are not advertisers in the magazine. I just like using their products and wanted to share them with you:

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## Finding Fish As Sunspots Strike

By Vic Attardo

It had to be the sunspots. There was no other explanation for such lousy bass fishing.

The water had a beautiful green clarity, its temperature was warming from the mid-50s to the 60 degree mark; the skies were cloudy and changeable, a cold front ameliorating to the east; the earth was greening up and at night the full moon smiled like the Cheshire cat. Everything seemed perfect for pre-spawn bass, but it wasn't.

For over four hours three of us caught nothing on Lake Gaston. Really nothing. After a while I said, half in jest, half in earnest, "It has to be the sunspots."

And why not? The news had Planet Earth being bombarded by intense solar flares. Our magnet field was being disrupted. The Internet was having a bad time of it. The Aurora Borealis traveled as far south as lower New England.

So it had to be the sunspots.

But even sunspots will fade, and as the afternoon got along, Sean Lewis, manager of Twin Lakes Outfitters in South Hill, Virginia, found a productive pattern on Gaston.

For all the reasons cited above and more, Gaston had seemed perfect. The lake's elevation never fluctuates more than three or four feet from winter pool through the lean months of summer, and on this tough day Gaston was level at 199.8 feet with full being 203 feet. So, we reasoned, it couldn't be that high water was pushing the bass birds into the reeds, or low water was pulling them out to the deep points. Even the current was moving as Gaston's water was being drawn to feed Virginia Beach and places like that. It had to be something else.

So this was a day when you sat and scratched your head, for a time







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anyway, then you picked up another rod, and another bait, and went to another place so you could sit and scratch your head all over again.

What made it even worse was that early in the morning we'd seen some promise. In one constricted bay, shad broke the surface. Not many shad mind you ... and perhaps that was the first warning sign we didn't read ... but some shad.

Three of us: Lewis, myself and Outdoors Limited publisher, Larry Thornhill, tried our best early spring baits during this time and hours afterwards... lipless cranks, deep-running spinnerbaits, jerkbaits and jigs. Flush off a big-fish victory the day before on adjacent Kerr Reservoir, I confidently threw a jig. For hours and hours nothing worked.

Then in the early afternoon Lewis glided us into a shallow backwater in the central part of the lake. After passing through a narrow canal, the passage opened into a mega-big bay complete with developing lily pads, greening milfoil and a sun-nudged water temperature.

In a narrow throat between a rock face and the soft, lily-ascending marshland, Lewis found

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the first bass in the throat's narrow channel, then another.

These fish weren't in the hardening stems of the lilies nor in the emerging greenery – and we just couldn't believe that – but were found in the narrow channel, or trough, cruising or sitting by a spot of deep cover.

It took long casts with a Rat-L-Trap to waken these fish, the internal knockers rapping at their door as it shimmied past. But after a couple of fish said hello to the bait, they stopped being friendly.

The bass weren't any more friendly at the front of the connecting channel where the current rushed out to join the main lake, nor where they any happier to see us across a thousand yard shoreline-stump flat.

Those darn sun spots. It had to be.

But Lewis had another location up his short sleeve. A place similar to, but not quite the same, as where he had first scored.

This spot was a cove surrounded by docks. Houses were built up on the sidewalls of the

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cove bowl and docks stretched out and across. A bunch of docks were no more than ten or fifteen yards apart facing each other across the cove. But here was a channel or trough, a dip through the middle, like the trough where Lewis caught the first bass of the day.

Once again he zipped a Trap down the lane.

When the first trough bass hit, his rod loaded wide and hard.

Brought to the boat the fish was a beautiful five-pounder, very pretty and fat.

The next bass struck about a dozen casts later; the next about a dozen after that, still in the trough but back where the first had hit. Personally I got the snide off my back by snatching one myself on a Trap from the same first location.

Transition troughs we call them.

Whatever you name them, they're the cut, the channel, or the ditch between shallower shorelines on either side. When things aren't perfect, either from the affects of a cold front, or perhaps solar flares, bass move back into these depressions.

Consider that you've tried the cove's outside points, its laydowns and stumps, its docks and obstructions and you've come up empty: now is the time to back out and try the channel. That's where you might find some bass -- might and probably.



Maybe the trough won't hold all the bass in the lake but in this confined structure there's bound to be some. Reaction strikes will get those that can be gotten and a lipless crankbait thrown along their path will wake those up.

If you find the right transition troughs, you'll catch a good number of fish from one tight area – as we did.

Yet that was it and by the end of the day, we were wondering if sunspots and solar flares could indeed affect fishing so badly. But at least Lewis had found one structure type where the sun didn't bother the bass.

[Sean Lewis guides on Kerr Reservoir (Buggs Island) and Lake Gaston from Twin Lakes Outfitters, South Hill, Virginia, 434—447-2710 (store) or 434-917-9947 (cell).]



**ODU Magazine**

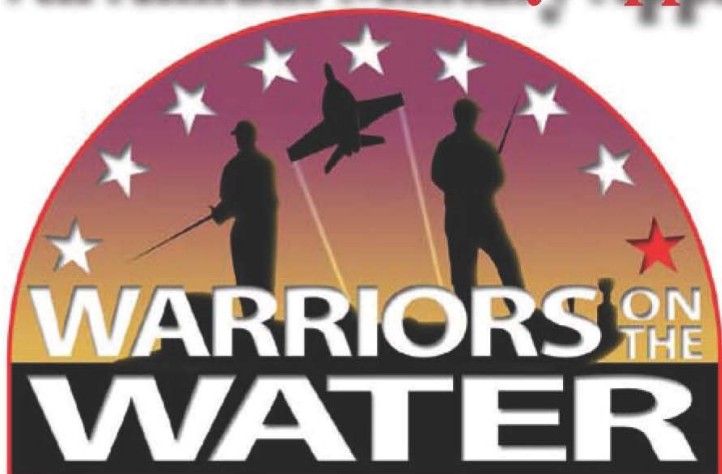
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## Take a Kid Fishing

By O'Neill Williams



Do you remember when you, and your father or grandfather had a fishing or hunting trip planned, and you knew it was going to be just the two of you? I do. I was always lying in bed wide awake and waiting for the sounds of the floor creaking as he got up and started the day. My mother would make lunch, and we carried it in a brown paper bag. We had no coolers. We just took a water bottle, or sometimes a thermos. I dressed in jeans with big rolled-up cuffs, a striped tee shirt, and an Atlanta Crackers' baseball cap. I had

one old square fiberglass rod and a Zebco 33. Boy was I nervous. I either talked a mile a minute or not at all.

We bought a small box of red wigglers for 50 cents and if an extra coin or two was available, some crickets came along, too. Sometimes, in preparation, I would catch grasshoppers or crickets myself for several days before hand. We always caught a few bream each time, but it didn't matter, we were there together. I would roam the banks trying one spot after another thrilled at the sight of a small bass or two and thinking that one would bite on the next cast.

The point is to spend some time together planning and going. I've never forgotten those days. Why not plan a trip soon with your son, grandson, daughter, or granddaughter, not to a football game, not with a crowd, just you two. I guarantee you'll see eyes light up in anticipation, and a little person thrilled to be thought of as so special as to be taken fishing.







## Sneaky Sheephead Offer Rewarding Challenge

**By Capt. Bill Miller**

If you fish for sheephead long enough, you'll come to know them as one of the trickiest fish in Florida waters. With mouths that are made for nibbling, these sporty fish are masters at picking away at your bait and avoiding hooks. Some say the nickname "convict fish" comes from those black and white stripes, but I think it's also due to their thieving ways.

### *Bait Options*

Sheepshead are not very picky, so it's not hard to find a bait that they'll eat. These fish like most any crustaceans and shellfish you offer them, with shrimp topping the list of common baits. Shrimp doesn't have to be alive, but fresh is best. You'll find that a bait holder hook with barbs on the shank will help keep shrimp threaded on the hook.

A lot of times, it's smart to only use cuts of shrimp, so when a sheepshead bites, he takes the whole piece of bait and that puts the hook right in his mouth. If you use a whole shrimp, your hook can't cover the entire length of the bait and sheepshead always seem to nibble around the hook without getting nabbed.



Another way to fish your shrimp is to thread it onto a ¼-ounce jig head. This keeps the bait, hook and weight all together in a compact form that's especially effective around rock piles where a separate weight may get tangled. A similar concept is the knocker rig, which is formed by slipping a slip sinker onto your leader and tying directly to the hook.

The weight slides against the hook, but a fish can pull the hook and leader through the weight so it's not spooked by any initial resistance.



Fiddler crabs are one of the top sheepshead baits, but they're sometimes hard to get. Some bait shops carry them, so I like to call ahead and reserve my order to make sure I have them. As with shrimp, live is best, but freshly frozen crabs will also work well.

For easier handling, remove the crab's big pincher. The best place to hook a fiddler crab is where the legs are attached. Insert the point, but don't push it all the way through the body. When a sheepshead bites the crab, the hook pushes through the crab and into the fish's mouth.

I like to fish fiddlers with no weight whenever possible. They can be difficult to cast when unweighted, so I'll use a light split shot about 12 inches up the leader from my hook. This benefits casting and helps get the crab to the bottom.

Of all the sheepshead baits, barnacles are my favorite. Approach pilings at low tide and scrape the "barnies" into a bucket of saltwater to keep them fresh. When hooking barnacles,

run the point through the back, or flat side. Thread as many barnies as needed to make the bait the size of your thumbnail.

Barnacles are most effective when free-lined around bridge and dock pilings. If you scrape off a few fresh barnacles, the



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sheepshead will respond to the scent of fresh food. Drift your baited hook in this chum line and stay alert for strikes.

### *Rigging and Response*

A sheepshead bite will be subtle; in fact, you might not even feel it. Just watch your line and if it stops sinking or if it moves off to the side, you're probably getting bit. Remember, sheepshead have tough mouths, so when you get a bite, jerk hard so your hook penetrates.

Braided line (I prefer 15-pound) helps with hook sets. It also prevents break-offs when sheepshead dash around barnacle - encrusted pilings. Go with about 18 inches of 20- or 30-pound fluorocarbon.

One of the fishing lessons I remember from my boyhood was that sheepshead are sneaky so you have to "jerk before they bite." This is one tricky fish and you'll need sharp attention and quick responses to catch them.

### *When and Where*

Sheepshead are available all year, but you'll find them gathering in large spawning groups during February and March. Fishing during these periods of cooler water gives you the chance to catch lots of fish.

Look for sheepshead mostly around structure. You may find a few on the flats, but the greatest concentrations will be around solid habitat that offers protection and food sources. All of the bridges, reefs and rock outcroppings throughout the Bay





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area will hold winter sheepshead. Rock jetties like Clearwater Pass, Demons's Landing and Venice are popular spots. Also, the rock piles along the edges of Tampa Bay shipping channels offer great opportunities.

Moderately moving water is always best, but if the tide is too strong, you'll have trouble getting your bait to the bottom. You'll find that certain spots produce best on different tide stages, or direction. Only experience can tell you what works, but don't over-analyze it. Fish whenever you can and keep moving around until you find a spot that works. Remember the details of tide stage, location, etc. for future trips.

