

Spring Fishing 2013

**Bass By The
Bushel**

**Transition
Fishing
For
Perch**

**Delacroix
Speckle
Trout**



**ODU
Tackle
Box**

**The Monsters of
the James River**



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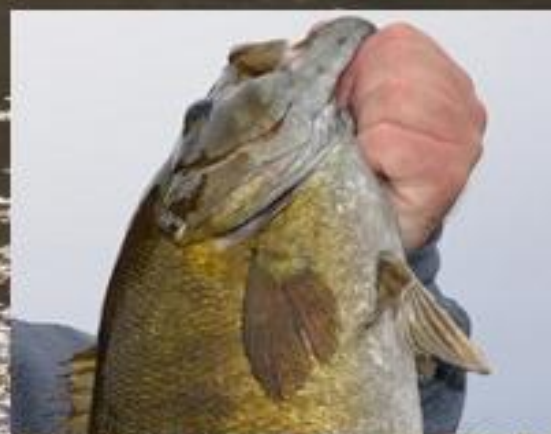
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After review, my last few years worth of "Editors Note" it appears that things are evolving, morphing, changing, whatever you want to call it in the world. We as Americans are a very resilient and a tolerant group of individuals, especially us outdoorsmen. On a regular basis, we struggle through hurricanes, blizzards, floods, droughts, and continue to have an un-wavering love for Mother Nature and a passion for the outdoors. Outrageous gas prices may curb our passion for traveling to our favorite fishing hole or hunting grounds but not our love for hunting and fishing.

As I mature and the years mount up it has become quite apparent to me that city dwellers will never have our love or passion for the outdoors. It's not that they

Editor: Larry Thornhill
Larry@odumagazine.com

Assistant Editor:
 Bill Schwarz, bill@odumagazine.com

Publishing Team: Bill Schwarz & Richard Barker

Photographer: Kathy Barker

Advertising inquirers for our Fishing Magazines, ODU Fishing News or ODU Hunting News should be e-mailed to:
webmaster@odumagazine.com

Contributing Writers: Chris Jenkins, Jason Freed, Lawrence Taylor, D & B Ice Adventures, Sean Landsman, Marc Thorpe, Bob Jensen, Anthony Badham, Daniel Quade, Captain Mike Gerry, Jake Bussolini, Jason Mitchell, Ed Harp, Bill Vanderford, Tom Neustrom, Jeff Bruhl, Dan Galusha, Tom Neustrom, Ted Takasaki and Scott Richardson

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can't, but it's hard to appreciate something that you have never experienced. To me, it's like setting in a classroom and your teacher is trying to encourage you to ask questions when you have no idea what they are talking about. Let's face it, there are a lot more city dwellers than there are suburbanites and country folks. We need to face facts we are a minority, and if we don't do something to help educate the masses we eventually lose what we cherish most, the right to enjoy Mother Nature and the joy of hunting and fishing.

Do me a favor and introduce someone new to the outdoors and help preserve our heritage before it's gone.

You can also follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

And please,
Enjoy the outdoors,

Larry Thornhill

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Bass By The Bushel

By Chris Jenkins



Another spring spawn come and gone. Just like weekends, the spawn takes forever to come around and oh so quickly passes by. For me, the months of March and April can be hectic. I know fishing is supposed to be fun, but when your obsession lies with one big bass, the term “fun” does not really apply. Typically, I switch gears in May and just try to enjoy the new patterns and numbers of fish that are easily caught.

This is actually a great time to take a kid fishing because the numbers of fish that can be caught will leave a lasting impression on that individual's mind.

Most of these fish stay in relatively shallow (10 feet or less) water and will accept any easy meals in their field of vision. One of the most exciting techniques has got to be topwater fishing. Low-light conditions are more favorable when deciding to cinch the knot

on any surface lure. Bass have no eyelids and the clearer the water, the deeper the light waves reach. In my opinion, it only stands to reason that they will avoid looking toward the sun to strike an overhead object. That is why we all experience our best topwater bites in the morning, evening, and night. With so many surface lures to choose from it can be confusing. I like to cover as much water as possible, so I will naturally reach for a buzzbait first. This lure will allow me to search large areas in quick fashion and exploit the topwater bite to its fullest before the sun ruins the party. There are times however, when a slow methodical approach is necessary. There are also those of us that would prefer not to contract tennis elbow from making three hundred casts a day. The solution is the age-old popper. The Rebel Pop-R has got to be one of the leading all-time best-selling selling poppers ever designed. Simple construction, easy to use, and best of all it catches fish. The only downside to any lure with treble hooks, like the



popper, is its tendency to get snagged. If you are fishing in a body of water that has a lot of vegetation, I recommend a weedless frog like the Stanley Ribbit Frog. When rigged properly, the Ribbit Frog will find its way through sticker bushes. Because of its design, I also recommend that you use a slow and steady retrieve on every cast. That's right, use it like a buzz bait! The legs on the Ribbit Frog were created to churn the water in a plop, plop, plop fashion.

I also still enjoy breaking out the old prop baits like the Smithwick Devil's Horse or the likes of Heddon's Torpedo and Zara Spook. These are lures that have stood the test of time because they still work.

Unlike early spring when we were actively looking for sun beaten banks, after the spawn is complete, the shadows now become favorable targets. Once the sun tops the trees, and the surface bite dwindles, everything changes. Being able to quickly adapt to the changes that occur in the water, is what keeps a good pro in the money. One technique that has become widely used is the Shaky Head. As much as I hate to finesse fish or even downsize, for that matter, this technique will consistently put fish in the boat throughout the majority of the year. As with most baits, anyone can throw it, but some anglers make that bait perform to a new level. When I first experimented with the Shaky Head, I tried to do so with minimum sacrifice. What I mean is, I didn't go into it with an open mind. For starters, I tried to get away with using braided

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line as well as heavy jigs and became impatient and frustrated by my lack of success. Eventually, I broke down one day when I was fishing with a guy, who was making me look really bad from the back of the boat. I laid my rod down and said “ok what am I doing wrong here”?

From him, to me, to you, here it is. Think light. He uses a seven-foot medium or medium heavy, fast action ST. Croix rod. Not a baitcaster, but a spinning rod that only weighs a little over four ounces. He stated that the Abu Garcia Cardinal series spinning reels were light weight, inexpensive, and have a superb and reliable drag system. As far as the line, he swore by ten-pound test Berkley Trilene Maxx. Always use the lightest line you can get away with he told me. Ten-pound test is favorable for most situations. As for the jig head, he stated to me that he had experimented with just about all of them. You see this technique has been around for decades. Like so many other trends, it came and went, and returned again solely due to its effectiveness. Through it all, one company has fended off all competitions by delivering an affordable high-quality product. When it comes to anything, hook related, look no further than Gamakatsu. Most jig heads flex on the hook set, and even bend out while fighting a fish. To prove his point, he intentionally got snagged and proceeded to pull my boat to the tree. He retrieved the round jig head and much to my surprise it was unscathed. Equally bewildering to me was the fact that he relied mostly on the 3/16-ounce size to get the job done. All I can say is I was WAY OFF in my approach to effectively fishing a shaky head. One other point worth mentioning is his adamancy with the Zoom trick worm. Not too soft, not too stiff he said. The Zoom trick worm has just the right balance and action. From Virginia to Florida, Black Grape is the all around best color by far in his opinion. John Lundeen taught me a lot that day, and I am thankful for the lesson. Another outstanding technique that is easy to use, and account for a multitude of bass is the Wacky Rig. Being a weightless rig most of the time, it demands a great deal of time and patience to let that bait fall through the water column. Admittedly, I am not the most patient person, so I often utilize a Lake Forks Wacky weight hook system. I can fish faster,

and save time and money using their set up. Lake Fork Tackle even makes a bait designed for the whole process. The Hyper Wack’n Worm is 7” and gets busy with action, just add water.

Time on the water is a gift that should be enjoyed. Take a kid fishing this month, and I guarantee if you use these techniques, you will catch bass by the bushel.

sowbelly.hunter@yahoo.com





Think Outside The Box, The Jig Box!

By Jason Freed

I was asked a question once, if you could pick any lure to be stranded on an island with what would it be? The answer was simple, a jig, because for decades, anglers across the country have said the very same answer and here is why. The standard jig has so many ways it can be used to catch fish from vertical jigging and snap jigging, to casting, and pitching. This versatility, combined with the evolution of the fishing industry, allows the angler to have an array of choices in his tackle box. Jigs come in sizes, shapes and colors and we here at LOA, feel that the jig is something that has to be part of every angler's arsenal. LOA's Jeff Anderson has been fishing jigs since he could tie one on his first fishing rod. Jeff's range and skill with his jig fishing put him at an elite level, and he stopped by LOA country to share some tips.

When it comes to chasing walleyes with jigs, Andersen has two favorite approaches: chasing weed walleyes and snap jigging across weed and sand flats. Weed walleyes often times are chasing 3-4" perch and shiners within bays, sand/weed flats, and bars or humps that have good cabbage weed growth on them. Early in the season, when water temperatures reach 42 to 50



degrees, be sure to focus in on the northern sections and structures of a lake. Weed growth will emerge much quicker due to the larger amount of sunlight it gets, but as the season goes on and the temperatures warm don't forget to go to those southern locations as fish will move into those spots. Much like a bass angler does, Andersen idles with his MinnKota Terrova bow mount trolling motor, with the I-pilot feature, and keys in on pockets within the weeds. The 'anchor' feature on the I-pilot allows Andersen to key on certain spots and works them over a bit more. These pockets serve as ambush areas for toothy critters as they look for the next feeding opportunity. Walleye anglers always talk about the 'spot on the spot' and some areas that need a closer look, here is the inside weed line (the weed edges closest to shore) and the outside weed line, inside turns, and isolated clumps of weeds. As he moves along, he uses a variety of jigs to cast or pitch into this weed cover. Some of his favorites are the VMC Moon Eye or Hot Skirt Jigs and any of the offerings from Kenkatch; the size will depend on how aggressive he

wants to fish and what the wind and waves are doing. When considering using a heavier vs. a lighter jig Andersen believes, you need to consider the following. "Heavier jigs are better for thumping the bottom drawing attention to the bait, which allows walleyes to zero in on that sound or flash. Plus, when the bite is on, the quicker you can get the bait back into the strike zone the better." When using lighter jigs, Andersen's rule of thumb is to use them more when you know the fish are there, they want more subtlety in the approach. Cold water or early-season fishing is prime times to downsize your jig size. When you cast a jig, let it slowly free fall, swaying from side to side, and weed walleyes will react. Anderson's favorite set up when pitching jigs is a 6'4" medium light Jason Mitchell Rod with 8-10lb high vis yellow braided line.

Hot Skirt Jigs



Another favorite technique for Andersen is snap jigging. Snap jigging is something more anglers are including in their jig fishing presentations. Snap jigging is essentially trolling with a jig and allows the angler to fish quicker and cover large areas of structure. On Leech Lake, for example, one of Andersen's favorite places to jig fish big walleyes, Andersen focuses on the variety of sand flats throughout the main lake and major bays. One of Andersen's favorite presentations when fishing these locations is to take a ½ oz jig combined with a plastic such as 3-4" Trigger X Soft Plastic or Berkley Gulp swimming grub. Andersen will use his Minnkota vantage or Mercury kicker motor, which allows Andersen to cover water faster and keep his jig in the water more than it is out of it. The advantage of using plastics is you do not have reach into the bait well to re-bait all the time. One tip is to use a bit of super glue to help hold the plastic on your jig longer. With the fishing plastics industry booming in the last five years, you can find plastics that are species specific with synthetically reproduced pheromones that naturally attract fish and trigger





them to chow down. As he moves along, he holds his rod at a 45-degree angle while snapping it with his wrist, and not the arm. The set up to use when snap jigging is very similar to pitching jigs, but instead of braid, use a good mono such as Berkley Sensation in 8lb test. Mono allows you to have some stretch in the line. Anderson believes it is very common for walleyes to pick up the jig when snap jigging and if you are using a braided line, they often times will feel that resistance and drop the bait. Mono just gives you that little more stretch to give the angler just a little more time to drop the rod tip prior to the fish detecting the resistance and then set the hook.

Even with all the new methods and tactics today, the use of a jig is one of the most versatile and effective presentations today. Anderson reminds us when it comes to fishing jigs, "I let the fish dictate my presentation each time I am on the water, some days they want that lure no matter what and other days you have to coax them into biting. Sometimes they want it ripped and other times they will subtly suck it up on the bottom, but when you feel that hard tick, reel down, and set the hook!" Whatever the jigging stroke is, Anderson has proven that jig fishing is something that has stood the test of time in the fishing world and is something you will find in every angler's tackle box. Therefore, this spring, get out and challenge yourself to think outside the jig box and you might just GET HOOKED!

Editors note: Leisure Outdoor Adventures is a premier guide service, and promotional group partnered with Chase on the Lake resort in Walker MN and other businesses in central Minnesota. **Photo credit to Jeff Andersen for provided photographs.**



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3D Baitfish Spawning Chart

By Lawrence Taylor

Bass anglers can lose focus after the fish leave the beds. Anglers knew what to do as the fish went through the prespawn and actual spawn, but 10 days later these same anglers can be confused, zipping from one spot to the next like water bugs. It's this postspawn period, prior to the fish setting up on established summertime areas, that throws a monkey wrench into bass fishing. There can be as many distractions to the fish as the fisherman, too. The main distractions that delays bass from setting up in summertime areas are the baitfish spawns.

Baitfish spawns can save the day for anglers who locate and exploit them. Gizzard and



threadfin
shad,
bluegills
and other
baitfish
are
vulnerable
while

spawning, not to mention producing a fresh batch of food. This presents a great opportunity for knowledgeable bass anglers. Here is the when, where and how for bass anglers looking to exploit the baitfish spawns.

Gizzard Shad

Spawning Temperature: 64-69 degrees. Gizzard shad prefer to spawn during a stable or warming trend.

Traditional Spawning Time: In Southern Reservoirs such as Beaver Lake, gizzard shad begin spawning in mid-April and continue through May. Most of the actual spawning occurs at night.

Reproduction Cycles: Gizzard shad spawn once a year.

Spawning Locations: Gizzard shad can spawn just about anywhere on a lake, but hotspots include weedy shallow



backwaters. On the main lake they like hard-bottom pockets with laydowns or riprap banks.

Look For: Excessive baitfish activity at the surface, blackbirds and other birds on the shoreline.

Bow-Chica-Bow-Wow: Adult male and female gizzard shad broadcast their eggs and sperm simultaneously near the surface. The fertilized eggs sink to the bottom and adhere to rocks, vegetation or wood cover.

Best Technique/Lure: Cast a single YUM Mud Minnow rigged on a 3/16-ounce YUMbrella Money Head jig, a Heddon Super Spook Jr. in shad patterns or a 3/8-ounce satin silver glimmer BOOYAH Blade. Baitfish color patterns are key during the gizzard shad spawn, especially in clear water. In water with any bit of stain, quite often the spinnerbait gets the nod as the most effective lure. During midday, a Flash Mob Jr. rigged with 3-inch Walleye Grubs fished in the deeper water near a spawning site is a good choice.

Threadfin Shad

Spawning temperature: 67-70 degrees.

Spawning time: Southern reservoirs such as Beaver Lake, late April. Much of the actual release of eggs occurs during the very early morning hours but can last until mid-morning.

Reproduction Cycles: Threadfin shad can spawn several times per year. It's not uncommon for threadfin to spawn a second time in mid July, and again in September or early October.

Spawning Locations: In lakes with a lot of vegetation, threadfin will spawn just about anywhere. Lacking sufficient vegetation, they spawn near boat docks, buck brush, rip rap and other hard objects.

Look For: Ripples from small schools of spawning threadfins moving erratically in the shallows, birds on the shoreline, and feeding fish breaking the surface.

Bow-Chica-Bow-Wow: According to a report by Texas State University, threadfin shad school along the shoreline, with small groups of 1-2 females and 3-15 males breaking away and





moving toward the shore. These micro-schools move quickly toward a log, vegetation or other submerged object while releasing eggs and milt. Anglers can see these little spawning schools because they swim erratically near the surface.

Best Techniques/Lure: Pound the bank with a BOOYAH 3/8-ounce Super Shad spinnerbait, XCalibur Xcs100 crankbait or a Heddon Pop'n Image 5/16-ounce Threadfin shad pattern. The Super Shad spinnerbait features four willowleaf blades to mimic a school of small shad, but unlike a small castable umbrella rig, can be cast into shoreline vegetation and brought out without collecting weeds and slop. When keying in on either the gizzard or threadfin shad spawn, use a shiny chromo or realistic white baitfish pattern on all of your bass lures.

Bluegills

Spawning Temperature: 68-75 degrees.

Spawning Time: Begins in mid-April and can continue all summer.

Reproduction Cycles: Bluegills can spawn up to five times in Southern states.

Spawning Locations: Bluegills and other sunfish prefer protected bays with gravel or sandy bottoms. Nests normally are created in less than 4 feet of water.

Look For: Anglers should wear polarized sunglasses and look for the light-colored nests in shallow water. Another visual cue are the wakes made by bluegills as they prepare for actual spawning.

Bow-Chica-Bow-Wow: Males create circular nests in less than 4-feet of water and may cluster as many as 50 together in an area. As a female approaches the male circles her and makes grunting sounds. If she's interested, the pair come to rest in the center of a nest and touch bellies to begin the process of releasing eggs and fertilizing them. This occurs several times before the male chases off the female. The male guards the eggs until the larvae hatch and swim away on their own.

Best Technique/Lure: Pitching a YUM Vibra King Tube or YUM 2ube in the nest or casting Smithwick Devil's Horse in bass/orange belly. Tubes or jigs should feature orange or red with a base of olive green to mimic bluegill colors. Any topwater you select should have an orange belly.

Other baitfish:

Skipjack

Spawning Time: May to July in the Mississippi River and March to April in Florida and other Southern areas.

Reproduction Cycles: Once a year.

Spawning Locations: Gravel and sandy bottoms in main river current.

Best Techniques/Lure: Hollow-body swimbaits perfectly mimic skipjack and can be rigged singly on a jighead or rigged on a castable umbrella rig. Cast upstream and reel the lure into gravel or sandy bottoms in the spawning area. Also effective are the Bomber Model 6A in black pearl or a 3/8-ounce BOOYAH Counter Strike in BOOYAH Shad color pattern. Big topwater lures like the



Heddon Chug'n Spook in baitfish color patterns also are effective.

Blueback Herring

Spawning Temperature : 69-75 degrees.

Spawning Time: April to May.

Reproduction Cycles: Once a year.

Spawning Locations: Hard bottoms like gravel and rocks, but also around dock pilings, seawalls and riprap in deeper water exposed to waves. Blueback Herring spawn in the upper portion of the water column, making bottom composition less important.

Best Technique/Lure: The Flash Mob Jr. rigged with 4-inch Mud Minnows or curly tail grubs is a great pick if bluebacks are spawning in deeper, open water. If snags are an issue, the Booyah Mini Shad or other spinnerbait will create the “school of bait” look while remaining relatively weedless. Another productive technique is a big topwater like the Heddon Spook. Select baitfish color patterns to best match the baitfish.

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Chris Lane



Transition Fishing For Perch

By D & B Ice Adventures

Everyone is entitled to their own opinions but debating the fact that yellow perch are some of the best eating freshwater fish cannot be dispatched. The fact that perch are aggressive feeders and abundant throughout many waters, makes them a prime target for all ages and fishing abilities. We have put together an effective pattern for locating and catching these tasty morsels!

Perch, in general are easy to catch and not too hard to find, but we didn't settle at that we wanted big perch. Through the years, we have found several bodies of water that consistently produce larger perch than others. Learning the contour of these bodies of water through bathymetric map and first-hand experience, has aided us in patterning their movements both daily and throughout the year.

We have found three different types of perch lakes. First, lakes that don't produce any quantity of big perch. Second, lakes that produce quality in late fall and early winter, and

lastly, lakes that produce mostly larger perch all year. Of course, we mainly target the lakes that offer bigger fish but we still keep up with all bites in case something changes!

