

June 2018  
Fishing Edition

# ODU MAGAZINE

*Seeking  
Summer  
Crappies*

*Trolling  
Weed  
Walleye*



***The Forgotten Lure***  
***The PVA Carp Secret***  
***The Year of the ChatterBait***



# ODU MAGAZINE™

## EDITOR'S LETTER

Early summer walleye fishing is a primary topic throughout this Late June edition of ODU Magazine. Crappie, bass, trout, striper and carp fishing fill out all the remaining articles. Enjoy and please share?



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Interest in more about ODU Magazine and OutDoors Unlimited Media visit this [LINK](#).

**Thank You All!**

ICAST kicks off next month and we have a few ODU team members chasing down lures and tackle that will make your day on the water more successful. In August we will have the TOP 25 of ICAST to share with you. Not a single lure, rod, reel or piece of equipment will be useless to you. We are only picking products that will make a difference.

***A Forgotten Lure - There are many long lost lures that our dad's swore by. And there are even more the fell by the waist side, because they just did not work. But!!!! There are some that were just not given their due.***

***A couple months ago my friends at Snag Proof Lures drop one such lure***

*in the mail to me. A weedless crankbait called a Moss Master Crankbait showed up and is one lure that missed it's calling. It was in limited production many years back and never took off. Well it took off for me!*

*Connie Fuller, the Snag Proof Lures founder's daughter got a call quite quickly from me, and I promised I would catch fish with it. It was a bold claim, but I felt quite confident after a few casts at my pond that it had great action.*

*In the Moss Master Crankbait's first two outings I landed 7 bass. Not bad.*

*The first feature of the lure that jumped out is the signature double hooks you find on Snag Proof frogs. Both tight to body to help avoid snags. The second is the metal bill that helps the bait jump off rocks as you retrieve it. The final Moss Master Crankbait characteristic is its soft body that is identical to Snag Proof frogs and I believe helps with increased hookups.*

*There you have it, but how does it look in the water? It has a nice medium wobble and the skirt in the back makes this lure look amazing on retrieve. I had it bouncing off submerged tree and limbs, rocks and thick stalked weeds with ease.*

*Here is the problem with the lure, its forgotten and Snag Proof only has limited supply's and personally I hope the Snag Proof Guru's take this lure out for another test run and rethink its mothball fleet status.*







Email Connie if you want a few (\$3 each) or if you are interested in joining the party in getting the lure back >> [connie@snagproof.com](mailto:connie@snagproof.com).

WS

*Thank you to all who have contributed to make this and past editions a success!  
And please, enjoy the outdoors.*

*Larry Thornhill and William Schwarz  
Co-Founders of ODU Magazine*



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# ***IT'S TIME FOR CRANKS!***

**From The Team At Next Bite**

Dust off the planer boards and fire up the kicker motor because it's trolling season! That's right crankbait aficionados, it's your time to shine! This time of year fish are still relating to deeper flats and tapers, where a typical set-up of Berkley Flicker Shads (pictured next page) and Flicker Minnows trolled behind Off Shore Planer Boards will rule the day. This is also the time of year that walleyes are beginning to move to steep breaking structure, especially offshore rock structure. Since this is an "in-between" time, both spots are likely to be holding fish and will have to be checked out when you get on the lake.

The best way to maximize your time on the water is to check areas you are targeting by graphing for fish before you start trolling. The recently released free software upgrade from Lowrance called "Fish Reveal" has changed the game for how you see fish on your screen. Fish Reveal takes the "walleye arches" that you have been accustomed to seeing on your sonar for years and "transfers" them over to the various StructureScan screens. Not only are the fish images "crisper" than in the past, but there is more definition between walleyes and bait fish on the screen. This technology is absolutely amazing!

If you are fishing areas with deeper structure, the Lowrance StructureScan can help you locate the rock edges. As you travel through the area, place waypoints along the edge of the structure to make a trail. Follow that trail on your first trolling pass so you can cover the entire structure. If you are fishing a body of water where six lines are allowed between two people in a boat, send out two lines on planer boards



on the shallow side of the boat to troll lures over the rocks. To effectively fish the drop-off, run two "flat lines" (lines without planer boards) off the back of the boat. Complete the spread by sending out two lines behind planer boards off the deep end side of the boat along the basin. The purpose of running this spread is to make contact with fish that are eager to bite!

It is imperative that you use the Precision Trolling App to know how to set your lines at the proper depth. Just select the crank bait you are using, dial up the depth you want the lure to run and let the app tell you how much line to let out. It's that easy! When you are setting each of your lines for the set-up described above, be sure that the shallow lines are only a foot or two off bottom. The flat lines should be running close to bottom and the lines being pulled through the basin should be just above where you are marking the majority of the fish to trigger the most bites. Once again, the Precision Trolling App data is invaluable, especially with the new snap weight data that they just updated to help your lures reach those deeper fish!

It is also important to pay attention to your speed when trolling warm water. The speed of your boat should not be dictated by the temperature of the water, but the crank and the action of the particular crank. It is a common belief that 2 mph is a great trolling speed, but we have found that it can be too fast for some cranks. A lot of cranks have a great trolling speed of 1 mph. The bottom line is that you should constantly be changing your trolling speed to find the best action for your bait!





## ODU MAGAZINE VIDEO BLOCK ([www.odumagazine.com](http://www.odumagazine.com))

What makes this kind of fishing so great is the ability to be flexible. Many times we hear anglers talk about being bored while trolling and that shouldn't be the case. You should constantly mixing up your speeds and baits until you find what they want. Experiment with different color setups so you can hone in on the exact pattern they are looking for. While "factory colors" can work great, we've expanded our horizons with the addition of custom colors from Renegade Outdoor Innovations, which includes some incredibly realistic "natural" looking baits. These patterns are really cool and the fish eat 'em up! The ultimate goal is to dial in your presentation so well that all of your lines are running the same style of lure in the same color pattern at the same depth!

When it comes to equipment, the 9.5 foot telescopic Walleye Angler Trolling rods from Bass Pro Shops are real sweethearts! We run the baits off of 10lb. Berkley XT line, which has been the standard for trolling walleyes for years. The Off Shore planer boards we run have a very heavy ballasted system so





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boards can be trolled slowly without tipping. They are also great for handling rough conditions. When trolling crankbaits we like to modify the clip set-up on the boards to what we call "The Pro Set-Up". We remove the release hardware and the OR16 (Red) release from the back of the board. The board comes from the factory with and OR19 (Orange) release that is mounted straight out on the arm and we add another OR19 just behind that one so it's aimed back at about a 45- degree angle (the board comes with a pre-drilled hole for this modification). The advantage of the "Pro Set-Up" is that it makes the boards easier to read because they will "tip back" more when a fish is on. It also makes removing the boards easy, especially when you are fighting a fish by yourself.

Remember, there are a few key things that will make you get your Next Bite when trolling cranks. Graphing for fish, watching your speed, finding the right color pattern and most importantly precise lure placement! If you can bring all of this together, you will have a fishing trip that you will be talking about for years to come!





# WALLEYE JIGS FOR THE JOB



By Chip Leer

Jigs catch walleyes. But not all jigs are the same, which means choosing the right jig for the job can mean the difference between loading the livewell and getting skunked.

Dividing leadhead designs into the following three categories can help you get it right every time.

Jigs For Plastics—typically feature a line-tie placement on the top of the head, a stout hook, and a wire keeper to prevent plastics from sliding down the hook shank. Examples include Northland Fishing Tackle's Slurp! Jig Head and Current Cutter Jig,

CHOOSE THE  
RIGHT JIG FOR  
EVERY  
SITUATION







which work with shad, curl-tail and minnow-style plastics, as well as live bait.

Jigs For Live Bait—come in several options. Northland Fishing Tackle's legendary Fire-Ball Jig, built for vertical jigging and casting, features a short shank, which holds the minnow firmly against the jig's round head.

Stand-up designs like Northland's Rock-It Jig elevate the tail of the bait in a lifelike manner, and excel for dragging live bait on bottom and casting around debris.