Sheepshead can be very challenging, but their tasty filets are worth the work. Handle your fish with caution, as those sharp dorsal fin spines can give you a painful wound. The skin is tough, so use a sharp fillet knife and remove the large rib cage. You can cook sheepshead in a variety of ways, but I like to fry mine. The good thing is that a liberal bag limit – 15 per day, 12-inch minimum length – allows you enough to try different styles of preparation.

For weekly fishing reports, hot tips, catch photos and lots of angling resources, visit [www.billmiller.com](http://www.billmiller.com). For fishing charters in the Tampa Bay area, call (813) 363-9927.



# Charlies Philosophy

By Darin Gillenwater



Being a fishing guide is definitely not for everyone, if you don't like people, you're in for a rough time. I love meeting new people and Charlie, and Pat were no exception.

Pat was a big guy, around 350 according to him, and his size translated to distance in his casts. He sat up front while Charlie sat in back and inevitably, Pat occasionally overshot his target and hit the overhanging trees and sometimes the bank.

Charlie, was always the optimist; "That's OK; if you don't hit the trees once in a while, you're not taking the chances you need to in order to catch fish." Of course this was always after he asked: "Is it squirrel season?" Or said, "You're gonna work Darin to death and THEN who'll row us home?"

The two days spent with Charlie, and Pat were two of my most enjoyable on the water; I ached from laughing, and I learned a valuable perspective from Charlie- push your limits and take a chance on failure. Don't dwell on your mistakes, success and failure live in the same zip code. Don't just cast to what is safe; cast to those hard to reach spots.

Charlie could enjoy the moment and thrive in it at the same time, not because he always got it right, but because he always saw things right. Fishing and, for that matter, life aren't about perfection. Charlie spent those two days enjoying where he was...being where he was; no stress, no self imposed quota; he was happy to be on the water relaxing, laughing, and fishing.

A few weeks after that, Pat called to tell me that trip was Charlie's last; he had died in his sleep the same way he lived- peacefully. I wish I could have more trips with Charlie, but I'll



never forget his philosophy. I hope you don't either. I hope that when you fish you don't worry about making mistakes and take chances; enjoy the moments you have on the water and there will be a payoff. You'll lose lures and break rods- Bomber and St. Croix will make more. The fish only matter in the lies you tell! (You may quote me.)

'Most men fish all their lives without ever realizing that it's not the fish they're after.' Henry David Thoreau



## It's Super Soft Pro Tiki-Stick Time

By John Murray



It's April and as far as I'm concerned that means it's Wave Super Soft Pro Tiki-Stick time. This 5-inch bait will catch them anywhere you fish for bass, from New England to Florida and from California to Virginia. And, it's at its best when you do nothing at all with it.

What I mean by that is that it's the ultimate universal, do-nothing lure. I rig mine Texas style, weightless, and throw it at targets. Anything is good at this time of the year — docks, stumps, laydowns, rock, weedlines or anything else you can see sitting in water 2-10 feet deep. They'll all produce.

Do-nothing means exactly that. Toss it to your target, put a little slack in your line and let it fall to the bottom. Wait at least 30 seconds before you move it. Don't do the twitch, snap, jerk, hop or drag thing. Just wait the bass out. You'll be surprised at how many of them pick up your Tiki-Stick about the time you get ready to reel it in

and head towards your next target.

My best colors are green pumpkin and watermelon red flake. If the water has a tannic color to it you might go with black blue flake. If you have any doubts about color go with green pumpkin. That'll get you through anything and everything. They'll always bite it.

I typically make long casts when I'm fishing a Tiki-Stick. My rod is 7-foot long. My line is 15-pound-test fluorocarbon. Your line choice is critical. This is not a reaction bite. Do not use

something they can see. They may not know what fishing line is but they do know that it doesn't belong on anything they're thinking about eating.

That's really about all there is to it: Get yourself a couple of bags of Wave Super Soft Pro Tiki-Sticks and head out to your favorite lake, river or stream to do nothing.





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# A History of Florida Freshwater Fisheries and a Tribute to Jack Dequine

By Bob Wattendorf

Jack Dequine's (1917-2011) 94 years of life reflects dramatically on the history of fisheries science in North America and especially in Florida. In 1985, I wrote a brief history of freshwater fisheries management for a state legislator. It quickly became evident that one of the pre-eminent names in that history would be Jack Dequine.

Almost from the moment of Ponce de Leon's landing on a Florida beach in 1513, the recognition of the tremendous diversity and value of Florida's fisheries resources, and their exploitation, began. For several hundred years, Spanish and British colonists relied upon these abundant natural resources for survival. In 1845, Florida became the 27th state and, within 10 years, had its first freshwater fishing regulation, which prohibited use of haul seines. However, it wasn't until after the Civil War in 1875 that hunting licenses were required; those funds were used to begin a conservation movement.

In 1879, the state passed an act to protect food fishes and regulate fisheries, and counties were authorized to hire fish bailiffs. In 1889, a short-lived Florida Fish Commission was created, replaced in 1913 by a State Department of Game and Fish. However, two years later, the state relinquished central authority to the counties. In 1917, the Legislature reversed that decision and vested ownership of game, birds and fish with the state, as it remains today.



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Photo Credit to Florida Memory Project

The next step in the evolution of a bona fide statewide science-based fisheries conservation effort was again short-lived. The new Department of Game and Fresh Water Fish appeared in 1925. Florida was the 46th state to establish such a department.

Gov. John W. Martin pointed out that fish

were “one of the state’s most valuable commercial assets, as well as one of her greatest tourist attractions. Our fresh and salt water fish should be conserved and the supply increased by the employment of scientific methods of propagation,” he said.

Although the state did not hire any trained biologists, it did create the first statewide Florida fishing licenses, which sold for \$2 (equivalent to \$26 in 2012) for out-of-county residents and \$5 for out-of-state visitors. County residents didn’t need a license. Based on public opinion and what seemed like common sense, several rules were imposed. The state established a minimum 12-inch bass size and 12-bass creel limit, with a March 15 to May 15 closed season, and utilized spawning refuges and fingerling bass stocking.

The Great Depression challenged the will of the people to conserve resources. For instance, bass harvest restrictions applied to recreational anglers but not to commercial fishermen. In 1929, all of the agency field staff (200 employees) were laid off. By 1931, commercial fishermen harvested 3.4 million pounds of bass, reducing the landings by approximately 50 percent. Conflicts between recreational and commercial anglers began to escalate and in two years the agency dissolved.

Another transient, politically driven approach, the state Board of Conservation took over in 1933, made up of the governor and Cabinet. One deposed commissioner decried the move, saying that “the sportsmen’s interest has been bartered for personal or political gain.” The Legislature continued to pass local laws pertaining to fish and wildlife with no scientific oversight. In 1935, the federal government stepped in and passed the Black Bass Act, which prohibited sale or commercial taking of black bass.







Sportsmen complained about complicated local laws governing taking of fish and wildlife and organized the Florida Wildlife Federation. The FWF sought a modern conservation program to include restoration, management, harvest and wise use of natural resources. Meanwhile, the Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program passed Congress in 1937, creating an excise tax on hunting equipment, handguns and ammunition. The tax revenue is returned to the states for conservation. This hallmark program, which now includes a Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration component, is celebrating its 75th anniversary along with adoption of the North American Model of Wildlife

Conservation. Both are tributes to American sportsmen's resolve to ensure fish and wildlife are held as a public trust and scientifically managed by the states for sustainable use.

Florida, without a strong game commission, was unable to accept federal funds from 1937 until 1941. In 1941, the Legislature proposed a constitutional amendment (efforts in 1937 and 1939 failed) to establish a Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission (GFC), which a constitutional referendum approved.

Adopting the new North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, the GFC began hiring trained biologists. Enter Jack Dequine. Dequine graduated from the University of Maine in 1940. He quickly became chief of fisheries for the Kentucky Game and Fish Commission but moved to Florida in 1946 as the first professionally trained GFC fishery biologist and later our



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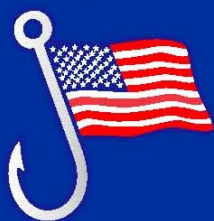
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first fisheries chief. He brought a commitment to the scientific method, as well as a well-tuned empathy for both commercial and recreational anglers.

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, he strove to resolve conflicts between commercial and recreational fishing interests and to evaluate rules governing freshwater fishes. Research on closed seasons and stocking fingerling bass in established populations led to elimination of closed seasons statewide in fresh water, and realization that dumping fry or fingerling (approximately 1-inch long) bass into lakes where predatory fish abounded was fruitless. Herbicide control for exotic hyacinths commenced to reduce their spread and allow native aquatic plants to thrive.

During Dequine's tenure, the first Youth Conservation Camps were held in Auburndale, and a permanent Ocala campsite opened in 1954. His initiative also led to the first survey of Florida lakes and streams to catalogue the resource status.

Dequine's philosophy was: "The fisheries biologist must learn from past example that his proposed management practices must be based upon facts and conclusions that have been thoroughly analyzed and critically examined." Perhaps that is why so many of the resource projects and decisions emerging in his time were so successful, and why we still strive to critically analyze decisions based on the best current data and public input.

In 1952, Dequine became the first President of the Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society. The AFS mission is to improve conservation and sustainability of fishery resources and aquatic ecosystems by advancing fisheries and aquatic science and promoting development of fisheries professionals. Dequine was also a prominent figure at nearly every meeting of the Florida Chapter of the AFS from its inception in 1980 to his death. His consistent interest in developing the next generation of professional fisheries biologists led to both the Southern Division and Florida Chapter naming awards after him to continue his legacy.







Dequene left the agency in 1954 and started Southern Fish Culturists Inc., a private fish production and environmental consulting business. As a fish culturist and consultant he continued to be an active resource user and mentor to new fisheries scientists.

In 1998, the public again saw the value of the GFC and North American Model and by constitutional amendment merged the old GFC with aspects of the Marine Fisheries Commission and components of

the Department of Environmental Protection. The new agency, created in 1999, is known as the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). The FWC continues to thrive, providing Floridians with the type of practical, science-driven conservation management to which Dequene dedicated his life.







## Suwannee Bass Thrive In The Pristine Water Of Florida's Big Bend

By Bill Vanderford

Sugar white sands and clear, black, tannic acid waters create spectacularly beautiful contrasts in bright sunlight when filtered through stands of magnificent ancient cypress trees. Combine that with fast water swirling around and over huge fallen logs, plentiful wildlife, solitude, and one can visualize the unforgettable splendor of Florida's Big Bend pristine rivers!

One of the prizes that lives in these little known waterways is the rare and always elusive Suwannee Bass. This diminutive member of the black bass family is rarely found anywhere on earth other than the Suwannee and Santa Fe Rivers systems in North-Central Florida and the Ochlockonee, St. Marks, and Wakulla Rivers in the Florida panhandle. Though it is often confused with the Smallmouth Bass from northern waters





or the Shoal Bass from Georgia, the Suwannee Bass is more kin to the Florida Largemouth Bass.

One of Florida's renowned outdoor communicators, Herb Allen, said that a sure-fire way to start an argument among Florida's freshwater anglers is to declare that Smallmouth Bass can't be caught in state waters. People still insist that they have caught smallmouth from the Suwannee River or somewhere in the panhandle. Not so, say biologists with the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission.

"There has never been a documented Smallmouth Bass catch made in Florida," stated Commission Biologist Gray Bass. "The confusion may be in improperly identifying four of the five bass species that do live in state waters."