The lakes that we target seem to have one thing in common, which is a deep basin perch population. Deep basins offer these fish a large area to roam and search for food as well as

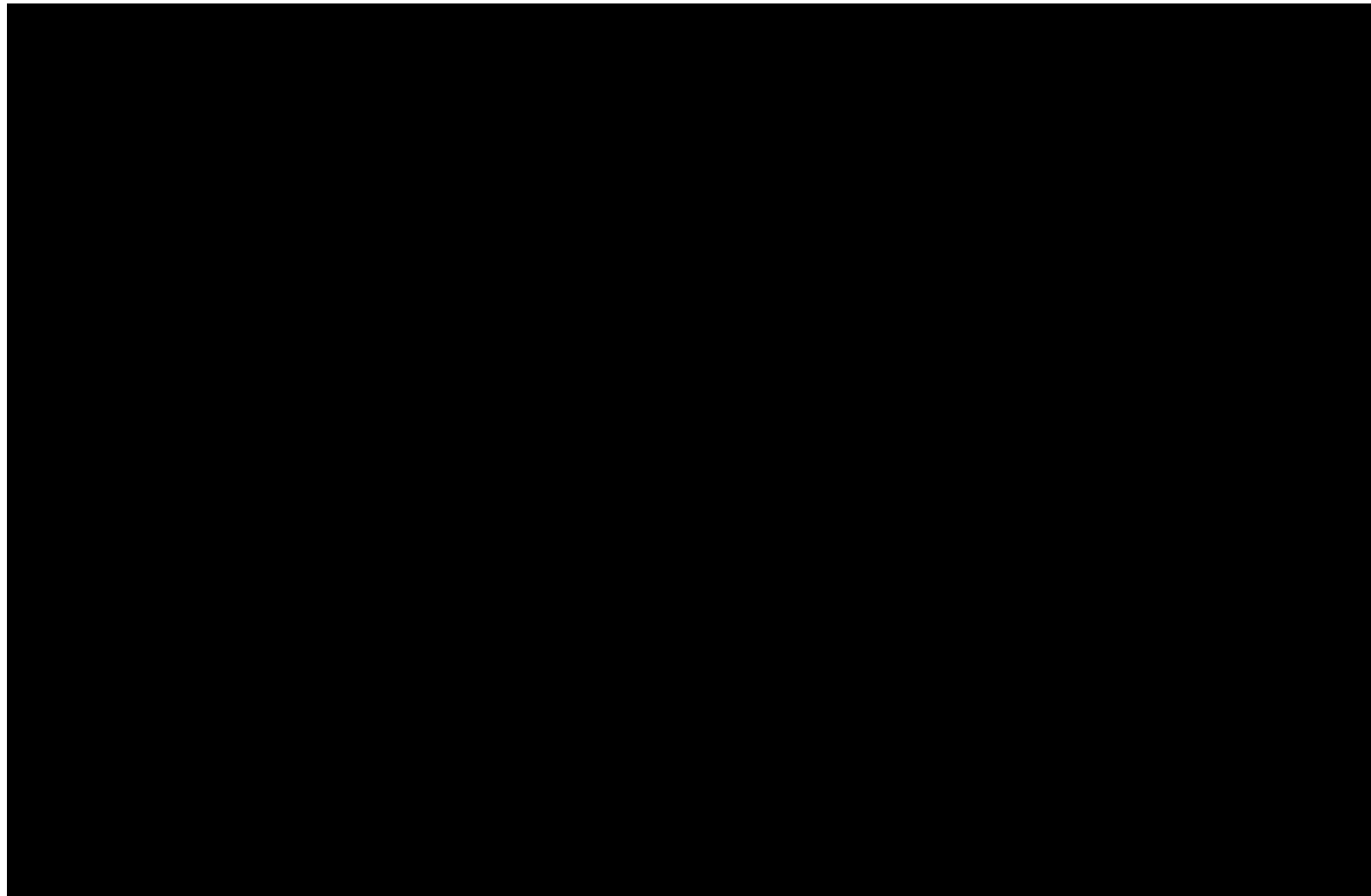


security. When we catch these fish in the summer, we find them spitting up two food sources consistently. The first food source, and arguably the most important to these fish, are freshwater bloodworms. Finding active bloodworm patches is the most important part to our success. Year to year these areas stay fairly consistent but seeking more locations must never be overlooked. The second main food source is minnows. Mainly, we see them up to about 3" The perch slow their feeding on minnows as the year progresses because their size increases significantly. There is one more food source that seems to be more predominant in the winter months, but we have no idea why. This food source is freshwater shrimp. Through the ice, a Scudi from Maki Plastics on a drop shot rig is a killer!

At first, we were catching these jumbo perch two ways. Deep diving cranks baits, and jig heads tipped with various live baits and plastics. As walleye fishing became a bigger part of our summer recreation, a bottom bouncing setup worked its way into our technique. Because snags were not a concern in our deepwater mud flat setting, we altered the idea slightly. The most effective method for us to catch these perch is with a three-way swivel setup. We run a 1/2-ounce bass casting sinker 18-24 " below the swivel with a size 4-6 octopus hook on a 6 " tag end. Leeches and plastics work well, but we find that night crawlers are our best bet. Effective plastics include: " Live " Baby Shad by Lake Fork Trophy Lures, 1.5 " Crappie Slider by Charlie Brewer, and the 1 " minnow by Gulp! Alive. Fishing in deep water, we have tries various color combinations but most days white and chartreuse produces the best results.

Finding the perch that we pursue at times can be frustrating. Neither of us can deny the fact that we have gone out and returned without having as much as a bite. We use those days to make





us appreciate the good days but most importantly as a learning day. By keeping notes on weather, locations, fishing and other recreational pressure, we are slowly putting together a pattern that many of the old timers have. We find that these perch starts off in the deep basin in the early morning and slide up near deepwater weed edges as the sun rises higher. The weed edges that we parallel during midday tend to run in 24-26 feet of water.

While we are fishing, we do use electronics to our advantage. The perch that we chase school up to a certain degree, so side imaging can play a role in locating larger pods. Mainly, Switchfire Sonar on the Hummingbird is the main source of information. In sonar mode, we can locate weed edges, baitfish, and larger fish with confidence because of its adjacent location to the transducer. While fishing deep, we see two different formations of larger fish. One is represented by a flat school covering the bottom 3' of the water column, and the other is a ball-like formation that we have determined over and over is composed of bigger bluegill and pumpkinseed. Although each day is different, much of how we chase these perch is consistent. They tend to roam in one direction, along a single contour, and day to day, they frequent the same areas.

One of the most important pieces of equipment in keeping up with these fish is I-Pilot on the Minn Kota trolling motor. After locating perch, we determine if they are moving or feeding. If they are moving we use the "record a track" function, so we can take consistent passes through their active area. Day to day, these tracks work until the fish move on. If the fish are stationary and feeding, "spot lock" or the electric anchors keeps the boat positioned directly above the fish. Most times, a moving bait produces more fish as you cover more water but vertical jigging



fish on the sonar sure is fun in the early morning or if the fish are very aggressive. When we are searching for new active fish or when the wind is right, we will run our legal two pole per person limit on the side of the drift being action. We call it the "bearclaw." It has proven to be very effective, especially when the outside poles are pitched to the side and constantly worked to widen the effectively fished area.

Although perch don't always get the respect they deserve, the anglers that target them appreciate the hardships they present, their aggressive nature, and superb ability to fill both our livewells and stomachs!

D & B Ice Adventures formed in 2012 with the goal of promoting ice fishing in the Northeast. Since then, we have had requests to extend

our posting to include the various modes and successes of softwater fishing. Our Mission is to share tricks and tips that have proved successful in our region. If there is anything you would like to see just let us know! <http://dbiceadventures.wordpress.com/>



Muskie: Blending Science and Proper Handling Practices for a Better Release

By Sean Landsman with Marc Thorpe

The Science typically, fish mortality is divided into two categories: initial and delayed (Arlinghaus et al. 2007). Initial mortality is often achieved when a fish is hooked in a location that causes massive bleeding and irreparable damage to fragile structures such as the gills. However, when a fish is not mortally wounded by hook location, an accumulation of sub-lethal



stressors can result in delayed mortality. Once a fish is hooked, and the angling event commenced, important energy stores are quickly consumed and Lactic acid build-up in the muscle begins. Increases in lactate and depletion of energy stores are greatest in fish angled for long durations (Schreer et al. 2001). When a fish is finally captured it may be removed from the water for measurements and photos. This exposure to air significantly increases the time required for heart-related processes to return to normal levels (Cooke and Suski 2005). Normal body function is typically achieved after an ample resuscitation period in a well oxygenated environment. Most physiological changes are magnified during periods of extreme water temperature. As cold-blooded creatures, fish experience changes in water temperature throughout

their bodies which can affect everything from metabolism to cellular function. Furthermore, warm water retains less oxygen, which makes it increasingly difficult for fish to recover from exhaustive exercise. A successful release can be significantly influenced by hooking location, water temperature, duration of battle, and amount of air exposure. Though you may not be able to control hooking location, you can control the other factors. By taking extra steps to ensure the survival of your catch, you are helping to preserve the resource so future generations can enjoy it as much as we do!

The Tools

First and foremost is some kind of landing device. Large landing nets with coated mesh can reduce fin splitting and other skin injuries. Another option is a cradle which can quickly subdue a fish, though usually takes two people to operate and may be too difficult to use when fishing solo. The Boga-Grip is another tool that allows the angler to gain control over the fish and remove the hooks quickly. Tools like these should be used only if they have jaws that can swivel 360°, thus preventing serious damage to the jaw if a fish decides to roll. A excellent pair of long-nose pliers or channel locks allow the angler to reach deep into a fish's mouth while maintaining good leverage to extract hooks; these tools also help keep the angler safe by minimizing contact with the fish's



sharp teeth. Knipex or other high-quality hook cutters are often faster and less stressful than using standard long-nose pliers. If you are concerned about losing your expensive cutters while unhooking a fish, famed Ottawa/St. Lawrence River guide, Marc Thorpe suggests trying this: attach a piece of nylon rope (roughly five feet long) to your cutters, tie the tag end to a keychain clip, then attach the clip to your net or somewhere inside your boat. If you lose your grip on the cutters, they will simply fall away, but remain attached to your net or boat. If a pair of long-nose pliers or cutters cannot reach hooks deep inside a fish's mouth,



a new product called the Hook Pick is an invaluable tool. Its simple design coupled with an overall

length of 15 inches allows the angler to push or pull on a hook wedged deep inside a fish's mouth. Many folks employ the "Leech Lake Lip Lock" which puts the angler's hands in very close contact with the fish's razor sharp gill rakers and sensitive gill filaments. A glove such as Musky Armor's "Release Glove" protects the angler's hands from sharp gill rakers, affords the angler excellent dexterity, and more importantly minimizes the bulk of other gloves that can damage the fragile gill filaments. If crushed or torn, these filaments can prevent the fish from obtaining necessary oxygen once returned to the water. Please use caution when handling muskies near their gills.



Landing the Muskie

As soon as the fish is landed, take a deep breath and compose yourself! Make sure the fish's head is in the water. If the fish's head is above the water because the lure has tangled in your net begin unhooking immediately. Your goal should be to remove hooks in as little time as possible. Thorpe, who has handled hundreds if not thousands of muskies in his lifetime, notes that there are two visual queues anglers can use to



determine if a fish is undergoing excessive amounts of stress. If the sides of the fish and/or the eye or eyelids turn a reddish coloration, this may be a sign of severe stress. If the angler sees this, Thorpe advises not to remove the muskie from the water; the release should commence immediately. If you choose to take a muskie which is not severely stressed out of the water for photos and/or measurements, give the fish a little time to recuperate after removing the hooks. Immediately removing them from their only source of oxygen heightens stress and increases the time it will take for stress levels to subside. Furthermore, you must grip the fish as tight as humanly possible when handling the fish or removing them from the water. Dropping the muskie can result in serious external and internal injuries.

Air Exposure, Measurements, and Photos

If you choose to take measurements and/or pictures, your goal should be

to keep the fish out of water for as little time as possible. You and your boat partner should be familiar with how your camera operates before hitting the water. Keep in mind how you hold the fish if a photo session is desired. A vertical hold can severely damage a muskie's spinal column, gill structures, jaw bones, and internal organs as connective tissue tears and organs slide or rupture inside the fish. The longer your catch is held in this position, the higher the likelihood of inflicting damage. Therefore, it is advised that the fish is lifted horizontally out of the net or cradle and supported with fingers spread or the entire arm positioned near the mid-



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section of the fish to support the fish's mass and prevent internal injury. Measuring the fish should be done quickly and with little to no air exposure. Measuring a fish vertically is never recommended for the dangers listed above plus the additional air exposure it would cause. Another popular measurement method is the use of a bump board. While this method keeps the fish's mass fully supported, it still requires additional air exposure. I cannot emphasize enough that it is crucial to minimize the duration of air exposure as much as possible. Therefore, it is highly recommended that all measurements be taken in the water. This is the absolute safest form of measuring that can significantly minimize stress. After using a large landing net to secure the fish, Thorpe uses the built-in ruler on Frabill's "Pro Tech Muskie Cradle" to measure fish in the water. A simple floating ruler or cloth tape would also work for in-water measurements.

The Release

The biggest mistake I see anglers make when releasing fish is when they force the fish forward and backward. This puts unnecessary strain on the fish's fragile gill plates. Simply hold the fish upright by the base of the tail and allow it to recover on its own. Periodically release your grip to make sure the fish has gained full equilibrium and is not rolling over on its side. Once equilibrium has been achieved, let go. The less handling that takes place the less stress the fish will undergo. Do not slap the fish on the tail to get it to "take off." This forces the fish to burst swim, which is the very type of exhaustive exercise that you are trying to help the fish recover from. Remember, just because a fish swims





away quickly
does not
necessarily
mean it will
survive.

Releases in High Water Temperature

When fishing in high water temperatures, everything must be done faster. The duration of the fight, the unhooking process, the handling period, and the time out of water must all be shorter. In fact, it is advised that the angler not remove the fish from the water during periods of extreme water temperature, particularly when the water is above 80°F. If you must, Thorpe suggests limiting time out-of-water

during this period to 20 seconds or less. It takes fish significantly longer to recover from exhaustive exercise during periods of high-water temperature (Suski et al. 2006), and removing them from the water will only prolong the recovery period. Furthermore, there is a positive relationship between bacteria production and water temperature (Sander and Kalff 1993), increasing the likelihood that fish with lowered immune systems (as a result of exhaustive

exercise) could contract water-born illnesses. A total-water-release where hooks are removed and measurements taken in the water is highly recommended. In fact, many anglers choose not to fish muskies once water temperatures reach 80 degrees, and instead switch to other species or pursue muskies at night when water temperatures are cooler.

Preserving the Resource

Humans have a responsibility to protect and care for nature's resources. As stewards of nature, particularly as anglers, taking every step possible to ensure the successful release of your catch helps fulfill this obligation. On the spectrum of handling procedures – from harvest to total-water-release – the guidelines in this article fall somewhere in the middle. The importance of educating the public on proper handling procedure's increases as the sport's popularity increases. Our handling procedures will never insure 100 percent of our muskies will be released successfully, but there are certain techniques you can employ that will dramatically decrease delayed mortality and keep survival rates high. Most studies on fish physiology focus on bass and trout; there are very few physiology studies focusing on muskies. Testing the effects various handling techniques have on delayed mortality is an important step in revealing what specific practices are most beneficial to the preservation of this resource. The muskie is a fish that provides great value both as an apex predator in aquatic ecosystems and as a quarry to those of us who love to pursue this beast. Please practice catch-and-release with care – remember your goal is to release a healthy fish which will live to grow, spawn, and perhaps fight again!

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<http://www.marcthorpeguiding.com>

<http://www.fishfactor.tv>

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Special thanks to John Underhill and Marc Thorpe for giving the author permission to use their photos.

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Catch Fish That Are Hittin' And Spitten'

By Bob Jensen

There are times, more than we like to think about, when fish get finicky. North, south, east and west, fish sometimes just don't want to get caught. Or maybe it's just that they like to frustrate us every now and then. Whatever the reason, there are things we can do to get the fish to take our bait better when they get fussy. Following is some of those things.

When the bite is light, use a rod that has a lighter tip action. Let's say we're jigging for walleyes and we're getting them to eat the jig, but they're spitting it right back out. What could be happening is they're taking the jig, then feeling resistance from a heavy rod tip. When the fish are aggressive, a little resistance from a rod tip isn't going to bother them. However, when they aren't





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really that interested in eating, anything out of the ordinary could spook them. When a fish takes a bait that's being fished on a rod with a light tip, they feel minimal resistance and will hang on longer. Next time you're using a finesse presentation, no matter what you're fishing for, try a rod with a lighter tip action when the fish are hittin' and spittin'.

Another situation that involves fish that are taking bait then rejecting it quickly involves slip-bobbers. Bobbers are probably the best way to present bait at an exact depth. If you want your minnow or leech or cricket a foot from the bottom and the water is ten feet deep, set your bobber stop nine feet from the hook: Your bait will be one foot from the bottom. This is where your bobber comes into play.

Just like with the hittin' and spittin' mentioned above with the jig, every now and then you'll see your bobber go under then pop right back to the surface. The fish is feeling the resistance of the bobber. Again, if the fish is hungry, the resistance created by the bobber won't bother them. However, when the fish is finicky, the resistance from the bobber will cause that fish to reject the bait. To combat this, go with a bobber that has a thinner shape and less water resistance, or add a split-shot or two to your line above the hook. This will enable the fish to pull the bobber under easier and reduce the chances of hittin' and spittin'.

Last idea for fish that are being finicky: Go with live bait. For almost all species of fish, when all else fails, a real minnow or leech or nightcrawler or crawdad or, well, you get the idea; live bait catches fish. We can make plastic baits or crankbaits that is remarkably life-like, but there are times when live bait is the way to go. In the past few years, I've been using a lot more plastics

for walleyes, but I still take a little Frabill 1404 aerated minnow container in the boat with me just in case the walleyes aren't eating what I'm using. This minnow container does an outstanding job of keeping live bait on stand-by, just in case the fish are playing hard to get.

Hopefully, the fish this year will be willing biters, and you won't need to resort to these finesse options. Nevertheless, if you run into fish that are hittin' and spittin', keep these ideas in mind. They'll put a few more fish in the boat for you.



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Beat The Crowds For Pressured Ice- Out Crappies

By Daniel Quade

It's been a long winter in the Ice Belt, but there's a light at the end of the tunnel. Winter's demise signals the start of the annual panfish migration. Hungry crappies, bluegills and other sunfish species shift from deep-water holding areas into easily accessible, shallow shoreline feeding grounds.

This spring run offers amazing opportunities for fast fishing, but when crowds of anglers flock to popular hotspots, the combination of commotion and overwhelming pressure can stop a hot bite in its tracks.

Some savvy panfish fans break from the pack and find hidden honey holes where

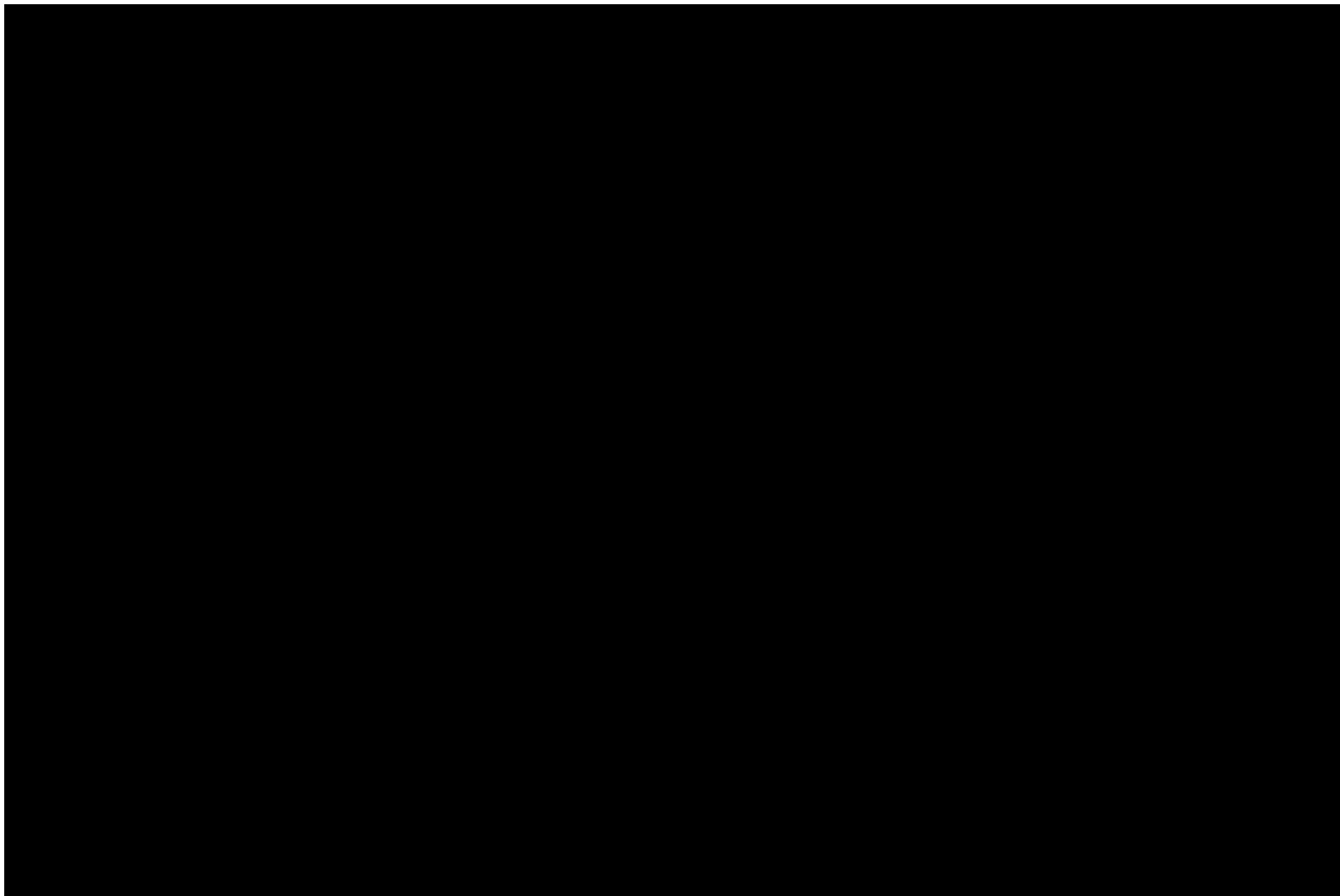
broad-shouldered slabs swim blissfully unmolested by the masses. It's a great strategy if you have access to such hidden gems, but another option is to tweak your tactics to milk the most fish possible out of community holes.

A lifetime of targeting pressured crappies has taught panfish fanatic Paul Fournier a few tricks for dealing with crowds. On his home waters in the shadows of Minnesota's sprawling Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolis, it's common for hundreds of fish-hungry anglers to line the shores of popular public fishing areas.

"The pressure gets pretty crazy sometimes," he laughs. "Even though it might put the fish in a funk, they still hang around feeding areas and can be caught with the right presentations."



Fournier begins by focusing on the best possible fishing areas, particularly classic fast-warming bays with dark bottom. The muddy bottom absorbs sunlight and provides the perfect incubation area for aquatic insects.



“There’s an old wives’ tale about north bays being best, but on some lakes bays on the south side phenomenal,” he said.

