

May/June 2014  
Late Spring Fishing

**Drop a  
Line to a  
Trophy**

  
**ODU MAGAZINE™**

**Spring  
Bullhead  
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**Musky Fishing On A  
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**Ten Tips to Catch More  
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**Seven Great  
Techniques for Spinner**



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I believe that spring has finally sprung, and today I heard one of the talk-show hosts give this season a new name Spriwinter. I guess that's because we are still having snowstorms thrown in with tornados, golf ball sizes' hail and spring flooding. From the reports, I have been receiving; the fishing has been just about the same. One day, you blank and the next day you cash a check. My point is saying all of this is I try and find some type of consistency in everything that occurs and this instance the only consistency is that it's

always inconsistent. That's probably why we call it fishing instead of catching. However, the one thing that I know for sure is the more I go fishing the better the odds are that I will catch some fish. So get out and do some fishing so it will turn into catching.

Please fish safely and responsibly and don't forget to wear your life jacket. It may just save your life!

Please introduce someone new to the outdoors this year.

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Larry Thornhill, Editor Chief, 919-603-5681

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**Photos:** Cover provided by [Snag Proof Lures](#). Index pages provided [Vexilar](#).

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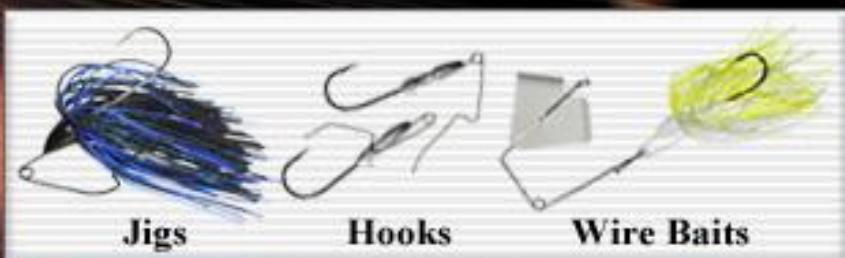
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# *Seven Great Locations and Techniques for Spinner Baits*

*By Capt Jake Davis*

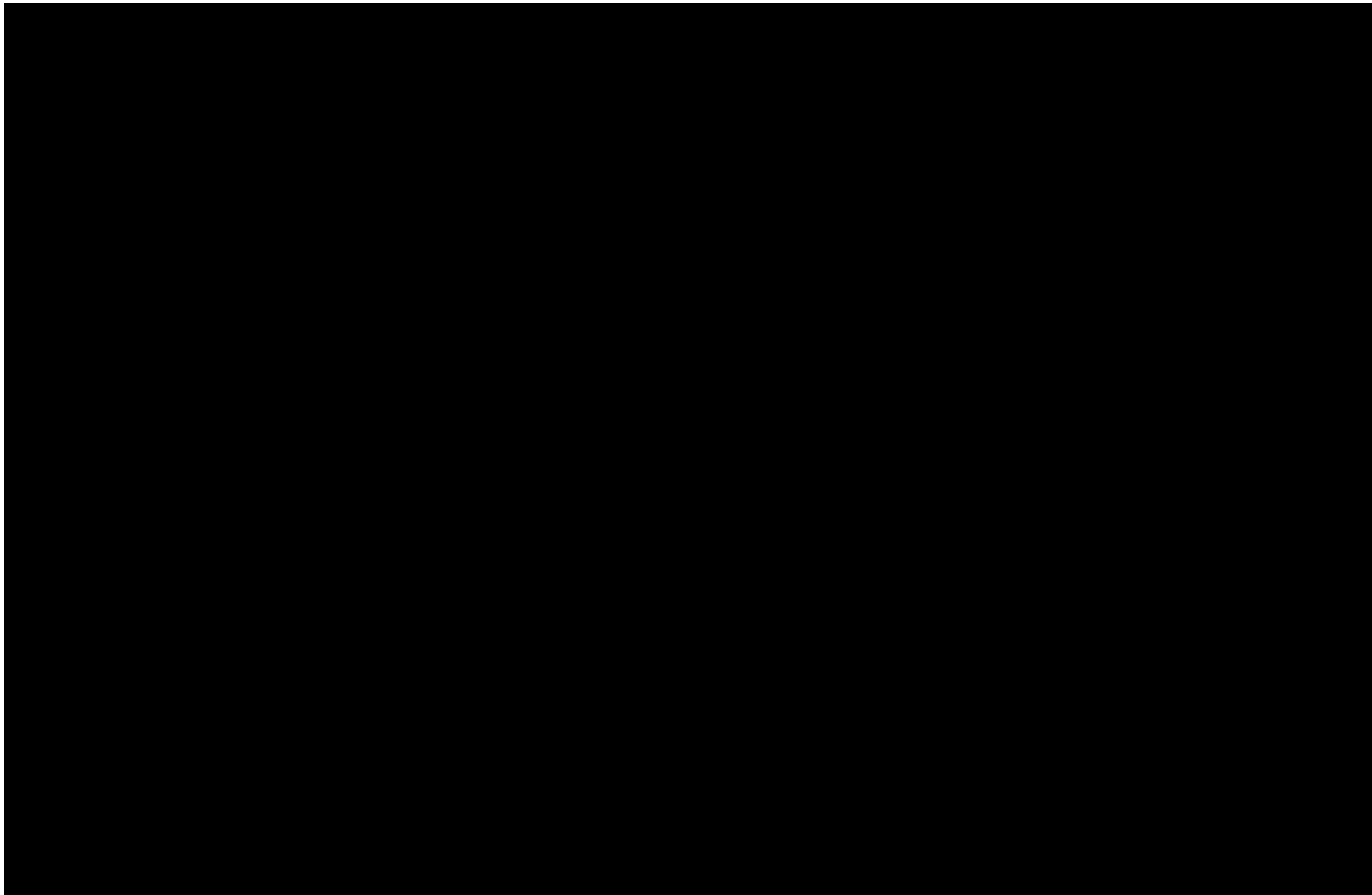
It's been said that you can use a spinner bait just about everywhere and under any conditions...I believe that to be fact. Anglers can fish this bait in everything from shallow water to deep summer time ledges. We fish it in open water or around heavy timber-grass-rock and other obstacles. You can burn it-slow roll it-crawl it or use a yo-yo retrieve. Here is seven proven locations and techniques in which I employ a spinner bait. Nothing is absolute and this is just a few suggestions and I'm sure there are other techniques and locations that might work even better for you on the water. To find those it just takes time on the water and patience.

**1) Grass:** Absolutely my favorite area to fish spinner baits is in standing weeds along the main and secondary channels on Lake Guntersville. Some of these weed lines are in very shallow water-some will extend out into 10-14 feet of water or more. In May, Shad use these grass lines located on flats very near channel drops to spawn. Focus on these key areas early and late in the day as well as cloudy days. As the sun comes up I concentrate on the outside "deeper" edges (the shady side) of the grass weaving the spinner bait through as much of the vegetation as possible. On windy days when it is blowing directly into the weeds, bass will stage more to the outside edges of the weed line. When this is the situation I always start there no matter the time of day or what amount of cloud cover I have. Lure speed and technique varies you may have to adjust several times before finding what the fish want. I will normally start with a yo-yo

retrieve working the entire water column; most strikes come on the fall. One of my favorite spinner baits for grass lines is the Assassinator "Clacker" Spinner Bait...this unique spinner bait is designed so that the blade actually hit together causing an erratic action followed by one of the most vicious spinner bait strikes an angler can get.

**2) Lay down Timber:** On lakes such as Tim's Ford or the upper end of Lake Guntersville fallen timber can be the only type of cover a bass has to ambush prey. Some of the limbs will be visible while much of it may not. On Tim's Ford, the top of the tree can be over water as deep as 60 foot or as shallow as 4 foot. On Lake Guntersville fallen timber provides a great current block offering a great location for bass to rest. Some of this timber will remain stationary all the time. Some of it will move with the rise and fall of the lake level. Absolutely never pass up fallen timber in the backs of coves, pockets or timber that

is wedged in and around docks and piers. Anglers should always make repeated casts to the shaded portion of the timber trying to stay as parallel as possible. Work the timber completely-pick it apart section by section starting at the outside edges first. Let your spinner bait helicopter (free-fall) down in and around intersections of limbs where it is attached to the trunk. Hold on!!



**3) Stump Fields:** First, good pair of polarized sunglasses are a must for fishing stumps. On visible stumps, I always make my cast on the shaded side well beyond the stump. By casting past the stump you are less likely to spook the fish and you can work the side and back of the stump at the same time. In some cases you'll need to crash the spinner bait into the stump. Some stumps have very little root system attached-while others might have an extensive system. Guntersville and Tim's Ford are full of "Text Book" example of stumps situated directly on a creek channel bank or bluffs. Many of the stumps were 2 to 5 feet across in 4 to 25 foot of water and some have extensive roots still attached. Areas like these will produce fish over and over again throughout the year.

**4) Bluffs:** One of first mistakes that many fishermen make is staying too far off the bluff wall with their boats. I have found to fish these areas correctly no matter what the water color is you have to fish parallel so close that you can reach out and touch the bluff with your hands. By doing this you keep your bait in the strike zone all the way. Work the ledges of these bluffs by slow rolling the spinner bait trying to stay in contact with the rock and wood as much as possible. Watch for changes in the bluff wall such as indentations and rock slides. Indentions are recessed areas in the face of the wall that will give you two defined corners for bass to ambush from as well as the recessed area that can hold timber or a series of stair step ledges. Rock slides on a bluff are almost always a signal that the water around the side will be shallower and hold bait fish and crayfish continually.



# Mid-South Bass Guide

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**5) Rip Rap Areas:** Much like fishing a bluff you should make your cast parallel to the structure. Rip rap areas hold bait fish-crawfish and cover for bass. While most of these areas tend to look the same look for areas of the rip rap that is different from everything else around it. Pay special attention to small points that extend out even slightly, Logs that have wedged themselves in close to the bank and weed lines that extends a foot or more out from the rocks. It's this type of areas that seem to hold the most fish. If the section of rip rap you are fishing has a culvert or bridge on it, be sure to work all four corners and pillars/supports of the bridge. You will also need to determine if there is current coming through the culvert or bridge. If current is present the four corners of rip rap under the bridge tend to be more productive.

**6) Points:** Most lakes will have "Points" located in various areas of the lake. Using a spinnerbait on points can be some of the most rewarding areas of any lake to fish. Points offer bass a change in depth which leads from shallow to deeper water and helps hold bass on them year around. Points that extend out into the lake and then take a sudden drop tend to be more productive than others. Position the boat over the deeper water but close enough to reach the shallow portion of the point with a long cast. To effectively fish these areas you must make repeated casts going a little deeper and a little deeper to

ensure that I have worked to area completely. I then move my boat where I can work both sides and the center portion of the point. If you are night fishing slow rolling a  $\frac{3}{4}$  ounce Black/Red Spinner Bait with a number 6 or 7 single Colorado Blade. Points especially if they have a brush pile or a few stumps on them can be good all year around-spring -summer-fall and winter.







**7) Boat Docks:** I refer to fishing docks as going to the mattresses' simply because docks can offer bass Shade, Cover, and a food source such as

bait fish. This may seem evil but watch for crappie fishermen on select docks...these docks normally are more productive than others. Work the spinner bait parallel slowly against outside edges of the dock-letting it drop and then pick it back up varying the speed. Always work inside the covered area of the dock as much as possible. Many times if bass are suspended under the dock the helicopter action of the spinner bait blades will provoke a reaction strike.

**Equipment and Rigging:** For almost all locations and applications, I will use 12 pound test Vicious Ultimate co-ploy spooled on a 5.4-1 or 6.4-1 Lew's reel mounted on a 6'9" to 7'3" Medium Heavy Duckett Fishing Rod. I will change up to 30 or 50 pound test Vicious Braid when the grass gets up thick such as in late June. The medium heavy rod provides for a good feel of the spinner blades turning as sometimes you going to find the first hint of the bite will be loss of the vibration of the blades. As for spinner baits, I tend to stay with White or White Chartreuse in 3/8 to 3/4 ounce sizes unless I'm fishing

deep ledges than you will need a 1-1 1/2 ounce to get down to the depth you need. Brands include Assassinator, Terminator and Punisher Spinner Baits.

Spinnerbaits have been and always will be one of the most versatile baits that you will ever have in your tackle box. Hopefully, you will employ some of the tactic's above which I know for a fact can result in productive days on the water.

Capt Jake Davis is a USCG Licensed Professional Fishing Guide on Lake Guntersville and Tim's Ford.

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# Ice-Out 'Eyes....

## *Foolproof Early Season Walleye Tactics*

By Daniel Quade

Wherever open season allows the pursuit of walleyes, early spring is prime time for tapping one of the year's best bites. Thanks to the spawning migration, big numbers of fish gather in predictable places, offering savvy anglers a shot at banner catches.

For veteran fishing guide Jason Muche, the open-water period's early days mean finding places where lake-run 'eyes focus on warm inflows. On his home waters of Wisconsin's famed Lake Winnebago Chain and Lake Michigan's Green Bay, that means keying on tributaries such as the Wolf and Fox rivers.



"Walleyes get fired up by flowing water," he explains. "They feel that current coming in and start staging. They'll run up into the tributaries, stopping at or funneling through certain areas on their way to spawning areas below dams or in backwater areas."

Sometimes this migration covers many miles. It's also not uncommon for walleyes in large rivers like the Mississippi to swarm upstream into smaller rivers, where their migration stalls only when they hit an obstacle such as a low-head dam.

"When the water temperature reaches 42 to 47 degrees, walleyes focus on spawning," Muche said. "Prior to that, they're on their way upriver. Afterward, they drop downstream and eventually scatter into the main body of water."

Shortly after the ice releases its grip on the lakes, when water temps hover in the mid to upper 30s, Muche goes to work putting clients on walleyes and saugers. He looks for areas where the fish pause



during their upstream run. Holes, breaklines, wing dams and eddies or current seams adjacent to a bridge abutment or other current break are all potential drop zones.

One of Muche's classic scenarios is a breakline dropping from 4 to 10 feet of water, with a bottom structure consisting of clam beds, rocks or sand.

"I jig right on bottom in 10 feet, close to the break," he says.

Muche's main weapon is a ¼- to 3/8-ounce Lindy Jig. Size varies according to water depth, current strength and the skill set of the angler holding the rod.

"The ability to maintain contact with the bottom and keep your line absolutely vertical are keys to it all," he says, explaining that a heavy jig is easier for aspiring river rats to handle, especially in fast flows or deep water.

Boat control is also critical. Rather than hover in one place and wait for walleyes to come to him, Muche moves downstream along the break. He uses the trolling motor to slip down-current just fast enough to keep the line vertical. Keeping the bow of the boat into the wind helps him with boat control.

"Chartreuse-orange, chartreuse-green and all-chartreuse are my favorite jig colors at this time of year, and I tip them with a 3-inch fathead or shiner minnow," he said. "Both work well, but fatheads stay alive longer."



## Recycled Fish

### S.A.F.E. Angling Tackle

The ideas presented as S.A.F.E. Angling are not original, but a compilation of "best practices" by all types of anglers. These ideas benefit the weekend angler with limited time and money, as well as the professional tournament angler in both freshwater and saltwater. S.A.F.E. angling benefits not only our waterways and the fish in them, but the angler as well.

Here are our top 10 S.A.F.E. Suggestions as pertaining to tackle:

1. Switch to [barbless hooks](#)
2. Use [single hooks](#) instead of trebles
3. Begin converting to tackle that does not contain lead, especially [weights and split-shot sinkers](#)
4. If you fish soft plastics, switch to the emerging [biodegradable molded baits](#) (best) or as another good alternative, the super-tough, shred and tear resistant plastics.
5. Use super glue, a toothpick, or a lure accessory designed to help [hold trailers onto a hook](#)
6. Try "[Quick-Strike](#)" rigs for trolling live and dead bait presentations
7. [Circle or Kahle style hooks](#) with live- and deadbait rigs.
8. A rod, reel and line matched to the fish you're pursuing will allow for a [timely landing of fish](#).
9. Knotless [rubber mesh nets](#)
10. Get a [de-hooking tool](#) that allows you to release fish in-water with minimal contact.

This is gear you can start using right away to help our fish and fisheries, if you're not already. For practices that will help, click here.

To hook the bait, he presses on the minnow's gills to open the bait's mouth. Next, he runs the hook through the mouth and out one of the gills, then slides the minnow up against the jighead. To complete the rigging, he runs the point from the bottom of the minnow alongside the spine and out just behind the dorsal fin. This keeps the bait lively yet secure on the hook.

Muche's jigstrokes hinge on the bottom composition. Dragging a jig in areas with rocks, wood and other debris results in frequent snags, so he executes a bottom-hopping cadence that mimics a minnow pecking at the substrate.

"You don't want the jig jumping up 8 inches and slamming back down," he says, explaining that such leaps are unnatural in the cold-water riverine environment. "Keep



it close to bottom, slowly jiggling it in 2- to 4-inch strokes.”

Muche lets the jig fall on a controlled descent with no slack in the line. Drop the rod tip the same speed the jig is falling so the line is taut or bowing just a tad. This allows you to feel bottom contact better, which is very important because if you don’t feel the jig touch bottom, you’ll tend to keep letting out line until the jig is dragging way behind the boat and getting hung up. During the early season, bites are typically light.

“Three-quarters of the time, you don’t even know you’ve been bit,” he says. “You simply feel a spongy weight on the line when you start to raise the jig.”

When he feels that sensation, Muche often pauses a second or two before setting the hook to give the fish time to take the bait. But if you feel a solid thunk, set right away, he says.



As the water warms into the low 40s and the spawn draws near, Muche shifts shallower and adds small crankbaits to his repertoire.

“Casting cranks into shoreline timber is a great big-fish pattern right now, because large females slide shallow and set up in the limbs prior to the spawn,” he said, noting that rocks and riprap banks can be hot, too.

When working wood, Muche holds his boat just off the downed tree and fires casts into open pockets. Bring it back with a slow to medium retrieve. His favorite bait for such situations is a small Lindy River Rocker in shades of perch or polished gold.

Other tactics also hold water for the early bite, including dragging minnow-tipped jigs over sand flats with the line at a 45-degree angle behind the boat.

“That will get you a mix of walleyes and saugers,” Muche says, adding with a grin, “But it better be a clean bottom or you’ll spend more time tying on new jigs than reeling in fish.”





# ***Spinning for Trout***

**By Brad Wiegmann**



Fly fishing for trout is greatly overrated. Sure the complexity and art of casting maybe intriguing to a few, but should trout fishing really be so challenging? That's probably why so many anglers use spinning tackle instead when fishing for trout.

Trout fishing below manmade dams continue to draw thousands of novices to expert anglers out fishing every year. Tailwaters below manmade dams form some of the best trout fishing streams across America. In these cold waters consistently stocked with catchable trout serve not only as a source of angling entertainment, but also a delicious meal.

One popular destination for trout anglers is the White River. Trout anglers come from across the United States to fish this river in northern Arkansas. It's renowned for outstanding rainbow and brown trout fishing

below Bull Shoals Dam in the prestigious Ozark Mountains.

"I have guided for 30 years now on the White River below Bull Shoals Dam for trout. Every year anglers come to fish this great fishery. Some I take out will use fly fishing tackle, but the majority of them use spinning tackle," said White River trout fishing guide Frank Saksa.

Saksa is one of the knowledgeable and expert trout fishing guides that's employed by Gaston's Resort on the White River. His client ranges from experienced to novice. For Saksa it doesn't matter as long as he can put them on fish and the clients catch them.

His specialty is using artificial lures to catch trout. Some days can be challenging, but Saksa always finds a technique and lure that will catch them.

"My three favorite lures are marabou jigs, small spoons and stickbaits."

The marabou jigs will weigh from 1/16- to 1/8-ounce. What size he uses depends on current flow and depth fishing. His favorite colors are black, white and brown.