In addition to the Largemouth Bass, four other species of black bass are said to be found in Florida. Though extremely rare, the Redeye Bass, Suwannee Bass, Spotted Bass, and the Shoal Bass have all been verified in Florida's freshwater rivers.

Since all of these species possess smaller mouths and have similar colorations, anglers generally don't recognize what they've caught. In fact, when questioning local fishermen in the Tallahassee area about the Suwannee Bass, most have never heard of this fish.

Suwannee Bass are quite attractive, very scrappy, and are somewhat wider and thicker than other types of black bass. They are generally thought to be more abundant in the spring-fed lower reaches of the Santa Fe River, which is a tributary of the Suwannee River, but the largest population that I have personally seen is in the St. Marks River. These fish were not native to the river, but were stocked by local fishermen, and tend to be much smaller than those caught in waters where they are a native species.

Most Suwannee Bass tend to be smaller than other members of the black bass family...no matter where they are found. Therefore, a two-pounder is considered to be a significant catch. The Florida and all-tackle world record weighed less than 4 pounds, and until one of my visits to the Ochlockonee River, only three line-class world records had been recorded. Two and a half days on that gorgeous Florida river a couple of years ago netted me two rare Suwannee Bass and an 8-pound line-class world record. Either of these slightly more than 2





pound bass would have been large enough for the record, but both made my heart pound far more than any certificate will ever accomplish.

In a very recent trip to the St. Marks and the Wakulla Rivers, I had the opportunity to fish with Robert Baker of Reel-Fin-Addict Kayak Fishing and a third generation owner of T-n-T Hide-a-way, Inc, canoe and kayak rentals located on the Wakulla River. We shared the experience with my friends Jimmy Jacobs and Polly Dean and their ever-present flyrods. The four of us caught an excellent mixture of Suwannee Bass, Largemouth Bass, and several species of native sunfish. Though I love my jet boat, kayaks and canoes are excellent for this type of river fishing, and are available along with superb guide service by calling 850-925-6412.

Despite the population boom in North Florida over the past few years, all of these rivers remain wonderfully lonely places. During my recent visit, I only encountered a few small boats with local fishermen that were interested in catching Largemouth Bass, sunfish, and mullet.

Kayaks and canoes allow exploration throughout the many miles of the picturesque but ever-changing beauty of these gorgeous waterways. It is an experience that always has a special place in my personal memory bank and continually calls for my return!

Bill Vanderford has won numerous awards for his writing and photography, and has been inducted into the National Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame as a Legendary Guide. He can be reached at 770-289-1543, at JFish51@aol.com, or at his web site: [www.fishinglanier.com](http://www.fishinglanier.com)

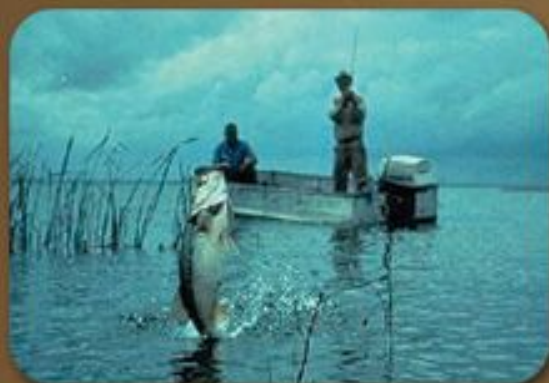


Photo By Bill Vanderford





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## Tie One On and Start Swinging

By Chris Jenkins

The month of May has long been a time for numbers when it comes to catching bass. I for one am both sad and somewhat relieved to see the spawn come to an end. When I say relieved I mean that I can stop my obsessive stalking of one big fish and actually relax a little and enjoy fishing for what it is.



One of everyone's favorite techniques suddenly comes alive this month in the way of top water action, and you have to be crazy not to love it. I remember some thirty years ago the excitement of seeing a bass annihilate my Hula Popper and Devils Horse. I can also honestly say that excitement I experienced as a kid is still alive and well today.

As effective as those two lures may still be today, the frog has gained notoriety by (Ribbit) leaps and bounds.





Both popper and slop type frogs deal out their fair share of sore lips, but there is no denying that the crazy legs' buzz type frogs are tops when it comes to fun. Some years ago I hit the water to do some research with a fist full of frogs and an open mind. At the time, there were a few different types of these buzz frogs and now as you can see, everyone has their own version.

When I say “buzz frog”, I am referring to a soft plastic amphibian look alike with legs that churn the water when reeled across the surface. Not all are created equal though, and I tied the knot with the Stanley Ribbit Frog. This marriage still lasts today, and once you see this frog

in action you will know why. I first began impaling this jewel on a Gamakatsu 4/0 E.W.G. Superline hook. With patience and the right gear, my hook up ratio was as good as could be expected. The only problem was the frog often slipped down the hook if I didn't apply Super Glue to the nose. Then Lonnie Stanley introduced the Swimmax Hooks with V-Lock keepers which eliminated the need for glue plus the added weight made it possible to cast the frog further. The Swimmax design also allows any bait to plow through weeds, pads, and brush without a problem. However, I still like being able to slow roll the Ribbit Frog across the surface and shake it in place when need to be. Remember I said my hook up ratio was as good as could be expected? Well, Lonnie raised the bar of expectations when he introduced the....

## DOUBLE TAKE HOOK

There is no denying that two hooks are better than one when it comes increasing your hook up ratio, and the Double Take provides just that.

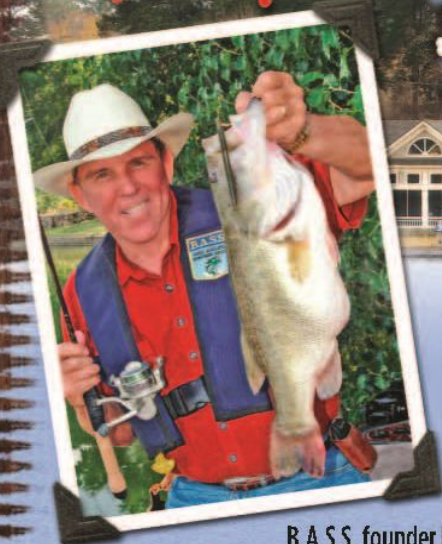
Not only does this hook provide better hook ups, but it allows you to apply more pressure to a fish when you are trying to horse it out of heavy cover. On many occasions, a fish has hit my frog and buried itself in salad so thick that all I came up with was four pounds of hydrilla and some Zesty Italian dressing. Plus this hook has long shanks that tends to give you more than just lip hooks. It also works as a keel and aids in balancing your frog to prevent unwanted rolls during the course of your retrieve. Weightless or on the Wedgehead, give the Double Take a try and double your odds of success.





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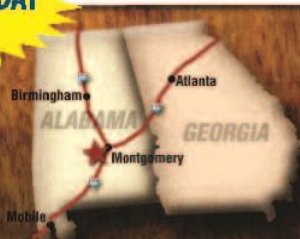
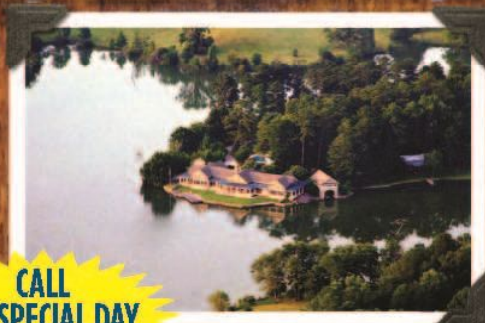
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**An Alabama Black Belt Adventure**



Now when deciding on a rod to use with your frog, you have to consider the type of cover you will be fishing in and around. I fish a combination of vegetation and wood most of the time, so I need a rod with a lot of back bones to aid in turning the fishes head to redirect it out of the thick stuff. I also want a fast-action tip to help impart subtle action to my frog and assist in casting that light bait. The rod should be at least seven feet long for taking up slack and delivering a good, solid hook set.

I found all of these qualities at a reasonable price with the ST. Croix Mojo Bass Slop-N-Frog rod. A high speed reel is a must, so I mounted an Abu Garcia Revo STX with a 7.1:1 gear ratio on it, and I was in business. With eleven bearings and a flawless carbon matrix drag, the Swedish engineered Revo is a multipurpose work of art.

As far as the line is concerned, braids is the only choice. I use 50-pound test Stren Super Braid for most of the frogging but may go as high as 65 or 80 depending on my surroundings. When using the buzz type frog, I retrieve them just as the name states, like a buzz bait. With the hook hidden in the soft plastic body you are able to bring the frog through the thickest cover on the lake. The best time to use a frog is in low-light conditions, but don't be afraid to fish heavy vegetation any time of the day. The hardest lesson to learn about this or any surface bait is to wait until you feel tension to set the hook. Also, try to keep your rod no higher than the ten o'clock position so you are able to quickly take up slack and deliver a solid blow when it's show time. Give the Stanley Ribbit Frog and Double Take a try and I'm sure you will be hooked. Also check out their YNOT, SideWinder, and ITZABUG online. Tie one on and start swinging!





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# Kingfish Rule Florida's Gulf Coast

By Capt. Bill Miller



Along Florida's Gulf Coast, one of the most popular sportfish species is the mighty king mackerel. Known simply as "kingfish" or just "king," these aggressive feeders make big runs at blazing speed, they're often found in large numbers and they'll eat a wide variety of natural and artificial baits.

The big fish, known as "smokers," typically travel alone or in small packs, while the younger "schoolie" kings roam in large schools. When kings are feeding near the surface, you'll see schools of baitfish flipping and splashing, while birds dive from above. Also be on the lookout for skyrocketing or free-jumping kings. These signs point you to the hot action.

## ARTIFICIAL APPROACH

Charter captains eager to show their clients a lot of action generally choose the latter because artificials typically appeal mostly to the smaller schoolies. The good thing here is that you'll catch a bunch of them and these fish are the perfect eating size.

Spoons are one of my favorite artificial baits for kingfish because they look a lot like a fleeing baitfish, while the single hook design makes it easier to dehook a fish. I go with a 6- to 8-inch spoon and I prefer silver spoons, although some anglers like chartreuse, red, purple, blue or cream colored reflective tape on theirs. Popular brands include Drone, Capt. Action, Spoon Squid, Gator and King spoons.

You'll also catch plenty of kings on big diving plugs like those made by MirrOlure, Yo-Zuri, Rapala, Rebel, Bomber, and Mann. You'll do best with baitfish colors, although red and white has been the go-to plug color for years. The bigger 6- to 10-inch plugs are my favorites, but be careful of the treble hooks when handling a hooked fish.





When I fish spoons, I troll them behind a No. 2 or 3 planer with 25 feet of 80- to 100-pound monofilament leader. (Tip: Put a black ball bearing swivel in the middle of your leader to help reduce line twist.)