Fournier isn’t deterred if his are hosts to a horde of hungry fishermen. He simply gears up for combat fishing and gets to it. Most anglers use standard fishing gear and dunk minnows under bobbers in one spot. While there’s nothing wrong with that, especially when crappies are abundant and biting, he likes a more active approach with more refined tackle.

Fournier’s crowd-control arsenal consists of two spinning outfits, a 6-foot, 6-incher for middle-distance casting and a towering 10-footer for long-range strikes. The extra length gives him more leverage for long casts to reach gun-shy fish.

Both setups are spooled with 4-pound-test mono mainline and a 2-pound fluorocarbon leader. He connects the 2- to the 4-foot leader to the main line with a swivel, which he feels makes the connection stronger.

He uses a feather finesse jig like the Lindy Little Nipper because the feathers pulsate with the slightest movement. The Little Nipper is available in 1/16-, 1/32- and 1/64-ounce sizes, and



Fournier use them all depending upon the mood of the fish and environmental conditions. On windy days, he opts for the largest option, and will interchange the smaller sizes to match the conditions or mood of the fish.

He uses four primary patterns. In dingy water, he likes pink/glow, chartreuse/lime or chartreuse/glow. In clear, water, especially on a bright day, basic black gets the nod. He will tip the Nipper with a small minnow or other live bait, but experiments each day to find the most effective.

Fournier often modifies his Nipper for more solid hookups by twisting the hook slightly of it's a little offset. If crappies are finicky, he may also trim the feathers up to the hook bend for a smaller presentation. He as well positions his knot to hold the jig horizontal before every cast.

Three casting tactics get the nod for pressured crappies: slow-rolling, dragging, and the more sedentary, sit-and-wait for approach. Slow-rolling the jig allows him to cover water in search of fish. He rigs the jig on a slip float rig with the Thill Wobble Bobber or Crappie Cork, casts, lets it all settle, then begins a slow retrieve with the occasional pause thrown in.

Fournier's years of tournament walleye fishing taught him the value of dragging a jig during a tough bite, and he says the approach translates well to ice-out crappies.

"Big crappies often hunker tight to bottom at the basis of dead vegetation," he says. "I hook a small crappie minnow on a Little Nipper at the front corner of the eye, so the minnow lays sideways and struggles as you slide it slowly along the bottom. Hold your rod at a 45-degree angle to the water and reel slowly with lots of pauses."

The waiting game is used to focus on specific areas Fournier believes hold fish. It's essentially super-slow-rolling, with long pauses and very little movement of the float.

"Don't give up on a spot you know holds fish," Fournier says. "A lot of times the bite picks up in late afternoon or even after dark, once the crowds goes home for the day."



Key to the A-Rig

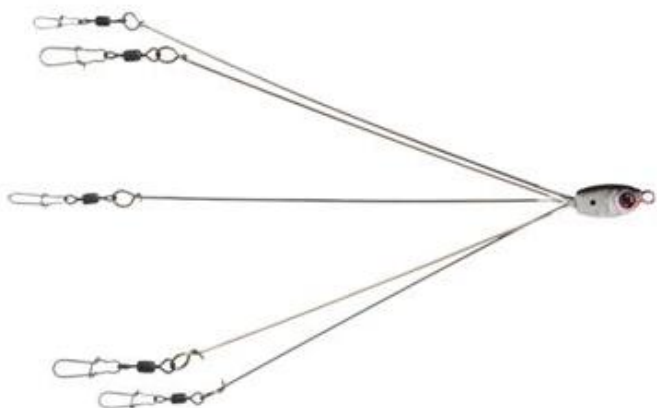
By Captain Mike Gerry

Since Paul Elias won the FLW on Guntersville, no bait has caught more big fish or won more tournaments than the A-rig (pictured to the right is the "NEW" Picasso Bait Ball Extreme). The combination of a cluster bait on an umbrella look rig coupled with swim baits, and flash has just become deadly. It was said that the bass just can't help themselves, that the bait is irresistible; they could be correct as tournament after tournament is seeing bigger sacks and more fish at every event from one part of the county to the other.



The key though as in any bait is fishing where the fish are: meaning that you still have to locate the bass in order to catch them, that hasn't changed. However, the bait does give many more options than ever, the presence of bait fish generally gets you a fish. Locations that may have never produced are becoming someone's honey hole, and it has made finding fish easier for most.

The bait is at its best when you are slow rolling it on the bottom, that tantalizing slow movement is just deadly; generally speaking if you are seeing bait you can catch fish on an A-Rig (Mann's Bait Company Alabama Rig pictured below)! There are very few secrets to this bait; rigged properly with heavy line and a strong extra-heavy rod allows you to bring those big fish to the boat.



The few down side I see is it is expensive bait, by the time you buy the rig add jig heads and swim baits you have close to \$50 in the bait and losing one hurts your pocket book. I have also noticed that the bass are moving off certain areas after being caught by the A-rig; they get beat up and physically hurt pretty good and when a fisherman wears out a specific spot the bass seems to feel the fishing pressure and move off that area. The A-rig is a fish catching machine, just slow roll it and it will do the rest!

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For Variety, Try Fishing Muscle Shoals, on the Tennessee River

By Jake Bussolini

Having never dropped a hook in the water in Alabama, I was invited by the Colbert County Visitors Bureau to try my luck in the Muscle Shoals area of northwest Alabama. The invitation came in September of 2012 when I talked with Brian Barton, who fished and often guided in Pickwick and Wilson Lakes on the Tennessee River, in the heart of “The Shoals”. The area is made up of three towns, Tuscumbia, Sheffield and Florence. The thing that intrigued me about these lakes was the abundance of big fish in a variety of species. I was looking for such an area for research for my new book. I began to research the area and records showed that ten species of fish were regularly being caught in good numbers and good sizes in this section of the Tennessee River. The species included, blue and channel catfish, striped bass, crappie, white bass, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, spotted bass, drum, and gar.



I could hardly wait for spring to arrive to catch the peak of the fishing season. I arrived at The Shoals in late March. Sam Parker was my host for the first of a three-day trip. Sam is a retired fire fighter that guides on both Pickwick and Wilson Lakes. We decided to fish the backwaters of the Wheeler Dam on Wilson Lake. Although my primary objective was to catch smallmouth bass, I quickly found that an exciting day could result from also catching several other species.

Smallmouth activity within this region is very much a function of the amount of water released from the dam. The faster the current flow, the better the smallmouth bite. Unfortunately, on this day, the flow was intermittent and fairly slow; resulting in what Sam called “cookie cutter” smallmouth bass in the 4 to 5-pound range, like the one I am holding in the photo below.



Actually, the bite was initially mixed between smallmouth and largemouth bass. The 5-pound largemouth held by Sam Parker shown in this photo was typical of the “cookie cutter” largemouth bass that we caught.

I found that all the fish we were catching were not unusually lengthy, but were very fat, indicating a pre-spawn condition.

One of my surprises was the number of freshwater drum that I caught. I landed 10 of these monster fish ranging from 6 to 12 pounds like the one shown in this photo. Catching these large fighters on medium-weight gear was great fun. Using 8-pound test line, the retrieve was slow and steady.

I was surprised at these catches of drum since this species is normally in shallow water, in an area offering a sandy or gravel bottom. The area we were fishing had a very rocky bottom in strong current ranging from ½ to 3 miles per hour, depending on the dam

water release. We caught all of our fish jigging with swim bait attached.

The surprise catch of the day came when Sam's friend Dave Sherear hooked a 4 pound "mean mouth" bass. This species is a hybrid cross between a smallmouth bass and a spotted bass. I am shown below holding this hybrid species. The markings are quite similar to a smallmouth but have a tiger-like pattern. The tongue carries the spotted bass characteristic of a rasp-type spot on the front edge of the tongue.



These hybrids were once thought to be rather rare, but the development of efficient DNA analysis techniques has proven that the hybrids are more numerous than previously thought.

On my second day of fishing The Shoals area, I fished with Brian Barton. Brian is very knowledgeable about both lakes having gained a BS degree from

the University of North Alabama, majoring in environmental biology. Brian has been fishing these lakes for 33 years and has been a licensed guide for the past three years. For the day with Brian, I was seeking some large catfish and stripers. We launched at the McFarland Park boat ramp on Pickwich Lake, which is only a short distance from our first catfish area around the base of Wilson Dam. The area selected was a calm water pool at the extreme end of the dam that produced huge catfish like the 75 blue catfish caught by Brian, shown on the photo below. This fish





was caught using large pieces of cut skipjack, herring.

After hooking some catfish, we decided to try some live bait just below the dam in search of some large stripers. Pickwick is known for some nice size stripers like the one that I caught shown on the photo below.

On the last day of my "Shoals" experience, I fished with Steve Pinkard. Steve is a young builder who lives in the Shoals with his wife and three children. Steve has been fishing the lakes of this region since he was 6 years old. Although not a guide, Steve is very

knowledgeable about these lakes and with his 21 ft. Triton and 250 Hp. Motor, he can move across the waters in quick fashion.

Steve and I fished some of the lower areas of Pickwick Lake, catching both largemouth and smallmouth bass using both swim-baits, plastics and crank bait lures. The size of the fish that we caught that day was limited somewhat by the significant drop-off in current flow in all areas around the lake. We did, however, manage to boat quite a few nice bass. This last attempt to fish Pickwick Lake was limited to a half day due to my need to travel back to North Carolina for the Easter Holiday.

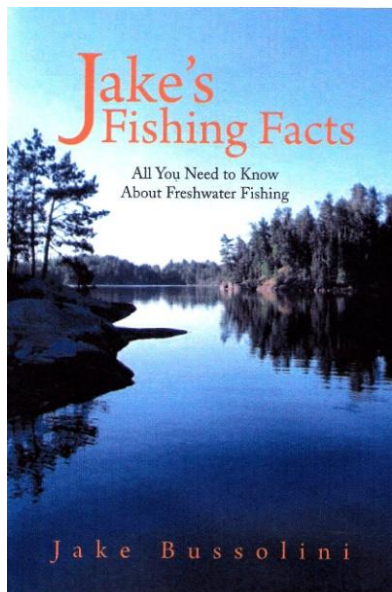
During my three day stay on Pickwick and Wilson lakes, I also caught crappie, white bass, and spotted bass. The only species that I didn't catch was a gar. A week after leaving the area I heard of a 45 pound spoonbill catfish being caught in Pickwick Lake. This rare fish was not known to be resident in these waters and is a protected species in Alabama. The fish, of course, was released back into the lake.



Springtime in northwest Alabama can produce some great fishing for anglers who are interested in a variety of fish species and the thrill of catching big fish in each one of these species. I was pleased with the hosts that showed me the tricks of fishing these lakes and would highly recommend them. Sam parker can be reached at Samparkerfishn@yahoo.com. Brian Barton can be seen on www.brianbartonoutdoors.com.

Jake Bussolini recently released his 5th book titled "Jake's Fishing Facts". This book takes anglers back to the basics of freshwater fishing.

All of Jake's books on freshwater fishing can be reviewed or purchased through his web site www.jakestakeonfishing.com.



Inside Angles on Walleyes

By Jason Mitchell

No secret that walleyes use weeds an awful lot and although walleyes are known to use weeds so often, many walleye anglers still avoid fishing weeds. Take a quick look around many good walleye fisheries from the opener on through summer and the armada of boats are typically dangling lines over the classic structure.

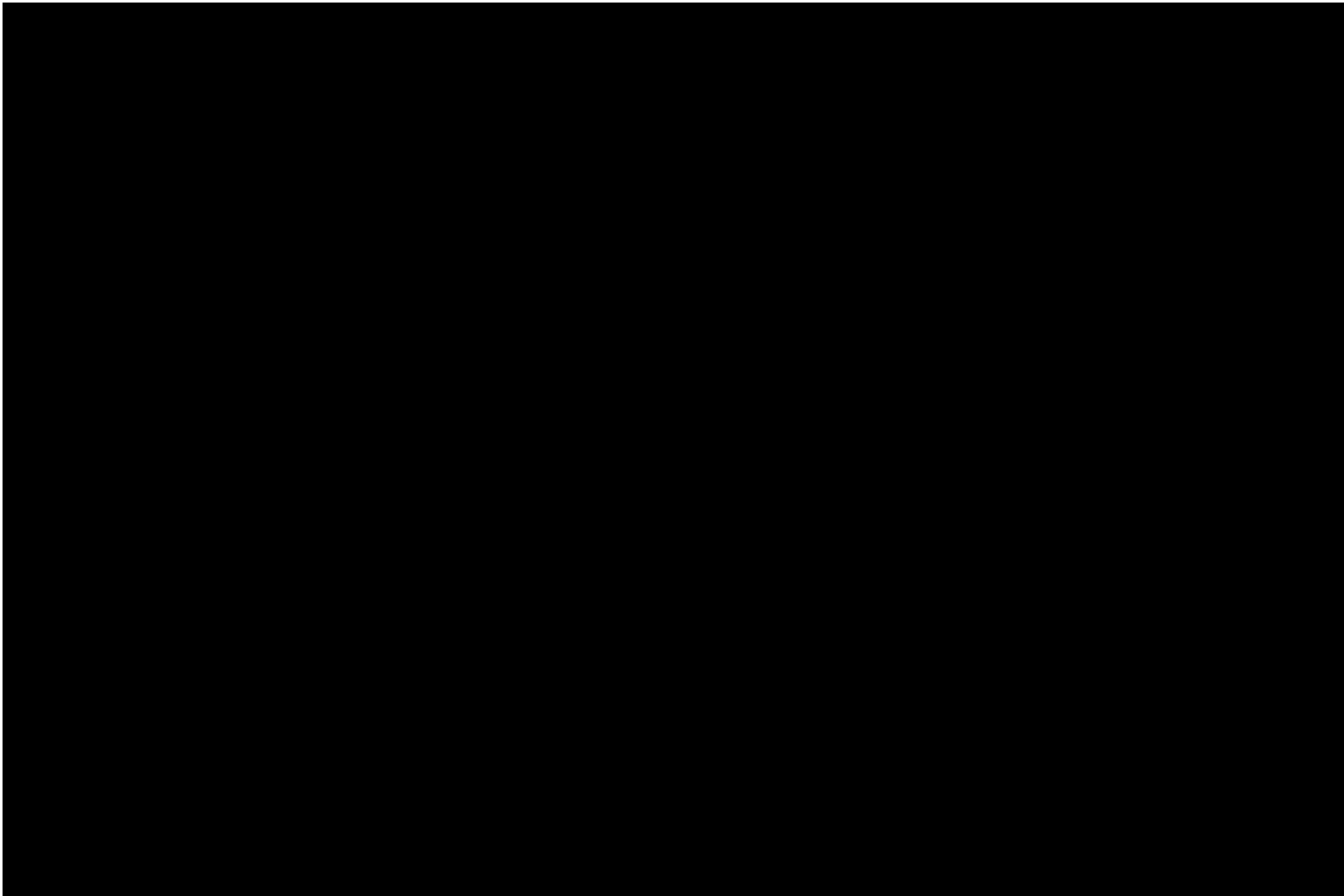
Even on lakes with slot limits where the same fish can be caught several times over the course of a summer, the fish on these classic locations get pressured. Can fish on these classic locations eat a day after getting caught and bend a rod? Absolutely, but fish that are getting angling pressure become more difficult to catch. What I love about weed fish is that these fish are typically fresh because of the lack of pressure. Fresh fish make you look better.

On some fisheries, the weeds are a major trump card where most of the fish will be holding in weeds. On other fisheries, most of the fish will be using classic structure and thus the reason why there is the armada of boats over every hump, reef and point but even on these lakes, there is usually a secondary population of walleyes that are using weeds and while these locations are holding fewer fish, these patterns can be very attractive because they just don't get fished as much.

Another observation is that many anglers who do target walleyes on weeds focus on the outside edge. The outside edge is always worth checking and is a high percentage location but another high percentage location that usually doesn't get touched is the inside edge.



With coontail and cabbage, in particular, there is often a relatively clean inside edge that might be anywhere from four to eight feet of water. Inside of the weed bed, the bottom can often be sand, gravel or just low lying junk weed but the number of fish that can accumulate on the inside edges of weeds can be surprising.



Anglers often struggle fishing the inside edge because they try to fish these spots from deep to shallow. When you hit these locations from this particular angle, you are going to have parts of the retrieve in the weeds fouled up and if the weeds reach close to the surface, you have to fight the fish in the weeds where more fish get off, and you disturb more of the environment.

To catch more fish on these inside edges, slide the boat up in shallow enough where you can cast either parallel with the inside edge or work the presentation from deep to shallow where the cast hits the edge and works back through the cleaner gap. For some reason, walleye anglers have a tough time sliding the boat up real shallow and working out away from the boat because they are always worried about spooking fish. Once you learn the spot really well, you can slide the boat up shallow and not have to worry about going over fish. Even if you do, it is not the end of the world because as fish roll off the boat, guess where they tend to pile up? That inside edge in front of your boat. I even believe that moving these fish a little from the presence of the boat can actually make them easier to catch at times.

Here is why... there are two kinds of walleyes. The walleye laying near the bottom with fins tight against the body and the walleye that is up and cruising with fins up. The former fish laying on

the bottom is about the toughest fish to catch while the latter fish that is up and alert is much easier. I dare say that most of the fish you have caught in your life are the alert, cruising fish. Even on really tough bites where the fish are negative, most of the fish you are catching are still the cruisers but when things get tough, there are just fewer cruisers. Sometimes in shallow water where there are lots of good weeds especially come mid-summer, the boat bumping against the fish a short distance can actually help you catch those fish because as they move away from the boat, they are alert.

Early in the season, I am not as effective with bumping against the fish and take great pains to back off the spot but for some reason, come late spring on into summer, a little presence is often good. It might be because as the weeds reach the surface, the weeds form a nice secure barrier that the fish slide into and they don't scatter as much. It might be a water temperature deal where the water takes on more color and the fish don't spook as much as they do earlier in the season when the water clarity can typically be better.

Don't know exactly why, just have a few ideas but the point is this... when you stop trying to fish a weed bed from the deep outside edge and actually slide up into the spots with some strategy, you learn so much more about the spot. You can see the intricacies of the spot and learn it like the back of your hand, and you are going to catch a lot more fish.

Great spots might be little troughs or depressions at the bottom on the inside edge. It could be



I am more than a weekend warrior.

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some small patches of gravel and rock and the harder bottom keeps weeds from growing and forms a nice sharp edge that holds fish. Under closer examination on many weed beds, you might find open holes and lanes where the weeds resemble a marbled cake, lots of lush weeds interspersed with clean openings that hold fish. High sun with no wind is often the best situation for really getting dialed into a location where you can physically see some of these locations. Hit some waypoints so you have this Intel for the day that is cloudy or overcast.

These shallow weed patterns often fish best during low light. Early morning and evening are obvious prime times, but another prime time is any gentle breeze or even recreational boat activity that adds enough chop to move the very tops of the weeds. The reason being especially with cabbage is that a thin film or residue often collects on the leaves, and any movement will slightly cloud the water as this debris falls off the leaves. If I were to pick a favorite situation on many lakes, my ideal day would be overcast, light winds and maybe even add some rain. That is a perfect shallow weed walleye day but ironically, these are the toughest conditions to learn a new spot as everything is so much harder to see. Here is something else I have noticed a lot... inside edges of weed beds on north shores often get really good during the day when there is sun. The reason being it is that there is a nice deep shadow created by the weeds when the sun gets high.

The ultimate tool for hitting walleyes in these inside edges and lanes, in my opinion, are jigs. In northern Minnesota, you better have some shiners in the boat. In the Dakotas, either half a crawler or a leech is often the ticket. Regarding jigging, I like to switch back and forth from a few

basic setups. Snap jigging a 1/8 ounce stand up Fireball jig with a six-pound monofilament line is a proven technique that just works. We revamped the Jason Mitchell Elite Series Walleye Rod lineup this season and designed the perfect jig rod for this style of fishing; the JMS641MLS is a six foot four inch spinning rod that features a high-performance IM8 Graphite Blank and Fuji Guide Train with a suggested retail price of \$59.99. The mono seems to let the jig hang and glide in the water after each snap and that hang time is ugly for triggering fish, especially when you have a live hooked shiner struggling against the jig. The other way to fish jigs that is truly effective for me is to simply swim jigs slowly where they never really touch bottom.

With both snapping and swimming, you can also do really well supplementing live bait for soft plastics like the Impulse paddle minnow because soft plastics are so durable in weeds. With soft plastics, I like to use Bionic ten-pound braid. There are so many variations of these basic presentations regarding mixing in twitches, the height of the snap, etc. but that is a moving target that can change each day. Keep in mind as well that as summer progresses and the fish bury in the bottoms of the open holes within large weed beds, just short pitching jigs into the holes and letting the jig coast to the bottom will catch a lot of fish. This is slow monotonous fishing, but the results can be impressive. No hole will hold several fish, but they all add up and this pattern is easiest to fish with calm sunny conditions where you can physically see the layout of the weed bed and can make short accurate pitches close to the boat.

Jason Mitchell hosts the outdoor program, Jason Mitchell Outdoors which airs on Fox Sports North and Fox Sports Midwest. Follow Jason Mitchell on Facebook or online at: www.jasonmitchelloutdoors.com.

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Sometimes it's not about the fishing

By Ed Harp

A couple of weeks ago I spent the better part of three days at Santee Cooper bass fishing with two of my friends, Larry Thornhill and Sean Lewis. It was a memorable trip, not because we caught so many fish — we didn't — but because it illustrates what's really important about the outdoors.