Specialty Jigs—are made for special situations. Northland's Weed-Weasel, for example, has a sleek head, forward line tie and Y-shaped plastic weedguard to slip through thick vegetation without snagging.

The company's Thumper Jig, meanwhile, sports a thumping belly blade for added flash, flicker and vibration deadly in moderate to darkly

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stained water. For extra flash in clear to slightly stained conditions, try Northland's Whistler Jig. This jig features a propeller, which also slows the fall rate—another key consideration when choosing which jig to tie on next.

Based in Walker, Minnesota, noted fishing authority and outdoor communicator Chip Leer operates Fishing the WildSide, an outdoor sports marketing and communications company. For more information look to [www.fishingthewildside.net](http://www.fishingthewildside.net)



A man in a red shirt and cap is standing next to a recycling bin. The bin has a sign that says "SOFT PLASTICS LURE RECYCLING".

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# WALLEYES ON JIGS RIGHT NOW

By Bob Jensen

Walleye Season 2018 has arrived across the Midwest. In fact, it here's been here for a while for some anglers. But now that the season is open for pretty much everyone in Walleye Country, it's time to get on the water. When it comes to catching walleyes early in the fishing season, it's tough to beat a jig. Other presentations will catch fish, but you can bet that the most successful walleye catchers, if they have more than one rod rigged, at least one of those rods will have a jig tied on at this time of year. Here's how you can catch more walleyes on jigs in the next few weeks.

There are a lot of jigs for an angler to choose from. Fire-Ball jigs are some of the best. They have a short-shank, wide-gap hook, and that's really important this time of year. Early season walleyes usually prefer a smaller bait. With the Fire-ball jig, you can put the hook in the minnow's mouth and out the back of the minnow's head. The minnow's mouth will be right up against the head of the jig, making the presentation appear smaller, and with that wide-gap hook, your hooking percentages will go up.

Just as walleyes often prefer a smaller presentation in the spring, they also usually like the bait moved fairly slow. This is when a stand-up Fire-Ball jig comes into play. The stand-up version of the Fire-Ball is



designed so the minnow or whatever bait being used is much more visible when the jig is sitting still on the bottom. A round head jig lays flat on the bottom at rest, and so does whatever bait that's on the jig. The minnow is much more visible when the jig is sitting still on a stand-up head, so the odds of the fish seeing the bait are much better, and, if the fish can see the bait better, they are more likely to eat it.

A dragging retrieve is usually better early in the year. The water is cold, the fish don't want to chase, so a bait that is moving slowly across the bottom with plenty of pauses will get eaten more often.

Have fathead and shiner minnows with you. Sometimes the walleyes prefer one over the other. There are also times, even early in the season, when leeches and crawlers will produce. More and more, we're going to just a piece of crawler on our jigs. It's a good idea to have a variety of live baits available: Figure out what the fish want and give it to them.

As the water warms and the walleyes get more active, plastics will take the place of the live bait. When we go to plastic, we also go to a different style jig-head, one with a longer hook and a plastic-keeper. A Slurp! Jig is a good example of a jig designed for plastics.

When it comes to plastic shapes, Impulse Swim'N Grubs are traditional favorites just because they're easy to use and they catch fish. Make sure the jig color contrasts with the plastic color to increase the odds of showing the fish the color that they want.

Six pound test P-Line CX Premium is an outstanding line to use with the jig/minnow combination, and eight or ten pound test in the same line is good with the jig/soft bait combo. If you want more sensitivity and less line visibility, try Tactical Fluorocarbon.

Right now is the time to use jigs for walleyes. If you keep the above ideas in mind, you're going to catch more walleyes on those jigs.

Jig Image - Two different walleye jigs: The jig on top is a Fire-Ball jig. Notice the shorter hook, making it better for live-bait. The bottom jig is a Slurp! Jig, an outstanding jig for plastics.

To see new and not-so-new episodes of Fishing the Midwest television, new and older fishing articles, and fishing videos, visit [www.fishingthemidwest.com](http://www.fishingthemidwest.com)







# ***THE PVA CARP SECRET***

**By The Team at American Carp Society**

Hello and welcome to the 4th article by the American Carp Society designed to introduce and instruct anglers on the new age of Carp Angling...

Over the past few months we've covered some basic carp behavioral traits, baits, rigs, fish safety & conservation techniques that are employed by today's carp angling community.

This month, we we're going to go back to the topic of baits and introduce a product/technique that not many folks outside of carp anglers will have used or even heard about...

This product is commonly known as PVA and is another method of presenting a bait attractant right next to your baited hook.



PVA or Poly Vinyl Alcohol is a product that totally dissolves when it comes into contact with water leaving no traces and is totally environmentally friendly!

We would like to mention here that the speed that the PVA dissolves is related to water temperature. It melts faster in warmer water... Anywhere between 30 seconds up to around the 3 minute mark in very

**Carp Catch  
Photo of John  
McGreevy**



cold water and dependent on the quality of the PVA product.

There has been much written about the various origins of the product but for the purposes of this article lets stick to how we use it to put more carp in front of our camera lenses...

Lets take a few minutes here if to quickly go over a few of the many PVA products available today...and then we'll get into their many uses...

Look at this as a crash coarse or brief overview on the subject, there are many variations and fine-tuning techniques that may suit the particular situations you find yourself confronted by in your everyday fishing sessions...

We encourage you to experiment, nothing here is written in stone.

Note: Some States and specific counties within certain states may consider the use of this technique as chumming! Please check with your area's fisheries department about their regulations in this regards...

Using PVA bags is a way of serving up a few ounces of "free" food as an attractant for the carp right next to your hook bait!





It's a similar concept to the "Method" or Pack bait mix feeder we talked about a few months back here in these pages. The main difference is the fact that the PVA bag can be filled with pellets, powders, boilies and other dry products that you can't present as easily via the Method feeder cage. Even soaked and boiled particles such as maize, tiger nuts, chickpeas etc. can be placed inside a PVA bag if they're first carefully dried in a towel and rolled in or mixed with the likes of dry bread crumbs, ground pellets or milk powder etc.

One note certainly worth mentioning is that oil based liquid attractants can be poured into the bags to add flavor without dissolving them. It follows that you can pre-soak your pellets or boilies in the same oil based liquid before filling the bag with them. Just make sure the liquid you use does not contain water...

Here's an example of a fairly typical dry PVA bag mix containing oats, various fish meal pellets, boilies and crushed range cubes.

Lets take a look at some of the various PVA products that are available to us...



## ***PVA Stocking or Netting.***

The netting comes in various sizes (diameters) but basically, there is one that's generally wide enough to carry boilies around an inch wide and another about two inches wide to carry pellets and "dry" mixes... The netting comes pre-mounted on a tube as shown, you tie a half hitch knot at the bottom of the netting, fill the tube with the amount of mix you'd like to feed the fish with... A plunger generally comes with the product to enable you to compact the mix within the tube before pushing it out and tying the bag off with a knot. See photos below:





Generally about 3" to 4" of PVA netting tightly packed with food is ample before cutting the netting with scissors and tying another half hitch knot to secure the food.



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After baiting the hook, its just a just simple job of threading the netting onto the hook 3 or 4 times to secure before casting out.



This next photo shows a wide netting bag with some boilies tightly packed ready for casting.





## ***Solid PVA Bags.***

Solid PVA bags come in various rectangular sizes and are used to hold finer powdered mixes. Various bait presentations can be achieved but again here to start with, we'll just cover the basics.

Start by pouring a little of the mix into the bag first, then place the lead weight and safety clip in there as shown.



Next, fill the bag to a little under half full with your mix and then carefully place the hook length and your baited Hook into the bag making sure the hook length material doesn't tangle.





Finish filling the bag with the mix to about four fifths before sealing the bag.

To seal the bag, moisten your thumb and index fingers with plenty of saliva and quickly dampen all of both the inside and outside of the top inch of the bag before twisting the top of the bag around the mainline coming out of the top of the bag as shown. Practice will make perfect here...