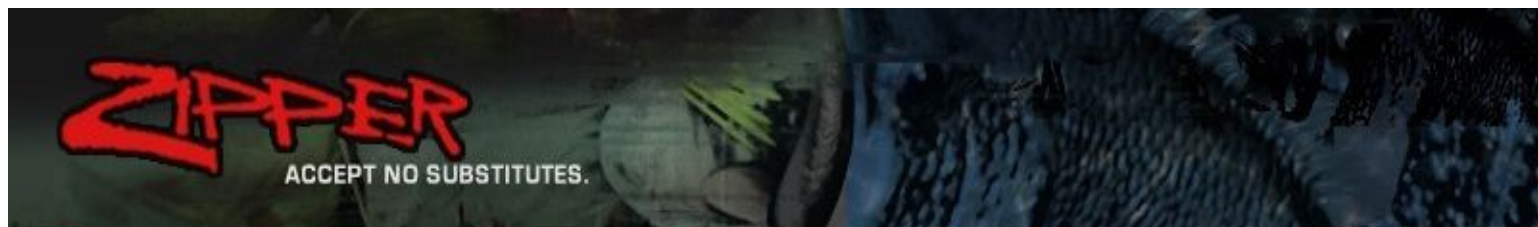
You'll need a medium-heavy to heavy action rod with 50-pound monofilament or braid to handle the pull and resistance of a planer when trolling at 4-5 mph.

You won't need the planer or a trolling lead for big-lipped plugs – just use the braided line, which offers less water resistance. This, plus the plug's lip creates the diving effect. The more line you let out, the deeper the plug dives.

### *LIVE AND LARGE*

When I'm targeting smoker kings, I'll go with live bait and my favorites include big whitebait, big threadfin herring, cigar minnows, Spanish sardines, blue runners, ladyfish and mullet. Bigger baits usually mean bigger fish, but the saying "Elephants eat peanuts" is also true. I once caught a tournament-winning 38-pound kingfish on a 3-inch whitebait.

A light to medium-light rod with 20-pound mono is about right. Braid can work, but the stretch



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of mono will help keep the fish on the hook at the strike.

I use a 12-inch leader made of 38-pound coffee colored stainless steel wire with a small black swivel on one end and a stinger rig on the other. The front hook of the stinger is a 2/0 short shank live bait with a No. 4 treble dangling on a 3- to 5-inche piece of the same 38-pound wire. The length of the treble stinger is determined by the length of the bait, but I like my stinger to lay 2/3 of the way back on the baitfish.

For small baits, a single hook on the wire leader works fine, but with larger baits like the ladyfish, mullet and large blue runners, you'll need to cover the bait's length by attaching additional stinger segments.

I hook the  
baits  
crossways  
through the  
nose most of  
the time;  
although  
hooking  
them just

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behind the head will help the baits get a little deeper. With mullet, I pin the lips shut by hooking from bottom to top.

### PRESENTATING BAITS

Troll live baits as slow as your boat will go to create the most realistic presentation. You don't need planners or trolling leads with live baits, as they're all on top. However, if you need to get your bait deeper, use a downrigger. Drifting and anchor fishing also works, as long as you target productive bottom structure.

Artificial reefs are good places because they hold baitfish. Look for bait schools on top and if you see kingfish jump or crashing bait, present your baits in that area. The Egmont Ship Channel markers 7-8 and out to the Whistler Buoy is historically a productive area, and the 90-foot hole on the northeast tip of Egmont Key has produced many tournament winners.

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# Santee Cooper Says It All

By Larry Thornhill



Have you ever found a little piece of “Heaven on Earth” or in other words thought that you had died and gone to “Fishermen’s Heaven”? I did years ago when I first visited Santee. Over the years, I have taken my kids; grand kids, writers and numerous friends back to one of my heavens(s) on earth. This year was no exception. I introduced

my fishing partner Sean Lewis from “Twin Lakes Outfitters” to some of the best fishing he has had in years.

Picture in your mind a perfect spring day; air temps around 84 degrees, water temperature 68 to 72°, puffy clouds, beautiful blue sky with just a little chop on the water and pre-spawn conditions.

Both Sean and I were chomping at the bit to get started, so we started off fishing the back of Popular Creek. Sean was so intent on catching a fish that he even went to his go to bait a “Copper colored 1/2oz. Rattle trap” that was discontinued years ago. We threw just about everything in our tackle box, and nothing happened. So we decided to idle across the lake and try Jack’s Creek and fish the standing timber. Again, nothing, Sean and I looked at each other in disbelief how this could be happening to us. As far as we knew it was perfect conditions, and we were coming up with nothing, zilch, blank, na-da. Frustrating to say the least, we started idling back across the lake weaving our way through the channel markers and standing timber.

The sun was starting to set and not even a fish in the boat, Sean and I looked at each other in disbelief that this could be happening to us. I suggested to Sean that we try a







different tactic and start fishing the point at the mouth of Popular Creek and work the sandy bank, rocks and docks along the river channel towards the swamp. Sean was fishing a 1/2oz "Picasso" Black/Blue jig and lo and behold on his second cast a 4-1/2 pounder hit it and almost pulled the rod out of his hand. Sean looked at me with a big grin on his face and said I'm glad I had this idea, and I responded with a yea right. We continued working the bank catching a few more fish, but nothing of any size.

That night over supper, we agreed we had to find some unusual structure and different color water. We had no pattern going, nor did we feel comfortable that this was the part of the lake; they were catching 30 lb. plus stringers of fish. When we got back to the cabin, we got the map out of the boat and went to work. We found what we thought would be a lot different water, with

minimal trees, hopefully grass, and if you would throw in a few reeds, this could be perfect. That is if we were right, if not it was going to be a long white-knuckle boat ride. Trying to stay in the channel, zipping around channel markers and trees. The boat ride itself is exhilarating and got the old heart pumping. I love it!





# **Santee Cooper Country**

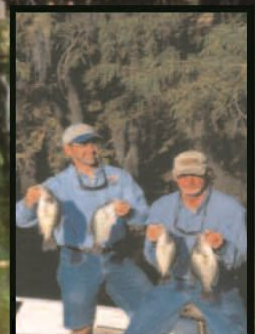
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So the following day we decided to try our luck and make the run to area by Goat Island Resort and Taw Caw Campground. If we were lucky and guessed right we would be off to the races if not, well we did not even want to think about what we would do next. After the fog lifted the run only took us about forty-five minutes. As we rounded the point and headed into the mouth of the Creek we knew

we had guessed right at least about the water clarity and structure. Just as we started up the Creek, we began noticing that these pockets had reeds and grass, at this moment we knew this is exactly what we were looking for, we hoped. We stopped and idled into a little cove just down and across from Goat Island Marina.

As we idled into the pocket, we notice the water was crystal clear. Perfect for sight casting to bedding bass. The sun had just broken over the treetops and almost at a perfect angle for seeing anything that moved. Sean got on the bow and lowered the trolling motor gently into the water, making sure we did not spook any fish. Sean started seeing fish almost immediately and was getting excited. Sean had told me earlier that he was going to give me a lesson on site fishing for bedding bass, and he did.



Sean got his flipping stick out of the rod box and went to work. Sean's 1st fish in the boat that morning was a 6 1/2 pound largemouth. This was not a guess-timate. I weighed the fish on an old reliable set of Berkley's scales that I try and always carry around. We all know that fishermen never exaggerate, but I like to keep everyone honest. After weighing the fish and a few high fives we went back to work. The next thing I know Sean hollering at me that he has another hog on, and he was right; his next fish was 6 a pounder. We immediately knew that we had made the right choice. Two fish in the boat weighing 12 1/2 pounds. What a great way to start the day, after a questionable start yesterday.

Sean suggested that I switch to a WAVE Swim Bug, which I immediately did. I may be stubborn





and bull headed at times and not fast to change, but getting my butt kicked like this; I am all over change. My problem was I just had White, Green Pumpkin Chartreuse Swirl and Watermelon Black Flake, which at the time I thought was not really that big of a problem. WRONG! Sean was throwing the WAVE 4" Black/Blue Sapphire Swim Bug, which I did not have and Sean had a very, very limited supply. So I opted to start with Green Pumpkin. Sean

kept adding fish to the boat, and I continued to do nothing. I switched to Watermelon then to White and still nothing. Believe me this made a believer out of me that "Color does matter".

We continued easing our way through the reeds and grass seeing bass, carp, gar and bowfin's scurrying around over and through the crystal-clear water and lush green vegetation. The water temp was ranging between 68 and 72 degrees, perfect pre-spawn condition.

We continued moving from pocket to pocket, and Sean continued adding hogs to the boat. Sean continued sight fishing for the remainder of the day, his smallest fish was probably right at 5 pounds. And his total for five fish was definitely between 25 and 30 pounds. A good day in any fishermen's book, and hopefully soon to be repeated.



I don't know if any of you have had the chance to stay at the state park and fish Santee Cooper, but my 1st time was like I died and went to heaven. If you ever want to visit my little piece of "Heaven on Earth" you owe it to yourself to stay at Santee State Park. To really make it an exciting stay in one of the cabins on the pier overlooking the lake.

Believe me when I say this story will be continued and I/we will be back.

Thanks again to Santee Cooper Country and Santee State Park for making this trip possible.

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# Warm up with Hot Spring Panfish

By Ted Takasaki  
and Scott Richardson

April is a great time to be an angler in the Midwest as the action heats up, right along with the water. It's a fun time to be outside after being indoors so long, and it's a terrific time to replenish the fish supply in the freezer with fresh pan fish.

But never forget – it is possible to harm pan fish populations if too many are taken from small lakes and reservoirs. However, some bodies of water host good numbers of big fish ready for harvest. Use selective harvest to preserve the fishery for next year.

Species like crappie go through cycles wherever they are. About every three years, a lake will have a bumper crop of bigger fish that are reaching the end of their lives. Fisheries' biologists say the reason for the up-down-up swings are because the larger ones feed on smaller ones. As a result one-year class will be the bullies on the block until their numbers are diminished by aging, predation and fishing pressure. When they're moved aside, the following year's class can thrive to become the following big age class.

Check with your local conservation department, which is glad to share their latest surveys. Sometimes, they'll even single out reservoirs and lakes where increased fishing pressure and more relaxed limits in terms of numbers and length limits are allowed which, in turn, could help prevent stunting. All things being equal, try to locate lakes farther off the beaten path which others' anglers may have overlooked.



Kristi Takasaki holds up a dandy spring crappie that could not hide from Humminbird's side imaging technology. This fish took a Lindy Fuzz-E-Grub jig, efficiently fished in deeper water with the aid of a split-shot sinker placed up the line.



Reservoirs, or flowage as they are often called, are sometimes prime crappie locations. They seem to love wood, which is often incredibly plentiful in reservoirs. Often, huge forests were left in place and flooded when these reservoirs were built. Fluctuating water levels in flood-control reservoirs often cause trees to topple along the shoreline. It may seem like there are so much cover that finding crappies is impossible. Nevertheless, the process isn't so complicated, according to guides like Steve Welch ([www.lakeshelbyvilleguide.com](http://www.lakeshelbyvilleguide.com)) who works the 11,000-acre Lake Shelbyville in Central Illinois or Greg Bohn ([www.gregbohn.com](http://www.gregbohn.com)), who guides on flowage and natural lakes around Minocqua, Wis.



They have two different approaches. Welch focuses on deep water even after other anglers have moved to the shoreline, which is where you'll find Bohn. Both patterns will work. Here are their suggestions; For shallow work when water ranges from 45 degrees to 60 degrees, electronics equipped with a temperature gauge is a must have. A difference in a degree or two is all it takes. Avoid the points. Check the shallow adjacent bays instead. Shallow,



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protected water warms faster. Add a breeze blowing warm surface water into the bay and the effect is even more pronounced. The ripple effect often triggers more intense action. Wood also transmits heat from the sun to the water. Check shallow stump fields in the back of bays. The water will be warmer and crappies will be there.