Larry's the Editor & Chief of ODU



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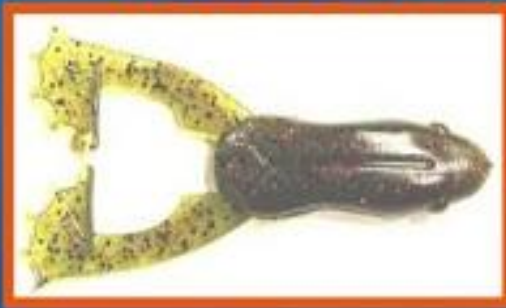


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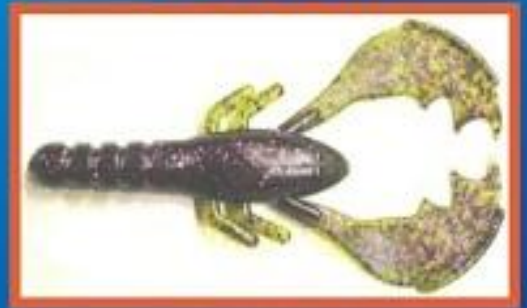
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T-CRAW



Magazine and the owner of Outdoors Unlimited, a company that specializes in marketing and public relations for hunting and fishing manufactures. Sean's the manager of Twin Lakes Outfitters, a full-service fishing and hunting supply shop near South Hill, Virginia, as well as a multi-species guide on Kerr Lake and Lake Gaston.

I wish I could write about all the big fish we caught but I can't. The shallow fishing was really tough and the wind was blowing too hard to fish the deeper, open water. That didn't bother me, though. And, I don't think it bothered Larry or Sean, either.

That's because we don't measure the success of a fishing trip by how many fish we catch. Sure, it's nice to be able to tell all your buddies about the big ones that didn't get away but it's also nice to spend time with friends and just relax for a few days without the pressure of deadlines, photos, finding fish for clients or meeting sales targets.

Larry and Sean spent the first day fishing by themselves. I didn't arrive until nearly midnight after spending most of the afternoon at the emergency room in Jellico, Tennessee. I won't bore you with the details but I will tell you that when you cut a plastic tie wrap with a Leatherman you should push the knife blade away from you. Do not pull it towards you, and under no circumstances jerk it towards you. Those things are sharp. They go through skin and muscle like it was butter.



Anyway, after a good night's sleep in a great cabin maintained and rented by the South Carolina State Parks — spacious, clean, well-stocked with utensils and appliances, and very reasonably priced — we were greeted the next morning by a cold rain.

Prudence being the better part of valor, we went to breakfast at a local

diner and watched it rain through the windows. The eggs were delicious and the conversation with the locals interesting. It stopped raining late in the morning so we went fishing — and I do mean fishing, not catching. Larry had one. Sean had two. I didn't have a bite.

I'll tell you, though, I had a good time. We talked fishing, gossiped and generally spent our time unwinding and enjoying the spectacular scenery Santee Cooper has to offer. Sometime in the early evening we headed back to the cabin where Sean grilled deer, duck, corn and green beans for dinner. It was delicious.

After Larry and I did the dishes we all retired for a night's sleep before another day on the water. It wasn't any better from a fishing perspective but, like the day before, we had a good time. After a steak dinner that evening we spent several hours settling the world's problems and then went to bed. The next morning we drank several cups

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of coffee, said our goodbyes and headed home.

On the surface it would be easy to say that the trip was tough. I stabbed myself and we could count the fish we caught on one hand. (I'm using "we" generously. I may be the only guy to ever fish a lake as good as Santee Cooper for two days in the spring without getting a bite.) But that wouldn't tell the story, at least not the one that matters.

Fishing trips aren't always about fishing. Sometimes they're about having a good time regardless of what the fish are doing. Larry and I haven't had a chance to fish together for over a year. That's unusual, very unusual. We both missed the time together. And, my relationship with Sean is just getting started. It looks to be a good one, too.

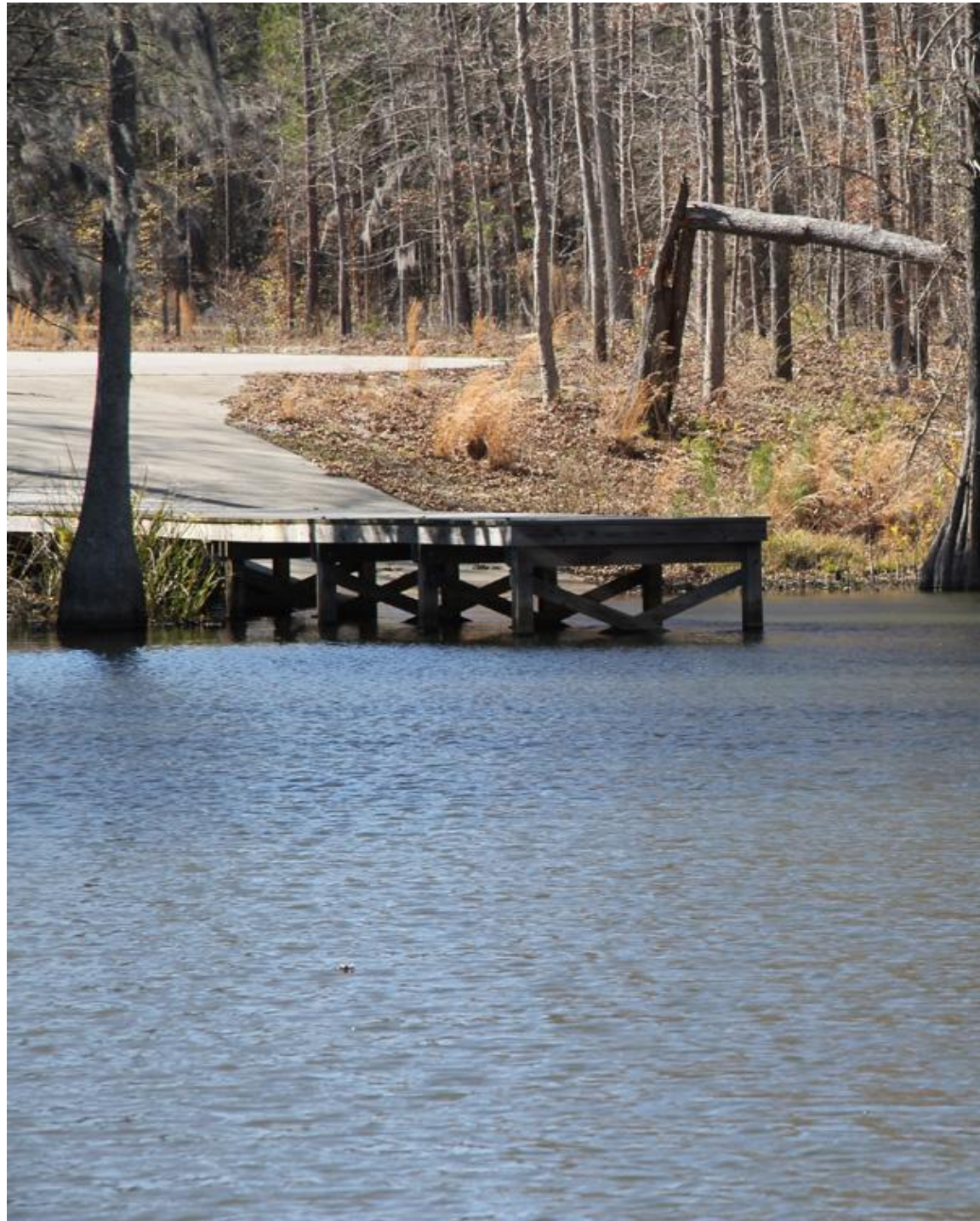
All in all it was a great trip. I'd do it again even if I knew the bass weren't going to cooperate. I'm sure the other guys feel the same way. Try it sometime — minus the Leatherman stabbing thing. Forget about the fish. They're not that important. All you're going to do is throw them back anyway.

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

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The Magical Swirleybird

By Bill Vanderford

When I first began my fishing guide service more than 40 years ago we had an abundance of largemouth bass and very little fishing pressure, so it was fairly simple to catch these fish on almost any standard bass lure. Over the ensuing years, however, the largemouth bass began to decline because of shallow fishing techniques, many bass tournaments, and a loss of natural habitat along the shorelines. Therefore, the black bass population changed to 20% largemouth and 80% spotted bass.

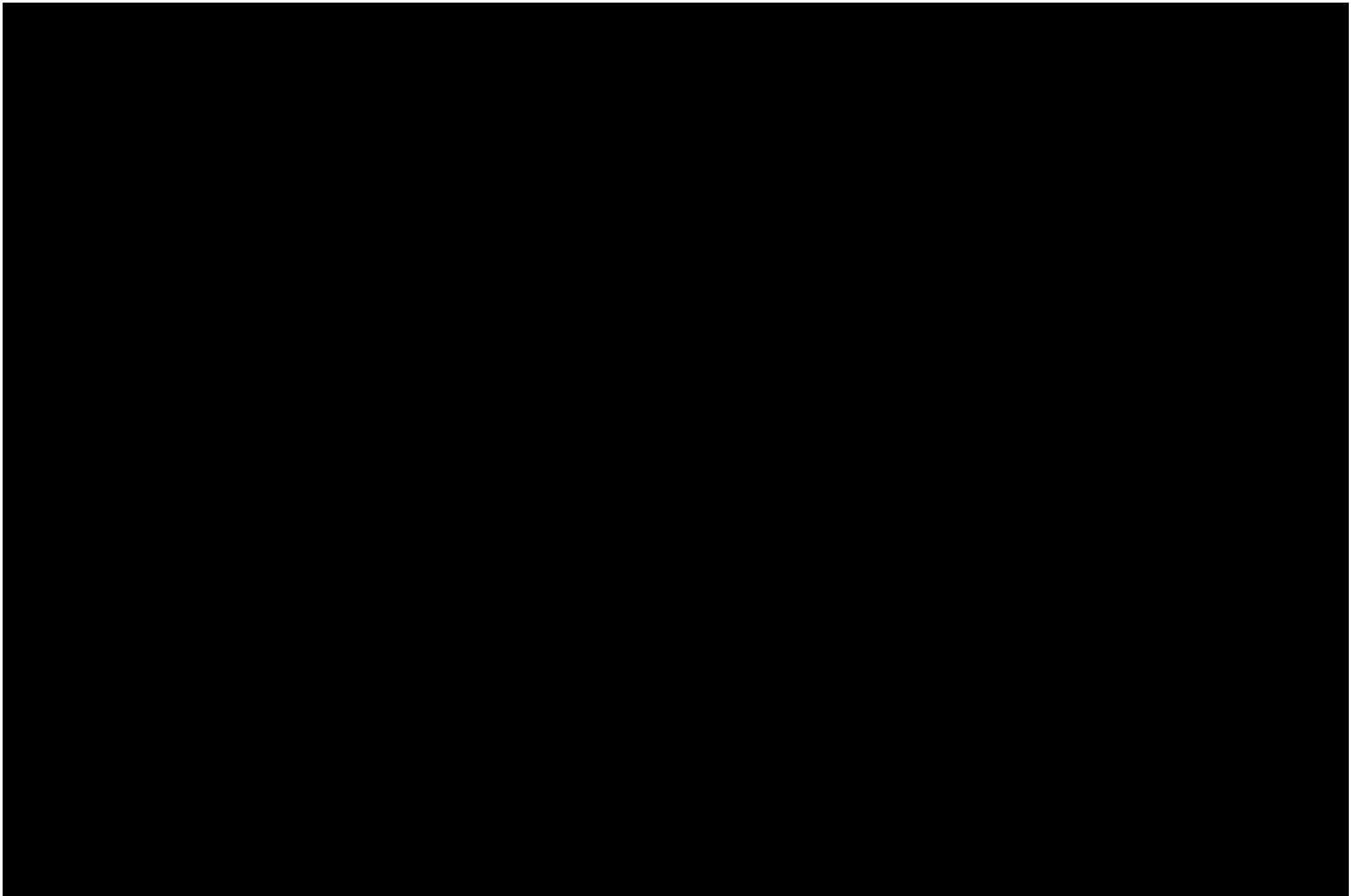
Since the spotted bass spawn deeper, have a smaller mouth, and are quick to spit any lure that they inhale, my everyday clients found it quite difficult to hook these fish...especially during the spawning cycle. I tried many different crankbaits, topwater lures, worm combinations, and jig and grub combos with moderate success. The first real breakthrough was discovering that I

could use a 1/16th ounce leadhead jig with a 3-inch curlytailed grub and swim it slowly enough to get lots of bites. The problem with this lure was teaching my customers the method in a short enough time to make them successful on one guide trip. Since the bass usually grab the lure by the tail, I had to convince people to only reel slightly faster and not jerk. This would make the bass come back for a second, third, and fourth bite until they finally got the part of the lure with the hook in it. I had success with this method, but knew there was still a better way.

Using my knowledge from my days of wading the Georgia streams and the European rivers for trout, I began experimenting with spinner type lures that acted more like the jig and grub combo. Finally the Swirleybird evolved in a crude fashion.

Over nearly 30 years of development, the Swirleybird has matured into a perfect size that imitates baitfish well, casts easily, and maintains its attractive qualities from the time it hits the water until the end of the retrieve. These attributes and having a treble hook in the tail make this lure especially good for anglers of all ages and skill levels in most parts of the world for almost any fish at anytime of the year.

We now produce these unique lures in seven sizes from the tiny Fly Rod size (1/32 ounce) to the larger Striper/Saltwater version (3/8 ounce) and in three different colors. This lure and a slow fishing method can be much more productive than any other lure under almost any conditions...except heavy grass and brush! For more Information, go to: www.georgiafishing.com





Getting Creative for Early Spring Crappies

By Tom Neustrom

Think you've exhausted every feasible place to catch springtime crappies? Think again! There always places crappies hide where anglers fail to find them. Spend enough time chasing these big spring slabs, and you'll learn to recognize and react to be unfamiliar, yet highly rewarding conditions.

Fellow crappie fanatic Brian "Bro" Brosdahl will tell you no two situations are alike. Therefore, he addresses every lake based on its individual features. Don't always bite on the 'north end of the lake' stereotype. Photo courtesy of Frabill.

When winter's long lock finally loosens, I'm already plotting my crappie game plan—pouring over maps, scouting for potential locations. Pre-determining a milk-run of potentials keeps me in the boat searching—regardless of weather—rather than at the landing, making excuses for why they won't bite. Spend time in search mode—using maps, electronics and lures— and eventually, you'll discover giant crappies other anglers doubt exist.

Like all species, crappies need to eat, and when the ice leaves the lake, some of the biggest slabs of the season go on a major hunt. At this early stage, you can have some great fishing when it's still cold enough to make your nose run. However, even though you can be catching fish shallow, many anglers make the assumption that crappies have already begun the

spawning ritual. Wrong! All species need nourishment before the spawn, and crappies are no different. In actuality, spawn time in most lakes don't occur until for a month or more after ice-out, once water temperatures reach into the 60s.

It's why my plan when attacking new bodies of water revolves first around ice-out dates, and then the lake's potential population of trophy-class crappies, given the existence of specific types of habitat.

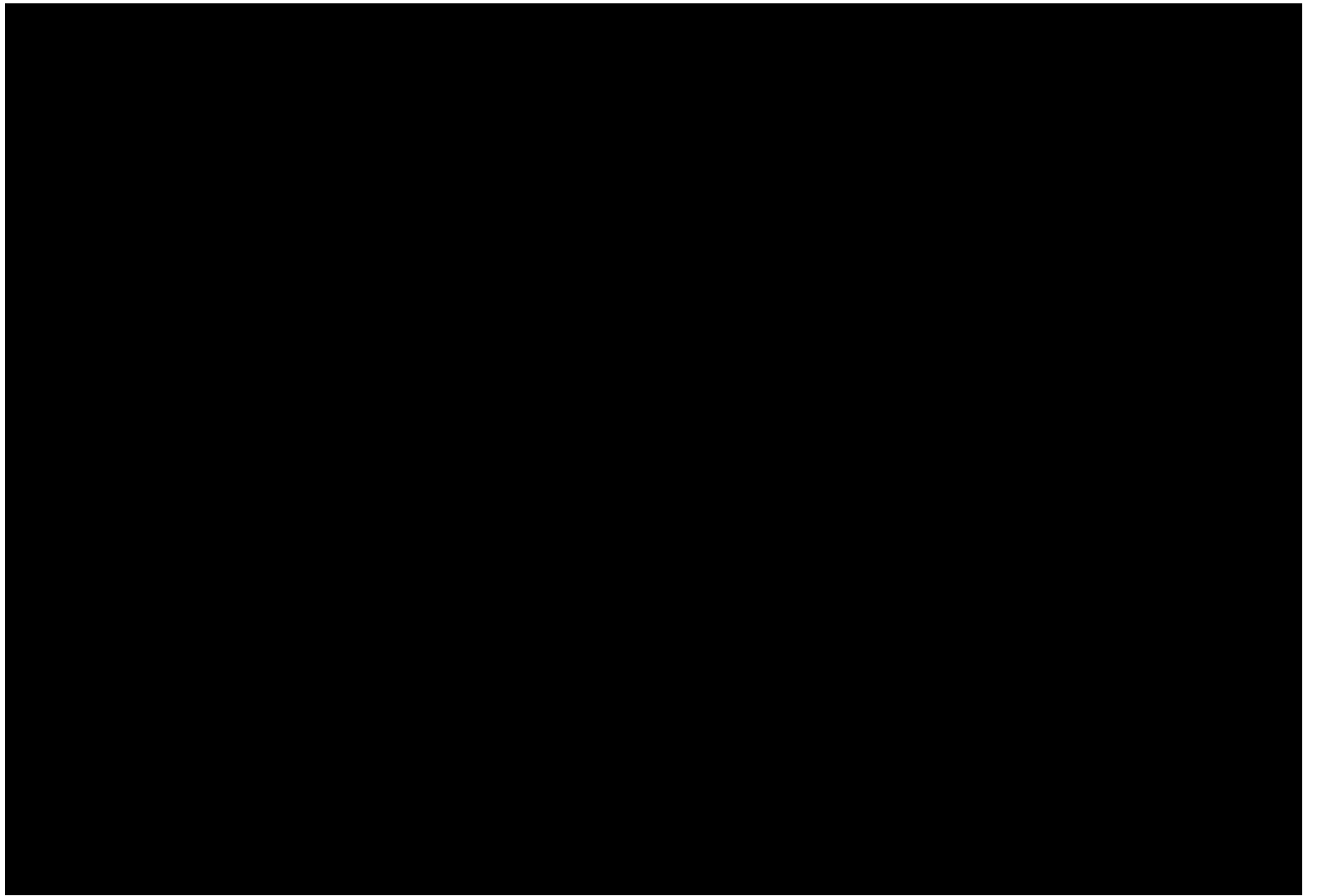
Several veteran crappie anglers I know each look for relatively deep water very close to those shallow feeding flats. This is particularly important right after ice out. Crappies often require the stability of deeper water nearby, which helps them function despite the presence of inclement weather, cold fronts, and windy conditions that send shallow-water temperatures spiraling.

Curiously, every early-season crappie article you read seems to define the north end of a lake as the most identifiable and predictable location; some go so far as to say that this is the only place to catch early-season crappies. This false assumption can be turned upside down, given the existence of preferred habitat elsewhere on the lake. Rather than automatically flocking to the north end, I'm more interested in finding areas with mud, gravel, scattered rock, and last season's pencil reeds—regardless of what side of the lake I'm on.

As my friend and fellow guide Brian "Bro" Brosdahl will tell you, no two situations are the same. And it's a mistake to avoid areas around the lake, just because

On-the-water fishing successes are often the result of keen pre-game mapping. For spring crappies, earmark key spots like tributaries, shallow feeding flats adjacent to steep breaks, and last season's emergent weeds. Photo courtesy of Bill Lindner Photography





they're not on the north end. Warmer water is often very important in the location puzzle, but key habitat nearly always trump temp.

Further, don't avoid slightly deeper flats over super shallow ones. Again, habitat is the key—as are local weather conditions. During weather changes, I love to fish deeper zones where crappies often go during fronts. I have taken some giants on 12 to 15-foot ledges near those traditional shallow flats.

Best way to find these deeper money zones—beyond just fishing—is to identify them first on my LakeMaster map, and then side image them with my Humminbird 998 SI unit. Side Imaging will not only show the presence of cover, but also reveal the crappies themselves, even in super shallow water. Many times I'll adjust my 'Bird to Switchfire mode, which increases sensitivity and allows me to pick out the small organisms' crappies seek. Even if crappies aren't currently present, finding concentrations of zooplankton or small invertebrates means I've ID'd a positive locale where crappies will eventually show. After ice out, crappies are after groceries and will adapt to several food sources to nourish their systems before spawning.

Small jigs are the right answer for crappies in search of something small and tasty. VMC Hot Skirt Jigs make quick work of roaming fish. Tip these tiny tinsel jigs with a small minnow or chunk of Trigger X and you'll have 'em drooling.

When pitching shallow I prefer a small bobber, but never let it sit too long at one place. I like to target a stalk of last season's pencil reed or the edges of an exposed brush pile. These areas host crappie forage, and I can fish them quickly and efficiently. Big slabs are often loners, but you can easily pluck a couple of fish off each good stickup. I just keep fishing good cover areas until I contact fish.

Boat control is a critical advantage in spring, as well. My MinnKota Terrova is equipped with iPilot Link, allowing me to slowly approach these very spooky fish with precision. This cool tool coordinates with my Humminbird, so I can systematically dissect every inch of potential crappie-laden water.

When cold fronts, winds or drops in the barometer alter my plans, it's time to seek the closest drop in depth. Here I like to cast a jig and minnow (sans bobber), letting it sink on a 5 count before starting a slow swimming retrieve. Done right, even seemingly negative crappies will often amaze you with the aggressiveness of their strike.