To make sure the bag is sealed, especially on a long distance cast, take another PVA product, PVA tape and securely tie a 4" length of it around the twisted neck of the bag to ensure closure as shown below... You could use PVA string here instead of the tape then trim any excessive tags or "ears" from the securing PVA tape/string to tidy it's appearance up.

As a final procedure before casting out, slightly moisten the bottom corners of the bag with saliva and fold them down to the body of the bag; this makes the whole bag that much more aerodynamic when casting.



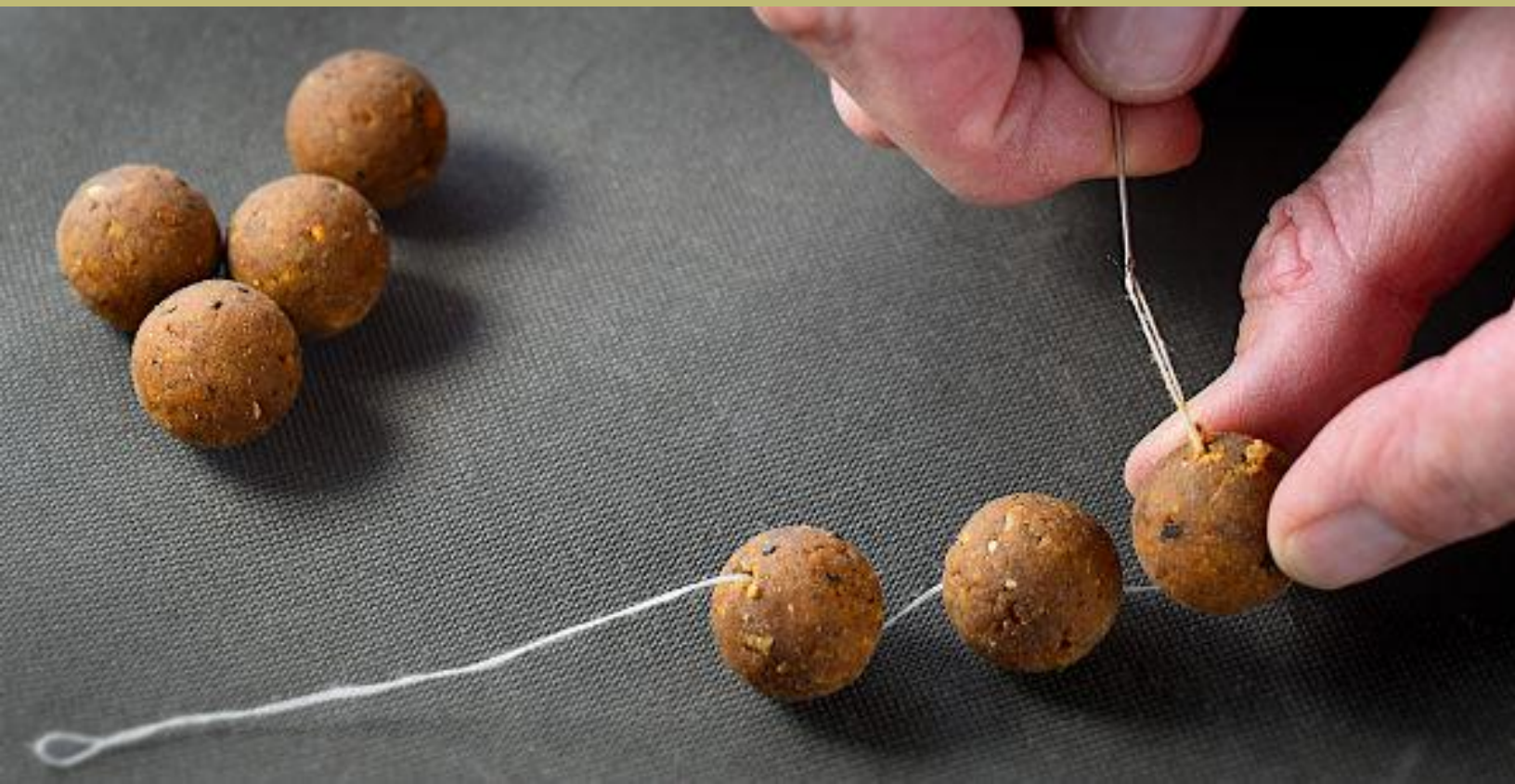
Finally before casting, carefully puncture the bag all over with your baiting needle or a pair of pointed scissors, this lets the air out of the bag faster when it hits the water and is sinking to the lake bottom.





## PVA Stringers.

Yet another use for the PVA string and/or tape is to thread a number of boilies onto the string or tape then attach them to your hook as shown. This also increases the amount of attraction your hook bait has around it with “free food.”



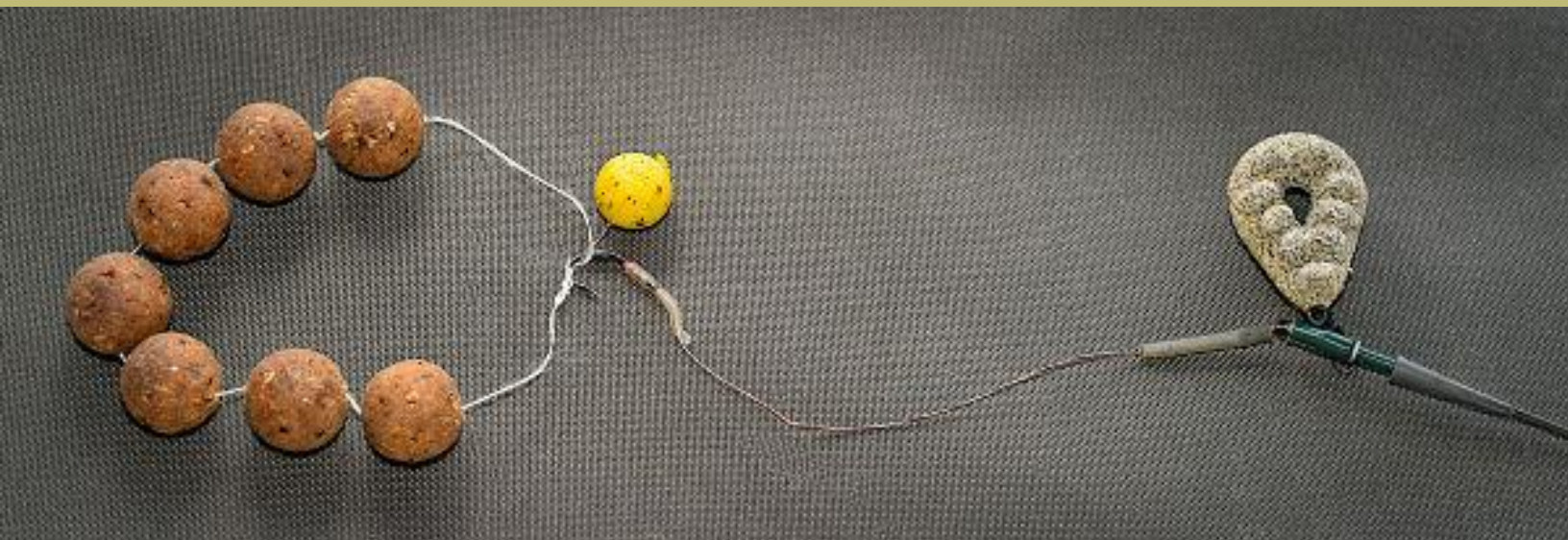




To make a stringer, take approximately a 20" length of the PVA string and then fold it in half so you end up with a 10" piece of string and tie a knot at the open end. Then start threading your boilies onto the string using your baiting needle as shown below. There is a specially made stringer needle that has an extra long needle with a hook on the end for this job but you'll find that a regular needle (or the straightened out Crappie jig we showed a couple of months ago) will work just fine.

If possible try and leave a quarter inch gap between the boilies as this helps the water get to the PVA string to dissolve it. Dependent on the quality and thickness of the string you use, you may need to triple or quadruple the string up to keep the boilies apart during casting.