Slip bobbers are best to target both the skinny water near shore and that 5 to 6 feet of deeper water under the boat. Crappies can be in both shallow and deeper water. Use minnows in the colder water, but try plastic trailers as the temperature rises. If your state law allows multiple rods, set out the slip bobbers and use another rod with a small jig/plastic combination to fan cast the area and cover more water.

Flood control reservoirs usually are drawn down over the winter. That means much of the forage has moved toward the dam and so will many crappies. Check those bays first.

If the water is high enough, motor up the shallow feeder creeks and rivers. Shad and other forage will go toward the warmth. If you live further north, try looking for fish in shallow, warmer water starting with bays located on the northwest side of the lake.

Deeper reservoir fish might be harder to find was it not for sonar units with sophisticated side imaging, like Humminbird's. The technology is so precise that fish can be seen on the screen as a boat motor along the deep river channel banks that feature down trees and standing trees. Once crappies are seen among the branches (yes, the side imaging is that good), use the cursor to mark the position with GPS. Mark several trees to target before quietly motoring over the tops of the trees and switch to standard, down looking sonar to gauge how deep to fish.

The same deep-water tactic works on Welsh's second favorite reservoir system, Kentucky Lake. "Even though the water temps are starting to warm up, I stay on the deep fish until late April," said Welch. "These fish are schooled up and easy to catch. On sunny days, they will suspend at the same level as the top of the submerged trees. Bottom depth means nothing because I know of trees in 50 feet of water depth that have branches just a few feet under the surface."







Photo By Bill Vanderford

Use heavier jigs with lighter hook to get down to the fish fast and get free if you snag. Tip with a minnow.

Feeder rivers and creeks can get shallow and narrow. Slip bobbers work best there. Stay back a bit from the trees and toss the bobber to them.

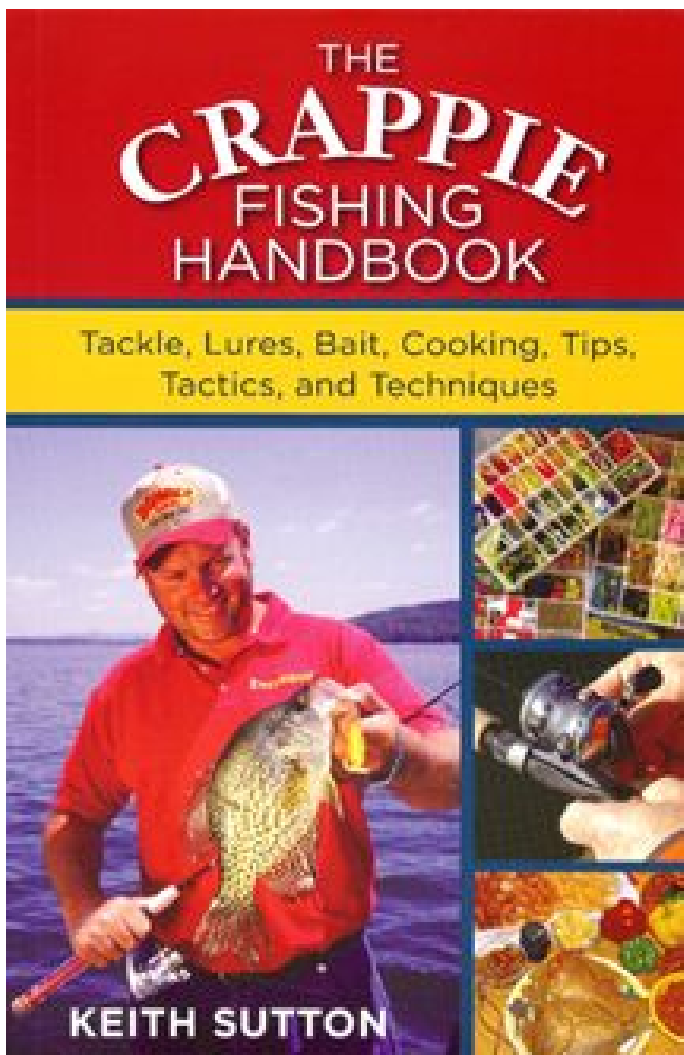
Crappies aren't the only pan fish that are welcomed by an empty freezer. Decent-sized bluegills are worth the trouble to find and place in the live well. Again, your conservation department biologists know the best places, which usually have a strong predator base such as largemouth bass, walleyes or muskies. Most

biologists say a lake known to have large numbers of 2-pound largemouth may harbor big pan fish. Angling pressure can certainly impact the number of large bluegills so practice selective harvest.

Unlike crappies and wood, bluegills usually relate to weeds and the bottom content they prefer consists of a variety of hard and muck bottoms. The best early-year 'gills are often found in small, shallow, fertile farm ponds. In larger lakes, shallow bays near deep water are typically best. Find emerging vegetation and the bluegills will be there. The best vegetation is cabbage 12 feet to 20 feet down near transition areas between mud and hard, sandy bottoms. Target the edges of the weeds, the inside, outside and on the top.

Use an ultra-light rod, like St. Croix's PS60ULF, light line, and tiny jigs. Tip them with small minnows or wax worms.

Early pan fish action can be hot and heavy, which is just the medicine to warm you up after a chilly winter.





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# Caught Between A Rock and A Soft Place

By Vic Attardo

The seasons are stalled -- caught between a snowless winter and the promise of spring.

On the cloudy water of Kerr Reservoir, the bass are in a pensive mood – transitioning between their deep winter hangouts and the excitement of the spawn.

Kerr, which straddles two states Virginia and North Carolina, sleeps fitfully. A week before March's full moon, the bass were reluctantly active for a time but during the full moon, and after a heavy shot of rain and a knuckle-aching cold front, the largemouth became boorish.

Unfortunately, that is where Sean Lewis, manager of Twin Lakes Outfitters of South Hill, Vir-ginnia-eye-ay, as well as Larry Thornhill, publisher of the internet's Outdoor Unlimited, and I step in.

Our mission -- since we choose to accept it -- was to catch bass during this difficult moment.

Though we duked it out on Kerr Reservoir, also called Buggs Island, it is a situation many largemouth anglers will face in this early season. You can experience these conditions from the Deep South to the North and they'll appear later and later as the globe tilts.

If you're traveling north to New York and the Finger Lakes, or up the St. Lawrence way, you might face them at mid-May.







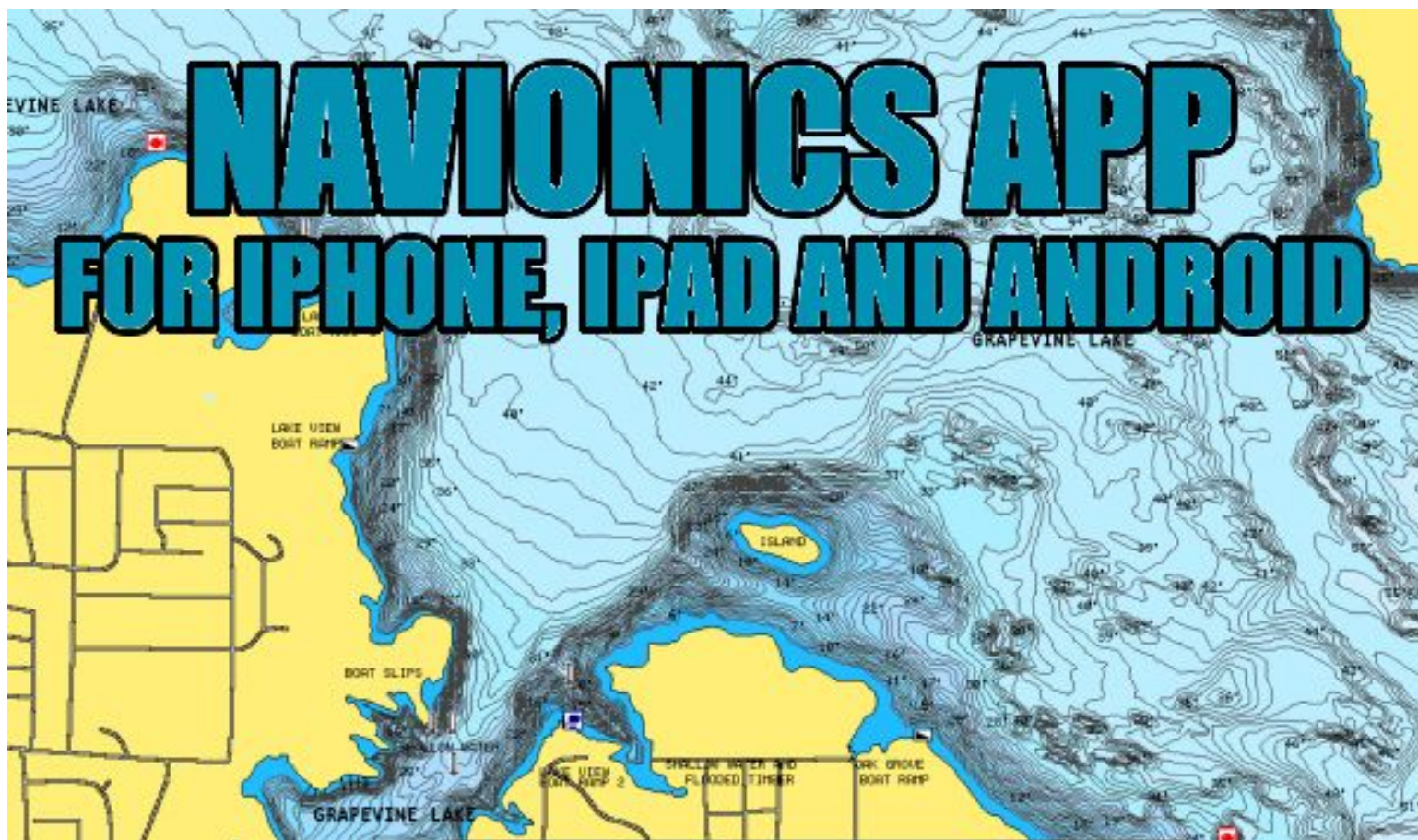
On Kerr the water temperature crawled from the upper 40's into the low 50's under bright and breeze skies. Kerr's buck brush, holding in scattered clumps out from the flatter shorelines, was nothing but last year's sticks: not a bit of green around them. Kerr's submerged weeds were black, no green there either.

Yet despite these negatives, Lewis and Thornhill, had a positive pattern to take some hefty bass. If we'd been working a tournament, the scales would have felt our numbers and weights.

As it was, after we all determined the bass weren't along any spawning shores or out in the deeper waters, Lewis began taking us to rocky offshore sites but within close proximity to flat, soft shorelines. Lewis, who guides out of his shop (434-447-2710 or 434-917-9947) understood the locations. He pinpointed the structure.

In places that met this rock/soft criteria, we found largemouth willing to bite.

According to Lewis and Thornhill, Kerr has changed quite a bit in the last two seasons. If the southeast lake is on your tournament trail in the future – and it often is for aspiring anglers--note that its famous blueback herring population has apparently topped off and is on the way down.