I prefer a soft action 7-foot UL rod like the Tuff-Lite or Spinmatic Series from Daiwa, which gives me extreme sensitivity and the ability to cast small baits far. Combine these stealth rods with a Daiwa Aird 1000 or Laguna 500 spinning reel and 4-pound Sufix Elite. Sometimes the bite's so subtle it's hard to react quickly, yet other times a big crappie will blister you.

When not using a small bobber I'll let the rod tip load gently before firmly setting the hook. Another little trick is to switch to Sufix Hi-Vis Yellow, which helps you see the slightest of bites, watching the line twitch and then quickly setting the hook.

With some simple tips and tricks, fishing for ice out crappies can be a fun, yet predictable pastime. It's facing down new challenges and conquering them that make the pursuit even sweeter.

Once the weather stabilizes, and cold fronts are in the rearview mirror, crappies move into striking position from the bank. This is one time of the year when shore-casters have the advantage. Photo by Bill Lindner

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The Monsters of the James River

By Jake Bussolini

It's just the lure of big fish that keeps tugging at me causing my return to The James River each year. The fishing activity of interest to me is in the section of The James River extending from Richmond Virginia south to the Atlantic Ocean. This section is influenced by the ocean's tides, and contains some of the biggest blue catfish east of the Rocky Mountains.



I normally enter the river at Dutch Gap Landing in Chester Virginia. I have always used Capt. Hugh Self as my guide and I believe that of the three or four active full time guides on this section along the river, Capt. Self is by far the best. There is one simple reason for my bias here, and that is his desire to ensure that you catch fish and will stay on the water as long as it takes to achieve this. Unlike most guides, Capt Hugh provides a guarantee that you will catch at least one 30 pound fish or your next trip is free. On my first trip with Capt. Hugh, I made a night trip. We started fishing at about 6 pm and fished all night, finally calling it quits about 9am the next day. On this first trip, I was just testing the river, so we fished for any size catfish. We boated nearly 20 fish with the largest being a 45 pound blue catfish shown below.

An interesting part of a fishing trip to The James River in the area that I board the boat is the Civil War history that surrounds you. To reach the boat ramp it is necessary to drive through an old Civil War battleground where you can still see the remnants of old bunkers and cannon mounts. While fishing you can glance up at a hill top that contains several war monuments. One area that I have fished is a back-water cove that contains the scuttled wrecks of old wooden barges and boats dating back to the early 1800's. The wreck of an old steam tugboat, shown below lies in the middle of a dozen old wooden wrecks.



It was obvious to me that these old wrecks were a magnet for fish habitat. Although the water in this area is shallow and less than 12 feet deep, I felt that these shallow flats were an excellent place for some early-morning fishing. I felt that it was early enough to catch some big fish still in the shallows, feeding

from the previous night. That theory was apparently correct because less than 10 minutes after we started fishing, I hooked on to a nice 40 pound blue catfish shown below.



Generally, I try not to catch small catfish when fishing the James River. This can be accomplished by using large chunks of bait which the smaller cats will leave alone. Capt. Hugh had secured several large gizzard shad to use as bait, and they were cut into fairly large pieces as shown.

On two of my fishing trips to The James River, I was accompanied by my friend Mac Byrum. Mac is a catfish guide on Lake Norman, North Carolina and the person that co-authored my book "The Catfish Hunters". On our first trip to the James, Mac landed a 56 pound blue catfish shown.



One interesting feature of the James River is the relatively large numbers of heavy shipping vessels that travel the river, bringing goods from ocean ports to Richmond. I read that fishermen feel that these large vessels actually help the river as a fishery because the large propellers of the barges and tugs' stir up the water and create excitement from the fish. I had just finished relaying that information to Capt. Hugh when a huge barge passed us while we were anchored at a fork in the river. No sooner had the ship passed when we got a double strike on our lines. Mac Byrum quickly started hauling in one fish, and I handled the second one. We did manage to land both fish. Mac's was a 30 pounder and mine went about 28 pounds.





There are other aspects of The James River that are interesting. On one trip that I made, the herrings were running upstream to spawn and the ocean stripers were following them. Striper season was not open, but the stripers were hitting the catfish bait as they swam upstream. I landed more than 10 stripers over 20 pounds each while attempting to catch

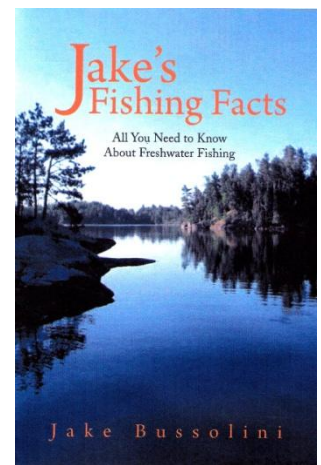
catfish. Of course, we released all the stripers, and Capt. Hugh kept apologizing to me about the stripers interfering with our catfishing. I laughed at his apologies because I am a catch and release fisherman and catching these monsters was an added bonus. One such catch is shown below.

On this last trip to The James, the weather was variable, starting out with a cold mist hanging over the river. As the day progressed, the overcast broke and the skies cleared. We ended the day with a few nice catches topped off by Mac Byrum's 42 pound blue cat shown below.



Jake Bussolini has authored five books about freshwater fishing. His most-recent book "Jake's Fishing Facts" takes the angler back to basics. It's a great book for beginners and also for experienced anglers who want a refresher. Check out all of Jake's books at

www.jakestakeonfishing.com



The Jerk Bait Craze

By Captain
Mike Gerry

When this year's Bass Master Classic got underway at Grand Lake Oklahoma, the anglers put the jerk bait presentation to test! Virtually, every top contender started their day fishing jerk bait; the minnow shaped lure was the practice bait



of choice and most expected it to produce during the tournament. Jerk baits are not only largemouth baits, but they will virtually produce bites from every species of bass known to man; I have seen them catch small mouth, spots, stripers and yellow bass and more.

The presentation most forgotten by the bass fisherman is the week or so before the spawn, they are an appealing life like minnow look alike bait that is just deadly as bass make their way to the spawning beds. Fishing the shallow runner in shallow water as the bass are preparing to spawn is a tantalizing presentation that catches fish. The bait is big, flashy combine that with an erratic movement, and you have recipes for a big bass!

Jerk baits come in basically two types; the floating minnow look that produces the most action as it wobbles darts and changes over shallow water and the suspending presentation that draws fish up from 20 ft of water as it jerks and wobbles consistently down to 4 or 5 feet of water. At one time, there was actually a 3rd presentation of jerk baits also; it was called a count-down jerk bait that would drop slowly parallel to the bottom; you could count it down second by second and foot by foot to entice suspending fish at depths they were positioned in.

As we approach the spawn, a presentation that is deadly in and around the spawning bed is called "rippin" where the bait hangs in shallow water with its hooks catching low lying grass, and you rip it back to you to produce a snap and fast retrieve. This produces reaction bites that can really produce some big fish out of the shallow water.

Fish Lake Guntersville Guide Service, www.fishlakeguntersvilleguideservice.com, Email: bassguide@comcast.net, Phone: 256 759 2270

Delacroix Speckle Trout

By Jeff Bruhl



Delacroix is a slice of the Louisiana Sportsman Paradise pie. Located about forty minutes southeast of New Orleans, Louisiana, the small fishing community of camps, shrimp boats, and other commercial craft is easy to find and loaded with game fish. Although bass, redfish, flounder, and other fish haunt the sweet water of the marsh, a recent trip proved the speckle trout were scattered around the bays, ponds, and bayous of this great fishery.

Todd Masson (*pictured below showing off a nice school trout*), Speaking of Specs Radio show host heard each Saturday morning at 7 AM on 1350 ESPN AM radio out of New Orleans, dropped the boat at Sweetwater Marina. A short ride to Oak River found us catching school trout, known locally as those twelve to fourteen inch fish, on corks, topwaters, and Ra-L-Traps. According to Todd, who articles can be found at www.nola.com under the sport's outdoors section, several factors help anglers catch fish in the lower marsh this of year. First, trout are like any species an angler targets. Anglers, who learn about spawning, migration patterns, and food supply, usually use that knowledge to catch more fish. Late winter to early spring find the trout in the deeper holes of the marsh that provide food and protection from Louisiana's mild winters. Next, as the shrimp go, so do the trout. Later in the spring, trout will move to the coast to spawn and to follow the shrimp as the small crustaceans travel back and forth to the gulf.



Finally, trout hang around marsh areas like Delacroix due to the abundance of shad, crabs, and other food supplies.



Using the word deep to describe depth in the marshes of Louisiana usually means three or four feet of water. However, Delacroix has several winding bayous and tributaries like Oak River that has water in the ten to fifteen foot range. Shallow bays and ponds with water depth range of two or three feet is where the action started. Wind aided in finding the fish as it pushed the bait into the shoreline. Drifting with the wind is a popular tactic to find fish. Once a fish strikes, drop anchor and fan cast to the area. Usually, where there is one trout, there are more. After a large alligator gar decided to eat my Rat-L-Trap, the big fish dispersed our school of trout. We hoped around points with deeper water trying to locate another pocket of fish. After the fast action in the morning, points produced a fish here and there.

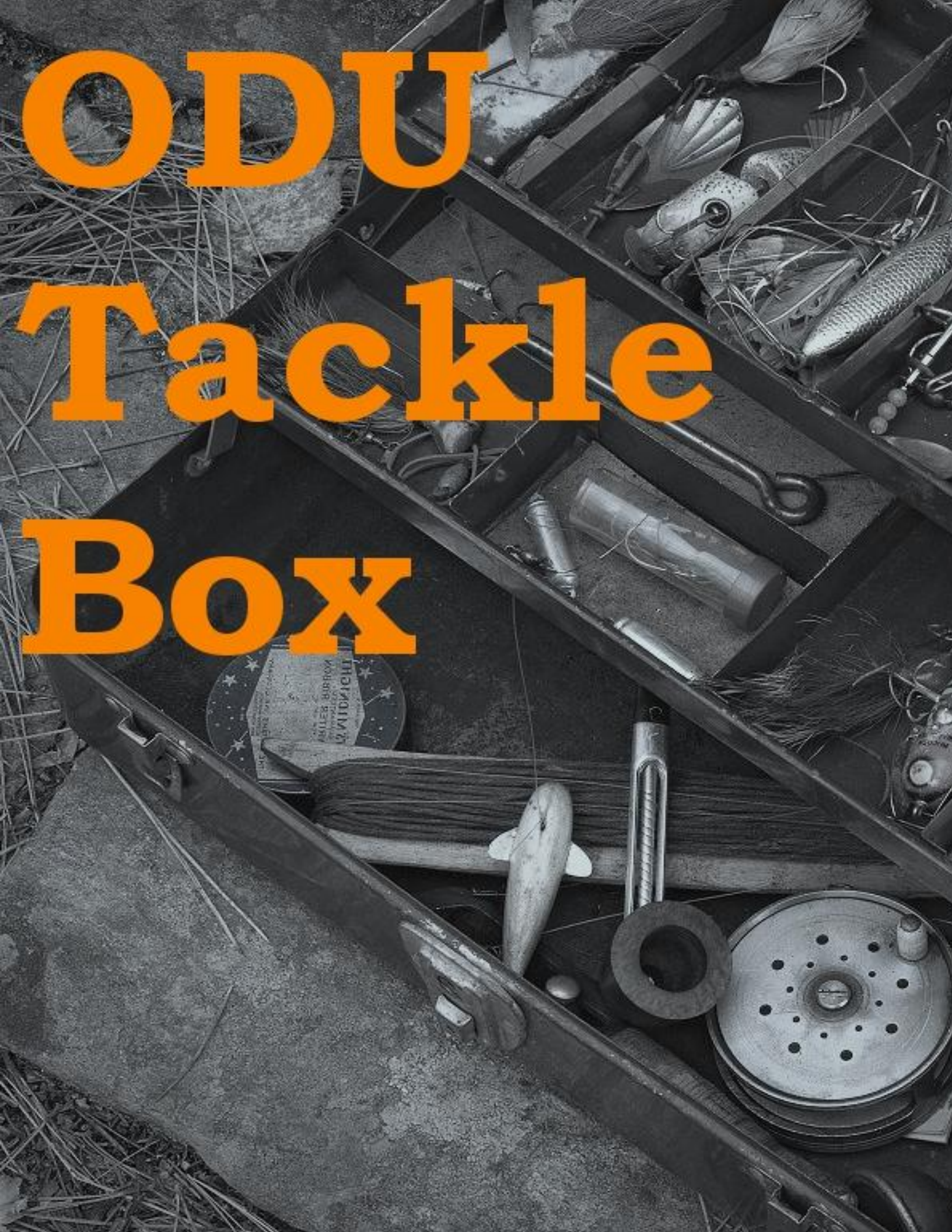
Tide is by far the biggest factor to success. Understanding wind, tide range, and peak times as it relates to where the fish are is important. Strong tide pushes and pulls bait across a point, through a small ditch, or across an open bay. If the tide stops, the fishing is as tough as an alligator's hide. Todd had picked a day with little tide range and an approaching front. The day was cut short by the weather which produced some thunderstorms. The best time to fish is any chance you can.

Baits that catch speckle trout around Delacroix are basic depending on anglers desire to catch a trout on top, see a cork go under, or go deep with a jig head. Like most anglers, topwater lures are the favorite way to catch fish. Nothing beats seeing a fish come out of the water as it strikes the offering. She Dogs (pictured on prior page), Bodonk-a-donks, or Zara Spooks are a few good topwaters for the marsh. Another tactic is a cork with a short Berkley 100% Fluorocarbon leader. A jig head is tied to the leader then a shrimp or cocaho plastic bait is added. Bayou chubs, Stanley's wedge minnow, and Vudu shrimp are just a few of the possibilities for a chicken on a chain presentation. Remove the cork and increase the size of the jig head to get down to the bottom in deeper holes. If the tide is rolling, often a half ounce head is needed to get the bait down to the where the fish are holding.

If an angler is not familiar with marsh fishing, try hiring a guide. Although everything looks good around Delacroix, it takes time on the water to find areas that are holding fish. Also, mud flats, shallow bays, and sinking marsh lands make running from point a to b difficult. It is easy to get stuck on a shallow flat. Marinas like Sweetwater will tell you where to fish and what to use. When conditions are right, there is no sweeter slice of pie than a Delacroix trout fishing trip.

Baits for Delacroix trout.





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The ODU Tackle Box is a selection of our team's best of the best in our own tackle boxes. So we know these lures work and put fish in the boat.



By **PowerTeam Lures** and big brother to the popular 3.6" JP Hammer Shad, the 4.8" JP Hammer Shad was designed to do an equal amount of damage on the water. But now with its proportionally larger size, the 4.8" not only appeals to largemouth and small mouth bass, but it's also the perfect profile for both stripers and redfish as well. The 4.8" JP Hammer Shad can be fished a multitude of ways; Bottom bounce it on a football head, stroke it through the water column on a jig head, or fish it weightless as a twitch bait on a 6/0 EWG hook and Hammer bass near the surface.

Unparalleled tail design gives the **Mizmo Scorpion Paddle Tail Worm** a unique look and action sure to pique the interest of fish. Great for dropshotting, this lure has enticing action on the fall. Also works well on a shaky head.



Z-Man ZinkerZ. An incredibly versatile soft bait featuring ElaZtech® construction that makes it up to 10 times stronger than conventional soft baits. It sinks slowly when fished without weight and is salt-impregnated to make striking fish hang on longer, resulting in a higher hook-up percentage. Rig is straight-, Texas-, Carolina-, Wacky- or drop-shot style.

First introduced in 1967, **Mann's Jelly Worm** remains the No. 1 selling worm of all time and for good reason. Mann's "Jellies" helped Paul Elias claim the all-time BASS four-day weight record of 132-1/2 lbs. and serious anglers continue to use them to put more bass in their boats. Veteran and novice baitcasters alike need to reserve a place in their tackle boxes for these worms to improve chances of success when the fish are finicky.



Lake Fork Trophy Hyper Lizard. This lure's wide tail produces a thumping action when worked quickly and a fish-enticing wiggle when worked at slow speeds. The tail's split design allows for erratic movement that will drive predator species wild. Durable construction helps the lure stand up to repeated strikes.



Power Team Lures Gator hands down...bass just can't resist the 6" Gator. The broad "offset" tail of this juicy reptile sends out a tempting vibration and creates a lazy swaying motion that'll grab the eye and tickle the lateral lines of any bass lurking in the area.



The **Strike King Rage Lizard** is the last soft plastic lizard you'll ever buy. The ever popular 6" lizard body has been a staple among many Texas rig and Carolina rig fisherman for years. The new 6" Rage Tail Lizard features the unique Rage Tail design on all 4 legs and the large Rage Tail has incredible movement in the water.

Crawfish imitations come in all shapes and sizes, but **Bass Kandi** has a crawl that has a little more action and works well either as a trailer, on a Texas Rig or Carolina Rig. Their products are manufactured with just the right amounts of salt and softness needed for achieving ultimate action and feel. Their baits are tested by staff in a clearwater pool, as well as by professional anglers and weekenders alike in lakes, rivers and marshes under all water conditions.





The **Power Team Lures Texas-Rig Jig** is designed so anglers could have the profile of a jig along with the snag resistant qualities of a Texas rigged soft plastic. This means you can spend more time fishing and less time getting hung up in cover. We're not sure if it's the stocky profile, super subtle action, tantalizing skirt or a combination of all of three.



The **YUM F2 Wooly Hawg Craw** is a craw bait with bubble-retaining deep rings on the body and a double claw pattern for extra-live action when bouncing on bottom or twitching under the surface. Great craw bait to toss in a Texas-rig.



Deadly when flipped Texas-style into heavy cover, the **Culprit Creature Craw** makes a great jig trailer as well, and is also deadly when rigged with a light weight and fished in a "swim-and-stop-retrieve" through shallow weeds and stumps. Its oversized claws create abundant flapping action, and are actually attached mid-body, which helps concentrate bites at the hook - eliminating the problem of short strikes that are common when claws are positioned towards the end of the bait.



The **Trigger X Aggression Flappin' Bug** bass bait is treated with the Trigger X Ultrabite Aggression Pheromones which are specially formulated for bass and other freshwater fish.

The pheromones are said to trigger the feeding instinct and mimic aggression and fear pheromones involved with predators and their prey.



The **Lunker City Ozmo** is the ideal creature bait for flipping, pitching and Carolina rigging. Texas rig the Ozmo on a 3/0 hook, or snip off the head and gill section and fish it on a football head. Clip off the "claws and antennas" and Ozmo becomes a traditional double tail.

The **Yamamoto 5" Double-Tail Hula Grub** combines the action and feel of the Original Senko with a double-tailed spider grub design for a realistic crawfish imitation whether worked on a jighead or rigged Texas style.



Reaction Innovations Kinky Beaver. Fish-attracting action abounds and combines with a wide selection of colors to give your angling arsenal the ammo you need to target big fish. A ribbed body, teardrop appendages, two long antennae and two large-profile flappers with thick wedges protruding from their outer edges create a whole new level of fish-enticing action.



Gene Larew Rattling Crawler. With oversized kick pads and an internal rattler, this lure produces irresistible fish-attracting action at any speed. Its flat body makes it ideal for flipping and pitching, and works just as well when used as a

weedless rig.



Designed by tournament proven pros, the **Gambler Flapp'n Shad** is the only bait on the market with its tail in a vertical position, to give the most lifelike shad swimming action. Twitch it,

jerk it, swim it, buzz it, weight it, flip it, pitch it—you just can't fish a Flapp'n Shad wrong!



Brand new from Berkley, the **Berkley Havoc 4" Subwoofer** was designed by Berkley's top professional bass anglers.

Built for speed, the Havoc Subwoofer's classic cut tail design kicks out a ton of vibration at virtually any retrieve speed. Designed to elicit strikes when other baits just can't cut it, it also features a hybrid shad shape profile.



A breed apart, the **Gary Yamamoto D-Shad** is an attention-getting, soft plastic jerkbait with a streamlined body that produces a side-to-side twitching action. The tail, however, is thicker and heavier than the body. So on the retrieve, when you kill the bait, it sinks level and gives any hungry onlookers a little shimmy.





Throw the **Bruiser Baits Kickin' Frog** overtop of any cover, along edges, or in open water, its profile and specially designed legs deliver a unique surface disturbance that bass have trouble resisting. Known to cause seriously explosive strikes, Bruiser Baits recommends rigging the Kickin' Frog on any size EWG hook with a glass bead in front for best results.



Using tremendous water displacement "paddles," the **Money Frog** pushes water like nobody's business, and attracts bass from long distances. It can be worked like a buzzbait over weeds and cover, used as a big trailer on a jig or a variety of other ways



The **Strike King Go-B-Gone** was designed to take on the large bodies of water in the North and go head to head with some of the bruiser smallmouth and largemouth bass located in those areas. The Go-B-Gone can

be Texas rigged, rigged with a jig head or on a Drop shot.



The **Lake Fork Tackle Craw Tube** provides the best of both a crawfish and a tube lure. The Craw Tube features a hollow ringed body, crawfish claws, and backed with a tube style skirt. Lake Fork Tackle has made the head of the bait solid, allowing the bait to remain secure to the hook.



Now you can fish **Strike King's KVD Pro-Model Tube**, the same finesse bait that helped make Kevin VanDam the 2001 Bassmaster Classic® winner! Salt-impregnated to lure the big ones, these durable, tournament-proven tubes are perfect for light line and spinning applications, as well as Texas rigging and flipping.

Trigger X Big Moe. If bigger is better, this oversized creature bait is among the best. The large size and tapered tail give it a slow action with maximum vibration. Even when the bait stops moving, the lifelike legs and claws continue to move, triggering vicious strikes. When standard baits aren't working, super-size your presentation by Texas-rigging one of these and let its size do the work. Try this bait a Carolina Rig.