If you have to cast any serious distances, make the stringer dangle from the hook in a straight line and not looped back up to the hook as shown.



Don't forget you can use the PVA tape for this process too! You probably will not have to double up on the tape as its is a lot thicker than string and so keeps the boilies in place a little easier. Lastly, flatten, moisten and fold a PVA nugget around the hook as shown below in the PVA nuggets section to reduce the likelihood of tangles during the cast.

A few minutes after the cast, the PVA string will melt without a trace, leaving a nice scattering of boilies around your hook bait as a fish attraction.



## ***PVA Nuggets.***

These nuggets are useful in a multitude of ways to us Carp Anglers from simply showing exactly where our bait landed (1), to help in presenting baits over or on top of weeds (2) to protecting hook points if after settling on the lakebed, you decide to pull back your bait a few inches to straighten out your hook length etc. (3) to stopping your spod mix falling from the spod during casting {we haven't covered spods or spodding here yet but there is a really good section covering it on



our website} (4) to preventing tangles when casting long hook lengths (5). Plus many more...

1. Flatten & moisten one side of the nugget and gently fold over and around the hook before casting, have your catapult, throwing stick, baiting spoon or other baiting tool ready along side the bait you'd like to throw out. About a minute or so after you cast out the PVA nugget will have dissolved enough to leave the hook and float to the surface exactly over your bait (in a still water) letting you know where the hook bait is. You can then accurately throw some more attractant bait out exactly to the spot using the bait distribution tool of your choice.





2. While fishing lake-beds that are covered in silk weed etc. you can use them to slow the decent of your bait enough so that it softly settles on top of the weed in stead of barreling into it and getting buried. This works better on longer hook lengths of course. How long you have your hook length depends on how deep the weed is that you're fishing over. We feel comfortable fishing up to 18" hook lengths in these situations with a semi buoyant bait if possible.

3. Do as in example #1  
Simple but very

effective in avoiding getting your hook tangled in debris and avoiding blunting your hook point on rocks etc. during a "pull back" to straighten your hook length immediately after the cast.

4. Place two or three nuggets across the top of your spod after filling it to prevent the contents spilling during the cast.

5. Experiment securing your longer hook lengths to the mainline to prevent tangles during casting. We haven't provided a photo of this because there are just so many possible variations... Can be used to secure long Zig Rig hook length coils too....

Dissolvable PVA nuggets can be obtained very cheaply from most





shipping and office supply companies. They're basically packing peanuts, ***just make sure you're buying the water soluble, corn starch ones, not the Polystyrene ones.***

We hope this article has been some use to you... There are lots of uses when fishing for other species too.

As usual, please don't hesitate to contact us via email with any questions you may have.

All the best and many tight lines...

### **About Our Organization:**

The American Carp Society was formed in 2002, with the goal of promoting and educating the public on the sport of specimen Carp Fishing in the USA.

The Common Carp (*cyprinus carpio*) is one of the hardest fighting freshwater fish in the world and is now being pursued by anglers of all persuasions, from fly fisherman to dedicated Specialist Carp anglers as a sport fish. The American Carp Society is a membership based organization and is responsible for promoting the sport and ensuring careful stewardship of both the specimen fish and its environment for the future generation of American Carp Anglers.

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guilty?

“

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THE CROWD.

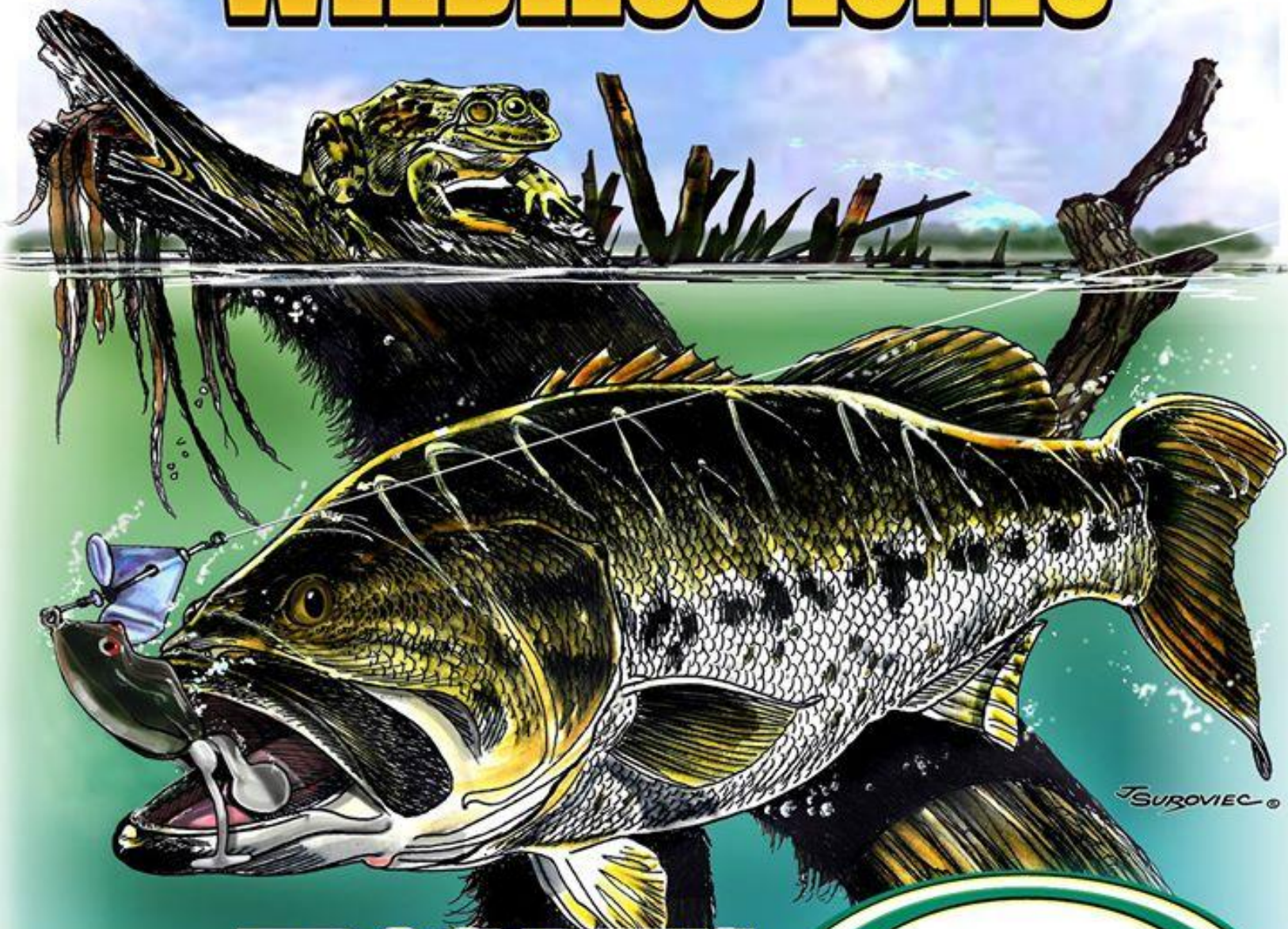


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## WEEDLESS LURES



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# Top Water Time

By Capt. Mike Gerry



As we progress forward into the warm summer the heavier grass and the water temperatures continue to rise, one of the best presentations over grass is fishing some sort of top water bait. I don't know anyone that doesn't enjoy fishing top water; it's fun, it's aggressive and it's visually a blast when that bait gets exploded on right in front of your eyes.

The good news is there are many options for top water baits and this time of year you can try them all and just about any of them will find a way to catch fish. Your old time traditional top water baits like popping baits, spooks and frogs all have a place during this post spawn era. The changes to them over time have improved many of the old time baits giving you a variety of differences that can make a big difference in your day on the water. Those subtle differences have a lot to do with a few things that change the bait from noise to action and subtle still presentations.