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He prefers having clients fish with small spoons when fishing for numbers of rainbow trout. "I really like how easy it is for clients to catch trout with small spoons like the Buoyant spoon made by Thomas Spinning Lures in gold/red (pictured). All they have to do is get the right speed retrieve and its seductive wobble seduces trout into biting," said Saksa.



Stickbaits are Saksa's favorite lure for catching big rainbow or brown trout. He likes either a floating or suspending version 3- to 5-inches long in river slick, rainbow or sucker minnow color patterns matching the natural forage base. Saksa noted that at least three units being discharged from the dam was imperative for angling success when fishing a stickbait.



When it comes to tackle for trout fishing Saksa likes spinning tackle. He favors a fishing rod with a soft tip allowing anglers to cast jigs, spoons and stickbaits long distances.

On a recent trip out trout fishing with Saksa, we used the WaveSpin Reels ([www.wavespinreel.com](http://www.wavespinreel.com)) Legend 250 and DHxL spinning reel. Both were spooled up with six pound test monofilament fishing line, however, Saksa recommends that anglers spool up with 4-, 6-, or 8-pound fluorocarbon fishing line for better results. "Fluorocarbon fishing line sinks allowing the lure to stay in the right strike zone longer and that equals in to more bites," said Saksa.

Because of the lighter fishing line and tendency for line twist or tangles, Saksa emphasized a high quality reel. He also uses reels with superior drag systems allowing him to land even the biggest of trout swimming in the White River. His preference was the larger sized WaveSpin DHxL with its larger spool size compared to the smaller Legend 250, but loved both with a clicking drag release system.

"I also like a reel that makes noise when a fish is pulling on the drag of a spinning reel. It lets me know if the fish is pulling against the drag and how big the trout maybe without seeing it. There's nothing better than to hear that drag being pulled out," said Saksa

All WaveSpin Reels feature the guaranteed no tangle technology. It's an exclusive spinning reel designed to eliminate tangles, loops





or bird nests. In addition to a super smooth, durable drag system able to handle big trout in a strong current.

When fishing on the White River, Saksa encouraged anglers to pay attention to water flow. "You just have to change

lures as the conditions change. In the end, presentation is the most important thing when it comes to fishing for trout in the White River," said Saksa.

Simplicity is the key to catching and having fun trout fishing. Spinning tackle allows anglers the opportunity to cast and catch trout on artificial lures without challenging them. For novice and expert anglers that's what it's all about casting, hooking and landing fish.



# Bass Haven

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## WEBSITE SPOTLIGHT BASS HAVEN, CANADA

By Dale Hainer

home uniting Southern Ontario anglers and hunters and rapidly spread to Midwest USA including Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky and beyond.

No other BBS sees as much friendly traffic as [www.basshavencanada.com](http://www.basshavencanada.com). With strict moderation, the spammers and scammers are kept at bay while outdoor enthusiasts share and exchange reports and ideas. The member BUY and SELL feature has certainly maintained and created many new sport-community relationships.



Stop in and say "Hi, I am new" and get ready for the greetings and hugs!

Bass Haven Canada was created by owners Dennis and Cathy Shaw for a place to promote their recreational outfitting, supply and camp business in Mitchell Bay Ontario Canada. It served well as the Shaw's announced new product arrivals, current availability of bait, special sales, etc. With greater perceptions, Shaw added current wind, water, wave and weather reports as well as a daily outdoors update of current local conditions

By attaching a BBS to the site, it quickly became a cyber-







# *THE CHATTAHOOCHEE IS THE BLOOD OF GEORGIA, ALABAMA AND FLORIDA*

**By Bill Vanderford**

Creeks. Also, Spoilcane Creek runs down from the vicinity of Unicoi Gap alongside Highway 75 north of Robertstown. It can be seen from the highway, and is easy for anyone to fish.

Most of the mainstream of the upper Chattahoochee River is in the WMA and can be accessed from Forest Service Road 52. This section has both wild trout and stocked rainbows, browns and brooks during the season.

From the Highway 75 Alternate Bridge at Robertstown south through the town of Helen, one can now catch stocked trout year-round. This is an especially popular and scenic stretch of the river, and can be

Since the first trickle of a stream that biologists consider the extreme headwaters of the Chattahoochee River actually begins in hills of North Georgia, fabulous fishing opportunities are abundant from north of Helen to Lake Seminole. At that point, the Chattahoochee joins the Flint to become the Apalachicola River prior to pouring its fertile waters into the Gulf of Mexico.

Though only accessible to the toughest of the trout fishing clan because of the remoteness of the area, the upper Chattahoochee and Henson Creek are still home to some of the last native eastern brook trout in the southeast. Farther down, one can catch both stocked and native rainbow trout in Low Gap and Jasus



extremely busy with canoe or tube traffic at times. Nevertheless, it is a good place for dad to fish while the wife and kids enjoy the carnival atmosphere and great shopping in the Alpine village of Helen.

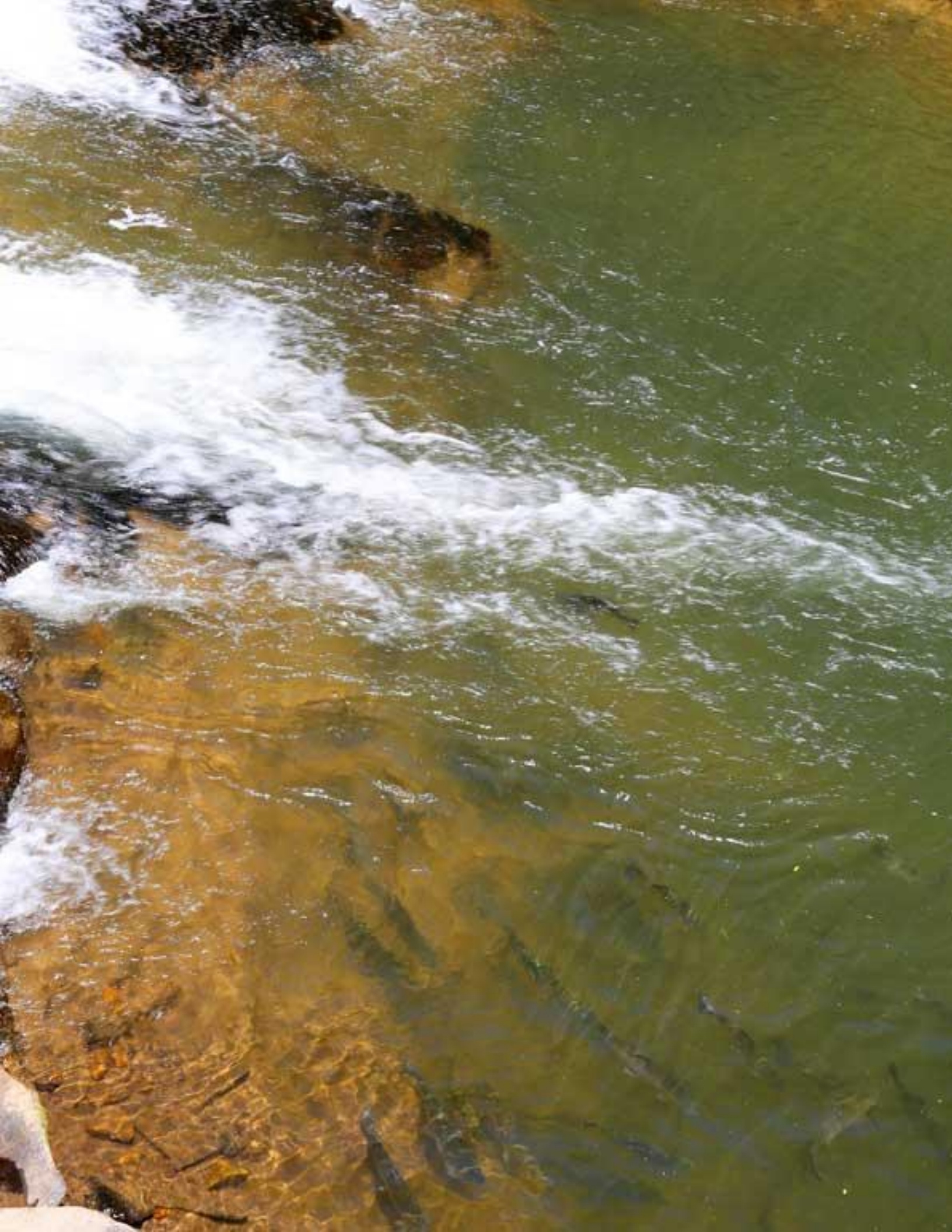
Fishing is not allowed in the immediate vicinity of the falls and store at historic Nora Mills. Also, the river



from below Nora Mills down to the Highway 255 Bridge along the White/Habersham County line has poor public access, and private landowners often take offense to trout fishermen or whitewater enthusiasts that come in contact with their property. By putting in at the Highway 255 Bridge, however, one can float a beautiful section of the Chattahoochee that meanders through long quiet stretches that are only broken by occasional rapids. This section of the river from Highway 255 down to Highway 115 Bridge is about five miles long and can be navigated by most any experienced person with a canoe, kayak, rubber raft or float tube.

The only dangerous spot is the Smith Island Rapid, which is about three miles into the float. It is a Class II rapid that is usually run by staying left for the first two ledge series, then moving right for the bottom chute, which empties into a picturesque pool with a grotto-like setting. If the water level is









above three feet, the right side of the island is also navigatable, but be sure to maintain a route that is right of center.

Larger flies, streamers, small spinners or the smallest floating or sinking injured minnow lures are best on this first fishable section of the Chattahoochee below Helen. One can usually catch a few of the small stocked trout, but will occasionally hook a trophy-sized rainbow or brown trout.

Though extremely exciting to navigate, the section down from Highway 115 contains

plenty of choice hiding places for big trout and shoal bass. These fish will hit streamers, Swirleybird spinners, small crankbaits and floating or sinking injured minnow lures.

From the Duncan Bridge all the way to Lula Bridge is another all day float, which has been handled by many novice boaters. A few rough shoals are encountered, but none that are too dangerous for anyone using good common sense.

Trout on this section of the river are few and far between, but when caught, they usually exceed seventeen inches in length. Instead of the trout, however, many fat, acrobatic shoal bass are caught with the same lures employed for the trout.

Great trout fishing also exists from below Buford Dam to the mouth of Peachtree Creek in northwest Atlanta. Much of this section of the river maintains a healthy population of resident brown and rainbow trout, but the Georgia DNR also stocks heavily during the trout season from April through October. Summer trout in the lower river are often caught easily with any number of dry flies or wet flies. Small spinners or crankbaits produce plenty of trout as well.

The warmer days of summer often find trout anglers traveling to faraway destinations to beat the heat and find better fishing. The beauty that Sidney Lanier described in his poem, Song of the Chattahoochee, so long ago, however, is still within easy reach for any angler. The river is always cool and comfortable, and the trout and bass fishing is always great!

Bill Vanderford has won numerous awards for his writing and photography, and has been inducted into the National Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame as a Legendary Guide. He can be reached at 770-289-1543, at [ifish51@aol.com](mailto:ifish51@aol.com) or at his web site: [www.georgiafishing.com](http://www.georgiafishing.com).





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# NORTHERN PIKE EARLY IN THE SUMMER

By Bob Jensen

Across the Midwest, anglers have lots of fishing options. There are a good number of different fish species to catch, and there are a lot of different ways to catch the different species of fish. One species of fish that doesn't get a lot of attention is the northern pike. Most anglers catch a lot of small pike by accident, but much of the time we don't target them. If you would like to get in on some good pike action, following are some ideas to do so.



First of all you need to be on good pike water. Fortunately, there are quite a few places to catch pike. Some of those places have good numbers of mid-size pike, fewer have good numbers of the truly big ones. In the smaller rivers that criss-cross the Midwest a six or seven pound pike is a good one: In the larger, deeper lakes, thirty eight to forty inchers can be taken. You'll need to determine your tackle and your expectations accordingly.

Keep in mind that pike are the first fish to spawn in most bodies of water. That means they'll also be the first fish to really go on the bite after the spawn. They'll seek out marshy areas to spread their eggs. After the spawn they move to deeper water close to their spawning grounds. This is where we'll look for them in late spring and early summer.





There are a bunch of presentations that will trigger pike this time of year, but if you throw a spinnerbait or a suspending minnow type bait, you'll have a good chance to get bit. If you're fishing waters where the pike don't grow as big, throw a quarter or three-eighths ounce Reed-Runner spinnerbait or a smaller Salmo Sting minnow bait. If you're in a big pike neighborhood, use a Magnum Reed-Runner or the larger Salmo Sting. Both will take pike, you just need to find

out if they're showing a preference on that particular day.

In stained water it's not unusual to feel the pike swipe at and miss your lure. When you feel this happen, keep reeling: The pike will come back. Bright colors, orange or chartreuse are good stained water colors.

A Flippin' Rod teamed with braided line is great for throwing spinnerbaits, although you can get by with a lighter rod when you're fishing the waters where smaller pike are most abundant. Choose appropriate line as well: Fifty pound test braid is about the minimum in big pike water.

Truly big pike are not so common in most waters. It's important to put the mid-size to big ones back.

It's also not a bad thing to keep a couple of the smaller ones. Filleted and prepared properly, they are excellent on the table. There are a good number of ways to prepare pike for the table or for snacking, and there are a good number of places to catch pike. Give them a shot and I'll bet that once you experience some success with them, you'll get after them more frequently.



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# Drop A Line To A Trophy

By Carrie Cartwright



Have you ever wondered how anglers catch big small mouth bass time after time? Well, you are not alone. I think we are all in the same boat. I live close to the north shore of Lake Erie where trophy size smallmouth bass are in abundance.

Professional anglers from both sides of the border are all too familiar with the Drop Shot! This technique caught me my largest bass to date which is a 6.4 pound smallmouth bass and has produced good bags of fish on tournament day. I continue to use the drop shot as one of my favorable techniques to catch many different species of fish. The drop shot allows a natural presentation which fish just cannot resist.

When it comes to choosing a rod and reel for the drop shot a 6 ½-

7 foot rod with a soft tip is a wise choice plus a reel that has good drag pressure. I use the Okuma Helios 7 foot medium/light rod with the Okuma Helios reel [www.okumafishing.com](http://www.okumafishing.com). Each type of line serves a



different purpose, if you are ever unsure on what to use don't hesitate to ask or invest the money. It can mean the difference between a day on the water and a day catching fish. Eight to ten pound test fluorocarbon is perfect for drop shotting. As it has little to no stretch and is invisible in clear water. Then choose your drop shot weight according to how deep you may be fishing and time of the year. For



example early season fish may only require a  $\frac{1}{4}$  oz. weight. Whereas fall time fishing may require a heavier weight such as a  $\frac{1}{2}$  -  $\frac{3}{4}$  oz. for deeper depths.

The whole purpose of the drop shot is to have the bait suspend over the weight. Using 'Zero Twist Hooks' by StringEase makes tying up the hook much easier than the traditional drop shot hook and Palomar Knot. Once the hook is tied on, take the weight and put it down the line from the hook approximately 18 – 24 inches away. Simply thread the line through the weights hanger and pull up so it sits snugly on the line. This is what I like to call a traditional drop shot set up. However depending on where the fish are located you can always adjust the length from the hook to the weight.

There are many different drop shot baits to choose, I have used anything from wacky rigging a rubber worm to my all time favorite 'The Slammer' from X-Zone Lures.





([www.xzonelures.com](http://www.xzonelures.com)) The 'slammer' is the number one drop shot bait on the Great Lakes.

Whichever bait you choose to drop shot with, be sure not to overwork the bait. After you cast your bait out, allow your weight to make contact with the bottom, tighten up your line with your weight still remaining in contact with the

bottom. Then slowly work the bait back to where you are fishing from. When you feel a change up in your line, reel up and set the hook. It doesn't have to be a hard hook set to be effective. With using a small hook the fish basically hooks itself. Have your drag set so the fish can swim but, still make sure there is plenty of pressure on the line.

The drop shot is a method that any angler can be successful on. It's all about concentration and being able to detect the bite. I am confident that once you try the drop shot you will be hooked on it!

Carrie is fierce when it comes to fishing and is always on top of her game. Her favorite fishing memory was when she left on the dock by her Dad, Uncle and brother. The moment that transpired that evening became a defining moment in her life. Carrie caught a northern pike off the dock while the boys did not catch anything. Carrie is the first female to receive the Top Ambassador Award from The World Fishing Network. She competes in Canada's premier one day bass tournament, The Bass Pro Shops Lake Simcoe Open against most of Canada's Top Angler's.





Dawn was just beginning to break, casting a fiery glow on the marshlands surrounding us. My husband Skip, and I were hiking to a secluded tidal creek hidden deep in the forests of Saint Marks National Wildlife Refuge. I was on a mission. After reading about the abundance of red drum that congregate in the bayous of this gulf coast treasure, I threw my waders in the truck and headed to the swampy wetlands dotting the refuge in anticipation of a backcountry angling adventure. I was after the one fish that has continued to elude me for years, the monster red drum. They are a magnificent species, golden with subtle hues of red, sporting a perfect, round black spot on their tail. I have caught my share of slot sized reds, but never the aggressive monsters that lurk deep in the tidal flats. They are well known for hard hitting, aggressive antics, often breaking lines and wreaking havoc for unprepared anglers. I arrived armed with heavy tackle and ready for a good fight.



# Chasin' Big Red

**By Nici Haerter**

The piercing warning cry of a bald eagle broke the morning silence as we trekked deeper into the woods. I peered into the dense forest, spotting a pair of eagles watching me, a freshly caught fish still wriggling in their talons. I stopped for a moment to enjoy this rarely viewed scene just as they took flight with a dramatic soaring departure through the tree tops. Following their flight path, we found ourselves standing on the bank of an expansive tidal creek teeming with bait fish. In the distance I





spotted a large alligator sunning himself while keeping a vigilant eye on us. Ladyfish broke the surface, gracefully dancing across the placid water. Along the shoreline, we spotted churning pools of fish, exposing the spotted tails of reds foraging for food. One throw of the cast net yielded a bucket full of live bait. I wasted no time pulling on my waders and sliding into the water silently with a live pinfish. My first cast produced a mangrove snapper. On my second cast, a ladyfish exploded, leaping and jumping in



the air, gaining the unwanted attention of a 12 foot alligator that rose to the surface, seemingly out of nowhere to survey my catch. I slowly backed out of the water, deciding that wading was not going to be a wise decision today. Meanwhile Skip decided to follow the golden rule of fishing, “big baits for big fish”, and threw a mullet out into the middle of the creek, patiently waiting for that first strike. He didn’t have to wait long before he hit pay dirt. One rod bending strike sent him lurching forward while his drag sang happily. We watched his line straighten with the force of a giant drum, running the gamut of the lagoon and



testing Skip's angling skills. Skip chose to fish with a lighter tackle and was going to have to wear him down. With one mighty roll, he broke the surface, flashing a large spotted tail before submerging again and changing directions. As the battle ensued, his rod bowed, the familiar zing of the drag sang and I held my breath in anticipation. Eventually, Skip wrangled him into the shallow rocks along the shoreline and held up his trophy red drum. He was over 30 inches in length, grunting and croaking in protest as I snapped one photo after another. The giant red was still fighting mad and full of attitude when we released him back into the lagoon. Proving to be a worthy adversary, he had earned his freedom.