Blueback herring are a deep-water schooling fish and high numbers of herring will change the feeding habits of largemouth bass. Herring schools pull bass to deeper water where the bass wait around like children hopping the candy machine spits out a freebee.

While a lake holds a substantial herring population, shoreline fishing is often problematical. This condition happens anywhere herring balloon.

But bass are going back to the shorelines at Kerr, at least for now. And in the back-and-forth situations that cold fronts and cloudy water cause in the pre-spawn period they wait at the first good cover out from their eventually spawning sites. In many cases, it's the offshore rocks that Lewis worked us around.

The location is the hardest thing to determine and find but after that you can toss baits recognized for their transition-time success: lipless crankbaits, spinnerbaits, jerkbaits and jigs.



Lewis favors lipless cranks and spinnerbaits; Thornhill uses the spinnerbaits and jerkbaits. Stuck in the middle of two machine-casters, I laid low and slowly worked a jig, in this case a Picasso with a Yum trailer.

Lewis has a knack and passion for Rat-L-Traps – his favorite a copper-body bait he'll get on special order. He tossed the "copper head" -- as we called it -- over a lot of water, which is one transition-season value of the Trap and other lipless cranks. The largemouth he put it in front of really seemed to like it.

Yet it was "the where" that seemed the most important aspect of the pattern; that is between the rock and the soft place.

The rocks were sometimes obvious, offshore piles that exuded from the surface, and sometimes they weren't so obvious, their only giveaway an isolated buoy or two out from



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Kerr's 800 miles of shoreline.

As we fished, the water level at Kerr was 300.8 feet with a full pool of 320. With that the lake cannot always be counted on to expose its rocks. When visiting another lake look for the rounded humps of eroded but exposed rocks or else offshore warning buoys. With the rocks located, hope the soft shorelines are not too far away.

Before Lewis pinpointed this pattern it was trying day to say the least. At one point in the slow morning he said with irrefutable Virginia reasoning, "The bass did not swim out of the lake, they have to be somewhere."

Then we found the bass between the rocks and the soft places. They were strong, bright, well-conditioned bass. The fish were feeding some, getting prepared for the spawn. Beside the spawning time itself, you can't find a prettier bass. In addition to the Trap, the bass also bounced off spinnerbaits. A white, deep-running willow-leaf with plenty of red or gold accents did the trick.

I liked the bass I saw from the lipless cranks and spinnerbaits but I wanted one worthy of a jig. The pointed-nose of the Picasso worked well down the broken rock and the soft banks. And with the Yum chunk trailer providing buoyancy, I used the slow twitch-twitch and gentle, low-lift approach – a cool-water, cold-front technique.

The best bass of the day, a four pounder, came from this tactic.

I was working along a soft bank not ten yards from the scattered rock when I felt the tick and set the hook. And there I was caught between a rock and soft place and glad of it.

Story courtesy of Pottstown Mercury.





# Spring Pike Fishing

By Craig Stapon



Looks like in most places it's going to be an early spring. Time to get the file out and sharpen up the toothy critter hooks! Spring Pike fishing is a ritual that is taken very seriously in my neck of the woods. This is the time of the year that both great numbers and size come to play. Remember Pike usually spawn just as the ice is going out, but understand fish are always at different stages in the spring process. Some Pike will show up to spawn early while others will show up during and then of course the late stragglers. This puts the spring advantage in the anglers' hand as these beasts are usually pretty easy to locate and catch.

There are all kinds of tactics that work at this time of year, but one of my favorites is using a suick or Bobby bait. You can work these baits in the shallows and out deeper as the big females heavily concentrate in the shallows late in the day and in top 15 feet of the water column as the season progresses. This deep water bay edge tactic is the key to catching some giants. After spawn the tanks will move out to deeper water to recover from the spawning ritual. They will often suspend at the first or second drop off of the bay or area that they spawned in. These outside edges are the key to serious numbers and big fish. Everyone that hunts big toothy critters understands that pike will move to the depths as the water warms and seasonal spring temperature move to an early summer pattern. They require less oxygen and prefer cooler temperatures. In-fact you often hear tales of anglers catching huge pike by accident while fishing for Lake Trout. By getting out and fishing these edges and drop offs the same slow methodical way you fish shallow water can be amazing. I





see very few anglers doing this, and that is fine with me as it leaves a whole pile of fish just for me. Spoons also can work very well at this time of the year; we call it fishing with heavy metal! If you remember a thing or two in this article, this is what you should put in the vault! Don't be afraid to pause your bait while retrieving. Make long casts as you cover more area and have more chances to stop the bait and have a huge pike smash it.



The sun warms as it reaches higher in the sky and the northern facing shorelines team with life. Weed growth has started. Bait fish are in shallow making an easy meal for our hungry Pike. A good pair of sunglasses is the key as you want the reflection of the water gone so you can see the big ones swimming around. There are times that a smaller bait will work wonders, and this is one of them. I use a floating Rapala x-rap or Husky Jerk! These baits can be twitched and worked slowly producing some of the biggest fish of the year.

Everyone preaches, fish the shallows, look for weeds, I am here to tell you, look for rocks and boulders, and if you have weeded growth, bonus! I have caught bigger pike early in the year on long rock splines that led to deep water. Both casting and trolling methods work well at this time of the year. I have found that once I cast an area I often will toss out my suick and troll over to the next spot. Even in areas that I have covered very well in casting have often produced several trophies while giving it a couple of passes trolling. Remember.....let

the fish tell you what to do! If they are hitting at the pause work your baits real slow. If they smash it while retrieving fast, the giver! This is the time of the year you can catch a pile of fish in a short period of time. So dust of the reel, change the line and get ready to rumble Canadian style! Not only will you boat the biggest fish of the season you will have a great time doing it!





I collect cookbooks from almost everywhere I go. I love the ones that use products that you usually have on hand and use frequently. One of the cookbooks I got from buying a jar of coffee had this type of recipes. With a little adaptation, Shrimp Creole is the first one to follow. I keep frozen cooked shrimp in the house all the time as Food Lion has Buy One Get One Free quite often. You can garnish a salad, make shrimp cocktail or use in recipes using already cooked shrimp. By the way, the original recipe used raw shrimp. Here is my interpretation:

### Shrimp Creole Sandy Style

- ✓ ½ cup diced celery
- ✓ ¼ cup minced onion
- ✓ ¼ cup diced green pepper
- ✓ 3 tlb butter
- ✓ 1 tlb flour
- ✓ 1 tsp salt
- ✓ 1 tsp sugar
- ✓ 1/8 tsp pepper
- ✓ 1 bay leaf
- ✓ 1 sprig parsley (I used 1 tsp dried parsley)
- ✓ ¼ tsp Worcestershire
- ✓ 1 can Italian diced tomatoes with basil, oregano and garlic
- ✓ ¾ lb (approx. 1 ½ to 2 cups cleaned & cooked shrimp)

Sauté first 4 ingredients till tender. Add the next 4 ingredients together and add to first four. Then stir in tomatoes, juice and all. Add bay leaf and parsley.

Simmer 30 minutes or until thickened. Remove bay leaf and fresh parsley sprigs and add shrimp and Worcestershire and heat thru. I used minced bay leaf and dried parsley so did not remove them. I served this on hot brown rice as we are trying to eat healthier and cut out white rice, some bread, etc. This is good leftover but it only makes enough for 2 to 4 people depending on how hungry you are and what other compliments you serve with the meal.







## The Taste of the French Quarter

By Anthony R. Mathis

The French Quarter in New Orleans, Louisiana hasn't tasted this good in a very long time for me. The character and old world charm of this part of town is amazing, from having coffee and beignets at Café Du Monde and then lunch at Café Pontalba, and finally finishing the day off by going to Jimmy's Gas station for a huge shrimp Po-Boy sandwich "noted to be one of the best Po Boy sandwiches in New Orleans".

Now being that my mother's side of the family are from Louisiana I felt that it would be very appropriate to give you folks a taste of something Cajun and Creole this month. I grew up loving and eating a lot of this Creole and Cajun based foods, from succotash to Gumbo. Honestly, the smell of this food can satisfy anyone's taste buds. It really is a soulful pick me up when a hearty meal would be wanted and I have the right thing for my fishermen buddies and foodies alike. Shrimp and Swordfish Creole is my take on the traditional classic "Jambalaya".

"Shrimp and Swordfish Jambalaya"

Recipe:

Roux:

- ✓ 2 ounces of AP flour ( all purpose = AP)
- ✓ 2 ounces butter

Trinity:

- ✓ ½ large onion (cut into small dice)
- ✓ 3 large stalks of celery (cut into small dice)
- ✓ 1 large bell pepper (cut into small dice)

Base of sauce:

- ✓ 1 small Serrano chili pepper (remove the seeds and cut into





small dice)

- ✓ 1 can of stewing tomatoes with liquids (16 ounce can reserving 1 cup of the liquids)
- ✓ 2 cup of shrimp stock
- ✓ 1 bay leaf
- ✓ 1 cup long grain rice

Sachet:

- ✓ 2 parsley stems (cut the leafy part of the parsley off and reserve for later)
- ✓ 7 whole black pepper corns
- ✓ 1 whole allspice corn
- ✓ 3 long pieces of thyme
- ✓ 1 clove
- ✓ 1 big piece of cheese cloth

Meats:

- ✓ 2 lb large shrimp or 1 lb prawns (devein and shelled, but keep the shells)
- ✓ 1 lb swordfish (cut in 1 inch cubes)
- ✓ 1 lb andouille sausage (cut into ½ inch circles) or 1 lb chicken & shrimp sausage

Seasonings:

- ✓ Old bay seasoning
- ✓ Cajun seasoning
- ✓ Salt
- ✓ Pepper
- ✓ 4 Tbl. Olive oil

\*Shrimp stock: Add shrimp shells and heads, 2 celery stalks, 1 large onion, 1/2 small carrots, wrap thyme, clove, allspice, bay leaf and parsley stems in cheese cloth and 24 ounces of water to stock pot bring to a rapid boil, then turn the fire on low and Let it simmer for 45 minutes. Strain and set aside until ready to use.

Preparation:

First heat large stock pot and add 2 tablespoons oil and sausage cook about 4 minutes on each side and then





remove from pot and set aside. Then add your trinity (onion, celery, and bell pepper) and Serrano pepper to the pot and let sweat for about three minutes then remove from pot. Add butter and let it melt. Add flour and stir and cook until the smell and taste of flour is gone, we are making a dark roux so cook on low about 12-15 minutes. Add tomato, onion, celery, bell pepper, and Serrano pepper, mix well. Then add stewing tomatoes (reserving the liquids) cook for 3 more minutes. Add cayenne pepper and Cajun seasoning. Add rice and let it pearl for 2-3 minutes. Then add liquids (reserved tomato liquid and shrimp stock) sausage to the pot. Simmer for 10 minutes covered. Then bake on at 350 for 40 until rice tender, stirring once at 30 minutes.

Season shrimp and swordfish with Creole seasoning and cayenne pepper, salt and pepper and then sear for 3 minutes each side in a very hot sauté pan with a 2 Tablespoons of olive oil.

Add shrimp and Swordfish into the pot during the last 5 minutes of cooking time. Take of over and let it sit for 5 minutes for extra richness stir in 1 tablespoon of butter (optional).

To plate: ladle into a large bowl and serve with torn pieces of French bread.