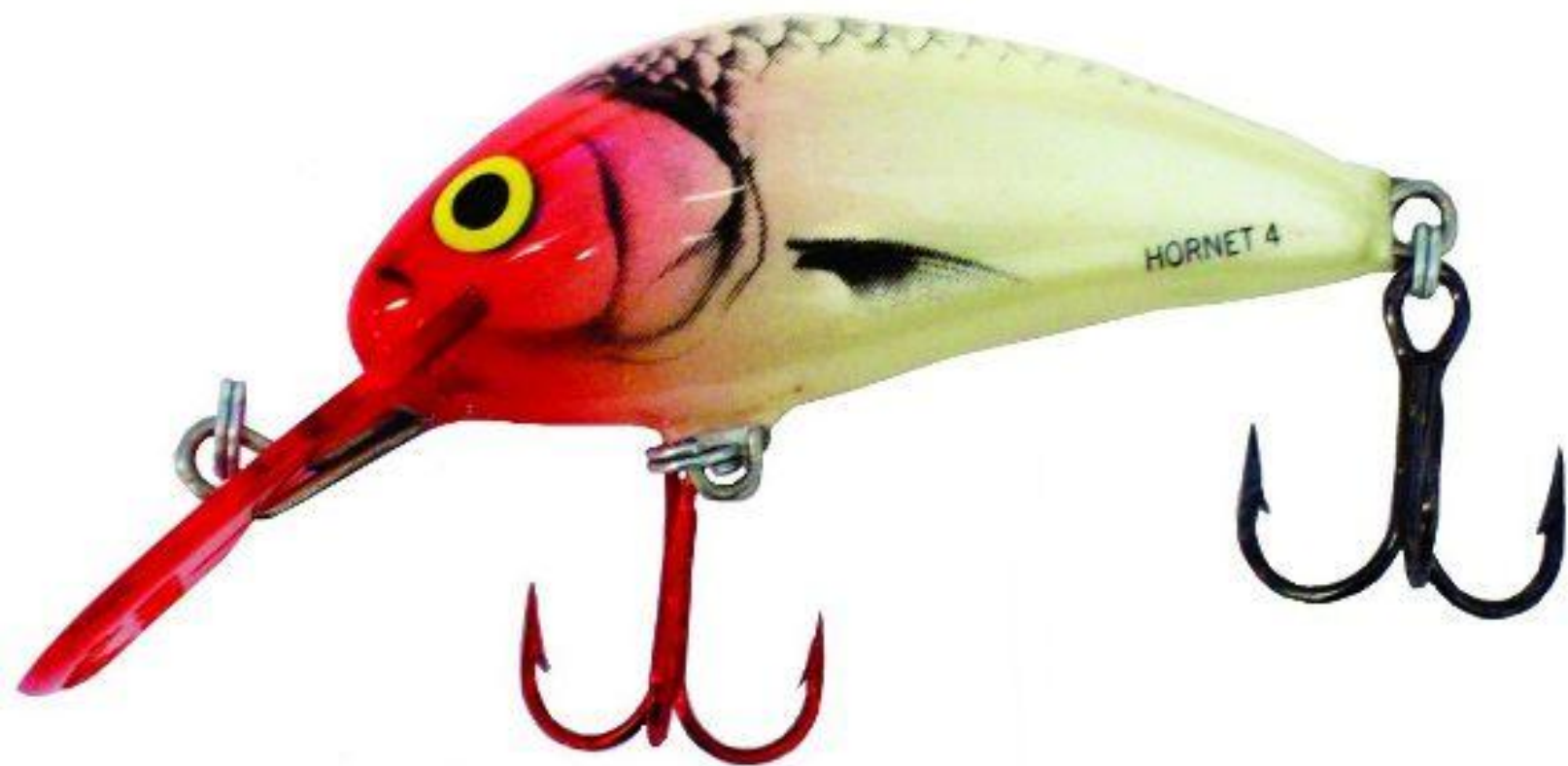
Noise is probably one of the biggest additions to top water baits, you have baits that make noise, some that do not and others that have a unique sound; all have their place in catching fish. Bass are fickle, some days they want a noisy bait others they explode on subtle quiet baits and then there are days when the noise just needs to be different hence the differences in top water. Buzz baits are a good example of the noise, Picasso buzz baits are water generating noisy baits where others use the wire to bang against and make a different noise, and many thicken the blade and change the sound just because the blade is wider or thicker.

Presentation can change just by the weight of bait; the heavier top water bait changes the bait from how it moves and sits in the water. Length weight placement all play a part in how the bait moves or sits in the water. If you examine different top water baits you will see what I mean, some drop form the back when sitting, others create sound by design, many give movement changes by narrowing the bait. All of them are made to do something different your task is to decide what fits you fishing style and gives you confidence.

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# TROLLING WEED WALLEYE



**By Jason Mitchell**

Large weed covered flats seem to hold walleye particularly through the first half of the summer. These often-large nondescript locations can be often overlooked by anglers who have been preprogrammed to look for structure. Depending on the lake or water you are fishing, these flats can range anywhere from five to fifteen feet of water. Stained water typically sees weed growth topping out in much shallower water where water with excellent visibility might see weed growth that reaches out to twenty



feet or more.

For sure, breaking contours that have emerging weeds often attract walleye but these locations also look fishier on a topographic map and often attract more attention from anglers. The large flats that are perhaps an acre or larger however might look unassuming but don't overlook the productivity.

My absolute favorite situation for dialing in weed flat walleyes occur when the weeds are growing up about half way down in the water column. If there is a common mistake many anglers make, it would be trying to fish too close to the weeds to the point your presentation is fouled up. Because these fish are often scattered over a large area, trolling crankbaits is an incredibly effective way to target these fish.

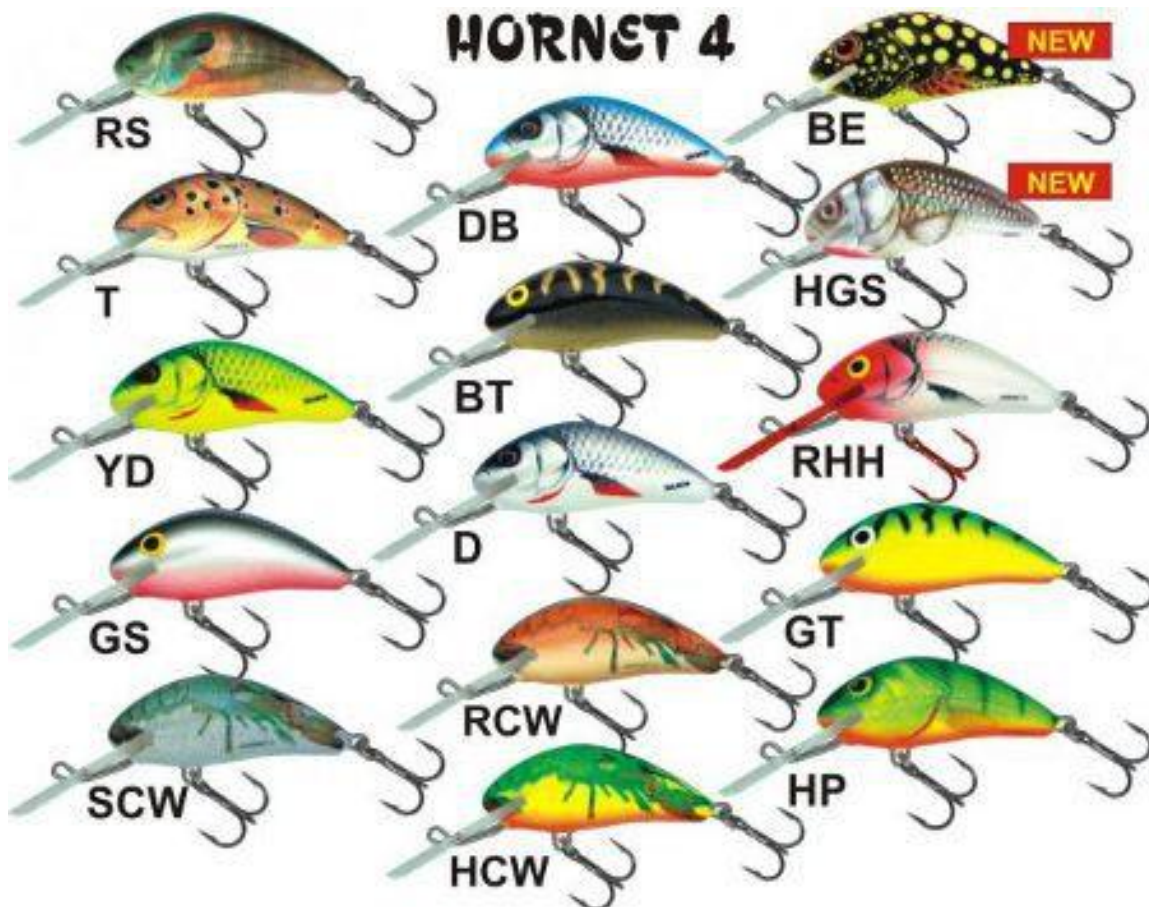
The advantage of trolling crankbaits comes from not only being able to cover water but also control your depth. If you are covering a ten-foot flat and the weed growth is four feet high, pull your cranks about four to five feet down. As the summer progresses and the weeds grow even higher, we often find ourselves trolling baits two to three feet down at times to skim over the tops of the weeds. Get above the weeds and make fish come up for the bait... which they will.