Whether you cast, flip, or split shot with **Kalin's 3" or 5" Lunker Grubs**, you're using a proven fish catcher. Designed to produce maximum, fish-catching action at ultra-slow speeds, these effective Lunker Grubs are made from specially formulated plastic engineered to remain super soft, yet durable even in cold water temperatures.



Jigs

The **Picasso Spider Jig** features a completely recessed line tie to prevent the jig from hanging up or rolling in structure. Available in 30 degree Extra wide gap hook or Original Round bend flipping hook. The Picasso Spider Jig has a very vertical fall in the Round bend hook version which makes it very accurate to hit your target. Made with the same hard Pro Metal Alloy and coated with the chip resistant duraseal finish, the Picasso Spider Jig provides more sensitivity and holds up to the "worst pounding".



Stanley Casting Jig. One of the most widely used and successful jigs you can buy. It's a tournament-winning design with a super-sharp vanadium-alloy hook and a hand-tied bio-silk skirt that feels and fishes like a round rubber skirt.

The **Flipping Brush Jig from Chompers** is one of the essential tools you'll need to pry stubborn bass from their thick, heavy cover. A beefier version of Chomper's Brush Jig, the Flipping Brush Jig offers the same proven design with a heavier Mustad black nickel hook for more pulling power and a thicker, stiffer weedguard. The Flipping Brush Jig's weedguard is made of specially selected bristles - stiff enough to make it through cover,



Spinnerbaits

With its tandem blades creating a bass attracting, flashing and vibrating commotion, the **Hart Tackle Spinnerbait** has the heart-pounding action anglers require. Designed with a strong, balanced wire frame featuring a quality ball bearing swivel, sharp Mustad® Ultra Point Hook and realistic head sporting red 3-D baitfish eyes, the durable silicone skirt gives this proven spinnerbait the seductive, breathing movements that trigger big bass strikes.



Made from high quality components, the **spinnerbaits** from **Kennebec Lure Company** hold up to the test of a good fight. Outside the great look these baits have, the design of the blades stands out. Burn them across the surface and get a unique action and sound to draw the lunkers in.

An ideal spinnerbait for the heaviest of cover, **Strike King's Hack**

Attack Heavy Cover Spinnerbait features a contoured head design that helps the lure deflect off cover while the long arm wire minimizes hang-ups. Other features include a Gamakatsu Siwash hook that won't open up, even with braided line. The Perfect Skirt blooms wide and even the Magic Tails serve as a trailer.



Sebile Finesse Pro Shad Spinnerbait. This spinnerbait features a blade pattern that mimics baitfish for unmatched realism. Tapered blades run true at any speed. Offset wide-gap hooks for sure hooksets. The two identically colored blades appear like a school of baitfish.



Spoons and Bladed Baits



The latest addition to **Gambler's** arsenal of shad style spin baits, the **Meano** features an innovative double headed design to imitate a group of baitfish, prevent roll over and to allow anglers to burn the Meano through heavy-cover. Sporting lifelike 3-D eyes, a high-quality paint job and its tail in a vertical position, the Meano's super-sharp Gamakatsu hook ensures quality hook ups.

The **Cotton Cordell Gay Blade's** "flathead" design creates a tight, pulsating action that lets you feel the lure working. Fish the Gay Blade just under the surface with a fast retrieve; it's a great technique for schooling fish. Or fish the Gay Blade vertically, a technique that is very effective for enticing deep walleye, bass and even ice fishing!



Fish Sense Inc. introduces **The Binsky**. The Binsky was created on the theory of strikes by recognition. No bass or any fish can resist The Binsky when presented with its realistic shad design, mirror finish and unmatched vibration. It's a feeding opportunity they can't pass up. Each size is designed to maintain the same enticing action.



Z-Man ChatterBait Elite. Based on the original ChatterBait bladed swim jig, this effective lure triggers the predator instinct in every fish it passes. Its EZ Skirt® jig skirt is precisely matched to a custom-colored head and a low-profile hub for maximum visual stimulation. A super-sharp Gamakatsu® 5/0 hook teams with a molded-in trailer keeper to hold soft plastics in place and deliver reliable hookup performance



The **Little George** still catches fish today just as it did in the 60's. This legendary sinking tailspinner, is perfect for schooling fish and for "ripping" near the bottom.

The **Lake Fork Tackle Flutter Spoon** is a bass magnet that will gain any fish's attention. Fishing the Flutter Spoon on slack line is very important to its success. Limp or slack line gives the Flutter Spoon its natural fluttering action, similar to a dying shad that provokes the instinctual feeding mechanism.



Topwater Weapons

Built with a highly individualized shape, the **Arbogast Buzz Plug** offers a lethal presentation and a unique advantage over traditional buzzbaits - the ability to come to a complete stop without sinking. While other buzzbaits require constant motion to stay afloat, you can pause the Arbogast Buzz Plug around stumps, slop, and docks, then give it a slight twitch or shake to persuade hungry bass into biting.



The **Snag Proof Bobby's Perfect Buzz Frog** evolved from the original Bobby's Perfect Frog, taking with it all of the best features, and adding a lightweight aluminum prop and paddle feet. A killer bait churned over the mats or around the edges of vegetation, the Perfect Buzz adds another dimension to frog fishing. Its ITT - inner tube technology also makes it virtually unsinkable, and it comes equipped with a Gamakatsu EWG double hook, as well as an internal glass rattle.

Heddon® Pop'n Image Jr. This downsized version has same great water-chugging action and sharp, fish-catching colors as the Heddon Pop'n Image, plus an extra-loud hollow bead rattle. Sporting a finely detailed finish, the Pop'n Image Jr. is equipped with premium, dressed rotating treble hooks.



The addition of the **Frog Popper** to the **Live Target** line of walking frog and popular hollow body series is the bait topwater anglers have been waiting for. The lifelike features and colors will catch the eye of big fish, and the realistic action will have them on the chase.

Rebel Frog-R. A plump body and realistic coloration team with an easy-walking topwater action to lure hungry, hard-charging bass in for a strike. This lure is built tough to take repeated strikes from aggressive predators.



The **Top Raider's** frantic topwater action teases big fish to charge in for the kill. Most effective on a fast retrieve with your rod tip held high. Designed with a unique tail rudder that produces loads of fish-attracting commotion. Always finish with a figure-eight maneuver boat side to trigger any followers!



Snag Proof Moss Master Tournament Frog. The pro-designed and tournament-proven Snag Proof Moss Master Tournament Frog features a specially weighted body for more accurate casts and to ensure it sits in the water like a real frog. The Moss Mater Tournament Frog's silicone coated rubbers skirt offers a seductive action with no matting or melting, while a built-in rattle helps create even more bass-attracting commotion.



Umbrella Rigs



The Picasso Finesse School-E-Rig + "Bling" = the **Picasso School E Rig Finesse Bait Ball**. Designed with the collaboration of Elite Series Pro, Fred Roumbanis, and FLW Tour Pro, Brent Ehrler, the Picasso School E Rig Finesse Bait Ball incorporates 3.5" piano-grade wires along with #3 willow blades plated in 24k Gold or Nickel for the ultimate flash and vibration. The School E Rig Finesse Bait Ball can be rigged with up to four additional blades or up to five School E Rig Jig Heads.

The first of its kind - the **Viking Marine Buzz Kill** takes the umbrella rig to world of topwater. Its dual buzz props generate the lift necessary to keep it running along the water's surface, all the while churning and creating fish attracting commotion. Its three wire umbrella rig configuration also makes it legal in most states



Swimbaits

An extremely versatile bait, the **Berkley Havoc Beat Shad** was designed with Mike Iaconelli and is an astounding hybrid of a grub and a finesse swimbait. On any retrieve speed, the tail beats from side-to-side, triggering a feeding response from any nearby bass.



An enticing meal for any fish, the **Gambler Big EZ** delivers a realistic profile in the water, and the combination of its segmented body and paddle tail create a thumping swimming action

fish can't resist. Available in a variety of colors, rig the Gambler Big EZ on a belly-weighted hook or with a screw in weight.

If you thought the original RattleSnake was deadly, wait until you fish the new GrandeBass Swim'n RattleSnake. **GrandeBass** took one of their hottest fish catching designs, and added a unique, 5-degree angled thumper tail. It actually thumps more and disrupts more water even with the slowest retrieve, delivering a tight swimming action that makes the entire bait shake. The new **Swim'n RattleSnake** design also allows you to fish the bait in the upright position or flip it upside down and get a different tail thumping action.



The **Baby Line Through by Optimum Baits** is an inline style swimbait but at half of the size of traditional inline baits. When the fish are heavily pressured a scaled down bait like the Baby Line Through can be highly effective to catch spooky fish that other anglers are missing.

Finally, swimbaits that actually look like a yellow perch, walleye, and a yellow bass. These baits are specifically made for East Coast fisherman that are looking to throw swimbaits. **Mattlures Perch Series** baits represent some of the most common forage fish from the Midwest to the East Coast.



The **Lucky Craft Pointer** has a very low center of gravity thanks to a special brass weight in its belly, and the low center of balance causes the lure to wobble and vibrate whenever the retrieve is stopped.

Rapala is renowned for the fish-catching excellence of its lures and is now setting the bar higher with its slow-sinking **BX™ Swimmer**. It combines the lively action of a balsa-wood lure with the nearly indestructible properties of copolymer material. The result is a highly responsive lure that has outstanding in-water action and is tough enough to fish in the most extreme conditions while taking hit after hit from aggressive, toothy predators.



Crank and Jerkbaits

Rapala® Scatter Rap®. In true Rapala® style, the patent pending Scatter Rap® Series flaunts classic balsa body shapes and a new Scatter Lip, which creates an industry first 'evasive action.' The Scatter Rap brings game-changing action to the water produced by an innovative and uniquely designed curved lip, which perfectly mimics a spooked baitfish fleeing attack, triggering bite after bite. Ideal for bass and other multispecies gamefish, the Scatter Rap series can be cast or trolled.



Storm® Smash Shad. Producing hard-core action, the new Smash Shad from Storm® will send all anglers into fish fighting mode. A shad-style bait, the Smash Shad is packed full of action and is ideal for all fishermen. In the water, it portrays a deliberate, steady cadence on the swim with a stable rolling action at all speeds, bringing fish in for the bite.



Lipless crankbaits are well known and justly famous for their ability to cover a lot of water quickly and to produce fish. **Rattletrap** is one the best known lipless crankbaits. Loud, flashy attention getters, Rattletraps can be fished in a variety of situations from shallow to deep and everything in between.

Normally fished in a cast-and-crank shallow water situation, they are also effective when allowed to sink to the bottom and burned over deep structure back to the boat. With this method, just position the boat on the uphill side of a point or underwater hump and throw out as far as you can. Let the bait sink to the bottom and start the retrieve up the slope, banging into rocks and other obstructions along the way. The

Rattletrap is best known for ripping through shallow grass beds and surprising bad tempered bass waiting in ambush. These baits will get pounded by hungry fish however you choose to fish them.

The original suspending minnow lure, the **Smithwick Deep Suspending Rattlin' Rogue's** proven action makes them a favorite on the tournament trail. Designed to suspend horizontally, and with a twitch of your rod the Rattlin' Rogue's loud, fish-attracting rattles begin to sound and animates the silver flash of its textured sides.



Cast farther and more accurately with the **Megabass Vision ONETEN FX Tour Premium jerkbait**, a suspending, tournament-spec version of the incredible Vision ONETEN. A Variable Resistance Flap-Bill tucks into the body during the cast, then opens when the lure hits the water. The Flap-Bill moves on a pivot so the bill angle varies with the amount of water pressure, providing a unique action.



The **Damiki Slim Jack** is a shallow running jerkbait that will dive 8 to 16-inches in depth then slowly rise on the pause. A great bait for spooky post-spawn fish or highly pressured lakes, the Slim Jack has an excellent darting and wobbling action.



Master angler and revered fishing philosopher Rick Clunn joined forces with Missouri-based Luck "E" Strike Lures to design the **RC Stick Jerkbait from Luck E Strike**. The RC Stick suspends perfectly at rest, just like a natural baitfish, triggering those bulldog-sized hawg-rockets to detonate in a frenzied rage! It combines a mesmerizing erratic action with eye-popping, brilliant finishes and battle-tested hardware to give you a jerkbait that will shoot you to the top of the leader board.

Salmo Floating Hornet. These high-density foam baits produce an action that's attractive to a multitude of species. Floating models dive quickly, and their aggressive action coaxes fish to bite. They can be cast or

trolled in lakes, reservoirs, and streams.



Strike King KVD Series Crankbait. Designed by BassMaster Classic Champ Kevin VanDam, this crankbait provides strike-triggering action for power fishing in 2 to 6 ft. of water. Square bill and erratic wandering action entice fish to strike. It silently deflects cover with no internal rattle.



The **Lucky Craft RTO 2.0 Silent Square Bill Crankbaits** are Takahiro Omori signature models characterized by the detailed precision of Japanese design plus the classic shape and action of the all-American crank. RTO 2.0 Crankbait features size 3 treble hooks. This ultra-durable crankbait boasts the precise action and finishes you must see to believe. The square bill is built to cover the upper column with a tantalizing action—bump it off cover, and in case of a snag, just pause so it can back out.

From their striking finishes to the free-floating rattle chambers that emit varying sound frequencies, it's easy to see why these **Strike King Pro-Model XD Series** cranks are so popular with the pros.



Several Elite Series pro's used the **ABT Lures X2 Slow Sink Crankbait** with great success in the 2011 season, catching numerous fish - as deep as 25-feet. A slow sinking, deep diving crankbait, it's designed to consistently reach depths of 18ft+. It's specially weighted so it will sink seductively on its own, allowing you to reach depths previously unreachable with standard deep diving crankbaits. "The key to fishing max depth is an extremely long cast! By counting it down, it will allow you to cover more productive and deeper water.



Norman DD Series Crankbaits. When bass anglers talk about successful crankbaits, you can be sure that the Norman Crankbait will be included in the discussion. These 100% American made crankbaits have been around for a long time and are proven fish catchers. The diving bill and the attitude that the bait naturally swims at, enable these lures to come through and over

underwater obstructions easily.

The **AR Lures Crank 50 Shallow Crankbait** features a high quality wooden construction for lively performance you can't duplicate with synthetic materials. Each bait is handmade to ensure custom quality, and AR Lures

also spent a significant amount of time testing and experimenting with each lure design to get the action, profile and desired characteristics just right.



Top Lines

As bass anglers, we want a reliable line that gives us the ultimate edge, **Sufix 832 Camo** exceeds the challenge. For bass anglers trying to match vegetation for the perfect blending technique, Camo 832 is the line for the job. Camo 832 provides the strength and abrasion resistance.



P-Line Floroclear Fishing Line. This easy casting line has copolymer strength and near invisibility due to Fluorocarbon coating. Good knot strength completes the package and gives you the confidence to go after the big ones.



MUSKIE & PIKE TACKLE



ERC Flash Grinder Musky Spinnerbaits. Built specifically for grinding (fishing in the weeds), this attractive goliath of a spinnerbait is dressed with a silicone/feather combo skirt and a big flashy willow blade to convince Big Daddy Toothface that his dinner is getting away! Features .062" diameter heavy wire construction, 275 strand 3rd generation hydro silk skirt, Chameleon flash strips, saltwater hackle, oversized trailer hook. Short arm design for more hookups.

Bomber Herky Jerky Jr. Musky Jerkbait. Make every cast count on your next musky hunt with the strike-provoking action of a versatile Bomber® Herky Jerky Jr. Musky Jerkbait. Bomber's slow-sinking Herky Jerky Jr. lipless jerkbait is not only deadly for musky, but the Herky Jerky Jr.'s subsurface darting and gliding, walk-the-dog action will also entice pike and stripers to strike.



Salmo Turbo Jack. A topwater prop bait with a hard-slapping tail blade that tears up the surface and pulls in big predators from great distances. Its slim body profile makes it easy to cast and retrieve. And it's crafted of super-tough high-density foam with a durable finish that stands up to big teeth.

Grandma Lures have been copied by many companies, but the action has never been duplicated. The unique action of this lure has been proven over and over again by the number of fish that are caught with it. Made of high impact plastic and a super-tough Lexan lip. The 7 1/2 inch Grandma Crankbait has three strong treble hooks, will retrieve at approximately 6 feet, and will troll at approximately 10 feet.



The **10" Jointed Swizz** from **Mr. Toothy Tackle**

is an old school, handmade, quality Muskie bait. The durable metal "lip" or head of the Swizz had two depth settings. No plastic parts used in this American made, Musky lure. Bounce it off rocks, or let the wandering, erratic action call in the big girls

in open water. The jointed Swizz is NOT a speed trolling bait, but is meant to be fished SLOWLY at 2 1/2 mph or slower.

The **Livid Fish, by Naze Baits**, is a new crank bait with an unbelievable action that will drive muskies crazy! This crankbait aggressively rocks back and forth and dives up to 8 feet when casting. Well built for big game fish, this muskie lure rises slowly, so a slower retrieve can get the bait to your



desired depth. When fishing through weeds, rocks or timber, the Livid Fish not only rises up, but backs out of a snag due to its unique shape.



Mepps® Musky Marabou Spinners. Like ringing a dinner bell, these lures combine the proven prowess of a Mepps spinner with marabou to have muskie lining up for a feast. Solid-brass components make for a perfectly balanced and durable lure. Change tail patterns quickly with the heavy-duty split ring. Drag-resistant marabou tails are hand-tied for lifelike movement in the water.

PANFISH TACKLE



schooling baitfish.

Blakemore Original Road Runner Marabou. Get the Original Marabou jig to finesse those finicky fish. With its fuzzy grub body and spinner-blade attractor, this jig will bring strikes from fish when nothing else will. Deadly on everything from crappies to walleye.

Blakemore Slab Daddy Super Rig. Rig up two Slab Daddy jigs for even more action. The handcrafted, thick bodies descend slowly and the increased profile mimics a tasty pair of



Lunker Lure Rattleback Crappie Spin. The ultimate lure for crappie and schooling fish. Lead head and ABS Hologrammed body contains a super loud rattle chamber. Available in spin or jig models with spinner blade. Keep an eye on your line when retrieving a bass might sneak up on you as well.

Blakemore Road Runner Jigheads. Versatile and realistic, this jighead is perfect for crappie, panfish and even bass and walleye. The horsehead jig has a swivel and a spinner blade attached to it for incredible vibration and flash on the lift when jigging. Add your own soft plastics to create a lure fish cannot resist.

Charlie Brewer Crappie Spins. Again keep your eyes on the line strippers, walleye and bass have been known to strike these when chasing slabs. Combine a soft Slider jig and a tantalizing, twinkling safety-pin spinner, and you have a crappie killer. Fish with a steady retrieve or jigging action. Per each.



CATFISH BAIT'S

Strike King Catfish Dynamite Dip Bait. Big catfish hunt by scent and feel in murky water. This dip's powerful scent will bring them in from a distance. In testing it's proved to be one of the most effective dips on the market.

Berkley Gulp! Catfish Dough. Catfish are active feeders, relying on their senses to tell them where their next meal is. With Berkley Catfish Dough, anglers have the most potent scent dispersion ever in an artificial bait. The smell moves through the water like a blood trail, telling catfish that it really is food. Formulated to be long-lasting and stick to the hook. Bloody Blood shown.



HERE IS THAT SECRET YOU CATFISHERS NEED TO KNOW.

C.J.'s Punch Bait. This top-secret punchbait formula was specially designed for attracting monster, rod-bending catfish. Works best with a treble hook.

Brand new **Sweet Charlie Dip Bait** is one of CJ's new formulas it has cheese and real shad in it, it stays on Good in running and swift waters. Use with sponge hook or dip worm.

Team Catfish FURRY THaNG Circle Hooks. Fuzzy nest of loop material. Ultimate dip bait holder. Circle hook. A fuzzy nest of loop material holds dip bait, and holds fish on the hook while you ram it home!.



WALLEYE TACKLE



SLIMERS Flathead and Leech are softer and more lifelike than all plastic baits. Great to add to any jig or rig. They're made in many different sizes and colors to meet all of your fishing needs. You can customize your Slimers with your favorite scent or color. They'll absorb more scent than any plastic worm.

Fin-tech Nite-Lite Nuckle Ball Jigs. Versatile baits feature the revolutionary "head under" design, kinked shank, weedless eyelet, and a Mustad® Knife Edge hook. The Nite-Lite features phosphorescent paint that glows for up to 8 hours.



Fin-Tech Adjustable Bottom Bouncer. A classic bottom-bouncer design with patented, interchangeable weights. Switch weight or color to adjust to conditions quickly and easily. Each package includes wire and two different weights.



The all-new **Lindy Shadling** comes in nine holographic patterns, each with a four-part finish that brings out the secondary color hues created by all natural baitfish. This reflective finish maximizes available light to create tantalizing flash, making the Shadling perfect for dredging big walleyes from deep water or from dark, stained and colored lakes and rivers. The detailed scale patterns and realistic holographic colors make it equally deadly in bright light and clear water.



The **Lindy Slick Spin** is a top-of-the-line spinner jig with features you won't find anywhere else. Whether fishing it in open water for walleye, smallmouth bass or other gamefish, or using it as a lake trout jig or walleye jig through the ice, the Slick Spin attracts 'em and attacks 'em with hard-thumping #3 or #3 ½ Colorado blade in two colors – a nickel and a gold – which can be easily changed on the water or ice via the X-Change Clevis.



The **Cotton Cordell Wally Diver** fishing lure is the total walleye fishing system, from the shallow runner to the Magnum deep diver, this series was created with walleyes in mind. Everything about these fishing lures - their action, their profiles, their colors – is expertly designed for walleye fishing in North America. It's been said too that some bass anglers are using Wally Diver crankbaits to catch largemouth and smallmouth bass.