I could feel a gradual change in the tide as the energy of the creek transformed. The ladyfish stopped leaping, no more churning and swirling of reds along the bank. This marked the beginning of the flounder invasion. They took over in a frenzy with massive numbers and force. My line immediately started bumping with action as I reeled in one flounder after another, averaging in size from 14-16". After I caught flounder # 15, I stopped counting. For hours we stood on the bank and continued fighting these aggressive flat fish with the jagged sharp teeth. It had turned out to be a magical day of constant action with St Marks proving to be an angler's paradise. Dusk was soon approaching and we had been fishing for 10 straight hours without a break or lull in action. I had landed a couple of slot sized reds but had yet to battle the monster that haunted my dreams. As the tide shifted again, the ladyfish began their final encore dance across the surface and I realized this was my last opportunity to catch that elusive giant red. Remembering the mantra of anglers, "big baits for big fish", I threw out my last cast of the day with a large mullet and hoped for the best. Without hesitation my pole bent in half as I held on for dear life while adrenaline coursed through me. This was the moment I had been waiting for. Big Red had arrived and I was about to experience the rod bending fight of a lifetime. She was a clever girl. After running the length of the creek, she abruptly made a U turn, changing direction and making a beeline straight towards me. Realizing that if I didn't bolt into action, my line would soon go slack, I started running down the bank and reeling as fast as I could, urging her to shift direction. She was now swimming parallel to the shoreline allowing me to keep the line taught and wear her down. With each roll and flip, I could feel her slowly beginning to surrender. She was becoming sluggish and I was able to pull her up on the bank. Skip anxiously waited with the camera as I sat on the ground, my arms quaking



with exhaustion from a battle well fought. A smile spread across my face as I glanced at Big Red. She had provided me with memories I would cherish forever. I proudly held all 33 inches of her and posed for the camera before releasing her back to the safety of the lagoon. She splashed me with one last defiant swish of her tail before disappearing into the murky depths of the creek, free to rule again.

Nici Haerter is a professional musician, freelance writer and avid angler. [www.Harpbynici.com](http://www.Harpbynici.com)



# Product Review: Salamander Sinkers

## The Basic Idea

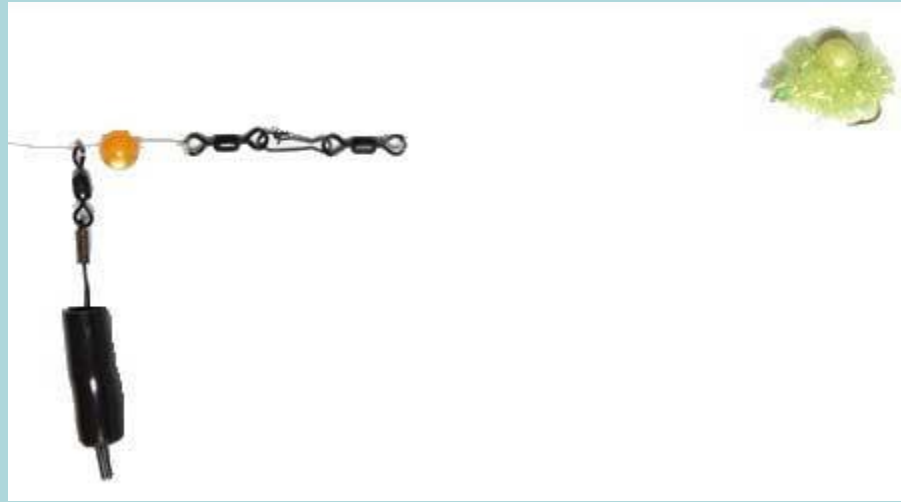
The idea behind Salamander Sinkers was to make a sinker that's fishable in rivers and streams without the frustration — and the expense — of constant hang-ups. A

secondary goal was to make a sinker that was lead-free and, at the same time, affordable.

## How They Work

The weights have a simple, yet highly functional, design. They're made by placing cylindrical steel barrels inside a moderately flexible plastic tube that's capped on both ends. A steel cable runs through the assembly.

On some models a swivel is attached to each end of the cable. On others, only one swivel is attached. This makes for a double swivel model and a single swivel model. That's a handy feature depending upon how you're going to use them.





## Physical Construction

The sinkers tested were all well made. The size and construction details were uniform with all the models. The lighter weights are about an inch long. The heaviest weight measures approximately 6 inches.

We put a great deal of pressure on the swivels. They, along with their connections, all held fast. We did not experience any failures.

The weights feel “light” when you hold them in your hand or bounce them with your fishing rod. That was a concern, at first. But, we tested the weights on a balance beam against a number of jigs and other sinkers of known weight. In all cases the balance beam was close to level. That told us the weight of Salamander Sinkers is true.

## In the Water Performance

They do not snag. We tested them in some of the nastiest, rocky waters in the country. And then we tested them in snarled, twisted wood. They do not snag.

This line of sinkers is amazingly versatile. You can use them to bottom-walk live bait — in moving or in slack water — or as a forward weight to get a shallow running lure to run a little deeper.

One of the most interesting things about these sinkers is the previously mentioned light feel. They simply do not feel as heavy as a sinker of comparable weight made from lead or tungsten. It's all the rage right now for anglers to talk about feel and the need to maintain contact with the bottom. Maybe, but that's not the whole story.





Fish don't survive by being stupid. They are really good at sensing something that just doesn't look or feel right. Using a sinker that'll allow your bait to move naturally has to be a good thing, especially when you're fishing highly pressured waters. (Are there any other kind anymore?)

Using them as a forward weight was a little more problematic. They worked, but that same light feel caused the bait to make wide side to side

movements. At times that might be what you want. At other times, though, it gives the bait too much lateral movement.

Salamander Sinkers website, [www.salamandersinkers.com](http://www.salamandersinkers.com), has a listing of several suggested rigging techniques. The directions are easy to understand and the diagrams are super good. We strongly suggest you check all of them out. It'll give you several solid, fish catching ideas for your next trip.

## Cost

The smaller packs start at \$4.39. Larger packs are available. They will seriously reduce your per sinker cost.

## Conclusion

### They work.

And, one of the best things about them is that they are not species specific. A few packs of them will cover you regardless of whether you're fishing for bass, crappie, catfish, walleye, salmon, steelhead, trout or just about anything else that swims in freshwater. That's no small thing if, like most of us, you fish on a budget.



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# Product Review: Bites Back Fishing Part 2

## The Basic Idea

In Part 1 of our Bites Back product review we looked at their line of hardbaits. That review included crankbaits, topwater plugs and shallow running models. Bites Back Fishing's basic design goal was to make a hardbait that was totally weedless but, at the same time, make a hardbait that had a high hooking percentage. You can read the full review at <http://www.odumagazine.com/Magazines/ODUSpringFishingAndBoatGuide2014/#p=18>.



That same idea is behind their line of jigs, spinnerbaits, buzzbaits, spoons and hooks.

## How They Work

The weedless design of the baits we're discussing here works as follows:

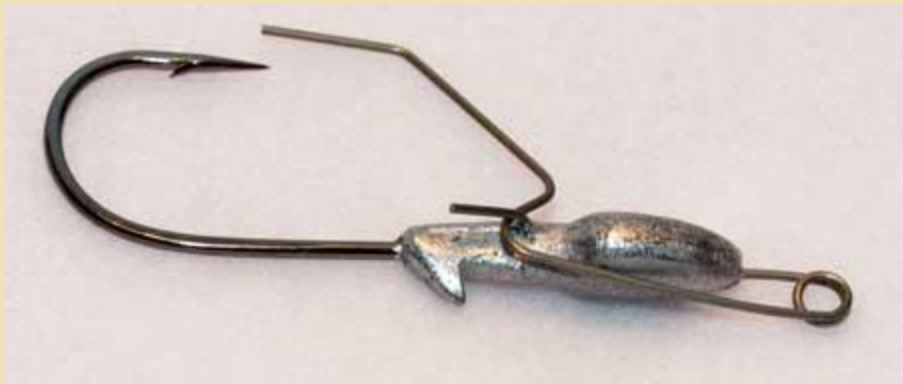
A wire covers the hook point. It looks much like a traditional weed guard, but is different in one fundamental respect. The wire guard is tension loaded. It's held in place by means of a small clip on the body of the bait.

When the fish grabs the lure it pushes the weed guard wire down. This releases it from the clip, which in turn releases the tension. The wire snaps down, out of the way. The hook point is clear so that you can get a clean hookset.

## Physical Construction

The baits are all well made.

The leadheads are clean and uniform in shape. The paint coverings are uniform, drip free and, for the most part, show no runs. The lures are available with deer hair dressing, Mylar skirts and silicon skirts.





If there's one construction problem with the baits, it's that the wire coming out of the head, leading to the line tie, is off center on some of the baits. It's an easy fix — you can bend it straight with your fingers — so it's not a big deal. Nevertheless, you should know about this issue.

All the baits come in several colors and they can be ordered with a couple of different options

relative to the way the skirt is tied or attached. If you want something that looks a little different, try their front banded designs.

### **In the Water Performance**

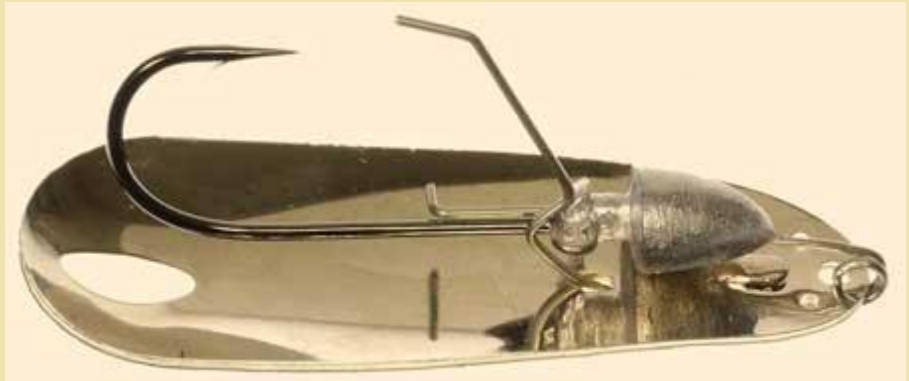
The noses on the jigs have a reasonably sharp point. Because of the weedless wire assembly on them they will hang in grass, rock and dense wood. It's not a constant problem but it does happen from time to time. They do not, however, hang to the extent that you can't get them loose by snapping your line or by pulling backwards. In our testing the point of the hook never hung on anything. In that respect they are weedless.

We can say exactly the same thing about the spinnerbaits and the buzzbaits, and they're offered in several colors with different skirt options as well as a variety of blade styles, sizes and combinations.

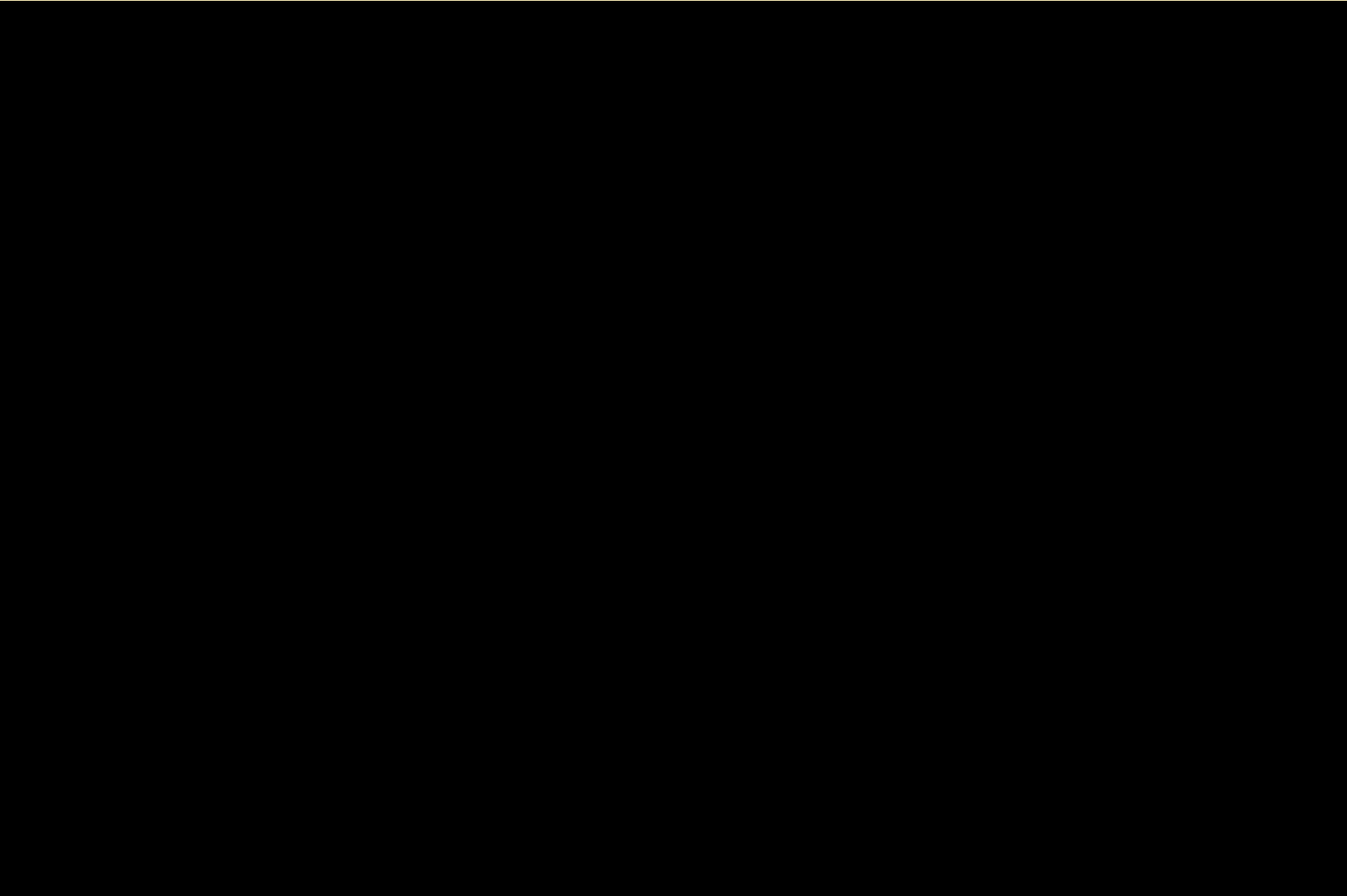
There are a number of weighted weedless hooks that are very similar to the jigs. They can be dressed with a wide variety of artificial dressings and should work well with live bait.

The Bites Back spoon is especially interesting. The weight is in a jig-style head that rests on top of the forward part of the body. The body of the spoon is made from thin, almost weightless, silver metal.

The spoon casts easily. Distance and accuracy, even in a stiff wind, are not a problem. At the same time, because of its design, the lure tends to "float" through the water on the retrieve. If you pull it along, it wobbles slowly from side to side. (The spoon body is wide. It will ride up unless your retrieve is painfully slow.)







If you stop it dead in the water, and allow a little slack in your line, it'll sink with a rolling side to side motion. To get a good picture of what it does think about a feather dropping from your hand to the floor.

We were able to catch several smallmouth bass on one of the hair jigs and one on a spinnerbait under very difficult fishing conditions. Getting a fish to bite a Bites Back lure shouldn't be a big problem.

### **Cost**

Prices range from \$6-\$9 depending upon which lure you select. Discounts are available for orders of three or more lures.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, this line of lures looks like it could be the beginning of the end to one of the most perplexing problems that has faced anglers for years — how to fish where the fish are, avoid hangups and still have a fighting chance to make a secure hookset.

For more information about Bites Back lures check out their website at [www.bitesbackfishing.com](http://www.bitesbackfishing.com).





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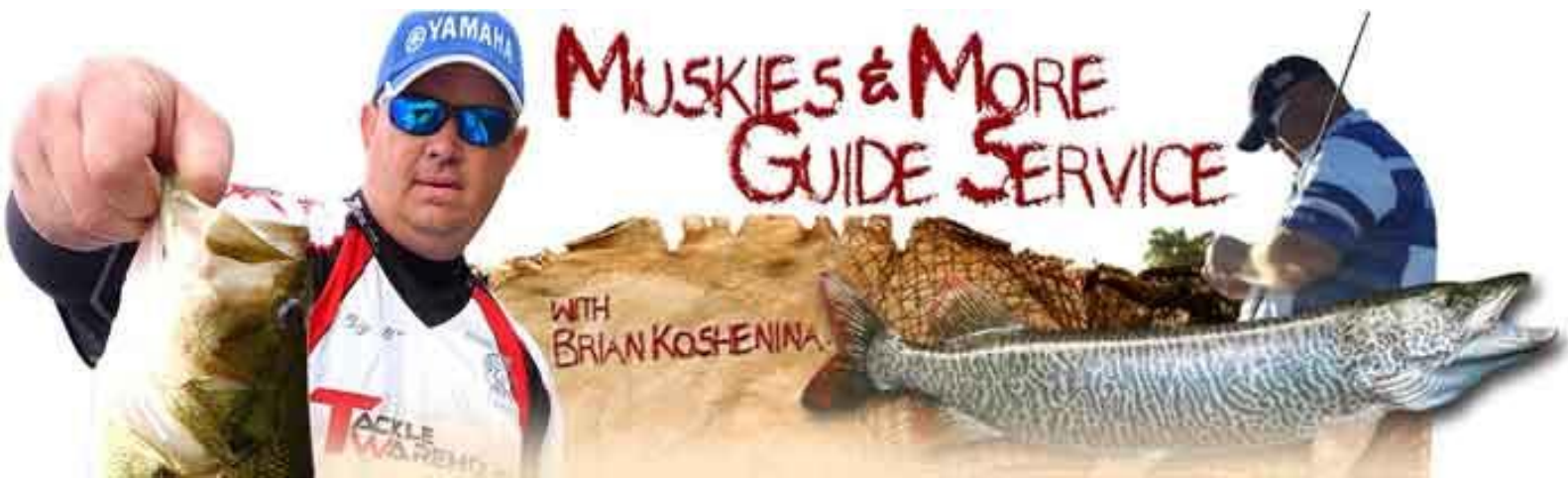
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# How To Start Musky Fishing Without Going Broke!

By Brian Koshenina

Yes, that's right. You don't have to go broke to start pursuing the elusive Musky. In fact you can do it rather "Inexpensive" if you put a little effort into it. Let me tell you how.

Last year my friend Woody, who is a diehard Panfish and Walleye Guide decided that he wanted to add Musky fishing to his resume. Woody wanted to know everything I knew about these fish. His excitement and thirst for knowledge reminded me of myself back when I started so I felt honored when he asked me to help him out.

I often tell my clients I guide that they "do not have to go broke to start Musky fishing". I think that people often see the cost of Musky gear and that turns them away from ever starting. Let's face it, you can spend a lot of money pursuing a fish you might not catch, let alone see for days or you can spend a little money on fish that you can catch all day, every day. Woody was no exception. Woody knew how expensive Musky fishing could be so he was amazed to hear that with a little time and effort, I could get

him started rather cheaply and I could have him on a lake, fishing in no time. This is how we did it.

First off, we had to come up with a budget. The first question I asked Woody is "How much do you want to spend on something that you've never done





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or might not like"? Many people that start Musky fishing spend thousands of dollars rather quickly only to find out that they really don't like to do it. Woody decided he wanted to spend around \$300.00. I thought that \$300.00 was very "do able" so we started to lay out a plan to get him started.

Once we decided on a

budget he asked me what to buy first. I told him that the most important piece of equipment you will buy is a rod. Now I know we didn't have a lot of money to work with so finding a good Musky rod for a decent price was going to take a little work. I knew of a few companies that made inexpensive rods and we could probably find one for around fifty dollars or so. I didn't want to spend most of the budget on a rod so after some research on the internet, I was able to find a brand new one for around forty dollars. Yes, that's right, a brand new seven foot, heavy action Musky rod for forty dollars. Woody trusted me with my choice so we went with it.

Now it was time to look for a Reel. A Musky reel can "make" or "break" your day rather quickly. Casting a 3.5 ounce to 1 pound lure can tire you out in no time so I needed to find a reel that was smooth and dependable but fairly inexpensive. I figured I had about seventy to ninety dollars to work with so I scanned the internet and came

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across a reel that would fit his budget. We believe in supporting local business's and it just so happened that we could get both his rod and reel at a local bait shop that I was familiar with.

Lure choice can be very tricky when starting out. Woody had often heard me talk about the lures I use when fishing for Musky but he had no idea as to what lures actually work and which ones don't. Being a Musky guide I have to depend on the equipment I use, especially lures. Over the years you quickly learn which lures are meant to catch the fisherman and not the fish. I knew we could get more for his money if we didn't buy every lure new.