\*This goes great with my New Orleans bread pudding and bourbon sauce as a desert  
For questions go to: [anthonythechef@gmail.com](mailto:anthonythechef@gmail.com)







*The author Jason Mitchell is considered a master at catching walleyes by casting crank baits. Mitchell shares his secrets for success in this article.*

## **Pitching Crank Baits for Walleyes**

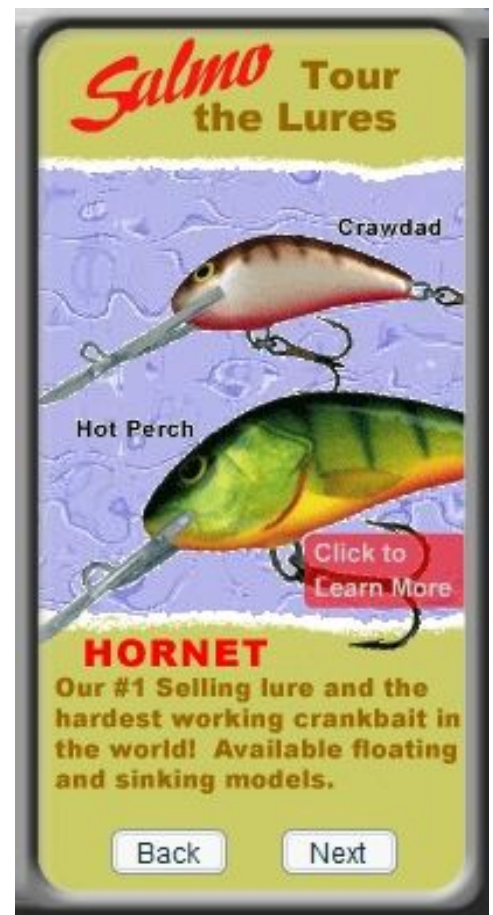
**By Jason Mitchell**

Pitching or casting crank baits into shallow water is one of the most enjoyable ways to fish for walleyes early in the season. Some lakes like Devils Lake in north central North Dakota are notorious for producing shallow patterns where anglers routinely cast crank baits but these patterns can be effective well beyond Devils Lake. Casting crank baits into shallow water not only allows you to cover massive amounts of water, shallow fish are often utilizing some of the warmest water available in a system and are typically aggressive so shallow fish typically respond well to crank baits. Not to say that fish deeper will not respond to crank baits because they will but in my mind, fish that are percolating in that warm water tucked in close to shore when the water temperature across the lake is just starting to climb, that fish is primed for eating whatever comes in front of its nose. Walleyes will hit jigs right now; they



hit swim baits. You can debate bait versus soft plastic and there are days where these options work better than crank baits but for finding fish, triggering aggressive strikes and just covering water to dial in the locations or sweet spots, nothing beats a crank. Not only are you typically reeling faster, but you can also move the boat along the shoreline faster as you cover water.

Obviously, finding the right spot to key on is paramount and location is the starting point. You can't catch fish that are not present. So often, the location of active fish is dictated by water temperature. Most sonar systems have a water temperature gauge. If you didn't hook up the sensor when you rigged your boat.... Big mistake. I often like to just patrol through areas watching where warmer water is getting stacked along a particular shoreline. A degree or less can focus fish activity. Wind will often blow warm water into a particular area or some areas may warm up because they are protected from larger and colder pools of water, but a temp gauge can give you the lay of the land and help you look at the big picture. Also, I strongly believe that the afternoon hours and early evening hours are the prime window for this kind of bite as the water warms up during the day.



Once the location is narrowed down, the presentation itself can also be adjusted. Finding the right lure or lures along with the right retrieve can be a frustrating process. Usually, how the lure hits the profile of a shoreline and retrieve speed or action is most important. When we talk about the profile of the shoreline, imagine what the bottom does under water between the boat and shore and imagine where the walleyes are laying or moving on that profile. On tough days, the fish are going to be tucked tighter to a particular lip on that profile and won't chase for very far. On easy days, the fish are suspended a touch off the lip and will chase what comes in front of them until they eat it. Some days, you have to get close to the fish with a lure, sometimes you have to get closer yet and that is typically determined by the dive curve. Thus, experiment with shallow running lures that will go over the tops of grass and weeds but also clip the shoreline with lures that have a deep diving bill.

Now obviously each shoreline will have unusual characteristics and change as you move along the shoreline so it really does pay to have different anglers in the boat throwing different lures and to switch up between a handful of lures until you dial in the pattern of the day. Go to crank baits for me include classic number five Shad Raps, number four and five Salmo Hornets, number five and seven Rapala Countdowns, the size eight floating Salmo Perch and assorted Husky Jerks and Salmo Suspending Stings. Sometimes I might







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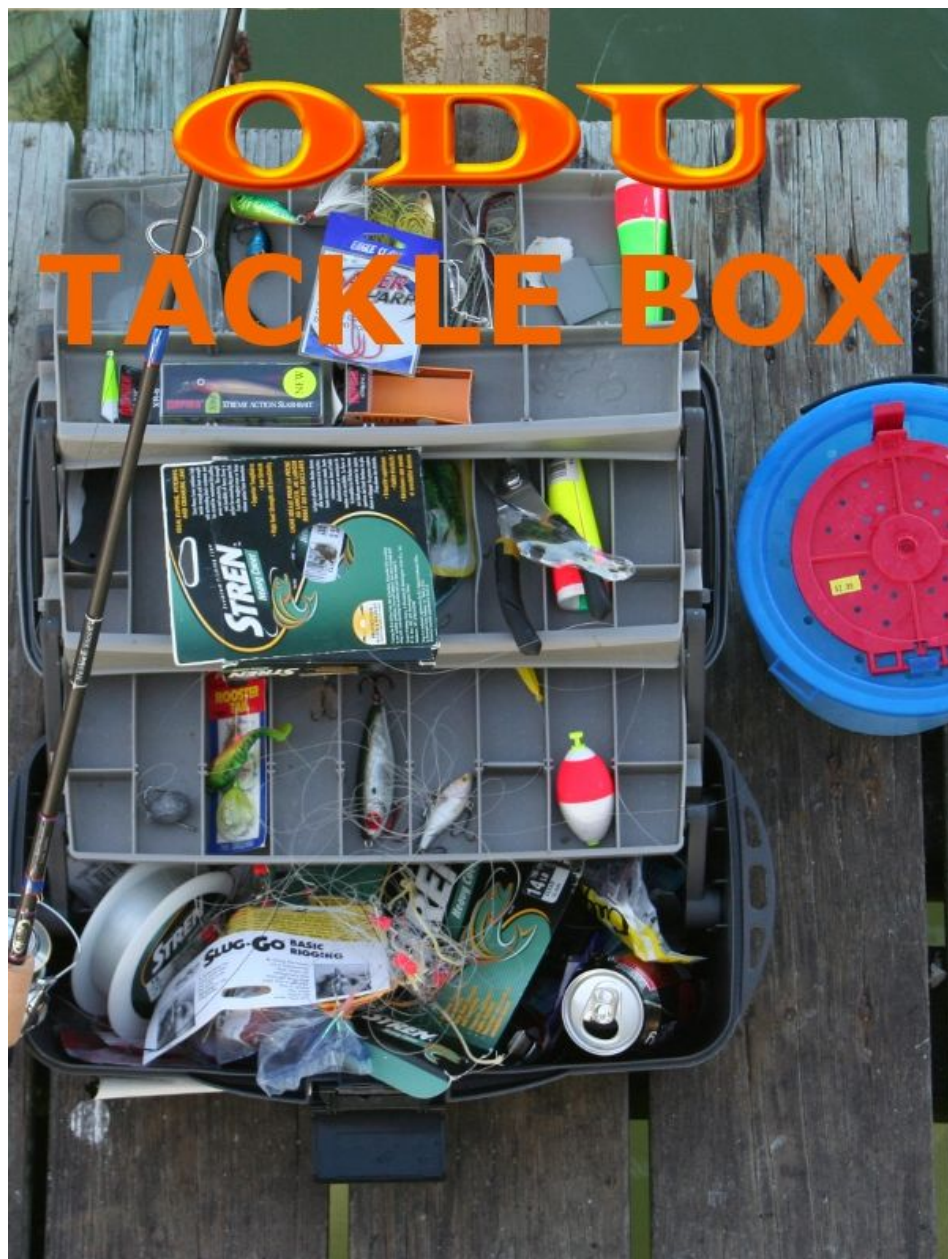


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mix in a few Flicker Shads, Wally Divers and Rogues. I believe a crank bait appeals to aggressive fish that looking for extra flash and vibration that can be felt and seen further than jigs and soft plastics. With that being said, I often like to pop or snap the lure to get extra flash and vibration as I work it back to the boat. Snaps and stops often attract and trigger fish. Besides experimenting with lures that hit the profile correctly to get in a position in front of fish, casting towards the shore should also be experimented with. You can cast right at the shore, for example, and reel directly back to the boat, or you can cast ahead of the boat or behind the boat to keep the lure along a particular depth zone for longer periods of time. Speed or cadence is also a make or break variable. As a guide, I always kept all the reels and rods the exact same so the gear ratios, spool diameters and line were exact so that I can have people in the boat match up when something started working.

One mistake I see many anglers make especially when things get difficult is they position the boat too close to the spot or shore and pound the area with short casts. When things get tough and you have to grind out fish, I think you can be much more effective by backing the boat off the spot and making longer casts even if part of the retrieve is over deeper water. On



off days, I believe these walleyes will follow a lure and just get more temperamental but long cast to give these followers more chances to nip until they get hooks in the jaw. If you are rolling fish to the boat at the end of your retrieve or can physically see following fish or just getting short bites, try backing off the spot and making longer casts. Ironically, larger or heavier lures that can be cast further often shine on tough days versus smaller lures because long casts to often get bit on the tougher days.

Editors Note: The author Jason Mitchell earned a reputation as a top walleye guide on Devils Lake, North Dakota before hosting the television show, Jason Mitchell Outdoors which airs on Fox Sports North at 9:00 am Sunday mornings and Fox Sports Midwest at 8:30 am Saturday mornings. Show listings and schedule can be found at [www.jasonmitchelloutdoors.com](http://www.jasonmitchelloutdoors.com)



# Return of Monster Kings

By Spider Ryback

From the looks of it, this decade will mark the return of monster kings to Lake Ontario.

Last year, several king salmon ranging from 38 to 40 pounds were caught by anglers trolling the tiniest Great Lake in late summer. While 40-something-pound fish are nothing new—indeed, they were almost common in the last century—they've been as rare as whiskers on a trout for almost 20 years.

Like all living things, salmon go through cycles. It ebbs and flows in the dynamic are attributable to factors ranging from food availability and disease to drought during the spawning runs.

Well, this year we have the perfect combination for even bigger fish than 2010:



*Tim Spraker holds a shiny king salmon landed near Oswego while fishing with Captain Ed Monette, Cannonball Runner Charters. (Photo by Capt. Ed Monette.)*





Drought in the autumn of 2007 limited salmon production, resulting in a relatively poor number of mature salmon for 2011; and the explosion in round gobies—exotic forage from Eastern Europe—has the cormorants and other predatory waterfowl feeding almost exclusively on them, leaving the alewives for the salmonids.