The **Suspending Wally Diver** is unique in that it reaches depths of 20 feet when trolled and teases fish by sitting motionless on the pause. A wide variety of color patterns have proven themselves on the Great Lakes and small waters alike. Durable Cordell construction and top quality components make the Suspending Wally Diver a top walleye producer that stands the test of time.



No other lure produces walleye, pike, bass, steelhead and other gamefish like the **Lazy Ike**, and it's been doing it for more than 60 years. Everything about the Lazy Ike is unique – from the banana-like shape to the lazy wobble that fish just have to bite. From rivers to ponds to lakes, any time walleye are feeding shallow, the wide wobble and classic color patterns turn fish inside-out.



The **Walleye Willospoon** uses a variety of presentations to attract walleye, including vertical jigging, casting, open-water drifting, bobber rigs, wind tip-ups, bottom bouncers and three-way swivel rigs. Willospoons can be trolled or drifted slower than spinners and still produce flash and vibration to trigger even the fussiest walleye. Use it on a dead rod when anchored or slip with the river current. Slip float rigs and Willospoons tipped with leeches or minnows are irresistible to walleye!



TROUT/SALMON TACKLE

The original **Tasmanian devil** has proven itself effective Worldwide on a host of species, including brown & rainbow trout, steelhead, walleye, pike, large & small mouth bass, salmon & tailor. Ideal for casting, trolling & jigging. Reaching depths of up to 1.8m, the original Tasmanian Devil gets down to where the fish are.



PK Jigging Spoons are the most dynamic spoons put on the market in years. The weighted design gives this bait an unparalleled action that calls in fish and causes them to strike. The counterweight system gives the lures an action that other tackle companies only dream of manufacturing. Each lure features glowing eyes to help attract fish in low light



conditions and are great to troll with!

No other hardbait can boast the fish-catching success of the **Rat-L-Trap**. But you must try the Mini Trap on the trout, you will be surprised! With its flashy shad-like profile and super-tight wiggle, it's impossible to fish wrong. Match the hatch with this action-packed ultralight.



Panther Martin Spinner Spinnerbait. Panther Martin's extraordinary fish-catching ability has been proven time and time again in their more 37 years of fishing experience. This spinnerbait's weighted body makes it a true countdown lure and ensures it casts like a bullet. Because its blade is directly mounted to the shaft, the Spinner spins easier and faster.

Most versatile spinner in our collective ODU tackle boxes. **Bill's Swirleybird Spinner™** has the perfect size, imitates baitfish well, casts easily, and maintains its attractive qualities from the time it hits the water until the end of the retrieve. These attributes make this lure especially good for anglers of all ages and skill levels in most parts of the world, for almost any fish, and at anytime of the year. Trout, salmon, stripers, spots the list goes on. Read more about the Swirleybird at this link.



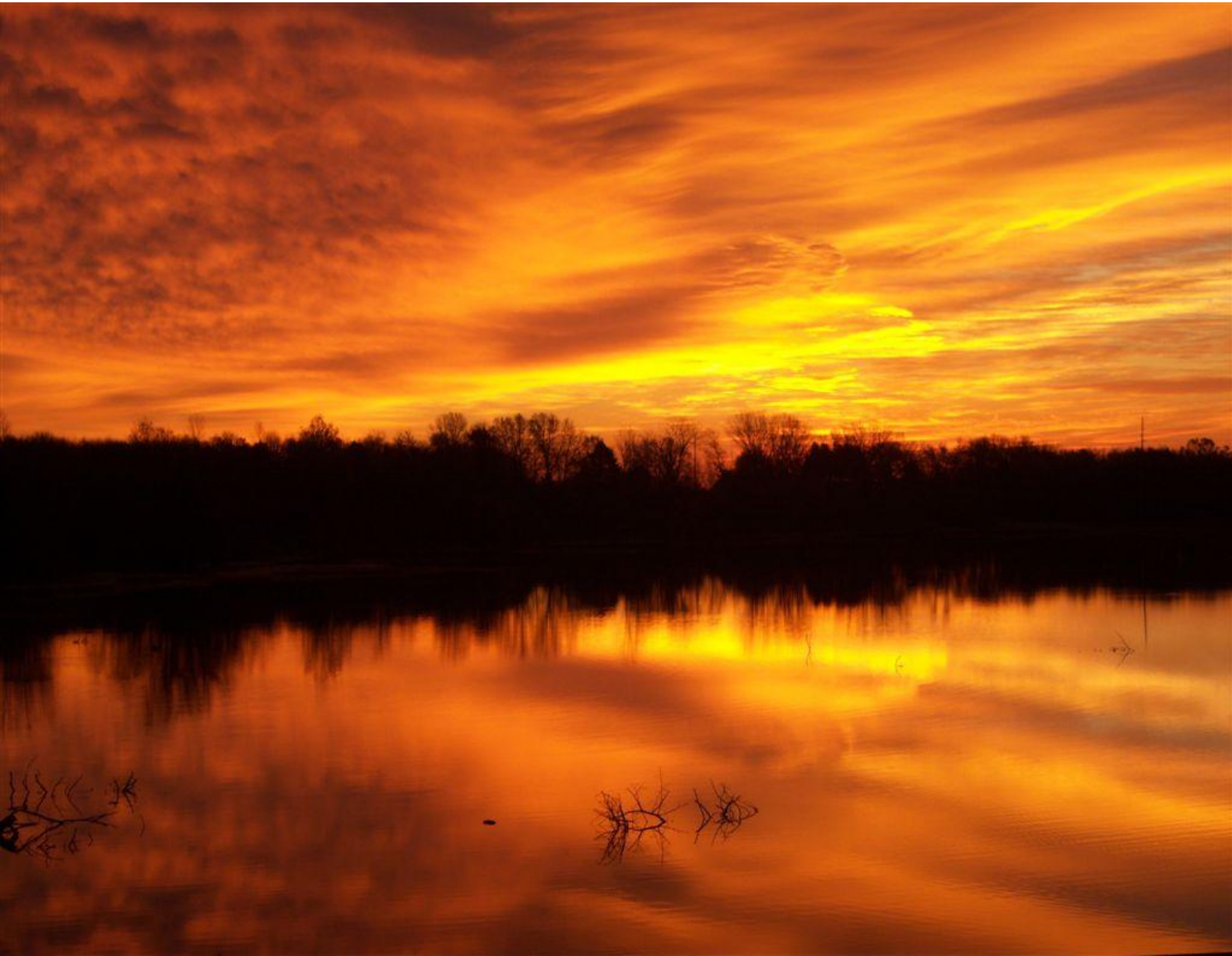
The **Swedish Pimple** is a superb jigging lure that has been popular with fishermen since 1955. This type of lure has been widely used in Sweden for over 100 years with exceptional results on both fresh and salt-water fish. Jig it, summer or winter! Catch trout along the way.

Pro-Troll Trout Killer Holographic Pro Series. Includes EChip, Holographic tape and 3-D eyes and two sizes and several color choices. One of the top trout lures on the market just got better. The EChip along with holographic tape and 3-D eyes make this a sure winner. About EChips ... This tiny device is not only increasing the success of fishermen using it, but may revolutionize fishing with artificial baits and lures. It consists of a small stainless steel tube with a stainless ball inside and a small ceramic crystal inside one end of the tube. As the ball rolls back and forth with the motion of the lure, an electronic impulse duplicating that of a wounded baitfish is emitted. Predator fish in the area sense the simulated nerve discharges and are more likely to strike.



Worden's Lures Mag Lip FlatFish. Built tough to handle big salmon, steelhead, walleye, bass, pike and other fighting game fish. The unique lip design allows for strike-enticing FlatFish action during slow trolling or retrieval speeds. Diving depths of up to 20 ft. without the addition of extra weights or divers.





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“East Side Iowa Fishing Vacation”

By Dan Galusha

Fuel prices will definitely be playing a huge role in vacation decisions, as it has in the past few years. This is especially true for camper/motor home owners who want to combine fishing with their trip. In many cases, they will be looking for something close to home, or at least midway of their usual destination. In Iowa, we have a good spot that could be said is located in the middle of the Midwest. It is called West Lake Park, located at the west side of Davenport. (Above: This was a Halloween sunrise captured across Railroad Lake.)

West Lake Park has everything an angler, camper and hiker would want. There are two modern campgrounds with playgrounds, electricity, water, restrooms and showers, along with designated tent camping. Marked trails that can be used for hiking run throughout the park, and fishermen can catch several species, including bass, crappie, bluegill, catfish, trout, and if desired – huge carp.



Other things available are a roped off swimming beach area with beach house, concession, showers, sand volleyball court and a deck with umbrella covered tables overlooking the lake; paddleboat and fishing boat rentals; and five large picnic shelters with restrooms, playgrounds, horseshoe pits and sand volleyball courts available for rent. There are also picnic tables scattered throughout the park. (Pictured: One of many access routes located throughout the park provides adequate opportunity for hiking.)

Ironically, the park's name does not reflect any of the four lakes found on the 620-acre area. These lakes are called Lake of the Hills (the largest), Railroad Lake, Lambauch Lake and Blue Grass Lake. Railroad and Lake of the Hills have concrete boat ramps, with all lakes being limited to electric trolling motors.

Blue Grass is the smallest and shallowest of the lakes. It has bluegill, bass and catfish, but is best fished early in the year before heavy weed growth. A small boat or canoe is very helpful.

The other walk-in/small boat lake is Lambach. This is an excellent lake for large bluegill, and some good bass action. There is also the possibility of a lunker bass, and a very good chance to catch the carp of a lifetime, especially a grass carp. I've seen grass carp well over 40 pounds in this lake. (Pictured: There are plenty of quality size carp in the lakes, as this angler proudly shows just one of his catches of the day.)

Railroad is one of my favorites. The best time for me is when the bass starts feeding along the riprap areas of the dams. I've taped four television shows on this lake, all of which were very successful. One of the bass shows started with a 5-pounder within 10 minutes after starting, and completed with 30 bass, not one under 1½ pounds. Another was fishing with mulberries for carp and catfish, with some very big carp, and nice size catfish being caught. There are plenty of mulberry trees in the park, so this may be something different for you to try to have some exciting fishing.

Lake of the Hills is the big lake. This is where the



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swimming area and boat rentals are located. All the earlier mentioned species of fish are in this lake. A very successful trout stocking project started in October 2006, and has continued on a spring and fall stocking schedule – so, if you are going to try some of this type of fishing be sure to have purchased a trout stamp to accompany your Iowa fishing license. Anglers wanting to target larger catfish will want to select this lake first. The lake has all the structure a fisherman desire – riprap, drop-offs, submerged brush, island and roadbed, and shoreline wood cover. The deepest point I've found is 22 feet near a sunken island in the middle portion of the lake.

My suggestion to bass anglers going to Hills, Railroad and Lambach are to use shad and crawfish colored crankbaits, black and pumpkin colored plastic worms; black, pumpkin and watermelon tubes; and black/blue and brownish colored jig combinations.

Crappie fishermen will want to go to Hills and Railroad, and use small tubes, Road Runners, 1.5" Gulp Alive Minnows on a 1/32-ounce J-Mac bare shank jig or Panfish Road Runner head, Ratsos, Mini Mites and Crappie Nibbles. Minnows are only allowed in Lake of the Hills, so DO NOT take them to the other lakes, use the aforementioned Gulp Alive Minnows. When using a live minnow in Lake of the Hills, try it on a Daiichi Bleeding Bait or Tru Turn Blood Red hook with a small Thill float and split shot, or straight line it vertically in submerged brush.

While bluegills can be caught in all the lakes, I would go to Lambach first, especially if shore fishing was the method of the day. Small tubes, Natural Science Panfish Road Runners and ice



jigs with wax worms and Crappie Nibbles have worked well. I've also had success on a plain Ratso or small J-Mac bare shank jig with a Berkley Honey Worm as the body – both fished under a float, and allowed to drift/bob with the wind current. Fly fishermen have been observed many times having great success on this lake.

If the vacation has a little longer time, and river fishing wants to be added, then the Mississippi River is within about a 10-minute drive. Either the boat ramps at Sunset Park in Rock Island, IL or at West Lake's sister park (Buffalo Shores) in Buffalo, IA can be used. The Buffalo Shores ramps will provide closer access to the river island backwater areas, while the Sunset Park ramps will be closer to the Credit Island wingdams and upstream trip to the lock and dam area. (Pictured: This bass was caught on a Rat-L-Trap fished along the 280 Dam area of Lake of the Hills – one of only two caught by anglers during an Iowa Conservation Conference fishing

outing. It wasn't huge, but on a tough cool, windy September day, any bass was welcome, especially when it could win a competition.)

If photography is enjoyed, then there will be plenty of opportunities to capture wildlife, sunset/sunrise, scenery and flora shots. Hiking the trails can reveal many of these chances, along with walking along the dams at dusk or dawn to see beautiful sunrise and sunset photo opportunities. Three locations, which I've used for sunrise, are the High Meadows and Morning Sun areas within the park, and the highway 110 sides of Railroad Lake.

During the right time of the year mushroom hunters come out in full bloom. The park has been known to produce some good finds of Morels, along with the smaller "grays". There are several annual events that take place in the park. Two major events in June are the Quad Cities Triathlon, and Kid's Fishing Clinic conducted by the Quad City chapter of In-Fisherman during Iowa's Free Fishing Days. Both draw large participation, as well as spectators.

While on the subject of events, and other things to do, since the park is close to the Quad Cities, this offers even more events and facilities to cover. There are museums of all interests, along with baseball games, concerts and golf courses.

Golf courses bring up another one of the Scott County Conservation' parks - Scott County Park, which is home to the Glynn's Creek – an 18-hole course.

Disc golfers can enjoy an outing on a professional 24 hole course, located in West Lake Park, that extends along both sides of Lake of the Hills.

There are several areas, other than West Lake and Scott County Parks under the Scott County Conservation jurisdiction, which can be included in the vacation. They are the previously mentioned Buffalo Shores (a camping area along the Mississippi River, near the historic Buffalo, IA); Walnut Grove Pioneer Village (an historical area near Scott County Park), which includes the St. Anne's church; the Wapsi Environmental Education Center, along the Wapsipinicon River, near Dixon; and Buffalo Bill Cody Homestead.

It should be mentioned that the campground areas do not take reservations. This is on a first come basis. Pull into the campground and set up the unit on an unclaimed site. Then go into the campground office and register.

For further information about West Lake Park, and any of the other Scott County Conservation areas call (563) 328-3281, or visit their website at www.scottcountyiowa.com/conservation. There is also a lake, trail and aerial photo map on the site.

If you have a question about this or any other fishing subject, drop me a line through the Dan's Fish 'N' Tales® website at www.dansfishntales.com. This site also provides a link to the ODU Magazine website. Another link will take you to the Dan's Fish 'N' Tales® You Tube channel, where you can view some of the TV shows shot on the lakes at West Lake Park. (Pictured: Trout fishing is fun for all ages, as this young angler shows with one of the first fish caught during an October trout stocking.)

Until next time, get out on the water, and enjoy a great day of fishing.



Chasing The Warm Water

By D & B Ice Adventures

Everyone has hit the water and returned home with memories that are unforgettable. Throughout the years, many trips have provided me with both valuable knowledge and treasured memories. My first outing on Lake Champlain this spring with good friend and owner of Fish Hounds Outdoors (www.fishhounds.net), James Vladyka is one that I will never forget.



The bite on the big lake this year has been tough. Although the ice went out early, without an extended period of warm air temperatures, the water temperature has remained relatively cool. So cool actually, that the fish have not really begun to stage up for the spawn which usually occurs at this time. If nothing else they should be staging!

Despite the cooler temperatures, Jamie found a pocket of warmer water the day before. The temperature was pushing 52, which is when fish should really be stacking up around here. Oddly enough, the flatfish did not venture into yet. On the surface, he reported that a few pike were busting baitfish but overall, the baitfish numbers were small as well. With the warmer



water and baitfish, it was only a matter of time until the crappie moved in.

I was in my car and making the almost two-hour trek just after 4 am. Jamie and I wanted to be on the water as early as possible so that we could make the most of the day.

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After grabbing a coffee and freshly made donut, we dumped the trailer and were on the water. As we drove to our destination, we tried to stay positive but talked about the reality that the fish might have not moved in yet and what our back up plans should be. Either way, it was calm over night, and we were hoping that the water temperature held steady so the fish could move in comfortably.

As we put into their staging area, the surface water was flat and no fish were breaking. The temperature had held but there were still no fish. We fished in as far as we could without getting a bite. The water temperature had risen to 54 as we inched into the shallows where they usually spawn. Not wanting to waste time, we started back towards the main lake, and that is when it started to happen.

Looking out towards our exit, we could see a pod of fish working their way in through the channel, busting the surface. Quietly, with the trolling motor, we got within casting range and simultaneously, we both hooked up with our first slabs of the day. After a high five and a quick game plan, we let the wind drift us into a nearby weed mat well within casting range of the channel the fish were using as a corridor.

Because we could see that the crappie was chasing baitfish, the go to bait was a "Live " Baby Shad by Lake Fork Trophy Lures. Not knowing what bait their search image was, I went with the " white is right " slogan we go by on Lake Champlain. To be honest, I don't think it would have mattered what color was below the bobber!



Over the next hour, we caught fish pretty much consistently. The water temperature had risen to over 54 degrees throughout the large cutback, and the fish were feeling it. The more fish that we caught, the more pinpointed our casts could be placed because we knew what route they were running. After a cast or two without a fish, we would both start working the channel up and down trying to hit the next pod working through.

Just as we were getting comfortable and thinking that we were in the clear for the day, the wind started to blow unfavorably. In a matter of 20 minutes, we saw the water temperature go from 54.5 to 47.5 degrees. Another thing that we noticed was that the fish were no longer going in order to stage. Our casts were actually following them back out towards the main lake.

After an hour without as much as a bite, we made a move. We checked a few likely spots for warm

water with no success. Running out of ideas, we settled on all or nothing. We would try the productive morning spot, with hopes that the water warmed back up, and if nothing was happening there, we would head home.

It looked bleak after we made our first pass. Not a fish was to be had. The water was pushing 50 and from the initial looks, it was still warming. We were pretty much running aground when

we saw a welcomed sight. An osprey flew overhead and started zooming in on something by the looks of its flight pattern. On its decent, the anticipation built and when the bird emerged with a slab in its grip, the pressure was off! The fish were on their way, and the water temp was still climbing!

We both sat there going back and forth between the graph (to watch the temperature) and the crappie popping the surface moving our way. The remainder of the trip was pure catching. The crappie was piled from shore to shore top to bottom. It was one of those afternoons where you could do no wrong. Even when other boats moved in to inspect us, and we took our baits, off so they wouldn't see us catch fish, we would. It was truly a mad house. By the end of our marathon, the water temperature topped out at 57.5 degrees!

The moral to the story... Never overlook the temperature when fishing. It sounds basic but even a degree of change can put the fish into a mass migration.

D & B Ice Adventures formed in 2012 with the goal of promoting ice fishing in the Northeast. Since then, we have had requests to extend our posting to include the various modes and successes of softwater fishing. Our Mission is to share tricks and tips that have proved successful in our region. If there is anything you would like to see just let us know!
<http://dbiceadventures.wordpress.com/>



Windy Spaces and Angling Aces

By Tom Neustrom

Build up some speed and a dog will nearly put its head through the window to catch a breeze. Our canine companions lose the sense of place and time, not to mention discipline when the truck starts cooking down the highway. Albeit for different reasons, walleyes will also drop everything when a wind whips up. Instincts take control and nature's programming says the moving air is as well heating up the kitchen.

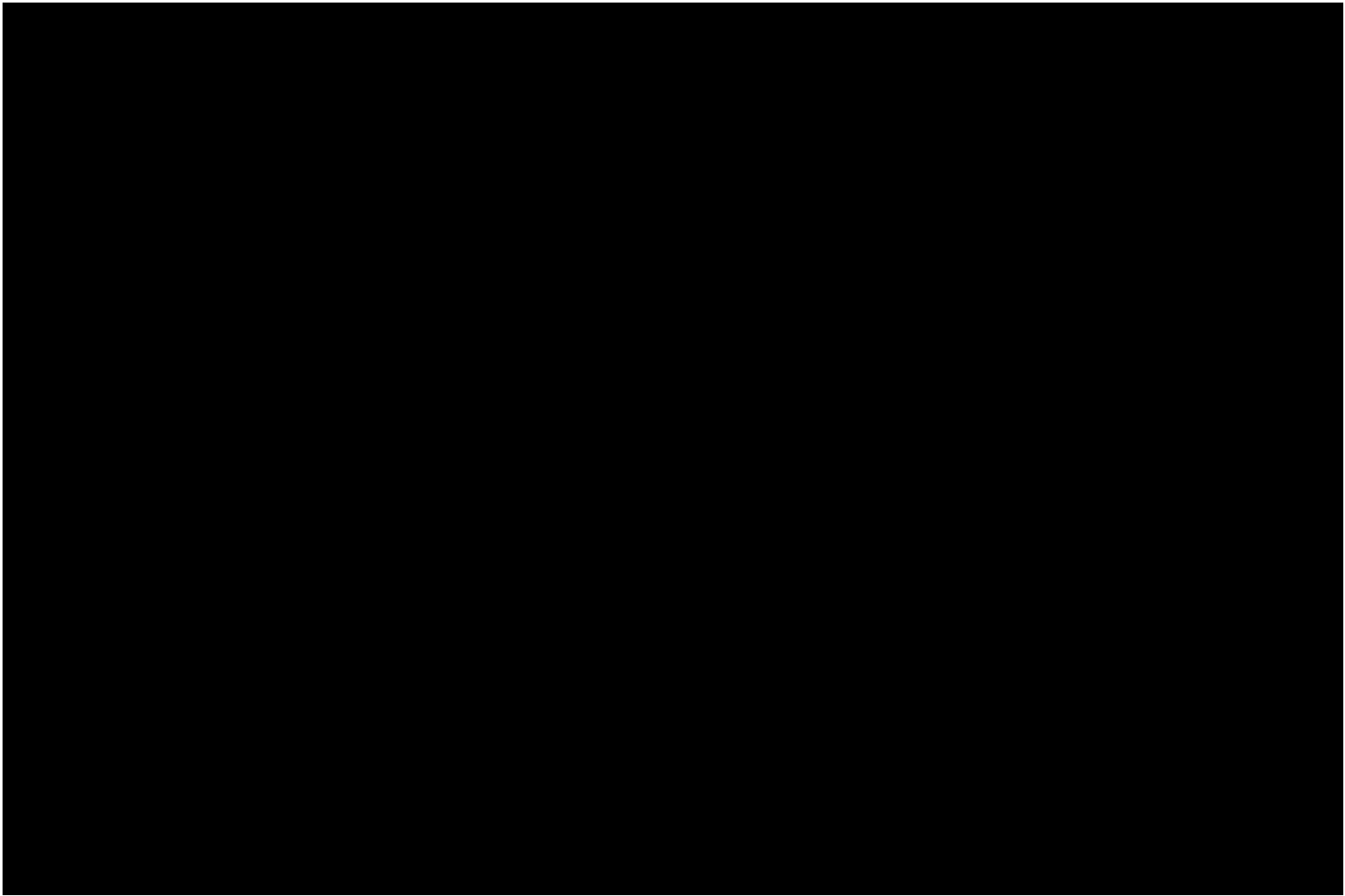
Wind creates what I call a 'food table'; a smorgasbord of consumables. An onshore wind activates the water, spawning an entire food sequence in the shallows. It traps foodstuffs there, too, waves beating against the shore. Walleyes sharpen teeth and tighten their bibs...