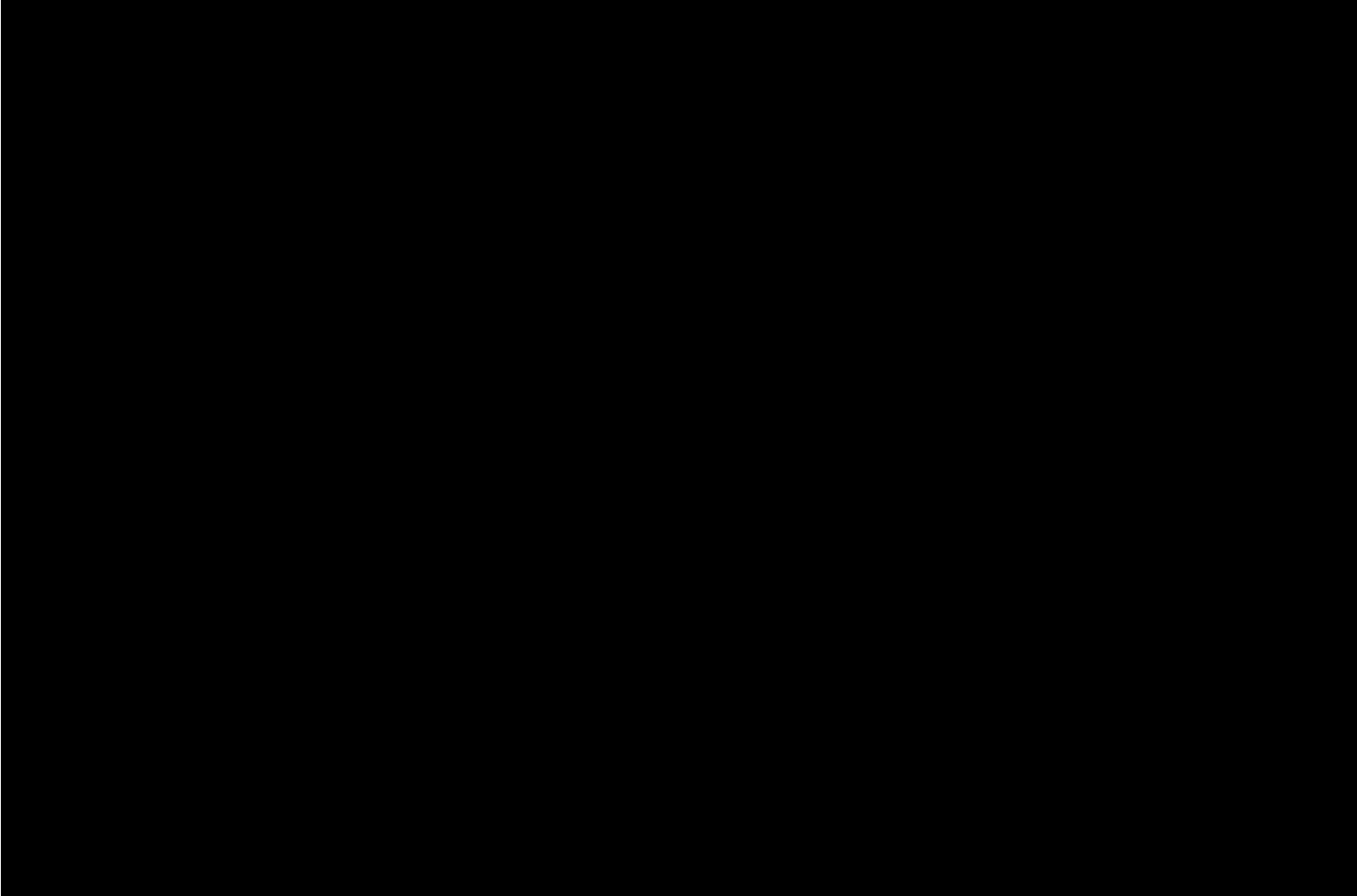
Before we had purchased a lure I wanted Woody to do a little research on his own to familiarize himself with the different styles and brands of lures available. Every lure has a time and place for use and I wanted him to understand why we were buying the lures I chose. We had to be very selective and I wanted him to have a least one lure for every situation he might run into. When Woody was ready we started to narrow his choices down.



I consider myself a "Top Water" fisherman so there was no doubt that he would have a couple of Poes Jackpots in his arsenal. These lures have an action that simply "Catch Musky". If you have ever "Walked the Dog" top water Bass fishing then these lures will work well for you.

Next we moved onto "sub surface" lures. I wanted him to get at least 2 Bucktails, one Black and one white. He did some research and he decided on double bladed Musky Mayhem "Cow Girl". I also had him look up some glide baits and I referred him to the 9" Phantom in the Walleye pattern. Phantom lures work well in many situations and since they are a countdown lure, you can run them shallow or deep. My deep water choice is the one and only Chaos Tackle "Medusa". These deep running lures have brought more fish into my boat than any other deep water lure on the market. I told Woody that you don't have to buy new lures and that most people sell lures that are basically used very little and have nothing wrong with them. We looked at Craigslist first. We were able to find someone who was local and selling some lures "cheap". I know we had to stay in budget so I also had a couple of lures of my own to sell. I felt that he was ready with what he had purchased and now it was time to look at a tackle box.

There are many different sizes and styles of tackle boxes. Most Musky tackle boxes are fairly expensive so I knew with Woody's budget we would be trying to find a "needle in a haystack". We scoured the internet for used tackle boxes and we found some cheap, just not in his price range. I was thinking of



alternative ways to store his lures and I knew someone who used a soft sided cooler and 2" PVC tubing to do so. I had a really nice, large, soft side that I was not using so I decided to tackle this project myself. I bought a twelve foot piece of 2" PVC pipe and cut it into 9" sections. This gave me enough tubes to fill the cooler bag. I decided not to tell him about it so I surprised Woody with the finished tackle box the next time I saw him. The whole project cost less than Twelve dollars, he was quite impressed.

The last few items on our list were tools and a landing net. You need a good pair of long handled needle nose pliers and a hook cutter for foul hooked fish. These tools will usually run you about \$30 dollars and can be found at any hardware store. We then focused on getting a net with the money we had left in the budget. Again, Craigslist was an excellent source for this. We ended up finding a four year old Musky net for twenty dollars with little use. We decided on a basket net since a cradle net required two people in order to use it. Craigslist is a great source for finding used fishing equipment. You can usually "Haggle" the price down a bit to fit your budget.

So let's recap, We spent \$40 dollars on a rod, \$70 dollars on a reel, \$120 dollars on lures, \$12 dollars on a tackle box, \$25.00 for tools and \$20 dollars for a net for a grand total of \$300 dollars even. We did it. We stuck to his budget and we didn't "Break the Bank" to get him started.

If you set a budget and follow these easy steps you too will be able to start Musky fishing in no time and you won't go broke to do it.

Sources-Craigslist Minnesota <http://geo.craigslist.org/iso/us/mn>, Poes/ Yakima Bait  
[www.yakimabait.com](http://www.yakimabait.com), Musky Mayhem [www.muskymayhemtackle.com](http://www.muskymayhemtackle.com), Chaos Tackle  
[www.chaostackle.com](http://www.chaostackle.com) and , Phantom Lures [www.phantomlures.com](http://www.phantomlures.com).



# Get an Edge on the Fish

By Ted Takasaki and Scott Richardson

“Edges, edges? We don’t need no stinkin’ edges!” OK, so the bandit in the Bogart classic was talking about “badges” and not about walleye fishing. But, that silly phrase might just help us remember an important piece of fishing wisdom – anglers should recognize the importance of edges.



Just like deer or turkeys, fish of all kinds, including walleyes, love edges for exactly the same reasons as their solid ground counterparts.

The main problem any angler faces is, “so much water and so little time.” But anglers who know what edges to look for can quickly focus on the 10 percent of water that holds walleyes on any given day. Keys to success are recognizing different types of edges, anticipating walleye movements along them based on seasonal and daily conditions, and knowing what tactics are best to tempt them with, once the fish’s position on the edges is known.

## Getting Edgy

It all starts with the

basics. Buck Perry taught us that fish travel through a system from deep water to the shallows to feed or spawn along well-defined features on the bottom. They hold along subtle variations within the drops in depth called breaks along the way.

Think for a minute what that means to you on the spots you fish. It's easy to see why the old river channel is so important when fishing reservoirs, like Lake Oahe. The channel features the deepest water in the impoundment, and its former banks provide the contours which fish migrate along. Add a structural, underwater point which reaches from shoreline to the channel, and walleyes have all they need – a way to travel through the system and a path to shallow water (where they often feed) and back.

Anglers at Oahe will pitch jigs to shallow shoreline points in spring and troll bottom bouncers and crankbaits along contours at other times of the year. At times, the contour is at 10 feet. At other times, it's the deeper breaks. But it's always on an edge of some kind.

Don't expect all edges to be pronounced. Some are quite subtle. Lake Erie's bottom is essentially featureless for miles, so a break of a foot or two can mean a lot. Walleyes find them and use them.

**Variety Among Edges**



Our apologies to Buck, but structural edges are only part of the story. For example, structure in rivers is critical because it creates another kind of edge – current edges between faster and slower water. Rivers feature many of them, known as eddies. Current edges will form in front of, and behind, obstructions, whether manmade or natural. These current breaks include holes in the river bottom, points, downed trees, wing dams, bridge abutments, and so on.

Current also plays a role where feeder creeks empty into reservoirs



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and natural lakes, especially in spring and fall when walleyes are drawn to moving water. Try 3/8-ounce jigs tipped with shiners at places like the mouth of the Menominee River on Green Bay or the Rainy River on Rainy Lake. Vertical jig and slip with the current while using your trolling motor or anchor on the old river channels, which serve as walleye pathways.

Walleyes also gravitate to edges between hard and soft bottoms because different kinds of aquatic creatures inhabit each area. Transition spots provide a smorgasbord as a result. Subtle changes on the breakline or small rock piles will concentrate fish.

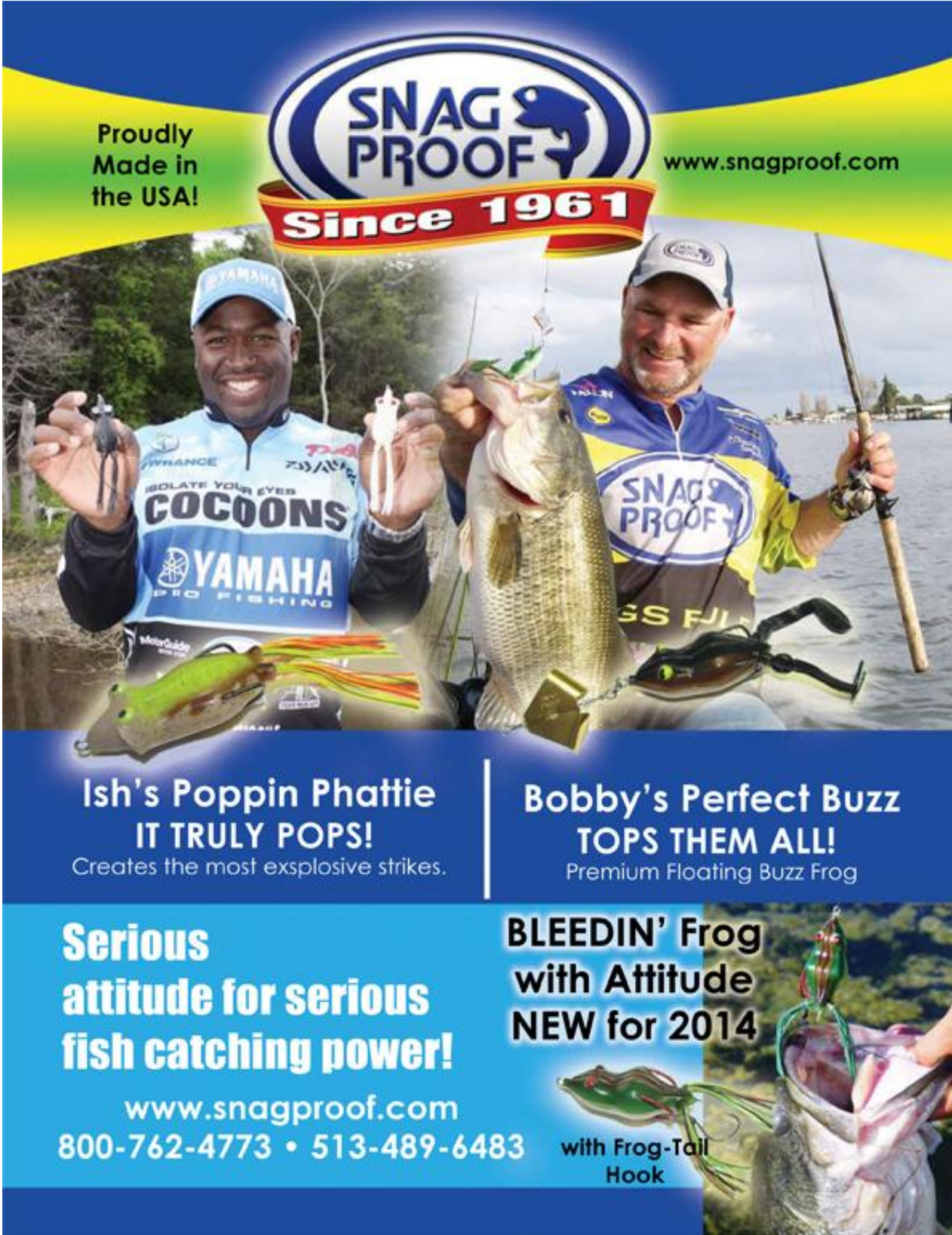
Wisconsin's Lake Winnebago is a classic example where weed edges are critical. Most anglers know enough to concentrate on outside weed lines. But, they often overlook three other important weed-related edges: the inside weed line, the edge created by the tops of the weeds, and the edges surrounding pockets and alleys in the vegetation. Each weed edge can be as important as the others. Try drifting with the wind or trolling with the electric motor, using a spinner and split shot or a small bullet shaped sinker over weed tops. But, weed beds can be massive. Just as you did with the outside and inside weed edges, narrow the search by focusing on the "something different." Walleyes often hold where a small patch of plants in the bed rise above the others, like tall cabbage rising from a bed of coontail. Walleyes will often be in the cabbage in big numbers.

Toss a marker buoy or enter a GPS waypoint when a walleye strikes so the spot can be found again. Try targeting the pinpointed area with slip-bobber rigs.



Some species of aquatic plants prefer soft bottoms while others prefer a harder bottom of small gravel and sand. Look for places where two types of weeds border one another. That often signals two different areas of bottom content where hungry walleyes find a more varied diet.

Other kinds of cover have edges, too. Anglers at Devils Lake target vast forests of submerged trees. Tournaments have been won trolling crankbaits on leadcore deep enough to just tick the upper branches. Anglers also do well by finding points in the tree lines, anchoring above them and vertical jigging or using slip bobbers.



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Even rocky, sandy or soft-bottomed flats feature edges. On Mille Lacs, fishermen use live-bait rigs or bottom bouncers and spinner rigs to target the little points within their irregularly-shaped outlines. Again, it's the "something different" that yields results.

Good sonar units are mandatory to find the spot on a spot. All models help identify the edges of structure, cover and transitions between hard and soft bottoms below the boat. Recent advances, like Humminbird's side-imaging, can paint a visual picture of the bottom out to the sides which is



detailed enough to see elements like weeds, rocks and wood and how they are positioned on breaks.

### Think, Think, Think

Subtle edges are often ignored. Water clarity is an important one in walleye fishing. Even though they are superb hunters and can feed effectively while using their lateral line sense, walleyes show a preference for feeding where they can see what they're chasing. After rainstorms, runoff from rocky terrain is often cleaner than the main river, so fishing the mouths of feeder creeks in regions like that makes sense. Where runoff comes from farm fields, the main lake may be clearer. Either way, places where dirty water and cleaner water meet will often attract fish.



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Wind blowing into a shoreline-connected point can create a mud line where walleyes feast on confused baitfish. The wind works to your advantage where you are less likely to spook shallow predators. There have been many times on reservoirs like Oahe when windy shorelines produce as long as the breeze is blowing, but action stops when the wind changes direction. That's when it is time to move on to the windy side.

Each type of edge is important in its own right. But, experience has taught us that the more kinds of edges that come into play, the more likely walleyes are there. A general example would be a structural edge, like a point, combined with cover and wind-blown mudlines. That is a recipe for walleye action. So, who needs stinkin' edges? We do.

# Bassmaster Elite Series Anglers Unveil Secrets For Spring Success



Anyone serious about fishing knows each season brings unique

challenges. But only the best will take advantage of new opportunities this spring as waters warm and the spawning season kicks into high gear.

As mainstays of the Bassmaster Elite Series tournament circuit, Rapala® pro-staffers Ott DeFoe, Bernie Schultz and Mike “Ike” Iaconelli know what it takes to land monster fish year-round.

Now, DeFoe, Schultz and Ike have joined forces to unveil their tips to help anglers make the most out of the spring fishing season and catch more Bass than ever before.

## Ott DeFoe’s Go-to Spring Bait

For Ott DeFoe, 2011 Bassmaster Rookie of the Year, spring means you’ll find him fishing the shallows, throwing Terminator® T-1 Original Titanium Spinnerbaits, a bait that helped him catch his biggest five-bass tournament limit to date – 30 pounds, 15 ounces – on Texas’ Lake Falcon in 2013.

“This time of year fish are more than likely going to be moving into the shallows near some type of cover off of points, and there’s no better tool for targeting these areas than spinnerbaits,” says DeFoe. “I almost always have a T-1 tied on during the spring. The key is to make sure you fish them at the right pace.”

Coming out of the colder months, a fish’s metabolism will still be slow, which means a





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moderate pace is best for triggering strikes, explains DeFoe.

“If you’re working spinners, take your time and don’t burn them,” advises DeFoe. “Try slowly rolling the bait around trees and rocks, making light contact. Keep it moving steady and don’t linger in one area too long. I usually make one or two casts to a piece of cover then go on to the next one to cover more water.”

In terms of presentation, he recommends a 1/2-ounce Terminator T-1 Spinnerbait with a small silver Colorado blade to add a little extra thump to the bait. Choose a skirt in a color pattern that matches the local hatch and the hawks won’t know what hit ‘em.

### **Schultz’s Secret for Fishing the Grass**

All the greats know that when it comes to spring fishing, location is everything. In fact, it’s often the difference between a successful day on the water and going home empty handed.

Bernie Schultz, an eight-time Bassmaster Classic participant, honed his skills fishing the grass-heavy lakes in his home state of Florida. However, he’s a firm believer that the Sunshine State isn’t the only place where anglers can find monster fish lurking in the green stuff.

“If you’re looking for the perfect spring Bass spot, it doesn’t get much better than finding a thick grass bed near a busy spawning area,” says Schultz. “You can typically find fish gathered in shallow pockets with easy access to sunlight where they’ll stage in or above the vegetation.”



Schultz recommends casting lipless crankbaits like the Rapala Rippin' Rap® or Clackin' Rap® into the grass and ripping them out to trigger reactive bites.

“The key with these lures is to make irregular contact with strands of grass and then rip the bait free,” Schultz explains. “When you snag a strand for just a moment, that slight pause, combined with the lures’ loud rattle are sure to grab fish’s attention.”



## Practice Patience in Cold Waters

Although novice anglers may look for the hot new spring fishing tactic each year, the best strategy is to not overthink things. By the peak of the season, the urge for fish to spawn will be irresistible, meaning anglers can usually turn to a tried-and-true approach that has produced for them in the past.



However, according to Schultz, in rare cases when the water is still very cold following a harsh winter – like the most recent one – anglers need to adjust their mind-set more than their bait selection to find elusive lunkers.