Over really clear water, we often have to use planer boards to catch fish but one advantage to fishing over





## HORNET 4



weeds is that any ripple seems to slightly cloud the water. On cabbage and broader leaved variety pondweeds in particular, there is a film of residue that seems to collect on the stalks and leaves and with the slightest wind or movement, this residue breaks loose and will slightly cloud or stain the water. This is why on really tough, flat, bluebird days, I often like to spend time fishing over weeds. Unless you are dealing with really skinny water between the tops of the weeds and the surface,

use a deeper diving crank on a short amount of line to increase your efficiency. In other words, if you have five to ten feet of water to work with, don't feel like you have to use a shallow running lure with a small bill that requires letting out more than thirty feet of line. Experiment with deeper diving lures that have a larger bill so that you can pull these lures less than twenty feet from either the planer board or behind the boat to reach the desired depth. This shortened leash speeds up cleaning weeds off lures and simply less can go wrong if you have to reel fish in over a shorter distance. Planer boards are also much easier to read for fouled up lures when using a deeper diving lure close to the board.

Over stained water, we often find that planer boards are not as necessary and if we are in a situation where they are not necessary, we don't use them to increase our efficiency even more. If you can get away with simply pulling lures behind the boat, you can also tell much easier if the lure is fouled up and there is one less step when you get a fish on.

We have encountered many different nuances to these weed flat walleye patterns over the years. Trolling speed is a huge factor to experiment with as trolling speed combined with lure running depth is usually more important than lure color. Often, I dare say that speed and depth is often even more important than the lure. Our procedure is to make big S-Curves if we are not catching fish so that we can figure out if the fish want the lure slow or fast. Don't be afraid to fish above the weeds and error on the side of high, particularly with planer boards.

These patterns often require you to get comfortable and confident in that the windows are often intense. I personally believe that the aggressive fish position near the top of the weeds and are often cruising. During the first half of the summer in particular when walleyes are feeding on young of the year fish hatches like bluegill, crappie and white bass, we often catch a staggering number of fish using really small profile crankbaits like the Salmo H4F Hornet. These tiny cranks have an extremely



intense action and fish much bigger than their size. From Iowa to Wisconsin and back to the Dakotas, running these small Hornets over weed flats is just simply deadly. Not only do you catch walleye, but you seem to catch everything with these cranks including big panfish.

Even though this pattern often takes place over relatively shallow water, electronics are still important. Obviously, you can see how high the weeds but don't get obsessed with looking for fish below the boat. I prefer the Lowrance HDS Carbon for the best side imaging and what you see to the side of the boat is important. Typically, you will see the weed growth on the side scan and fish will just look like horizontal or vertical lines and often times these lines will curve or slash as the fish are often moving. When fish position high as they often do when aggressive, you can often see them on good side scan. If you run a Lowrance HDS Carbon, make sure to upload the unit with the latest software that became available earlier this spring as the software update will give you much better definition further out to the sides of the boat. This enables you to increase your range dramatically when looking for fish.

These types of weed flat locations are often under-fished but I can't stress enough how productive these locations can be. Walleye anglers by large are programmed to look for structure and fish close to the bottom so some anglers have a confidence hurdle to fish this pattern but the reality is that on many fisheries, these locations are some of the most productive patterns we encounter.

**Editor's Note:** The author, Jason Mitchell shares tactics for a very productive and sometimes overlooked pattern for catching walleye by trolling crankbaits over large weed flats. Jason Mitchell hosts the popular outdoor program, Jason Mitchell Outdoors airing on Fox Sports. More information can be found at [www.jasonmitchelloutdoors.com](http://www.jasonmitchelloutdoors.com)

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# Why And How To Net Your Fish

**By Bob Jensen**

For many fisher-people, netting the fish on the end of their line is about the last thing they think of: There are so many other things that we need to do to get to that point. First you've got to find where the fish are. Then you've got to select the proper bait that will get them on the end of your line. After that happens and the hook is set, you have to play the fish properly. You've got to have a good knot and strong line, and you've got to have your drag set properly so it will give a little but not too much when the fish wants to run. Then, once you've got it tired out, you need to land it. You can swing it into the boat or onto the shore, you can grab it with your hand, or you can net it. Many, many fish are lost when the angler tries to land it. If you want to increase your odds of landing that fish on the end of your line, you need to net it. Here's why.

Swinging a fish into the boat or onto the bank usually isn't







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a good option, although lots of people do it. Sometimes when we're fighting the fish we underestimate its size. When you try to swing a too-big fish into the boat, lines and rods break.

Even if the fish is of swinging size, frequently the hook pops out. Sometimes the fish lands in the boat, but it's flopping around on the floor. That's not good for the fish. And, when the hook pops out, sometimes it slingshots into one of your body parts. That's not good for you.

Sometimes the fish lands on the deck of the boat or on the shoreline and flops back into the water. If you were going to release the fish, that's no big deal, but if you were going to include him in your supper, you're out of luck. Swinging a fish into the boat is not the best idea.

Landing the fish by hand works ok for some species, but you're increasing the odds of getting a hook in your hand, and again, that's not much fun.

Also if you land a fish by hand, you've got to really play the fish out, and that decreases its chance for survival if you release it. The best way to land a fish is with a net.

So, now you've got that fish within netting distance. Don't reach or over-extend to land it. You want to get it coming in your direction, and you want it to go into the net nose first. Never try to land a fish tail first: Fish can swim faster than you can move the net. If you try to net it tail first, it will swim out of the net.

If you've got someone who's new to netting, show them how it's done on the first fish, then have them net every fish that comes into the boat that isn't on their line. It's good practice, and it keeps them interested even when they aren't catching the fish. It's usually a good idea for the netter to reel their line in when they're netting. This prevents rods from going over the side of the boat and tangles.

Beckman Nets have been around for a long time, and almost anyone who has tried a Beckman has liked it. The fish like them also, as the bag of the net is easy on the fish's eyes and skin, which greatly increases their odds for survival if they're released. Best of all, Beckman nets are fisherman-friendly. They can be stored out of the way until needed, but when needed, they can be snapped into a landing position quickly.

When you're on the water this year, net your fish. You'll end up catching more fish with less damage to the fish and to your hands.

To see new and old installments of Fishing the Midwest television, Fishing the Midwest articles and videos, check out [www.fishingthemidwest.com](http://www.fishingthemidwest.com)

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# TRIMMING FISHING COSTS



By Margie Anderson  
[blackbeltojbwa@me.com](mailto:blackbeltojbwa@me.com)

These days, everyone is looking to save a buck here and there. If the economy is making you think about cutting back on your fishing trips, there are many things you can do that will make your time on the water less expensive. For a family that really enjoys fishing, reducing your trips is counter-productive – it will just make you all grumpy. Try some of these first.