Relative to wind and waves, it's also a truism that walleyes prefer moving water. They thrive in rivers. And when relegated to a lake, any sign of agitating water, be it a current or wave action, serves as a summons.

(Pictured: Not long after the spring spawn, large female walleyes return to the shallows and gorge themselves on baitfish. Onshore winds are a strong indicator of where their hunger is being satisfied. Photo courtesy of Frabill)

Wind also causes walleyes to establish in definable areas. On flat calm days, the tendency is for fish to scatter while foraging. Those same fish will consolidate in a gale, establishing on the windward side of structural shallows.

In the spring, wind speed directly affects walleye depth – shallower as it gets windier. The waves break up light penetration, too, which promotes daytime feeding. About the term 'shallow', in my book it means anything 10 feet or less. In colored water, 'shallow' labels depths of only 2 to 5 feet. And I'm constantly reminding folks to never consider a spot too shallow. I've hooked countless walleyes in sub 4 feet, but only with a hearty onshore chop.



Not all wind-pummeled shallows are created equal, though. Tapering breaks are superior to sheer walls – more roiling; more space for baitfish; more walleyes. Best bottoms in my experience feature gravel, small rocks and grassy weeds sprouting from the lake floor. Any combination of the above creates the ‘All American’ spot.

A short real-life story about how wind commands the bite: Couple walleye openers ago, I was plying Minnesota’s Leech Lake — a renowned shallow-water fishery. We boated 33 walleyes for three anglers. (Yes, I keep track.) All were smacked in windblown, weedy- gravel-based shallows. By comparison, some friends of mine opted to fish traditional points and humps. Wind direction wasn’t considered; instead, just beautiful structures on a map. They only scared up two walleyes for three boats. Suffice to say our boat was responsible for dinner.

Even given an onshore wind, I still won’t invests time in the area without first probing electronically. Humminbird’s Side Imaging shoots into the shallows and shows weeds, rocks, walleyes and baitfish – or nothing, and I move along.

Humminbird’s Down Viewing feature literally displays walleyes and baitfish in as little as 5 feet of water. I can cruise along marking the shallow water below while simultaneously, firing a sonar beam even shallower. Now that’s covering water.

Premium Humminbird models also offer something called SwitchFire. The exclusive feature expands sensitivity for graphing shallow water by increasing sonar intensity. Baitfish comes to life. Walleyes are distinct.

What I consider 'fishable' winds are anything out to about 20 MPH – anything over 25 get downright dangerous. Operating in even a 10-MPH wind requires serious boat control. Yes, practice is in order, but offshore so you don't slam into shore during training camp. Backtroll or gun it with the bow-mount Minn Kota. Either way, learn how to hold steady against the wind.

The actual design of the watercraft matters, too. Lund Boats tame wind like none other. Engineered for mitigating rough water, the reverse chines, power strakes and rails on the IPS and IPS2 hulls promote control trolling into a wind and motoring on plane.

Having a number of quality neighborhood fisheries to choose from, I also apply wind direction to the best structure on a properly positioned lake. Some lakes just don't fish well in certain winds. You want wind pelting particular shoreline structures.

How long it takes for consistent wind direction to energize an area varies, however. In calm conditions, wind can activate a spot inside hours. By comparison, it can take 12 to 24 hours for a wind change to take effect. With those beliefs in mind, I monitor wind direction for a couple of days leading up to a fishing trip.

Are some wind directions better than others? Yes, to some degree... steady south and southwest breezes produce best, followed by westerly and then northwest winds. East is okay if it's stable for a couple of days. However, that northeaster is a downer. It usually partners with a fluctuating barometer, and the results are seldom good. Consistent wind, however, plays a more significant and positive role than the actual compass direction.



Honestly, if you nail down the wind thing and are captaining with control, the rest is gravy. Needn't get any more complicated than a jig and minnow. The jig gets you in the money zone. The minnow? it's what's for dinner.

And fish small, or more accurately use as light of jigs as possible. 1/16-ounce jigs offer enough gravitational pull most of the time. Upsize to a 1/8-ounce if smaller jigs are getting blown around. The goal is maintaining control with as light a jig as possible. Light jigs can be fished slower, which is in sync with cold-water walleye feeding behavior.

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My preferred jig is a VMC Mooneye with its long shank and wicked hook – ideal for threading on live shiners or chubs. In weeded zones, the short-shanked VMC Dominator is a better selection.

By and large, I still prefer a premium monofilament over a superline. Six-pound Sufix Siege is my bread and butter for jigging. I will, however, switch to Sufix 832, a superline, in a particularly strong wind. It slices through gusts and doesn't bow as much.

Longer rods are the order of the day. For jigging, I recommend the price-conscious fast-action Daiwa DXW 6' 8" and 7" models. I was involved in the development of the DXW series. Goal was to build a guide quality walleye rod for under \$100. We did it...

Match the DXW with all-around-performing Daiwa Lexa 1500 reel. It, too, performs like a champ at around \$100. The Daiwa Procyon 2000 is the ultimate upgrade, and what I use on most of my combos.

Don't be that guy anchored behind the island. Yes, it's easy and carefree, but sucks for catching walleyes. They thrive in the wind. You have to brace the blow, maneuver in it, and you'll get that peaceful easy feeling back at the dock with fish to show.





Crappies Galore. Navigate the early season, and find hidden spots others miss.

By Ted Takasaki and Scott Richardson

Fishing for crappies offers a spectacular opportunity for early-season fun throughout the upper Midwest. The enjoyment includes not only catching, but eating them as well. Crappies are considered some of the best-tasting fish that swim. Early in spring is a peak time to get them while they're schooled on structure and holding around cover that makes them relatively easy to find.

On larger lakes, crappies will hold in the same bays where anglers were cutting holes in the ice to reach them just a few weeks earlier. The best bays feature water shallower than 10 feet and dark, sandy points and flats where they'll soon be laying their eggs.

Look for the warmest water you can find. Northern (south-facing) dark-bottom bays warm first. Be sure to check bays that receive wind-blown warm surface water. Larger lakes

sometimes have smaller lakes attached to them. That's where you'll find early-season crappies.

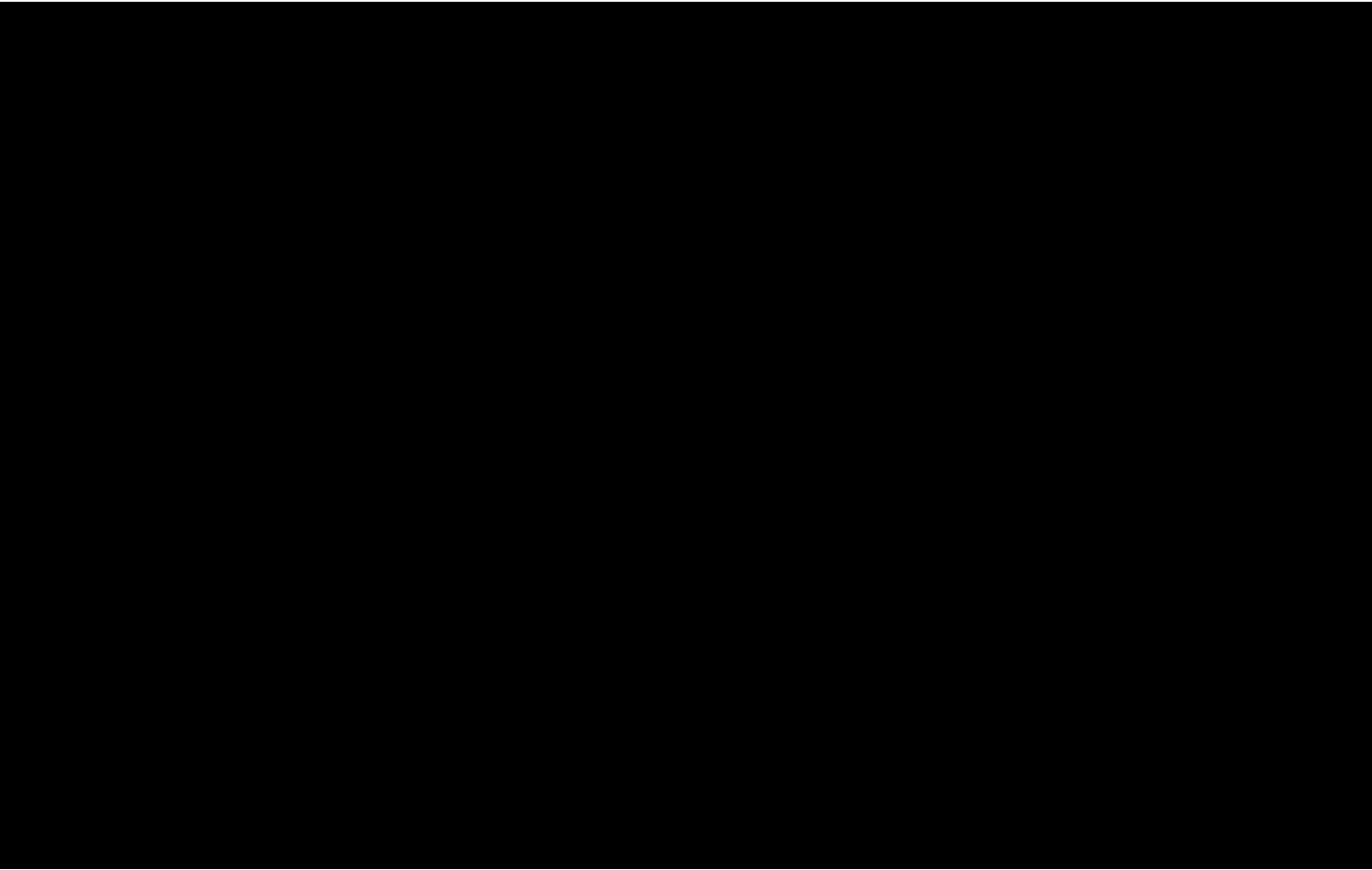
Anglers often overlook a key location in Midwestern reservoirs – feeder creeks. Water warms there first in reservoir systems, so baitfish – followed by crappies – move up to take advantage of food, they find there.

If you're unfamiliar with the creeks, go slow to avoid knocking a lower unit against a stump or a tree that's blown down. The wood, especially wood in very shallow water, will hold crappies. Travel as far back as you can into the creeks and start fishing. Shore anglers can target these areas, too.

Pictured: Hall of famer Ted Takasaki with a slab-and-a-half, a monster crappie that fell for a Thill slip-float rig, fished as described in the article. Follow Ted's ideas and you'll be fast to fish this spring yourself. No matter what the conditions, no matter what stage of the spring.

On main lakes, shallow water takes time to warm early in the year. Save shallow targets until the sun does its job. Early in the day, crappies will merely move higher in the water column over deeper water. Also find crappies along rocky shoreline riprap, if present.

Cover is usually the key. Crappies love wood, whether fallen timber or submerged brush. Exposed wood collects heat from the sun and radiates it to nearby water to ignite



the plankton-batfish-predator food chain. Deeper brush offers concealment as the fish move toward the shallows to feed.

The shallows can be sight fished, but deeper brush piles can be harder to find. Old-timers know to go to likely points, lower a jig and move slowly with the electric trolling motor. This is when a snag is a good thing, because it signals that you’ve found a brush pile. Toss a buoy and you’re in business.

Good news for today’s anglers: there are easier ways to find deeper brush and other cover. Enter the next generation of electronics, such as Humminbird’s Side Imaging technology. The screen details cover like brush piles, stumps, or rocks – out to the sides of the boat, up to 240 feet away. Once you spot a brush pile on the side imager, just drag your cursor over to the brush pile and hit a waypoint. It automatically saves the spot in memory, making it easy to find later. Being able to do this might tick off some old timers, but we always say they have access to the same technology, too!

If the lake features a lot of boat docks, focus on the ones with deep water nearby. Another important spot to check: old weed beds that survived the winter. Methods will vary depending on where and how deep the target is.

One fun way to fish shallow wood is to use a long rod with a quick tip and some backbone, in order to reach out over the tree limbs and drop a Lindy jig with a small crappie minnow into spaces between the branches.

If you need to stay away to avoid spooking fish, use a slip-bobber rig with the Thill Pro Weighted series to let you stay back and still get where you need to go. Use a thread-style bobber stop, a bead, the float and a barrel swivel to a leader of the line lighter than the main one. If you get snagged, you can break off without losing the entire setup. Use enough split-shot in order to balance the float. The key is to get the float to ride just high enough in the water so that you can see it, yet low enough to allow a light-biting crappie to pull it under easily.

During especially tough bites, downsize. Try an ice-style jig, like a Lindy Bug or Toad, dressed with a wax worm under small, Thill floats like the Mini Stealth or Shy Bite.

Rip rap, which warms the water, often holds the most aggressive fish. Use a small jig dressed with a small plastic grub and/or a wax worm or piece of nightcrawler. Move fast along the rocky faces of dams or bridges, casting and let the bait fall to the bottom before slowly retrieving it just over the rocks. Count it down for two reasons. 1) If the bait stops short of the last count, set the hook, because a crappie probably took it while it was falling. 2) Counting down also lets you test shallower depths on subsequent casts to see if crappies are suspended.

Use the same setup to cast over the tops of submerged weeds. Or, drift over the top with slip-bobber rigs. Drop a buoy or enter a waypoint on the GPS when you connect with fish. Soon, you'll have an idea about the size, shape and even direction of travel of the school.

Shallow weeds can be fished like bass anglers do. Simply flip a small jig and plastic into holes in the weeds and reel it back through natural avenues through the weed bed. Target docks by using light, flexible, short rods to "sling-shot" Little Nippers underneath.

As the water continues to warm, look for crappies suspended off the outside weed lines. Cast a Fuzz-E-Grub jig tipped with a minnow and let it fall. Furthermore, check fish cribs with the jig/spinner or a slip-bobber rig. Drifting areas off weed lines with slip-bobbers can also be productive.

One word of caution: contrary to what some believe, panfish populations can take a beating from more and smarter fishermen equipped with the latest technologies. Take only enough for a meal or two. That way, there'll be more for you when you return next weekend – not to mention next spring.

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Downtown Montreal Fishing

By Anthony Badham

We would not necessarily think of Montreal as a fishing destination, but within an hour of downtown lays a world class fishery



that has become more popular. It's a small paradise of 8+ pound Smallmouth Bass, monster Musky, 10+ pound Walleye, masses of Perch, a huge American Shad run and so much more just minutes from the nightlife, architecture and the cultural diversity of the great city of Montreal (*Downtown Montreal background pictured below*).

The St.Laurence River includes Lake St.Pierre, Lake St.Louis and Lake St.Francis, all great fishing destinations with over 70 species of fish to offer. With this abundance of fish and good size captures that include a few of my personal best; 7 lbs 8 oz Smallmouth Bass, 16" Crappie, and a 49" Musky, I have definitely had some great memories fishing in the Montreal area. And then add all the other great species such as Walleye, Pike, Perch, Largemouth Bass and many more.

My trip starts with Montreal Fishing Tours, a fishing guide service based out of Montreal on the magnificent St.Laurence River. Dominic Savard, (*pictured above with a nice smallmouth bass*)



owner and guide, offers a complete service for tourist and locals, from beginners to pro's away from home without a boat. This is the perfect adventure for the whole family or a corporate retreat, MFT caters to all your needs. Dominic offers half days, full days and even evening outings for

the people who can't take a full day off, but who would like to enjoy a few hours of fishing after a hard day's work.

The day starts in the Lachine District, which is just 15 minutes from the Trudeau International Airport and Downtown Montreal. I meet Dominic at the launch as we head out on the Lake St.Louis a portion of the St.Laurence. As we idle out of the marina, we discuss what species to start with first, as Dominic really wants me to sample what the area has to offer. We decide to start out jigging for walleye, as its close by. Within a few minutes, we both have a good start with a couple of 2 pounders at the end of our lines. We continue our walleye hunt with numerous fish in the 1-3 pound range and Dominic lands a nice 5 pounder. Having being out fished at walleye, I suggest moving on to something else, so we head a mile west to a huge flat to catch some smallmouth bass. In no time we are catching fish in the 2.5-3 pound range, but no monsters yet. So we head off the flat and drop

shot the deep area around us and once again Dominic lands a big fish showing me up with a nice smallmouth just shy of 5 pounds... we high-five and I give him the "good job buddy" phrase, but deep inside, I seriously need a big fish now.

As it's time to change spots again, Dominic says, "Hey, let's get lunch", absolutely not knowing what he is talking about. I reply

Author Anthony Badham
with a huge smallmouth





“Sure...” and we head over to the Lachine public launch where Dominic has a catering company deliver lunch for his clients.

After we pick up the meal, we head back out in the middle of the lake and slowly drift while enjoying some really good sandwich's, Dominic explains that because half of his clients are from out of town and are staying at a hotel, they are not equipped to make a lunch and instead of them grabbing a few unhealthy things at a convenience store, he paired up with a local caterer to offer affordable and healthy meals delivered fresh everyday for his clients... What a great idea!

Now that I'm full and refreshed, it's time to catch some largemouth bass, we cross the lake to an area called Peace Island. It's a beautiful place with a variety of birds and wildlife. We are pretty much going thru the vegetation looking for little open water pockets and cast our frogs into them waiting for the fish to bust up and devour our baits. Within a few minutes, I get my first fish, a nice 4 pound largemouth that I'm proud of. While releasing my fish, Dominic has got something big on the line and fighting thru the weeds to try and wrestle his fish to the boat. After a few minutes, a nice pike appears in the 10 pound range with a huge belly. Once again, Dominic takes the lead but, hey, I am still today's largemouth king!

As we continue thru the openings and little canals of vegetation, I start throwing a spinnerbait and catch numerous largemouths in the 2-3 pound size and few pike in between. Almost every fish I see I can catch, so I ask Dominic what's up with the crazy fish here. He explains that not that many anglers target the largemouth and pike on Lake St-Louis as the walleye and perch fishery is what it's known for. So I suggest we try some perch. We pick up and travel back towards the Lachine and stop a few miles out where huge rock piles are in the middle of the lake. We tie on some microtubes and cast just off the edge of the rocks. Before the baits can hit

the bottom, we both have perch on the lines. In less than 15 minutes of this technique, we have caught over 20 perch, including a few good ones over 13 inches.

Still thinking of Dominic kicking my butt, I suggest stopping back at the walleye spot before heading in. We catch a few more nice fish, but I just can't beat the 5 pounder he caught earlier, so I gracefully accept that my guide has out-fished me! Home water advantage I guess.

We get back to the launch area and trailer the boat. Dominic suggests a snack, right across from the launch is Dairy Queen. How can I say no? As we walk over, I see that all along the street there are nice little restaurants right on the waterfront, a bike path, parks and so much to do.

The benefit of having such a good fishery so close by is the opportunity to enjoy all that Montreal has to offer for the entire family; great shopping, museums, beautiful architecture, Mont Royal, the Habs, La Ronde theme park, St.Catherine Street and it's festivities, the Biodome, Basilica Notre-Dame, the Olympic Village, Just for Laughs festivals, the Casino and so much more. Spend a weekend or even a week and become enchanted with the great city of Montreal and it's fishing. There's fishing and activities for everyone year round.

So after such a beautiful day, I would like to thank Dominic from Montreal Fishing Tours and the great service he provides. He offers pick up service from downtown or the airport, catered meals delivered to the launch, certified guiding boat, all the equipment necessary, even shore lunch's are available upon request, all that plus lots of fish... and lots of fun!

Montreal Fishing Tours, www.montrealfishingtours.com, 514-742-1553, info@montrealfishingtours.com. For further information, regarding this article or to contact Anthony Badham directly, please visit www.anthonyjohnoutdoors.com.



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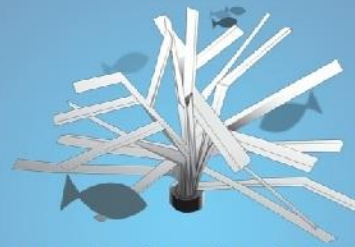
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