“Patience is absolutely a virtue with cold-water fishing. To have success you need to work slow and take time to detail where fish are settling in. Non-reflective jerkbaits will be some of the best tools in your tacklebox,” says Schultz. “The Rapala X-Rap® or new Scatter Rap® Minnow are two of my favorite lures for frigid days on the water. No matter which technique you use, you’ve got to be thorough and deliberate. The fish are there – you just need to make them bite!”

## How Ike Finds Finicky Fish

Mike “Ike” Iaconelli, 2006 Bass Angler of the Year and 2003 Bassmaster Classic Champion, also says spring is one of his favorite seasons for catching trophy Bass. But as anglers look to spend more time outdoors after a long winter, the season can also bring the year’s most crowded waters.

According to Ike, anglers can set themselves apart from the crowd by targeting fish located on cover and structure that is not visible to the naked eye. Using a depth finder, Ike locates hard-to-find cover and subtle depth changes, then ties on baits that he can use to feel along the bottom, like the quick-diving cranks from the Rapala DT® (Dives-To) Series.

“I also like to use more finesse presentations in the springtime,” Ike says. “Sometimes baits with an in-your-face action don’t do the trick. If the fish just don’t seem to be interested, it’s time for a change. That’s when I switch to a silent, tight-crankin’ lure like the Rapala Shad Rap® to offer up what looks like an easier meal for finicky fish.”

With these tips from some of the world’s most successful Pro Bass Anglers, even the most inexperienced anglers can fish like the pros this spring. For more helpful tips for on-the-water success, connect with Rapala online at [www.facebook.com/RapalaUSA](https://www.facebook.com/RapalaUSA).



A crankbait for summertime bass fishing in the Atchafalaya swamp is hotter than cayenne pepper at a crab boil. A crankbait is the key part of the arsenal to catch hot weather bass. Anglers who fish in south Louisiana know the importance of the crankbait for finding and catching quality fish in the Atchafalaya Basin and southern Louisiana marshes. Crankbaits ripped, waked, banged, bounced, or pounded around the natural cover of the Basin floor trigger reaction strikes from bass during warm summer months. From grass to wood, various models and shapes of crankbaits draw strikes. Water flow to river stages impact fishing in the massive area of bayous, bays, and canals. With the ability to choose from crankbaits in color patterns such as crawfish, crab, shad, or other forage, the crankbait is a must have tool for catching bass in the maze of water in south Louisiana. Crankbait choices are as abundant as the numbers of worm with all their shapes and colors. However, the two basic choices for the Atchafalaya are lipped, square billed baits and lipless, vibrating styles.

Lipped baits mean there is a plastic lip on the front of the bait that determines how deep or at what angle the lure will dive. Bills come in various shapes but the square billed crankbait is the common choice since it runs in the one to four foot range. Common examples of a square bill lures are Bandit 100 series, Strike

# Crankin the Basin

By Jeff Bruhl

King's KVD, and Bagley's Balsa B (pictured later). Lipless baits, as the name suggest, do not have a bill or lip. Louisiana's Rat-L-Trap (pictured later) is an example of a lipless, vibrating bait. Lipless baits run from top to bottom depending on speed of retrieve and rod position.

To make matters more confusing for square bill anglers, size and shape of the lure, angle of bill, and size of the bill determines how deep a lure dives. From a Mann's Minus One to a flat sided square bill, water



depths from a foot to twelve feet are covered by selecting the right bait for the job. The size and angle of the bill determines how steep the bait dives. Fortunately, most packaging state the depth range for the bait inside. Anglers do not need to go to the bank to borrow money to purchase a tackle store to get the needed baits. A handful of lures that cover several depths will get the job done.

Anglers believe the bait must dive to the bottom to be affective. Crankbaits should be thought of as a spinnerbait. Keeping the bait in the proper strike zone is more important than bottom bounce. This is especially important in the basin as the bottom is often covered with lure fouling muck. Speed of retrieve, contacting the cover, and water displacement (vibration or wiggle) are factors angler should use when picking a bait for the Basin.

Anglers like Louisiana Fish Fry Pro Brett Sellers selects a Bandit 100 series or a Strike King KVD 1.5 for his square bill bait. Brett is a local angler who fishes circuits like the B.A.S.S. Weekend Series and BFL. He also has cashed a few checks in the Children's Miracle Network and other big local tournaments.

"A 100 series Bandit (pictured) catches fish across the Basin", begins Brett, who currently fishes the BFL events on Toledo and Rayburn. "The KVD 1.5 has a bigger profile and catches quality fish. The bigger profile pushes more water. Big baits catch bigger fish."

Bobby Templet, The Bass Federation district officer and long time Basin angler, relies on Rat-L-Traps or Traps for short. Bobby competes on the Media Singles South Louisiana circuit and the Media Team South Louisiana trail.

"Rat-L-Traps are great around grass and the Atchafalaya has plenty of grass", adds Bobby, who is a Dream Day Foundation board member in his spare time. "A fast retrieve is great in the early summer."

Cover is the next part of the puzzle. Cover is a simple term that means anything in the water that is not earth or ground. A stump, log, grass, or even a crab tramp in south Louisiana qualifies as cover. A hump, drop off, or point is an example of structure because it is part of the land. Louisiana is loaded with grass. Hurricanes add plenty of lay down trees to the water.





The Basin is

loaded with stumps leftover from logging operation in the past century. And trees and bushes survive in the water which bass use as shade and protection from predators. The abundance of cover in south Louisiana is at times overwhelming.

Grasses like Hydrilla are widely found throughout the eco system of our rivers and bayou. The old saying that grass means bass is true. Anglers use crankbait to fish over, through, and around grass. Since most grass and water depths in the marshes of Louisiana are in less than four feet of water, shallow running baits and traps are right at home. If the grass grows in isolated patches, roll a square bill through the open areas. If the grass is below the surface, burn and rip a trap over the top for a reaction strike. For thick mats of grass, parallel a crankbait in front of the mat or yoyo a trap at the base of the mat. Thinking out of the box is the way to add crankbaits to the arsenal.

“The Bandit and 1.5 crankbait deflect off of the cover easily”, adds Brett, who won the recent Children’s Miracle Network Benefit Tournament out of the St. James Boat Club along with partner Jason Pourciau. “The KVD 1.5 comes through the grass easily which makes it better choice when the bass are on points with grass cover.”

“Ripping a Trap from submerged grass triggers some hard strikes”, continues Bobby, who paints Trap to match bream, crab, and shad found throughout the marshes of Louisiana. “Let the bait fall until it rest in the grass. Then pop it loose with a quick jerk of the rod. That sudden jump of the bait triggers a reaction from the fish.”

Laydowns are another option for crankbait anglers. In the heat of the summer, big trees lying in the water offer shade, protection, and room for the fish to ambush prey. Often the ends of the trees are in the main channel in slightly deeper water. A great pattern for summertime anglers is to catch fish off



the points of the laydowns. A one two punch of square bill baits and lipless Traps are needed for fallen trees.

Start dissecting the tree by burning a Trap across the point of the tree. If that fails to entice a strike, beginning working the Trap over the top of the tree. Believe it or not, lipless baits are fairly weedless. Next, tackle the heart of the tree with a square bill. Banging the bait on the trunk or big limbs is a prime tactic for triggering resident fish to take the bait. The deflecting lure mimics a wounded fish that is hard for a Basin bass to ignore. Finally, do not forget the shallow water around the main trunk. As the lure travels next to wood, it is easy for a bass to trap its prey against a hard edge.



With some patience and practice, both types of crankbaits come through the wood cover without hanging up. The old advice about getting the fish on before worrying about getting them out of the cover rings true.

“The best retrieve for wood cover in the early summer is a fast, burning retrieve”, continues Brett. “Hitting the cover along with an erratic action is best with a fast retrieve. As the weather gets hotter, a medium retrieve while hitting as much junk as possible is better.”

Cypress trees are another favorite targets for anglers searching for bass in the Louisiana swamps. Large or small, it is not hard to find a Cypress to throw a lure next to. Trees provide shade and that is often a pattern anglers use to catch fish. Summer shade is prime real estate for bass. The extra shade and protection offered by a tree or group of trees is worth exploring. Square bills bumped or banged against the trunk or kneads causes the bait to deflect to one side. This deflection is what triggers strikes.

Traps are another great way to fish in the shade. Cast the lure past the target. A stop and kill retrieve or



a retrieve with a couple of short jerks entices a response from bass waiting in the shade. If the lure makes contact with a knead, the extra bump of the cover is all the better.

"I target Cypress trees with grass patches near the base of the tree", adds Bobby, who sponsors a Dream Day event for kids every year called "Fishing Galore" in Clinton, Louisiana. "Traps are good for big Cypress trees with sparse grass cover. Pause the bait and let it flutter next to a big tree when there is current pulling around the base of the tree."

The Atchafalaya River is a body of water that is influenced by the Gulf of Mexico tide. But there is more to learning the vast waterway than just tide. Wind, river levels, and tide go into a pot when searching for prime fishing spots. Like the ingredients of a good gumbo, the many parts are what make a pot of gumbo taste good. Usually, by the summer season, the river should bottom out. After spring floods and snow melts are over, tide, wind, and river stage are used to determine where to fish. Wind may impact water movement but reading tide times and ranges is the best key to lower estuary fishing. Upper reaches near Bayou Pigeon and above, only see a few inches of change and water movement if the tide

range is a foot or more. Knowing when the water will move because of high and low tides helps the angler find moving water and fish.

"By summer, the water is as low as it gets", states Brett, who regularly fishes the Bayou Pigeon area in the upper Basin. "Points with moving water or where a bayou or canal intersect are good areas to fish in the summer. Points with cover and moving water will be the first areas to try."

All the factors go into the pot when determining water movement. Only time on the water shows an angler where the water moves and when it moves. Crankbaits are not magic baits but are part of the pot. Crankbaits help cover water and find those sweet spots on points and intersections. Without the right conditions of moving water, food, and cover, a spot may be just another spot. Like a light switch, moving water turns the fish on and off. Anglers like Brett and Bobby have the experience to know when the water is moving to check certain areas for schools of summer time fish.

The Atchafalaya is a diverse place. Reptiles,





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amphibians, mammals, and more call the place home. If the angler is going to match the hatch so to speak, crankbaits should blend in and mimic the natural forage on bass. Crawfish, crab, shad, and shrimp are only a few of the species that make up an Atchafalaya bass' diet. Luckily, crankbaits come in just about any color and design to match exactly what the angler needs.

Crawfish are abundant in the Basin in the summer. A rich source of protein, bass target the little creatures in the grass and around Cypress trees. When selecting a crankbait to match crawfish, reds, browns, and orange colors should be part of the color scheme. As a rule, in muddy water chose the darker color of brown as the first choice. If the water is stained to clear, try natural patterns with more greens, reds, and orange. Solid red Traps work year round for crawfish imitation.

Sunfish and shad make up another part of the bass's diet. Green, chartreuse, and orange are good colors to incorporate into the mix for bream. White sided baits match the shad's coloration. Summertime means panfish are spawning around trees and stumps in the area. Bass feed heavily around bream beds. Warmouth perch hide in and around Cypress trees. Shad spawn and flick in the grass and pads. By having a few variations of crankbaits colors in the boat, most situations are easy to adapt to when the angler encounters them. Silver sided Traps, white sides with black top crankbaits, and chartreuse colored tops are simple but effective approaches to lure selection for summertime bass. "Traps come in numerous colors but I find a touch of purple, yellow, and green added to a crankbait matches the forage of the Basin", continues Bobby, who using an airbrush to customize his lures. "Yellow and black patterns or yellow and green patterns are hard to find. I am fishing with something the bass do not see as often."

The biggest argument with crankbait anglers is rod selection; graphite or fiberglass. Each material has advantages and disadvantages. Graphite is more sensitive, stronger, and lighter. Anglers who crawl baits through heavy cover use a sensitive graphite rod to prevent hang-ups. For ripping Traps out of grass, there is nothing better than a graphite rod. Graphite rods are lighter so anglers can chunk big square bills all day.



Fiberglass or glass rods allow the fish to attack the bait and load up the rod. This allows for better hookups. Glass rods are limber. This means a crankbait will float up and away from cover instead of hanging up. Glass rods have an advantage of landing fish. The more flexible rod cushions jumps, runs,



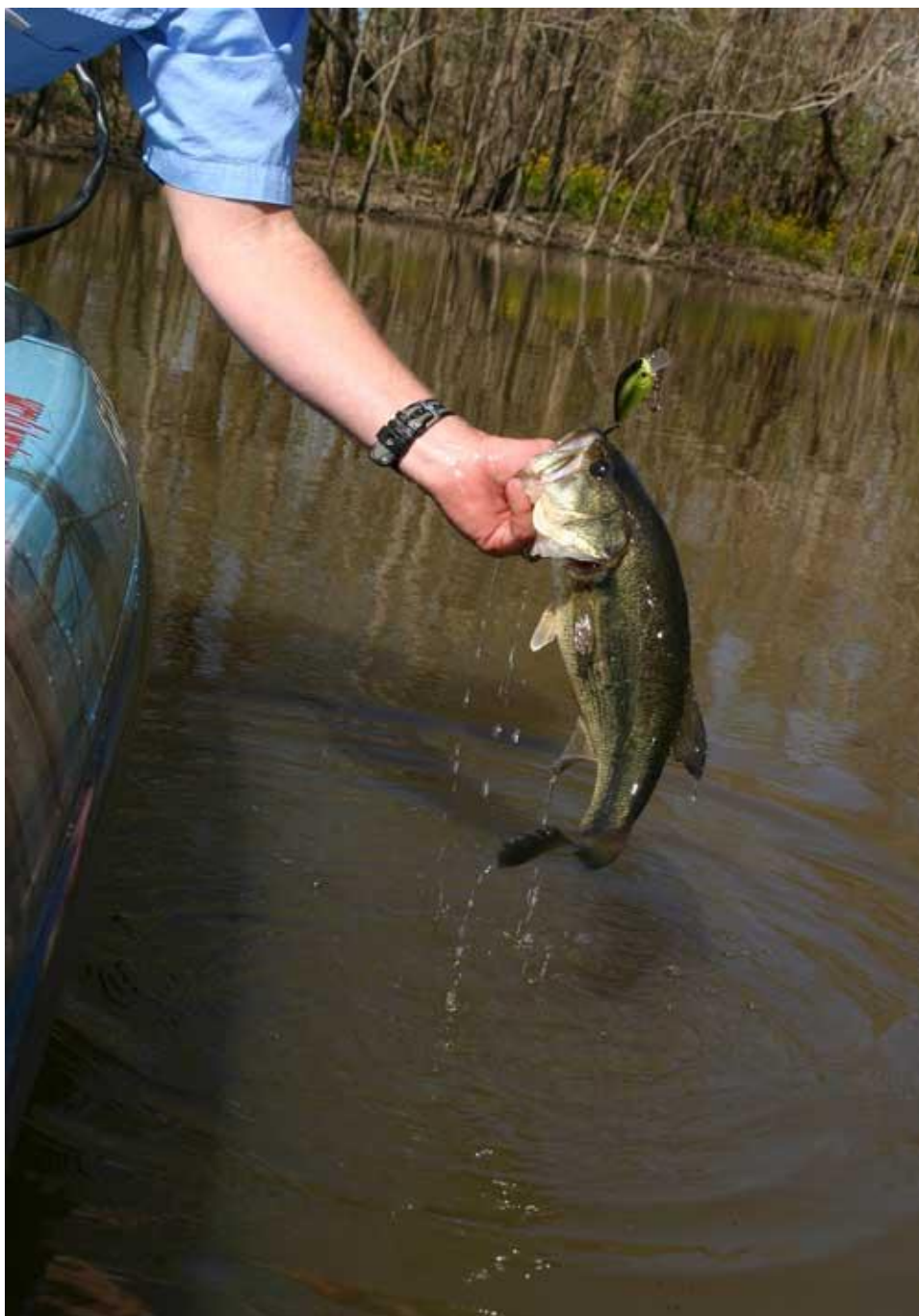
and directions changes of the fish better than graphite. Small crankbaits have small hooks so the fiberglass rod prevents bigger fish from pulling free.

“A composite rod that is a medium action but has some back bone is best for ripping baits out of the grass”, inputs Bobby. “If the rod is too stiff, the fish will pull free or the angler will rip the bait away from the fish.”

The bottom line for anglers using crankbait is to invest in a crankbait rod. Rod specifically designed to throw crankbaits are well worth the money. Check with fishing buddies to see what they use. Ask to borrow the rod for a trip or two. It will help determine if graphite, fiberglass, or combination fits the Basin style of fishing the angler does.

Cranking square bills or lipless baits throughout the Basin is a bread and butter summertime pattern. Picking the right cover, water, and bait combination is just the first step to figuring out the Basin bass population. Forage, right rod, and other factors are part of the puzzle, too. Since crankbaits are known as search baits, the lure actually help cover the wide swatch of marsh around Morgan City. In the shallow water and thick cover, crankbaits work to trigger strikes from bass buried in grass, under laydowns, or in the shade of a lone Cypress.

Jeff Bruhl has fished the Sportsman Paradise for over forty years. From wading for speckle trout in the surf at Grande Isle, LA to bass fishing the marshes of south Louisiana, fishing and writing about fishing has been a lifelong passion. As a member of the Louisiana Outdoor Writer Association, Jeff has published articles and videos in numerous magazines and websites across the country. An avid tournament fisherman, he puts his knowledge of the local waters into weekly reports on [www.marshbass.com](http://www.marshbass.com). As a reporter for the Outdoors with Don Dubuc Radio Show heard each Saturday morning (5-7 am) on WWL 870 AM, Jeff reports on freshwater fishing around New Orleans and the surrounding Gulf Coast.



# Early 'Eyes On The Troll

## Timely Tips For Trolling Up Spring Walleyes

By Daniel Quade

Trolling is widely considered a top tactic for targeting walleyes in mid to late summer, but it's an effective option early in the season as well. In fact, under the right conditions, pulling spinners or crankbaits can out-produce other strategies long before other anglers even think about straining water on the troll.



“Trolling is a deadly weapon on a lot of walleye fisheries in May and June, although the timing, locations and tactics can vary from lake to lake,” says veteran guide Jon Thelen.

Two of his favorite fishing holes are Minnesota’s legendary Mille Lacs Lake and the state’s section of the mighty Lake of the Woods. And, while both offer fine opportunities for trollers, the scenarios are far from similar. Mille Lacs is located in central Minnesota, while Lake of the Woods straddles the Canadian border. This sets up distinctly different trolling bites.

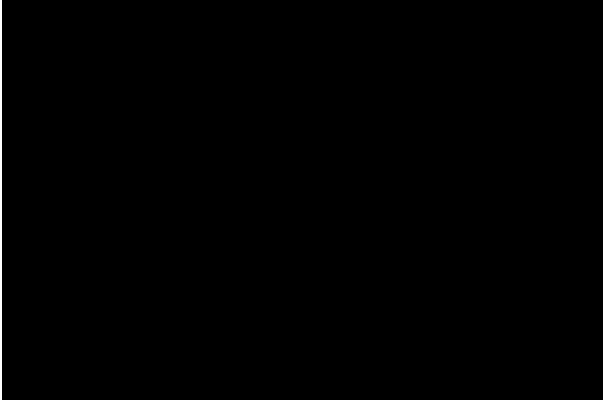
“Mille Lacs is farther south and warms up faster,” Thelen said. “So, from May into June you’ll see the first major movement of walleyes from shoreline shallows out to offshore structure. But, some fish are always within striking distance of shore, so you have to keep that in mind as well.”

From a tactical standpoint, Mille Lacs’ presentations generally kick off with a flurry of Lindy Rigging and slip-bobbering options. While these catch fish, Thelen frequently slides trolling into the mix, particularly along near-shore breaks.

“There’s an unbelievably good early crankbait bite that most people miss, both on Mille Lacs and a lot of other lakes,” he says. “Anglers are conditioned to fish slowly in cold water, but you can crush the walleyes by trolling a crankbait.”