Fuel is no small part of the expense of owning a boat, but fortunately there are simple ways to increase the fuel economy of your tow vehicle as well as your boat. First off, keep the tires properly inflated on both the boat and trailer. Invest a small amount in a device that will both pump air, check the pressure, and jump start your engine. It will pay for itself in no time.

Keep the bearings on your trailer greased, and once a year take them apart and repack them. Get the trailer wheels aligned and the tires balanced. The smoother your trailer wheels turn, the better your mileage will be.

Get your outboard tuned up and choose synthetic gear grease as well as synthetic engine lubricants. The synthetics cost a bit more up front, but they decrease friction and heat, making the engine run better and last longer. Always use fuel stabilizer in your boat. Fuel is organic and the compounds react with oxygen to form gummy residues or varnish that can clog up fuel lines, carburetors and injectors. Using a fuel stabilizer will prevent this.

Getting the right prop on your boat can take time and expert advice, but once you do have the right one, keep it in good shape. Dings and dents make a dent in your fuel use, so keep the prop and skeg in good repair.

If you're like most anglers, you probably have boxes and boxes of tackle in your boat that you seldom (or never) use. Try keeping the tackle in the garage and only bring along what you will need. It takes more fuel to move more





mass. Don't under-power your boat. Generally, the biggest engine it is rated for is the best choice. A smaller engine just has to work harder to move the same boat, especially once it is loaded with people and gear. An underpowered boat has to be run at full throttle just to stay on plane.

Having a lead foot is bad for fuel efficiency on the water as well as on land. Go easy on the throttle and don't over-trim the boat. Those rooster tails are just money flying out behind you. Keep the bottom of the boat clean – a dirty hull increases drag and reduces fuel economy.

Before you get to the lake, decide where you want to fish. Most of our lakes have more than one launch ramp. Put in close to where you want to fish and don't run and gun more than you have to. Truth to tell, your fishing will most likely improve if you stay put and fish thoroughly instead of rushing from spot to spot. If you're not keeping fish, close the drain on the livewells before you put the boat in the water. They'll fill up if the drains are open, and you'll be using gas to haul all that water – and water weighs over eight pounds per gallon.

Fishing lures can be very expensive, so do whatever you can to keep from losing them. Unfortunately, the fish are almost always close to structure, and that structure can snag your twenty-five dollar jerk bait in a heartbeat. If you switch out your split rings to the Ultimate SmartLink you'll get your lures back and just have to replace the hooks. The SmartLink stretches open when you apply constant heavy pressure, allowing the lure to come free and leave the hooks behind. They don't open up when you're fighting a fish, though.

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Crappie fishermen have a tendency to go through a lot of jigs. They snag easily, especially since crappie are almost always in the brush. One trick is to use a hook file to slightly dull the points of your hooks. A crappie will still get hooked when he bites, but the hooks are much less likely to catch on every water soaked branch.

If you fish a lot of timber, try flattening out the barbs on your hooks. With no barb it will be a lot easier to get the hook free from the soggy wood. This works well with slab-type spoons because the weight of the spoon itself helps lever the hooks free.

When fishing over weeds, opt for braided line. You can get ten pound braid that is as thin as 2-pound mono. In thick weeds fish don't normally notice braid, but if line visibility is really going to be a problem for you, you might want to try Berkley FireLine Crystal. It's a superline that is nearly invisible.

Braid is the line of choice for weed fishing because it's strong enough to rip a bait free from snags. There's a bonus, too – when you rip the lure loose, don't reel it back in right away. Let it flutter down and you just might get bit right then and there.

If you're new to braided line, make sure you put some compressible tape or a layer of mono around the spool or the line will slip when you try to set the hook. Also, keep scissors on hand because braid is hard to cut with nippers. Make sure that when you are snagged you do NOT wrap the line around your hand to pull the snag free. Braid can cut your fingers badly. Wrap the line around a cleat or a pair of pliers or something to pull it.

Another trick to use, particularly if you're using braided line, is to replace the hook with a light-wire Aberdeen hook. If you get badly snagged, applying steady pressure will straighten out the hook. You'll have to put on a new hook eventually, but you'll get your lure back.

A good day fishing relaxes and renews your mind and can fill the freezer with good protein-rich meals for your family. Cut back on expenses, not fishing.







# ***I Can't Control The Unexpected, But I Can Surely Prepare For It***

**By Hunter Bland**

"Life is a precious gift.", "Never take a day for granted."

Growing up, my elders were always sharing these words with me. I appreciated the advice, but those words never really had a true meaning. I was young and invincible. My life was just beginning.

On January 14th, 2017, I was involved in a boating accident (caused by a hydraulic steering failure) that changed my life forever. The good Lord, a Mustang survival PFD, a kill-switch and my partner saved my life that day. I was very blessed to walk away with only cuts and bruises, but it gave me a whole new perspective on life. For that, I am grateful and those words will



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forever have meaning.

From that point forward, I committed myself to boating safety and sharing my story with hopes to help boaters across the world. I began focusing on taking every precaution possible, before I hit the water each time. The MOB+ was something I discovered after my accident, because it provided another layer of protection. It also allows me to offer further protection for my passengers. I can't control the unexpected, but I can surely prepare for it.

The MOB+ gives me confidence and a piece of mind while on the water. It allows me to focus on fishing, and helps me to know that IF something does happen, then I have taken all the necessary safety steps. As a boat owner and operator, it is my job to make sure everyone that boards my vessel, also makes it home safely to their families. Being able to pair up to 4 fobs, allows my co-anglers and passengers to have an alarm fob. This provides an additional layer of protection for all passengers including pets.

I am thankful for the ability to share my story nationwide. I pray that my boating survival story touches the lives around me. I did everything correctly, and we survived. Some things you just can't control, but your preparation for the water is not one of them.



My name is Hunter Bland, and I am a boating survivor. I am a graduate of the University of Florida with a degree in Natural Resource Conservation. I am a bass fishing professional in the Bassmaster Eastern Opens, and I am a member of Yamaha's National Pro Fishing Team. I spend my time fishing and speaking nationally on boating safety.



My intention is not to scare people, but to make you understand that anything can happen even when you are doing everything right. Take the extra precautions, and enjoy the water with confidence. Spending time on the water creates memories that will last a lifetime, but returning home safely is the required happy ending.

Life is a precious gift, so act like it. Be safe. Prepare. Use a MOB+.

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## Fishing Tips From The Pros

### Walkin' The Frog

By Danny Barker

Walkin' the dog takes a little skill to do it right and walkin' the frog is no different! It takes a little skill to do it effectively. Here are a few tips that work for me.

The goal is to zigzag the frog about 6 inches from side to side without pause. First, you want to make sure that there's some "line-slack" immediately before each jerk of the rod as well as immediately after each jerk. Let out enough line to form a little "S" in front of the frog. Lower your rod tip and give it a quick jerk. Let the fish tell you how they want it, sometime it's a quick cadence and other times it's a slow wide action.

The effectiveness of Frog-walking is mainly due to the fact that the lure never stops moving, making it difficult for bass to get a good look. The lure is moving back-and-forth with little forward progress mimicking a struggling frog, mouse, or bird in the water and looking like lunch!

Snag Proof makes a variety of frogs that are easy to walk. Bobby's Perfect Frog, the Phat Frog, the Tournament Frog and even the Poppin' Phattie. These frogs are made for walking!







Snag Proof Frogs cast a mile and are virtually, well, snag-proof! So you can walk these frogs into and off of matted weeds as well as in open water, without hang-ups. The soft hollow plastic body collapses easily when the fish bites and the super sharp hooks bring it home.

These frogs come in a wide variety of persuasive colors. Personal favorites in the Phat Frog are Clownfish or Sticky Green, Bobby's Perfect Frog is great in green pumpkin or tweety. As always it's hard to go wrong with black or white as staples in my tackle box.