Do the math; fewer salmon chasing an overabundance of food adds up to an unusually large number of huge kings come spawning time.

Coming Home to Oswego County.

Each year, the state Department of Environmental Conservation stocks Lake Ontario's tributaries with 1.7 million chinook and 250,000 coho salmon; the Oswego and Salmon Rivers get the lion's share. After a short time in the streams, the fish migrate to the open lake where they spend the next three years eating and growing.

In the summer of their third year, their life cycle coming full circle, they're hooked by the urge to spawn and start heading for home to the tributaries of their youth. On the way, they become veritable eating machines, putting on the fat reserves they'll need to carry them through their spawning ordeal.

Although the plumes of all of Lake Ontario's tributaries draw maturing salmon during their last weeks, the waters off the Salmon and Oswego Rivers get the greatest number.

Traditionally, July sees the first meaningful returns. Local charter captains like Captain Greg Gehrig (K G Sportfishing Aboard Top Gun, [www.kglodge.com](http://www.kglodge.com); 800-346-6533), whose "bread and butter fish" from ice out through early summer is a trophy brown trout, diversify by offering trophy salmon trips.





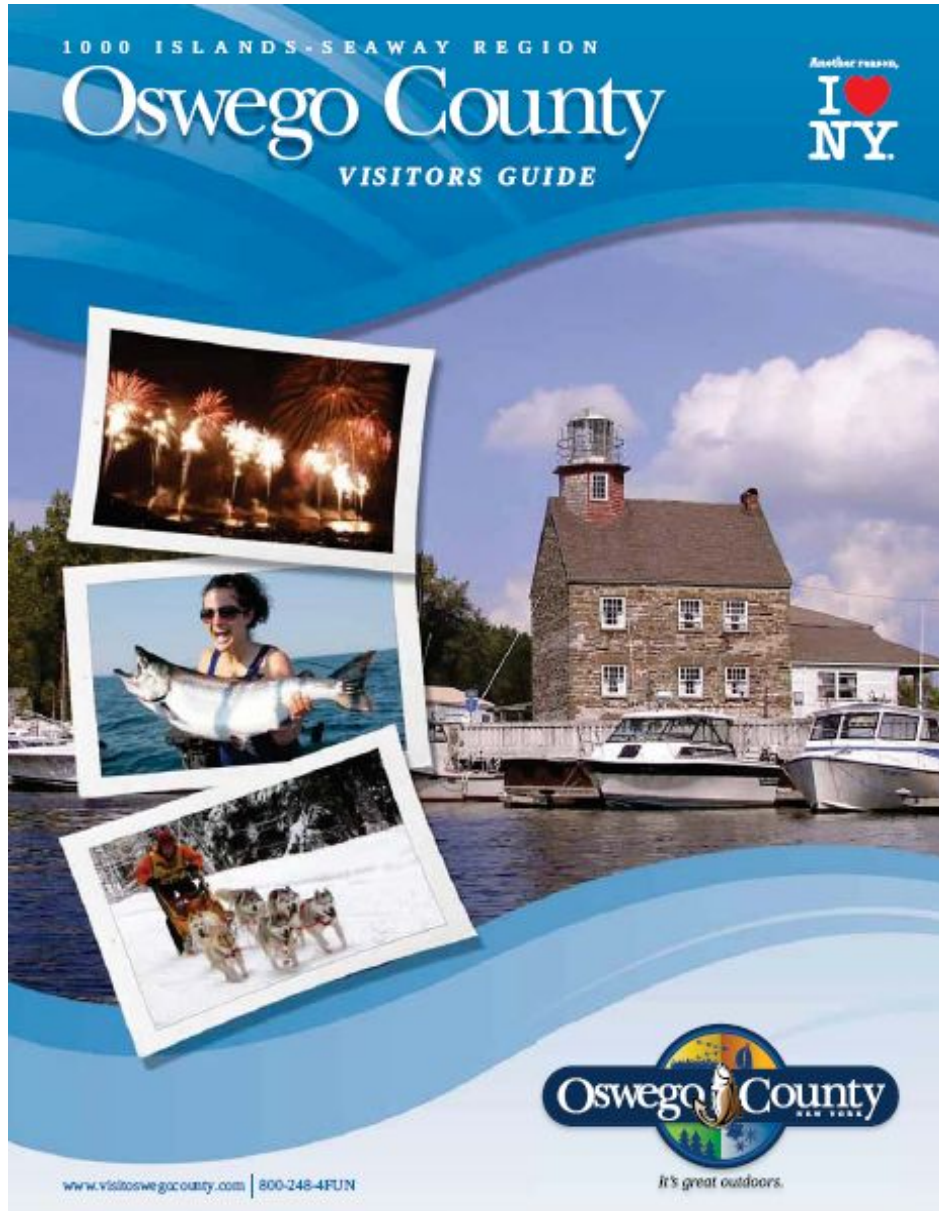
Gehrig agrees this fall promises to be one, for the record, books – noting that anglers were already catching fish over 30 pounds in late June from the northern half of the lake.

And that's just the beginning; fish that size - heading for the Oswego area for the rest of summer - will be growing faster than at any other time in their lives. The possibilities are breathtaking.

The only way to take these guys right now is by trolling open water. While kings prefer cool temperatures, say the high 40s, Captain Richard Miick (Dream Catcher Charters and Guide Service; [www.TrophyDreamCatcher.com](http://www.TrophyDreamCatcher.com); 315-387-5920) points out that their prey likes water a little warmer, in the 50s, and that's where hungry salmon hang out.

Miick catches most of his summer kings by deep trolling spoons like Michigan Stingers, and dodger/fly combinations off downriggers, at speeds ranging from 1.9 to 2.5 mph.

"The depth I fish depends on the location of the thermocline. In July that can be 90 to 180 feet deep. In August, it's a little higher, between 50 and 90 feet deep," he claims.



"From late August through September, it's a whole new ballgame," he adds. "Kings stage off the river mouths, revving up their fins for their spawning runs upstream. In the morning, they're in as shallow as 15 to 20 feet, in the range of J-Plugs flatlined 90 to 150 feet behind the boat." For fishing conditions, charters and river guides, and visitor information in Oswego County, go to [www.visitoswegocounty.com](http://www.visitoswegocounty.com), or call 1-800-248-4FUN.

Spider Rybaak is an award-winning outdoor writer who has been published in more than 20 periodicals. He is the author of "Fishing Eastern New York" and "Fishing Western New York" guide books that cover 429 streams and lakes in New York State. Contact him at [srybaak@yahoo.com](mailto:srybaak@yahoo.com). Check out his blog at <http://fishingandhuntinginoswego.blogspot.com/>





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## Calling Turkeys On Pennsylvania's Public Lands

By Vic Attardo

With the start of spring gobbler season (for young hunters, April 21; for adults, April 28), thousands of Pennsylvania sportsmen will be taking to the woods in hopes of a longbeard.

But just because the toms are occasionally noisy, doesn't mean a hunter has to call his, or her, brains

out to get a turkey.

Robert Bondurant -- a call maker no less -- says that sometimes silence, or at least a reserved quite, is golden.

At the risk of reducing sales (really no chance at that) Bondurant, of Limbshaker Calls, South Hill, Virginia, believes that certain tough situations mandate less calling than others. Bondurant believes there are plenty of times that aggressive calling, with one of his eight-models of mouth diaphragms or slate, glass and box calls, will often trance a hot bird, but sometimes it pays to be a bit quieter.

One of those situations -- and something many Pa. hunters can relate to -- is hunting on public land.

"The reason being is those birds are messed with by a whole lot of people," Bondurant said. "They've heard a whole lot of calling. They've seen people running in an out of the woods and trying to sneak around.

"And once those birds have been spooked a couple of times, they're going to be call-shy and it may take a little more time to work them. They're not going to gobble like birds that have not been messed with. Those birds will be quieter."

So how does one go about handling a quiet, public-land turkey?







“It seems to me if the birds are shy you should not call as hard as you otherwise might; instead you need to go a little softer. If you go a little bit softer and take a little more time, the birds will usually respond better.”

And a public-land situation often begs for a specific call.

“Usually on public lands I use a mouth diaphragm

or a slate call. Very rarely do I use a box call or a glass or crystal call in that situation. The only time I use one of those is on a really windy day when I need more volume.”

A typically public-land situation may have a tom gobbling early in the morning just off the roost. Bodurant ([limbshakercustomcall@yahoo.com](mailto:limbshakercustomcall@yahoo.com) or 434-738-7372) says hunters often rush towards that bird but that, he believes, isn't the best tactic.

“Let's say the bird gobbles,” giving the scenario. “I call to him but get no response -- nothing. I wait a few minutes and I call again, still nothing.

“But when I'm calling I'm telling the tom exactly where I am -- yet I have no idea where he is.

“Instead of getting frustrated, jumping up and walking toward the bird, I prefer to use a locator call, a crow or hawk call (or an owl call early in the morning) and get the tom to shock gobble. I want the tom to tell me where he is before I move to him. I don't want to educate him anymore.

“If he answers me and he hasn't moved from the first time I heard him, it's obvious he's not coming to me so I'm either going to move or else back out and let him go. Yes, I will forget that bird and go for another.

“But if that tom has wandered a bit and I feel he's not too close, then I'll make a move, getting up and walking towards him, or flanking him one side or the other.”





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So, patience reduced volume and less calling is Bondurant's way to go on public land.

One of the keys to good spring gobbler hunting is knowing the terrain and locating the birds prior to the morning hunt.

"I always try and locate the birds in the evening. This gives me a leg up because I kind of know where the bird is. If you go into the morning without knowing if a turkey is around, it's kind of tough."

Whether on public or private land, where a sportsman sets-up is critical to a successful hunt, Bodurant says. He likes to find a bird the evening before so he can be ready for it in the morning.

"I try to do my homework. I'm going to scout the birds and put them to bed. That way they'll be there first thing in the morning.

"Let's say you're working woods with a nearby farm where the farmer divides his pastures. You'd have a hard time getting the bird to come across the separated pastures. Therefore if you roost a bird in the evening, you know you need to be in the woods the next morning.





“Try to put yourself ahead of the turkey. If I have the birds roosting, I try to get within a couple of hundred yards. I don’t get too close to them because you run the risk of running them off the roost, or spooking them right off the bat.

And more details:

“Let’s say you have the bird roosted. As the light comes up in the woods, the crows start hollering.

Usually if the crows start hollering, the bird is going to start gobbling. At that point you can do some soft yelping.

“I personally don’t like to do a lot of calling until after the bird gobbles. I’m not going to call to get him to gobble on the roost. A lot times if you don’t do anything and let the time go by, you’ll get better results.

“If it is getting late in the morning and I think something ought to be happening here, I’ll blow a locator call -- an owl hooter, peacock call, woodpecker call, or I slam a car door.

“There are a lot of things to do to make a turkey gobble, but in that situation I don’t want to make a lot of noise. He’s going to gobble anyway. Once things get going in the woods, that’s when I’m going to start my calling.”



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With a tom that is “henned-up” – meaning there are plenty of hens and no reason for the tom to move -- Bondurant tries appealing to the hens.

“We often appeal to the hens and get them upset. I do some cutting and cackling and some excited yelping and get those hens fired up. What happens is the hens come to us looking for a fight and all the time they’re dragging the gobblers with them. That’s a situation that works out pretty good.





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