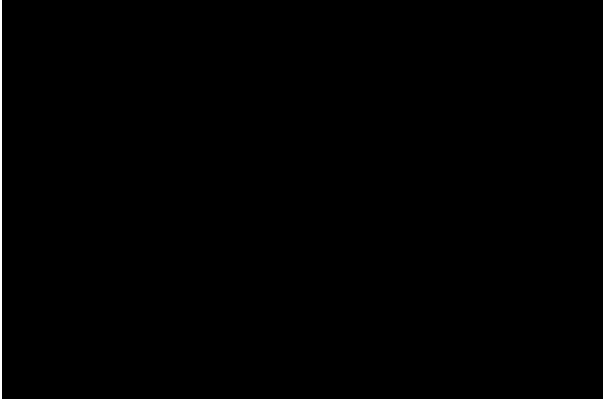
Low-light periods are particularly productive trolling times. Cloud cover or wave action can trigger daytime feeding flurries. And as for the night bite, Thelen says spring walleyes are accustomed to being





active once darkness falls due to their nocturnal spawning traits, as well as the low-light visual advantage they command over baitfish such as yellow perch.

“Their activity level starts rocking come evening,” he grins. “You can fish all day for three bites, then the lake catches fire at sunset and you limit out in an hour.”



Productive depths often fall between 7 to 12 feet, though Thelen cautions that they tend to trend shallower as the night progresses. Twelve feet may be magic at twilight, but don’t be surprised if the fish slide into 7 feet or less an hour or two after sunset, he says.

Structurally speaking, he looks for a major drop-off lying within this depth range, and notes that a shelf along the break can be especially good. Look at a lake contour map and find those areas with wider gaps between the lines. Wider shelves are best, he says, and he ignores those areas with closely clustered

lines that indicate fast stair step drops.

One of Thelen’s favorite baits for the spring bite is a Lindy River Rocker. He says that although the banana-shaped lure was built for strong current, it shines in still water, too. Of the Rocker sizes available, he favors the smallest option—the 2 3/8-inch-long number 3.

“Walleyes aren’t tuned in to big baitfish right now,” he explains. “So you don’t want a huge bait that produces a wide wobble. The River Rocker’s small profile and tight wiggle generate just the right amount of flash and vibration.”

Tackle requirements are straightforward. You don’t need any special trolling gear for the night bite. A medium-action spinning rod spooled with 10-lb monofilament line works just fine.

To get started, Thelen casts the lure behind the boat and lets it dive. He continues letting out line until he feels it begin to tick bottom, then raises it slightly with two or three turns of the reel handle. Water temperature dictates trolling speed.

“In the 50- to 55-degree temps common in spring, I run from 1.3 to 1.5 mph, moving slightly faster as the water warms,” he says.



On Lake of the Woods, Thelen says walleyes are slower to head offshore.

“You don’t typically see the main lake bite this soon on Lake of the Woods,” he says. “Walleyes do filter onto the first deep breakline, however, which is often in 17 to 19 feet of water. Once you locate the fish, they’re relatively easy to trigger.”

He targets such areas by trolling parallel to the drop-off. Spinner rigs laced with nightcrawlers are top options, and are kept in the strike zone with a 1½-ounce bottom bouncer sinker. He also uses Lindy’s new Lil’ Guy hybrid rig, which combines the benefits of a spinner, Lindy Rig and crankbait.

It’s worth noting that trolling bites hold water on a variety of fisheries, including the Great Lakes. May often finds veteran big-water guide Jason Muche pulling a 72-inch Lindy Crawler Harness in 7 to 9 feet of water just off the shores of mighty Lake Michigan. He looks for schools of shad, shiners and other baitfish near the first breakline off shore or along last year’s weedline for hungry walleyes.

To avoid spooking fish, Muche uses a planer board to position his bait in the shallows while keeping his boat over deeper water. He typically runs 50 feet of 10-lb mono mainline between board and spinner, and trolls at about 1 mph.

Muche favors a size 5 Colorado blade in shades of perch or golden shiner. He notes that trimming the last inch off of the ‘crawler’s tail helps shorten the gap between the end of the bait and the trailing hook, thereby improving the odds of successful hookups.

“It also increases the amount of scent the rig produces,” he adds.

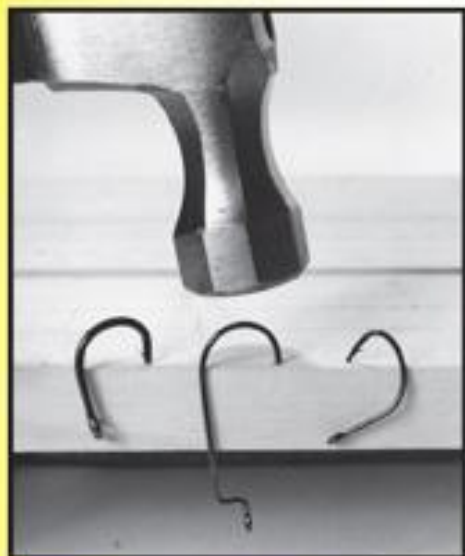


Whether you’re plying the Great Lakes or a 150-acre prairie pothole, putting Thelen and Muche’s tips into practice can help you cover water and catch more walleyes early in the season, and outfish anglers using slower paced presentations in the process.



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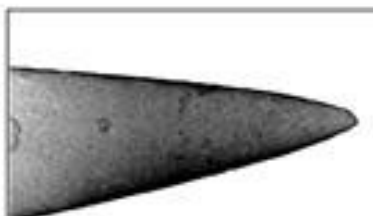
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When Howard Anger flew east from his new home in Brentwood Tennessee to join his old fishing crew from Mooresville NC., he only wanted a couple days of easy fishing with his friends. This group of old friends makes a habit of renting a house for a week at Hatteras during the off season in the spring and fall. Anders just likes to get together with the guys to tell a few old war stories and tell some lies about the fish that they caught since they last met. For Anger, the goal is to take home a few mahi mahi and if lucky some tuna, but he also knows that it is all in the luck of the rotation that determines who sits in the fighting chair.



# Two Billfish in One Day

By Jake Bussolini

When the Hatteras Fever II, Captained by Buddy Hooper reached the Gulfstream waters as planned the bite started slowly but the Dolphins were big as indicated by this nice fish held by Rich Doering.

Anger was fourth in the rotation and when his turn came, he approached the retrieve in his normal fashion. It felt like a big fish and the hit was on the line furthest away from the boat. The excitement started when the Captain hollered “sail fish”. The beautiful fish made several nice jumps and with the skill of a seasoned surgeon, Anger got the fish to the boat but the mate could not haul it into the boat and it slipped away. Although disappointed, Anger was reminded that he would still get credit for the catch.

The trip proceeded with a slow but steady catch of dolphins, each angler taking his turn in the fighting seat. When Anger’s turn came around again, it was another big fish, this time a white marlin. Anger had been resting in the cabin so his middle aged muscular body was ready for another good fight. This time the fish wasn’t quite a cooperative as the sailfish and the fight was on. I was guiding the fighting seat as the big fish moved from one side of the boat to the other. The mate had cleared the other lines knowing that this was going to be a hard retrieve.



With his feet firmly anchored to the fighting seat, Anger fought for more than a half hour with all of his pals cheering him on. Finally as the big fish made a final leap out of the water, Anger felt the big surge of adrenalin and started bringing in the last hundred yards of line until the marlin was at the side of the boat. This time the mate was not going to let the fish slip away, knowing that if he did, he might make an involuntary dive in after it.

The fish was a beautiful 90 pound white marlin. Anger, weak and shaking from the experience, wanted nothing to do with holding the fish, but he did manage to slide close enough to the



mate and the fish for a photo. The photo shows Anger smiling with pride over his catch. Some of us felt that he was really catching his breath from the grueling experience of the retrieve.

The Hatteras Fever II pulled back into port with the two flags proudly displayed. The group boated more than 170 pounds of fish, mostly dolphins and one wahoo as seen in this photo. Anger did get to take this photo holding the two flags and he will also receive a certificate from the State for each of the billfish.

The first mate on the Hatteras fever II

was Carey Foster. This is his first season acting as a mate and the two billfish were his first two catches of this type. After the boat docked, he was greeted by mates from other boats and given the traditional initiation for catching bill fish. He was thrown into the cold water twice.

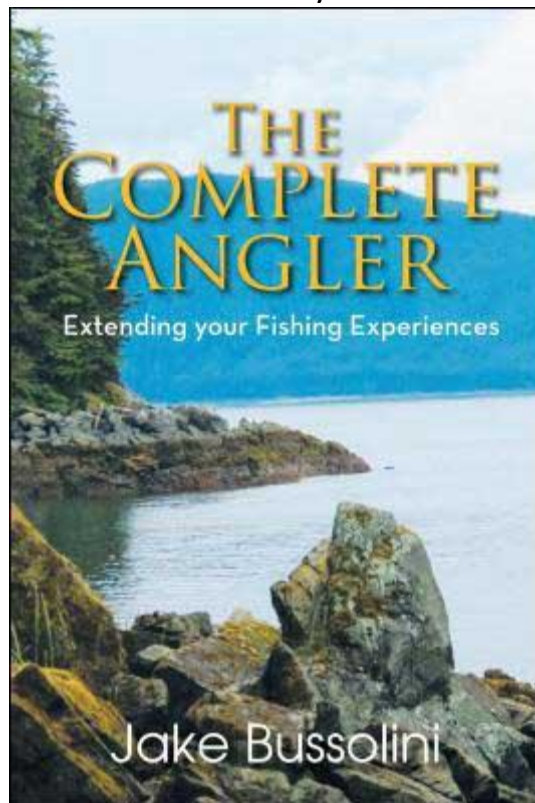
Our group fished a second day on the Hatteras Fever II and boated over 200 pounds of dolphins and wahoo.



This group of five anglers from Mooresville North Carolina travels to Hatteras twice a year to re-stock its supply of fine eating fish. They have become accustomed to using Captain Buddy Hooper and the Hatteras Fever II because he always

manages to find the fish for them. These two trips were no exception.

Jake Bussolini is a freelance writer who has written six books about fishing. His latest book titled The Complete Angler, and all of his other books can be seen on his web site [www.jakestakeonfishing.com](http://www.jakestakeonfishing.com).







# IT'S ALL ABOUT BOAT CONTROL, POSITIONING AND CATCHING FISH

By Ron Presley

The 6- and 8-foot Minn Kota Talon anchors quickly became a favorite among shallow water anglers when they were introduced two years ago. The sturdy construction and all electric operation provided a quick, quiet and dependable way to stop and fish in shallow water. For many this was all that was needed, but others wanted more.

Forward-looking Minn Kota designers created two new models that could reach further down the water column. A new series of 10- and 12- foot Minn Kota Talons in an array of new color combinations and improved features hit the market this year.

The new models extend the possibility of vertical anchoring to new depths, but with the same easy installation and operation as the early models. Size-wise the new models are hardly any longer at all. In fact, the 10-foot Talon is the same size as the 6- and 8-foot models. The 12-foot model is only about 5 inches higher. "We were able to get more depth in the spike and the inter workings," explains Kimber Austin, Marketing/Field Operations Coordinator for Minn Kota.

Austin notes that several features have been enhanced on the new models. “We have upgraded several features on the Talon, one of which is moving the motor to a lower level. The effect is to cut down on vibrations. We also created a soft-bottom mode that allows the spike to retract and not have the full force of penetration. This feature allows better anchoring in silt or other soft-bottom conditions.” Now, when an angler leaves a soft-bottom area the Talon retracts much easier than on the older models without this feature.

Each Talon comes with two remotes and a second dual remote can be purchased separately. “The dual remote allows the angler to operate two talons simultaneously for quick and accurate boat positioning.”

Pro crappie angler Whitey Outlaw is a staunch advocate of the Talon. “The response time on the Talons is much quicker than my previous anchor. If I find structure and catch a fish or two, whether on a stump or a brush pile, I just hit the down button and I’m locked in almost instantly right on top of the structure and the fish.”

With the new models, explains Outlaw, “You can do this up to 12-feet deep. Talon is the only shallow water anchoring system on the market that can go that deep.”

Because he often deals with both hard- and soft-bottom conditions, Outlaw has high praise for the Talon’s ability to anchor in either. “It has a soft-bottom setting or a hard-bottom setting,” comments Outlaw. “With the hard bottom setting three different stabs in the bottom results in solid anchoring. On the soft-bottom setting they just go down and stick the bottom once. Talons help catch fish more efficiently, including in high winds or current because they will hold the boat no matter





what.”

When the winds do come up or the angler is operating in high current conditions the Talon can be switched to Rough Water mode. Now, the Auto-Drive feature will drive the spike three additional times at ten-second intervals. The result is secure positioning in rough water conditions.

Catering always to the angler, Minn Kota also developed a wireless foot switch to give hands free operation. “The wireless switch,” says Austin, ‘will operate a single Talon or dual Talons depending on programming.”

Another new feature is a tilt bracket that allows the operator to lay the Talon horizontal by pushing one lever. “This feature allows the boat to go under a low bridge, overhangs or garage door openings.”

Austin also explains the ease of installation. “If your boat has a flat transom the Talon will mount directly to the transom. If you have a curved transom you mount the Talon using either of two available brackets. One bracket accommodates a jack plate installation on either the port or starboard side of your boat. The other bracket mounts the Talon by using a bracket between the transom and the motor.” These bracket systems are referred to as sandwich-style mounts. All are universal and very durable.

The icing on the cake is the new color schemes. The 10- and 12-foot Talons are available in black, blue, red, silver and black and silver and white. There are also travel covers available for all lengths and quick-disconnect systems if you don’t want the Talons on the boat all the time.

For more information on these incredible shallow water anchors visit the website at [www.minnkotamotors.com](http://www.minnkotamotors.com).



# Ten Tips to Catch More Walleyes With Jigs

By Jason Mitchell

Jigs are the most versatile tool in any walleye angler's tackle box. Like any technique, there are details and nuances that can make you successful or unsuccessful. If there is one aspect of jig fishing that is often overlooked, it would be the importance of versatility. There is not necessarily a right or wrong way to fish a jig. When the fish are biting, you can fish a jig in a lot of different ways and get bit. When conditions get tougher however, we often see a particular stroke or jigging style produce and catching fish is all about locking into that specific mojo.

The best jig anglers can tap into that mojo. The cadences and strokes can vary dramatically from sharp snaps and pops of the rod tip in varying windows to subtle drags and shakes mixed with lifts and holds. Think of each attitude, each fishing style as a channel on an old black and white

television set. Turn through the channels until you find the right station. Jig stroke and cadence however are not the only variables you can experiment with to jig your way to more walleyes this spring. Here are ten of our best jig fishing tips to get you ready for the walleye opener this season.

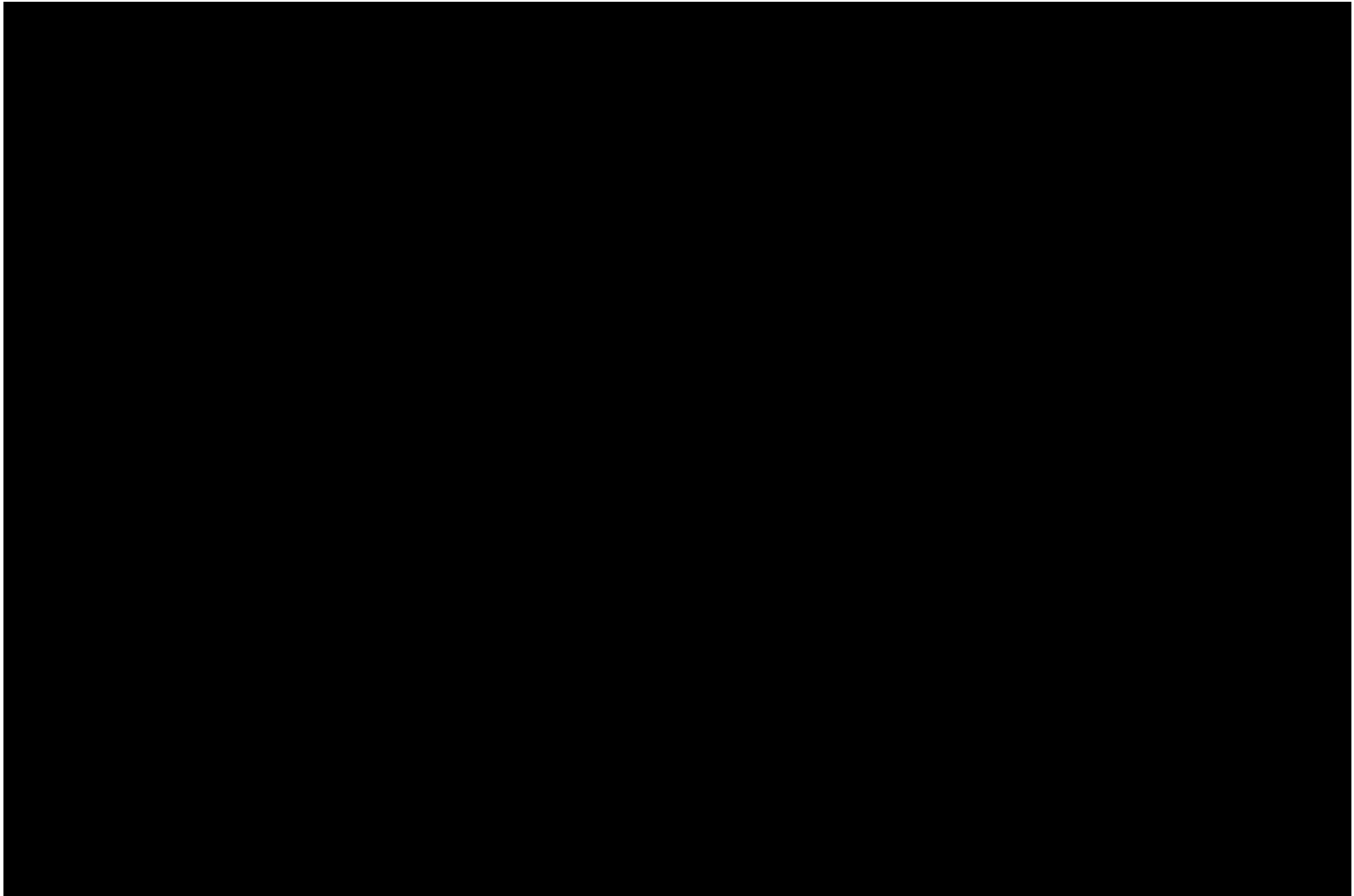
1. Mono or Braid? Some anglers make the mistake of believing one is better than the other. Not so





simple. We have found several situations especially early in the season where the flexibility and stretch of mono trumped the sensitivity of braid. On the flip side, we have also seen situations where the hook sets were much more effective with braid. If you are missing fish or not getting bit, the answer is simple... switch. Keep a rod rigged up with mono and a rod rigged up with braid like Northland Bionic and switch back and forth until you start hooking up consistently. It is amazing how on some days, one line will work better than the other.

2. Watch the Line. Bites often get felt at the bottom of the stroke or on the lift as a stroke is repeated. More bites often get seen anywhere on the descent when fish punch a descending jig. If the line twitches or jumps, set the hook. Many avid jig anglers swear by high-vis line so that they can distinguish these bites easier.



3. Anglers go gaga over colors and finishes on jigs. Some days, high visibility colors like chartreuse and Moon Glow are the ticket. The hook on the jig however trumps color. Always have a hook file in the boat and sharpen the hooks throughout the day. The best jig is a jig with a really sharp hook. Amazing how dinged up hook points can get fishing through rock, clam beds and rip rap. A jig will keep pounding walleyes long after all the paint is chipped off as long as the hook point still has an edge. Also, match up the hook size and gap to the bait you are using. Use the biggest hook you can get away with to increase your batting average on hook sets and also for keeping bigger fish pinned up.

4. Long Shank versus Short Shank. One of the most popular and effective jigs of all time has to be the Northland Tackle Fire Ball. This particular jig has a short shank. The advantage of the short shank jig in



my opinion is how the minnow or bait rolls on the jig as it is moved across the bottom. The minnow in particular seems to put off a lot more flash. Long shank jigs however have a place. While the action might not be as good on the bait, you can sometimes increase your hook ups with long shank jigs because the hook can be threaded further back into the bait. Long shank hooks also allow for double hooking and threading which can make you more efficient when fishing through debris or when pitching. Experiment with both.

5. Heavy Factor. Anglers often preach the mantra of using as light of a jig as possible. Just as often however, we often catch more fish by using as heavy of jigs as possible. In rivers or current situations for example, heavier jigs can be fished slower in faster current and can be kept close to the bottom. On tough bites on still water, heavier jigs allow for more vertical up and down presentations especially when conditions make boat control tougher. Working down the scale to lighter jigs is always an option but don't hesitate to work up the scale to heavier jig weights to find out what is working.

6. The Count. The general consensus amongst jig anglers is to set the hook when a bite is distinguished. There are situations however when feeding the fish some line or at least pausing momentarily can increase hookups. If you are missing fish, experiment with the amount of lag time between when you feel the bite and when you pull the trigger. There are days where a second or two or delayed response can pay off.

7. Line Angle. Assuming that both anglers in a boat are using the same jig weight. If one angler is catching fish while the other angler is not, match up two variables. The jig stroke is the first variable to duplicate. The second is the exact angle the line takes from the rod tip to the water.

8. Rod Action. For many jig fishing applications, you can't go wrong with a medium power fast action rod like the Jason Mitchell Pro Walleye JM621MS which is a rod we designed specifically for the purpose. Some situations however require either a stiffer or softer blank. Match up your jigging formula to the optimum rod action. Too stiff and fast or too soft and moderate of a rod action can cost your dearly. As a general rule of thumb, aggressive jig strokes, far casts, current or heavier jigs require a much stiffer blank like the Jason Mitchell Pro Walleye JM721MS. Pitching and working light jigs,





dragging and soft jig strokes along with horizontal behind the boat jig presentations can often be much more effective with the lighter touch found on the JM641MLS.

9. Cast More. Many walleye anglers fish a jig below the boat and below the boat works great but make a point to cast more this season. When searching for fish and going through a location especially when fishing rivers, it is amazing how much faster and more thorough you can work a spot. You still hit below the boat on the end of a cast but you also touch a lot more water. With two anglers in the boat, have one person fish below the boat and have one person cast around the boat... you will be amazed by how much luckier you get especially in regards to finding fish.

10. Versatility. The best jig anglers can flip the switch and change like a chameleon. Turn through the variables until you get the mojo going. Monitor the cadence and stroke by using words in your mind so that you can experiment and then go back to something. A mistake that sometimes happens to me especially early in the year when the fish want a slow and methodical delivery is that I get excited after catching a fish or two and by default find myself reeling a touch faster and snapping the jig with

more enthusiasm not even realizing that I am making this minor variation to my presentation. On tough bites, I often half to talk myself back down to get back into the rhythm of what was working.

Paying attention to detail and experimenting with these different variables can elevate your jig fishing game this season. With all of the presentations available for walleye anglers right now, jig fishing might top the list for effectiveness across the board just because you can fish a jig so many different ways. Not to mention, crossing an eye with a jig is a lot of fun.



## Writer Spotlight



After growing up as a kid and walking streams for miles at a time in order to catch a fish and he has long term memories of miles of wading and fishing. He spent the last 45 years of his career bass fishing on lakes all over the State of Alabama, Guntersville, Wheeler, Pick Wick and Logan Martin, in Maryland fishing the likes of the Potomac, the Eastern Shore and more and in Florida fishing Kissimmee, ST. Johns, Lake George and the Harris Chain of lakes. It was always an addiction that he could never stop nor did he want to, as bass fishing was a love

his whole life.

Bass fishing to him started by dragging a plastic worm or lizard over structure regardless of conditions, depth, and obstacles, as he fished with one rod and one purple worm or lizard and used it to fish, slow, fast, shallow or deep!

In 1994 he experienced a extremely nasty boat accident that took him 3 years to overcome and months of therapy to get where he could just get around, as an alternative to sitting around doing very little he started a part time guide service, where he was helping others with their customers and taking a few trips himself in order to supplement his income. After a few years of learning more about the guiding business, gaining sponsors and fishing many tournaments over several states, his business grew to an unmanageable amount of trips where he was so busy that the need to add staff to his business became apparent.

His career as a guide took a big upswing and grew into what it is today, with customers from all over the country following him first on the internet through his web site: [www.fishlakeguntersvilleguideservice.com](http://www.fishlakeguntersvilleguideservice.com) and then through his Facebook page [www.facebook.com/FishGuntersville](http://www.facebook.com/FishGuntersville) and now both, with that said his guide service in total fishes somewhere around 900 days a year between all his guides.

They treat people like family, they care about their customers and they put first class equipment in their hands to fish with from fishing boats to rods and reels and baits. Sponsors flock to his service as all his guides are licensed Captains with credible back grounds and strong leadership skills, allowing him to be extremely influential with customers as to what reels, rods, and baits they choose to fish with on a daily basis. In fact, they are so influential when it comes to bait choices that he has had customers dump boxes of baits in garbage cans in front of him and walk into a tackle store and replace everything they just discarded with baits he is sponsored with. It is by his own admission, amazing to him to see the influence he has when it comes to bait choices, with customers that love to bass fish and believe in the sponsors he has gathered over time.



Success in the guiding business for him has all been about how his service treats customers, they put them first, they teach techniques, they explain what they are doing and they try to make everyone that enters the guide service a better fisherman. His belief is that he cannot always make the fish bite, but he can always teach someone something whether it be about their Lowrance Electronics or a technique that makes them a better fisherman. He can always treat them with respect and show equal admiration for their accomplishments in life and make them know that he cares and as his motto states "no one will treat you better."



Captain Mike's personal fishing equates to around 250 guided days a year and another 35 for personal fun, where he might be fishing with a friend or another guide to cross over experiences and areas. One thing that he insists with his guides is they share information, so each and every guide can not only have alternative places to fish, but can learn from each other on a continuing basis. As the lake changes we know it as his guides discuss these changes on a daily basis, so that being successful when customers are in the boat is a given. His biggest bass he has ever caught on Guntersville was 11.4 lbs with customers having several bigger from 11.9 to 13.4 lbs. His biggest bass ever was caught in Brazil peacock bass fishing, and was 21.3 lbs. caught in 2000 in the rivers and mountains of Brazil.

As a background to fishing he spent many years coaching high-school football, playing high-school and college football and had a very successful career as a coach and if it wasn't for my boat accident he may very well still be coaching football. Coaching in many ways is very similar to the teaching and memorable times he gives his customers today during a guided boat trip. His customers will learn, they will catch fish and they will have the time of their life while on the water with **Captain Mike** - Fish Lake Guntersville Guide Service - [www.fishlakeguntersvilleguideservice.com](http://www.fishlakeguntersvilleguideservice.com) - [www.facebook.com/FishGuntersville](http://www.facebook.com/FishGuntersville)



# DAN'S FISH 'N' TALES®

## Tail Nippers Help Find Correct Bass Lure

By Dan Galusha

are hitting. In most cases this means smaller, which in bass terms is “downsizing”.

Part of the sunfish strikes will help an angler stay alert, and it is always better having something hit than nothing hitting. Often I've found that when the sunfish are striking the lure, many of the bass strikes will feel the same.

Keith Lundahl, former owner of Lundahl Lures, came up with an interesting theory as to why this works. He said when the bluegills were hitting the lure, the bass become more interested, and want to take the lure away from the bluegill before he could get it. Here is a selection of lures that I have found to work best for this technique.

### LURES WITH SPINNER BLADES

Small Road Runners and Beetle Spins; and 1/8-ounce Stanley Wedge Spinnerbaits, in colors of white, chartreuse and white/chartreuse, are not only good for this technique,

Bass anglers will often get a little upset when they are having “tail nippers” (sunfish/bluegill) hit their plastic worm. However, many times the sunfish will let a fisherman know which lure will work best for the bass.

On several occasions, when the fishing was tough, I have tried to find a bass lure that the sunfish



Sunfish of all types were hitting on Finesse Worms along a rocky point in the Little Sister Creek area of Bull Shoals Lake, when a smallmouth bass became interested in the offering.





A lot of green sunfish and bluegill were tapping 4-inch Power Finesse Worms along a bluff area in the back of Jimmie Creek on Bull Shoals Lake when a pattern was found for producing some nice Kentucky Spotted bass.

but can catch a wide variety of species.

## PLASTIC WORMS

Straight or curl tail 4-inch worm (Power Finesse, Havoc Finesse and B-Fish-N Ringworm), used with a 1/16 or 1/8-ounce lead head, or Texas rigged with a 1/16 or 1/8-ounce worm sinker, and a number 1 or 2 (occasionally a 1/0) XPoint XGap hook. While I have other colors that I prefer to use, for some reason the colors, which have worked the best in this situation, are electric grape/pearl and black/chartreuse for Ringworms; abd black, pumpkinseed, green pumpkin and red shad for Finesse Worms.

## GRUBS AND TUBES

Mann's 2-inch Augertail grub, a 2 or 3 inch curl tail grub, Yamamoto's Tiny Ika, and a 2-inch tube are my pick in this category. I rig these on a 1/16 or 1/8 ounce lead head jig. The most productive colors have been black, smoke, and white/pearl.

## CRANKBAITS

This is not a lure I generally

try for this technique, but when I do there are a couple of picks - Norman's Deep Tiny N (pictured at end) and Bill Lewis' Tiny Trap. For colors try shad patterns, chrome/black back, chartreuse/blue back, chartreuse/black back and sexy west.

This system has worked best in lakes. I've used it in all sizes of water - from farm ponds to Ozark reservoirs.

One occasion when this system worked was during the taping of a TV show. I had pre-fished a small, deep lake, which had an abundance of submerged weeds. The water was very clear, and the weather was hot. It was uncertain as to what was going



Three of the author's favorite lures for finding bass through "tail nippers" are a Power Finesse Worm, Mann's 4-inch Jelly Worm and 4-inch B-Fish-N Ringworm, rigged on a Xpoint XGap hook with a 1/16 to 1/8 ounce worm sinker.



to be used on this very tough lake. I fished red shad and pumpkinseed, 4-inch Power Finesse Worms on a 1/8-ounce lead head, and started having a lot of bluegill hits, with a few being caught. After a short time the bass started hitting on the same lure. This pattern carried over to the show's taping date, and on into a couple of weeks to follow.

Another such situation was on Bull Shoals Lake, out of Bull Shoals, Arkansas. It was the final day of the trip, and fishing had been tough. I decided to go back in the Jimmie Creek area, and fish a small area of bluffs, which were in shallower water. The lure of choice was a 4-inch, black Power Finesse Worm, on the aforementioned lead head jig. It started off with a lot of strikes from sunfish of all sorts. Then a smallmouth took interest, followed by Kentucky spotted and largemouth bass. The

A 10-inch bluegill that hit on a 4-inch Power Finesse worm while fishing for bass.



A pattern was found for catching bass on this show by pre-fishing with 4-inch Power Finesse Worms, which produced several bluegill strikes while bass were hitting the same lure in the same

pattern worked so well that it sparked the decision to extend the trip for another week, through which time this technique kept on producing. Tail nippers and all produced an enjoyable trip.

While this technique works well, it is not a 100 percent solution to find the “magic lure” during tough days on the water. Then again, it is doubtful if there is such a thing as the “magic lure”. If you know of one, keep it quiet, and start fishing tournaments professionally - you will make a fortune.



If you have any questions on this, or any other fishing subjects, drop me a line through the Dan's Fish 'N' Tales® website at [www.dansfishntales.com](http://www.dansfishntales.com). There is also a link to connect back to the [ODU Magazine website](#).

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



# Spring Bullhead Fun

**By D & B Ice Adventures**

As winter comes to an end, there is usually a short break before the open water fishing opportunities in Vermont begin to increase. While some

are still brave enough to venture out on the thinning ice, the rivers and creeks begin to “pop”, opening a new door to anglers. Bullhead (bullpout, hornpout) are a popular fish for many spring and summertime anglers because of their aggressive nature and the commercial fishery. When these creeks open and start to flow so do the massive swarms of bullhead. After caught, bullhead can be excellent table fare if allowed to “mud out”.

Bullhead spawn in the spring and are usually the first fish to run and seek out warmer water to do their springtime duty. The spring warm-up, allows anglers to have remarkable success finding fish bawled up in certain locations that tend to warm first. As stated, bullhead action can start as soon as the creeks and rivers begin to open up but when the surface temperatures





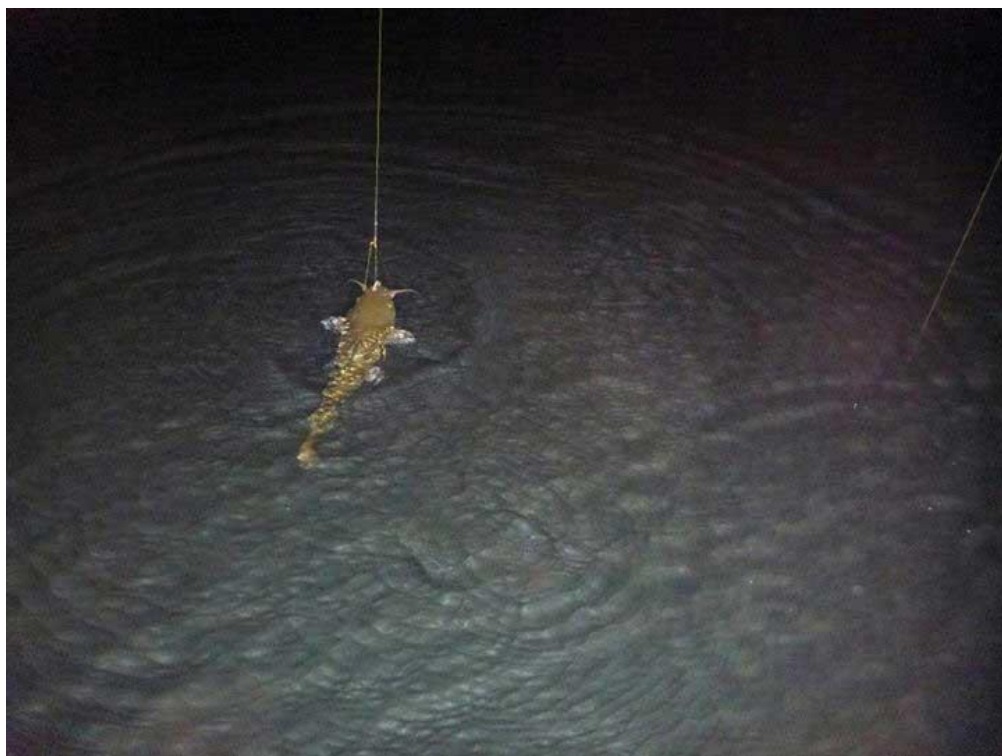
approach 55 degrees is when the major rush of fish will become active. Bullhead will spawn in water between 55-70 surface temperatures allowing for plenty of time to get in on the action.

Some of the most popular places to catch Bullhead in the spring are in small creeks flowing into a larger body of water. The fish will



work their way upstream looking for the warmest water. Warmer water holds the bait which the bullhead need to get their energy up for their spawn. You will often see fishermen lined up on bridges or on banks near culverts. These locations act as a natural funnel congregating fish but the possibilities of locating fish outside of these pinch points is endless in most bodies of water.

Bullhead are also a great way to get the family out of the house after a long winter simply because of the fact that you don't have to be a pro to catch one. The rigging we use is simple. In general, running a double drop shot rig produces more fish because when they are there, they bite. Above a 1/2 ounce weight, start by splicing in two three way swivels one and two feet above the weight with snelled hooks coming off. The three way swivels aren't necessary but they help with line twist. Because bullpout feed so forcefully, using larger hooks is a good idea for their ease of removal.



As for bait, bullhead aren't too picky. There have been times when all of our worm cans have been emptied out and have resorted to bits of lunch or even chunks of filleted fish. Basically, anything that smells and stays on the hook for several casts will do the trick. Hot dogs are a great snack to bring while bullhead fishing because, nothing beats a hot meal on the water, and

the leftovers, if there are any, can be used for bait in a pinch.

When starting off the season, the runs of fish may be light so one helpful trick is to get a good sent trail going. As with ocean fishing, this is similar to chumming the water but without actually tossing any bait out. Start by making long casts with slow retrieves making sure that your bait is running in contact with the bottom. The more casts you make the better the scent trail will be. These fish will get on a smell and follow it right to your area. Not only will it draw them in, the commotion of catching fish will keep them there. This method has proven effective over and over through the years.

When the spring run is on, it is evident by driving just about anywhere around Lake Champlain that offers shallow water. Large groups of people will be lined up pulling fish consistently. Even though bullhead are a big nighttime feeder, the day bite during the spawn can be phenomenal as well. If you don't mind the crowd, pull up a seat. Fishing in crowds can be fun but in many instances is more frustrating than it is worth. To get a bit of relief, targeting down times for fishermen is the best bet because the fish seem to bite at all hours. Many trips for us begin around 2-3am and will last until people start to show up in numbers again. This is a good time to run home and grab the boat for other species!

As the spawn winds down, don't give up on bullhead. They will push out into slightly deeper water and can still be found in concentrations. Many times they can be found congregated around natural funnels, subtle and major lake features, and weeds. While many people will target them in 10 feet of water or less, we have had some great success in depths out to 30' fishing for walleye. Even though the fish have slid deeper, using the same methods can be equally as effective.

Like we said before, the nighttime bite is the right bite for bullhead and even after the spring run is a great way to expand your time on the water. Don't be afraid to go out at night and set up with a light. Make those long "chumming" casts and in most cases, have action until you can't take it any longer!



D & B Ice Adventures is based out of Barre, Vermont and composed of two fishing fanatics: Dylan Smith and Robert Booth. With an equal drive time to the Connecticut River and Lake Champlain, the hardest decision is whether they want to catch giant bluegill on the river or huge pumpkinseed on the lake with crappie in the mix at both. These decisions have been logged through their blog (<http://dbiceadventures.wordpress.com/>) which gives details on what they have to endure to be successful.



# Humminbird® ONIX™ Finds Fish Faster: Crappie Case Study

By Jim Edlund



Powerful, completely customizable and easy-to-use ONIX first step in classic trifecta: locate, catch, eat

Humminbird Field Marketing Manager Bill Carson is an honest-to-goodness fishhead. Left to his druthers, he'd spend every waking minute aboard his center console boat teaching fellow anglers how to find and catch more fish with electronics.

As the former Tournament Director of the now-defunct Wal-Mart FLW Striper Series, Carson knows a thing or two about finding and catching fish, especially brawny pelagics, although he's just at home fishing crappies on freshwater lakes, rivers and reservoirs, especially in the spring and fall.

"There's still that kid in me that absolutely delights in catching crappies," says Bill Carson. "Plus, when it comes to table fare, they're awfully hard to beat."

Truth is, since the recent launch of the Humminbird® ONIX™ at the 2013 Ft. Lauderdale International Boat Show, Carson has been using the powerful new technology to find and catch pretty much



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everything that swims: from largemouth and spotted bass to stripers and walleyes to crappies and redfish.

"Second only to bass, panfish are America's fish. So a big part of Humminbird's job should be to show anglers how our technologies can help them find more panfish faster. And ONIX is the cat's pajamas. It gives anglers an unprecedented level of customization, so a bass fisherman can set it up for the way he fishes, a walleye guy, redfish angler, crappie fisherman and so on."

Just this past week, Carson took a break to fish crappies on Georgia's famed Lake Lanier. Running two ONIX10ci HD SI units, one at his console, the other on the bow, Carson says the new units are amazingly fast, powerful, customizable and easy to use. "ONIX eliminated a ton of guesswork and put me on crappies fast."

Like a lot of waters in the country right now, Carson found crappies pushing up shallower from wintering areas to pre-stage near shallower spawning habitat on Georgia's Lake Lanier.

"These pre-staging areas can mean areas close to structure, like wood or docks. On Lanier manmade structure is key. For example, I can idle by a boat that's backed into the water off a dock and the outdrives will actually hold fish. It's not unusual to find crappies hanging around the crud on a lower unit hanging in the water."

Carson's typical M.O. is idling parallel to docks with Side Imaging, looking for fish in and around the floating platforms, pilings and underwater cover. He favors the larger, shaded platforms of community docks which often hold massive schools of crappies.





“Side Imaging allows you to quickly identify which docks have fish on them and which don’t. It’s a great filter. No wasted time on areas with no fish.”

Yet, as was the case on Carson’s recent outing, a cold front moved in, pushing crappies away from docks and out over adjacent, deeper water.

“There just weren’t the numbers of fish under the docks that there should have been. So, I looked to the other side of the boat away from the docks with Side Imaging. Once I found them with ONIX I

was able to highlight a specific depth contour and keep idling that depth contour until I found the biggest schools.”

Carson’s magic depth was the 30-foot contour on his Humminbird LakeMaster map, which he set with a variance of plus/minus five feet a touch slider via the patented Depth Highlight feature, which highlighted the area in green for easy navigation.

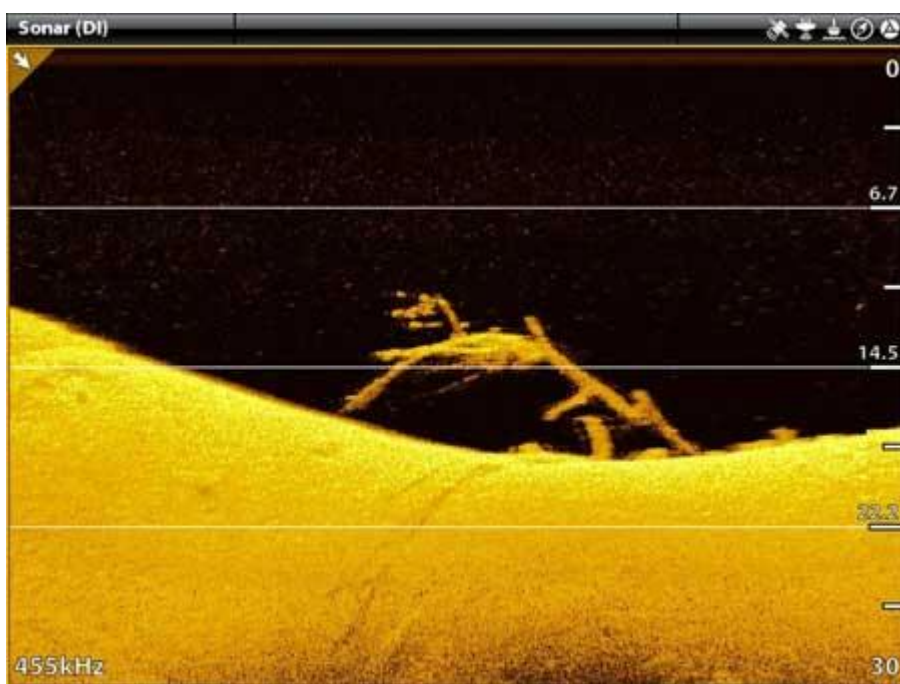
“Since crappies typically look up to feed, I like to present my bait a foot or two above them in the water column. My set-up usually comprises 8-pound braid with a 2- or 3-foot leader of 8-pound fluorocarbon. I like braid for immediate hooksets on deeper fish; the soft tip of my rod prevents any ripped lips.”

While filling his livewell with slabs destined for the dinner table, Carson stumbled on an underwater tree in relatively shallow water, illustrating how Humminbird Down Imaging can be a crappie angler’s best friend.

“I was following that 30-foot contour when I approached a point and discovered a tree that had broken off and fallen into the water. You can clearly see the wood and fish suspended off of it in 10.5 feet with Down Imaging. So, not all crappies will suspend into deeper water during a cold front. Often, they will hold close to cover like wood, too.”

Anglers using ONIX say that the Down Imaging view is sharper than on previous Humminbird units.

Carson explains: “The ONIX has a new all-





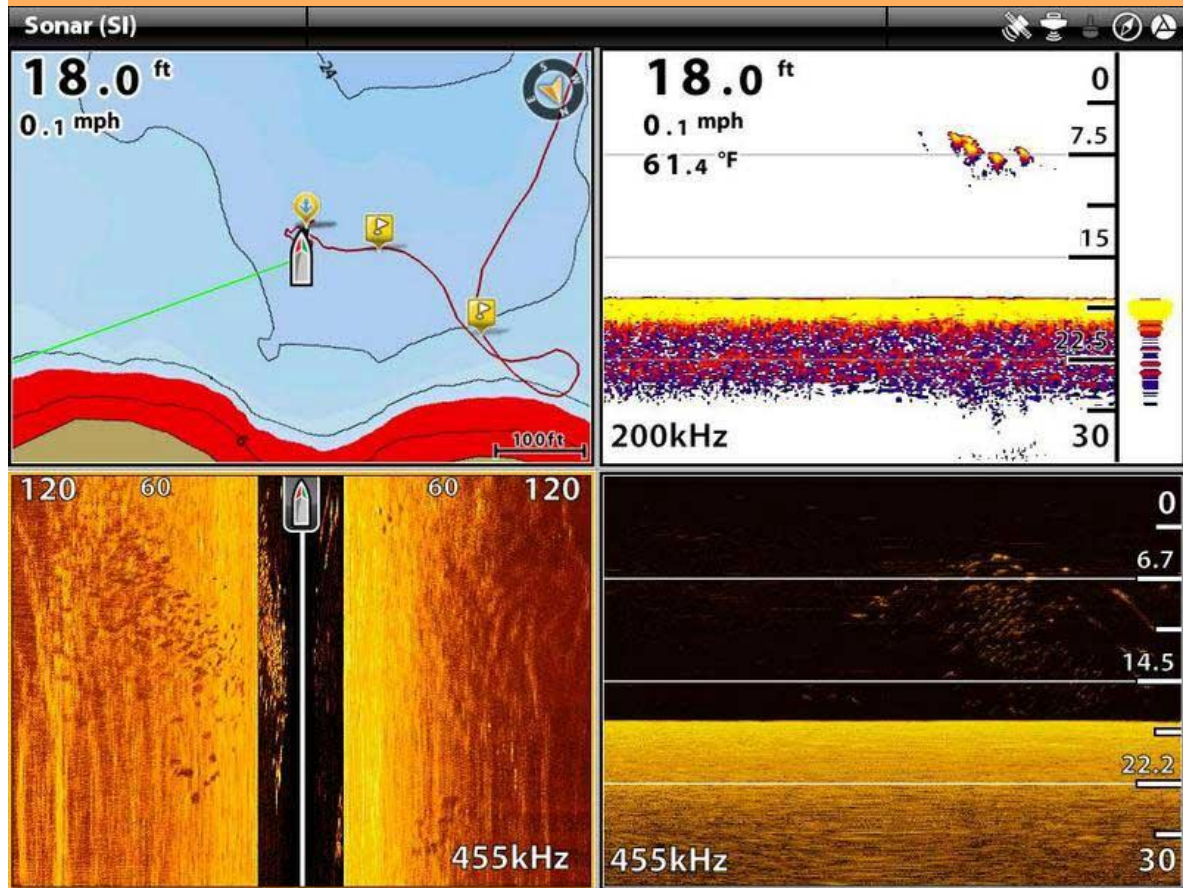
in-one transducer that has a dedicated Down Imaging transducer element built in. Historically, unless you used a separate XNT 9 DI T transducer with your Side Imaging unit, all DI images were created out of two Side Imaging overlays. Now it's a dedicated transducer with a 455 kHz beam with an approximate 75-degree cone for stunning imagery.

“You also have an 800 kHz setting, but at 45 degrees, it's narrower. I typically want to use 455 kHz with DI for the same reason we want to use it with Side Imaging: bigger playing field. The only time I switch to 800 is when I'm looking for something that is very hard and reflective, like a car, an airplane or something metal. I might use it in boulder fields or rock piles, but nine



“The ONIX Side Imaging view reveals a majority of crappies off to the right of the boat, which gradually becomes deeper. “

“Simply touch one of the view with two fingers and it will snap to a full-page view of that particular screen shot. Notice the crappies on the left hand side of the boat. The chart indicates that the boat is Spot-Locked, notated by the anchor icon. The green line that trails left indicates the direction the trolling motor is turned.”



times out of ten I'm using 455 kHz.”

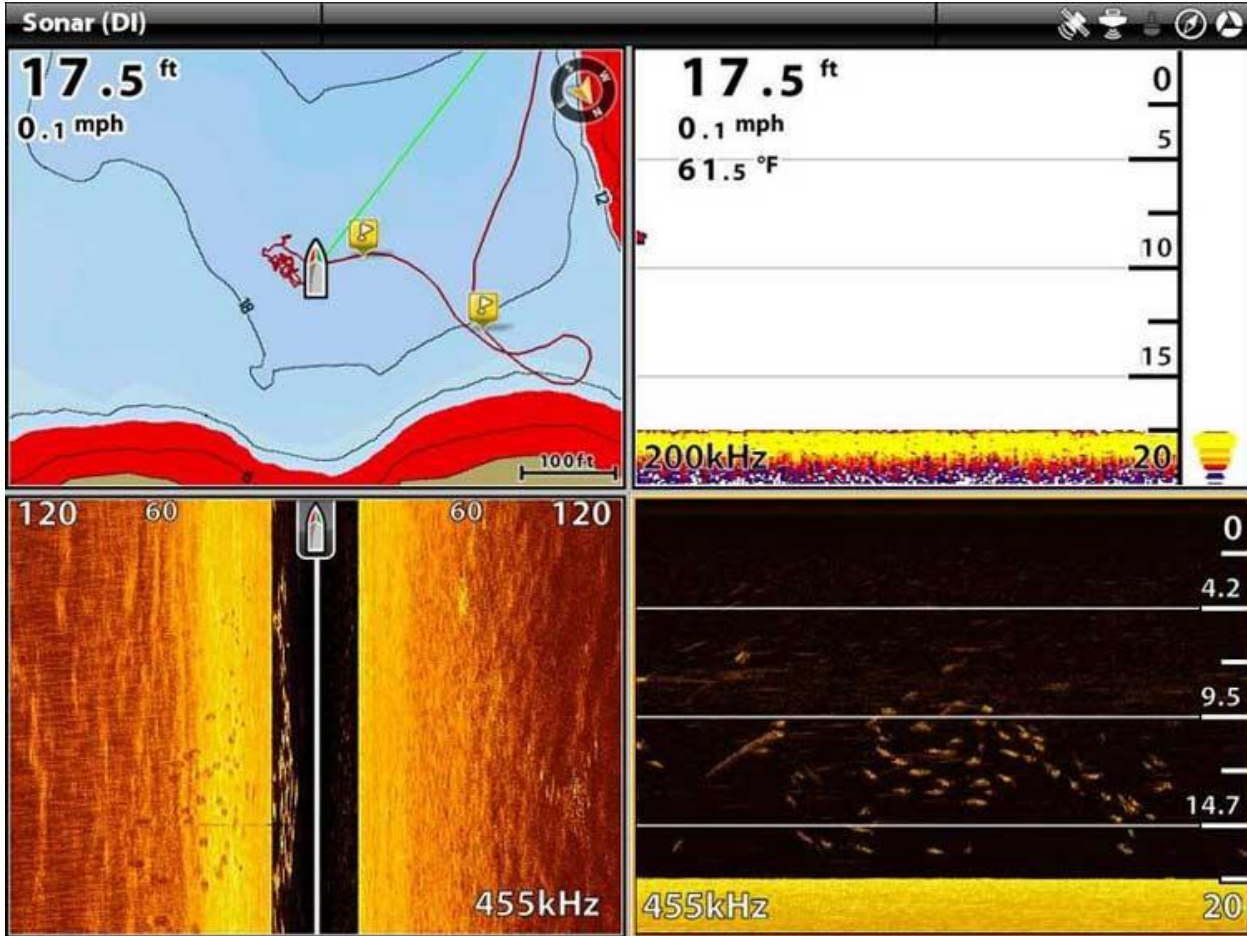
Speaking of fast operation, Carson says the visual icons on ONIX make operation a breeze.

“The upper left hand corner shows an arrow with a little brown box. What this tells me is I was looking at the screen in multi-pane view. Most likely, I had Down Imaging, Side Imaging, 2D Sonar and a chart in a custom wire frame view all at the same time. Then, I saw these fish on the tree so I simply touched the DI view window with both fingers and had it snap to a full-pane view,



which is what you have in the illustration above.”

He adds that on the top right of the screen you can tell at a glance what other integrate technologies are on and running. “The top right of my screen tells me left-to-right that my GPS, Sonar, and 360 Imaging are all on, my trolling motor is deployed, and iPilot Link is engaged.”



Carson: “You’ll notice in this screen grab fish are not showing up in 2D sonar because of the narrow transducer cone and the fact I am running in Clear Mode with minimal sensitivity. There are times, especially with smaller fish like crappies, when Max Mode – even in shallower depths like this – works best with panfish. Simply adjust the sensitivity until the fish that you see in Side Imaging and Down Imaging begin to appear.”

## The Payoff

At the end of the day, Carson says the new Humminbird ONIX is the first step in a beautiful trifecta: locate fish, catch fish, eat fish.

“I tell you what, that meal of fried crappies was the best meal I’ve had in a long time: fresh guacamole, sliced fresh jalapeno peppers, steamed taco shells, and perfectly fried fish ... wow!”

Pretty hard to argue with that.



Through the years, wherever and whenever anglers go fishing, live bait has always been the go-to bait when fishing gets tough. It's still that way in many fishing situations: Pure and simple, live minnows, nightcrawlers, leeches, crickets, crawdads, and whatever else catch fish. But plastic baits are taking the place of live bait in many situations. However, when some anglers try plastic baits for the



first time, sometimes they don't experience the same success that they have come to expect from live bait. There's a reason for that most of the time. The reason is, they're fishing it like they fish

live bait. The fact is, when you're using plastic bait instead of live bait, you've got to fish plastic differently if you want to catch fish. Here's what I mean.

# Plastic Baits For More Fishing Success

By Bob Jensen

Let's say you're fishing for walleyes with jigs and minnows. You're just crawling the jig along the bottom and giving it lots of stops, letting the minnow wiggle naturally like minnows do. You're catching them pretty good so you decide to substitute a plastic bait for the real one. There are lots of plastic baits that resemble or at least kind of resemble a real minnow. You throw the jig/plastic combo out and retrieve it the same way you were retrieving the jig/live minnow combo. The walleye's don't eat it, so you decide this plastic stuff isn't as good as the real deal. The reality is, plastic baits aren't live baits, and if you want to be successful with plastic, you need to fish it differently than live bait.

Plastic baits don't move by themselves like live bait does: You need to provide the action. You've got to keep the stuff hopping or swimming across the bottom or through the water. For the most part, plastic bait that is sitting still probably isn't going to catch much, although there are times when bass anglers and ice-anglers catch bass or panfish while using a very slow retrieve with plastic.



Plastic baits offer so many advantages over live bait. Plastic comes in a variety of shapes, colors, sizes, and can provide so many different actions. And you don't need to worry about keeping plastic alive or transporting it from lake to lake.

Plastic baits really enable an angler to experiment with color, and color can be a big factor in your fishing success. Try using a jig head of one color with plastic of another color. Now you're showing the fish two different colors and increasing the odds of showing them the color they want on that particular day.

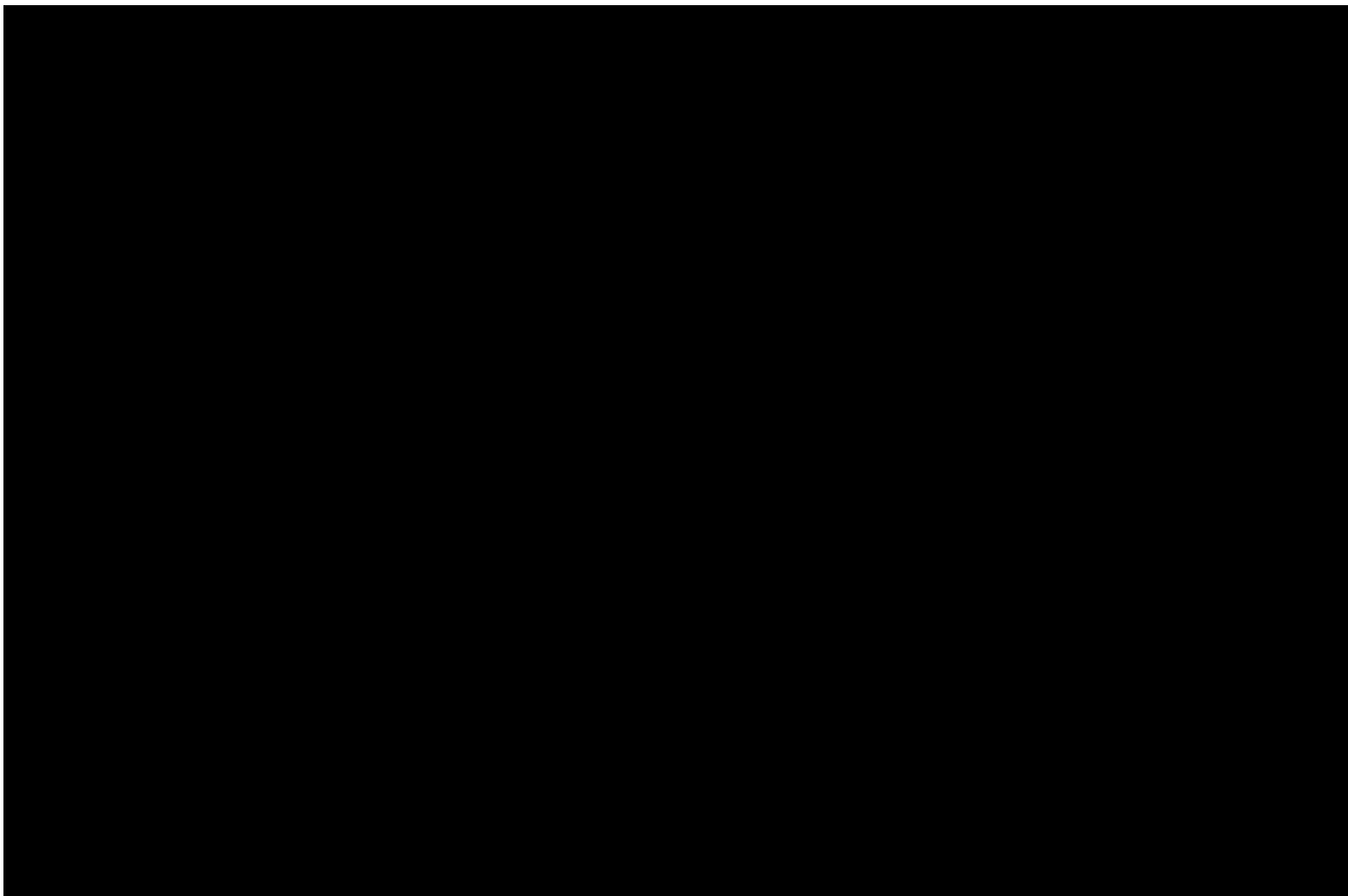
There are lots of different plastics available to anglers. I've tried a lot of them, and, when fished properly, a lot of them do a great job. The Impulse plastics have become a favorite of mine for several reasons.

First, they're easy to store. They don't need to be stored in messy liquid in a leaky container.

Second, the cost is reasonable, and they come in a lot of the best colors and shapes.

Last, they catch fish. And that right there is reason enough for me to use plastic more often. If you fish plastic the way it needs to be fished, you'll catch more fish on plastic.

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