Snag Proof makes it easy to walk the frog and the action is clearly the best in my opinion. Plus these frogs are all made right here in the USA! Next time you head out for some frog fishing, give this technique a try and you'll be happy you did.

"Chomp On" my friends, no leash needed LOL



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# TIME TO HELP DAD USE THOSE FATHER'S DAY GIFT CARDS

OK, what did we get dad? Not a mug, but sometimes those mugs we make in grade school or we get the 1st Father's Day stay on dad's desk for a life time. I have one such clay gift made with love from my son on the desk. It collects all the extra coins. But maybe a gift card was in order and now dad needs some help spending them. Here you go. 10 products you will think are really wicked cool.

**#1 A Fishing Back Pack** - The Nomad is Wild River's soft tackle "single solution" bag. It has an integrated LED light system that allows you to see into the bag or your work area when natural light gets scarce. It also features a large upper storage area with a removable divider which can convert this bag to a full-size backpack for holding larger items. The Nomad has the capacity to hold up to

six 3600-series and four 3500-series trays.

**#2 Survival Multi-Tool Axe** - The Survival Axe is the ultimate outdoor multi tool. With 31 features, the tool will fully equip you for any situation you might come across. The design incorporates an all-steel full tang and axe head with an ultra strong, lightweight glass filled nylon handle. The resharpenable hatchet blade is great for chopping, clearing debris, or demolition. The hammer head and claw is great for pounding in and removing tent stakes or repairing your deer stand. (Upcoming Positive Product Review Coming)

**#3 Mepps Bass/Panfish Kit** - Dressed Lure Assortment – #3 Black Fury hot firetiger, #2 Aglia Long gold/redbo, #3 Aglia gold, #0 Thunder Bug dragon fly-silver, #0 Aglia hot firetiger, and #0 Black Fury white dot.

Link to the full article >> <https://www.odumagazine.com/it-is-red-alert-time-for-getting-a-fathers-day-present/>





# The Reel Deal: Making Sense of Gear Ratios

By Shane Beilue

When I first started fishing for bass in the early '70's, the pinnacle of bass fishing equipment was one of the red Abu Garcia 5000 series reels that my dad owned. As I was learning to cast a lure with a closed faced spin cast reel, I coveted the day I could become skilled enough to use one of those red beauties that I thought only "real fishermen" used. My dad was cautious about letting me use them early on, as I often threw a rat's nest that would result in a few choice words of regret and a pocket knife to cut the tangle out. We still have several of these old tanks in a storage bin and I suspect they would still work just fine with a little oil and fresh line. Interestingly, as a testament to their durability, these classic reels can still bring \$50 or more on eBay nearly 40 plus years after production.

But, here's the thing about those old reels: they were heavy, had tiny handles, minimal cast control



features and a retrieve ratio of around 4:1. Now fast forward to the modern-day descendant of the baitcasting reel and you find a lot of technology packed into ergonomic, lightweight, palm sized reels in either left or right hand retrieves and loaded with features such as magnetic cast control dials, oversized handles and an assortment of gear ratios to choose from. Each of these features combine to make the day much more pleasant on the water; however, selecting the right retrieve speed to fit a specific technique can further fine tune your equipment to work for you and not against you.



To define the term, a stated gear ratio for a baitcasting reel means that for every complete turn of the reel handle, the spool will spin a specific number of times. Therefore, a 6.3:1 gear ratio means the spool will turn 6.3 times for every revolution of the reel handle. As stated, years ago the approach to gear technology was simplistic and it took a lot of cranks of those small pearl handles to retrieve a lure from a long cast.

Today, an angler can select reels from 5:1 all the way up to blazing 8:1 retrieves, which leads to the question: when does one choose power as opposed to speed when selecting a baitcaster? As with most choices in life, there are pros and cons with both ends of the spectrum when exploring gear ratios and it

most often depends upon the specific technique employed. As a rule of thumb, anglers should consider choosing lower gear retrieves for powering fast moving, hard pulling baits like deep diving crankbaits and choose higher speed retrieves for the slower moving baits, such as jigs and soft plastics. The ability to take up line quickly with a high-speed reel can have a huge benefit in efficiency; however, there is also some sacrifice in power with the super high-speed reels.



Alan McGuckin, a 23-year fishing industry vet and avid angler weighs in on the matter of speed vs.



## ODU MAGAZINE VIDEO BLOCK ([www.odumagazine.com](http://www.odumagazine.com))

power when considering options at your local reel counter: “The best way to understand fishing gear ratios in my mechanically-challenged mind is to parallel them to 4-wheel drive diesel trucks and sports cars. You wouldn’t use a sports car to tow a house trailer, and vice versa you wouldn’t use a diesel pickup in a Friday night drag race.”

“The same goes for modern day fishing reels. You definitely lose measurable pounds of cranking power with each step toward a faster gear ratio reel,” adds McGuckin. “At a very rough, approximated estimate, you’ll lose about 6 pounds of cranking power when you move from a 5.3:1 reel like the Quantum Smoke HD that Kevin Van Dam uses for cranking, versus the higher speed 8.1:1 Smoke S3 PT for use with a topwater popper or a soft plastic rig.”

A look at the boat decks of most pro anglers will find reels slanted toward the mid to high speed retrieves for the bulk of their setups, with the low geared 5:1 reels reserved for cranking, slow rolling spinnerbaits or even umbrella rigs. McGuckin further opines that anglers looking to buy just one all around “work truck” would be best suited to buy a reel with a mid-range gear ratio like the new Quantum Smoke S3 that features a 6.1:1 retrieve, as this gear ratio can work with just about every technique.

Finally, McGuckin adds, “Probably the most overlooked element in reel choice is the size of the line holding capacity of the spool. Ideally, all anglers should seek the largest line holding capacity in a low-profile reel for longer casts and faster line uptake. This is why tour pros like two-time Classic winner Jordan Lee, KVD and Greg Hackney are such fans of Quantum’s Smoke HD and Tour S3 models.”





# SEEKING SUMMER CRAPPIES

By Brian Brosdahl

The hottest month of the year is usually July in my part of the country, with the peak water temperatures occurring in late July or early August.

I like to measure surface water temperatures early in the morning, rather than later in the day, so I am measuring the amount of heat the water holds overnight, rather than measuring how much the water temperatures can spike in direct sunlight during the day.

It is rare for the lakes in my part of Northern Minnesota to reach the 80 degree mark for more than a short period of time during the summer, when measuring first thing in the morning.



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As soon as surface water temperatures reach close to 80 degrees, a summer kill usually begins on the cold water species in the lakes like tulibeeds, whitefish and lake suckers.

The warmer water raises the metabolism in the fish and makes them feed for frequently to keep up with the calories they are burning. Fish that are old and weak or injured from getting caught by anglers may become stressed and die if they are not able to find enough to eat.

Fish can also become more susceptible to delayed mortality or predation when they are stressed, so anglers need to be careful when they catch and release fish during the hottest part of the summer.

Most fish move shallow when water temperatures get too high, looking for higher oxygen levels along with the shade and cover provided by green healthy weeds.

If the fish aren't in the weeds, then they are usually hanging on the edge of the thermocline in lakes that have enough deep water to stratify by temperature.

Shallow lakes and bays will begin to stratify and set up a thermocline when it gets hot, but the wind and waves periodically mixes the water down to about 35 to 40 feet deep, which turns over most of the water column in shallow lakes.





Deep lakes with significant amounts of water deeper than 40 feet will set up a thermocline during the summer and only the upper portion of the water column will get mixed in a strong wind.

There usually comes a point in time during July when many of the fish in the lake will move out of deeper water and head back into the weeds.



Most anglers like to fish for crappies in the spring and also in the fall, but they lose contact with the crappies during the summer months.

Crappies have big eyes on the side of their heads, so they are able to see what is out to their sides and above them better than they can see what is below them and directly in front of them.

Crappies like to tuck under the deep edge of tall standing weeds like cabbage, coontail or milfoil (American or European) during the summer, to take advantage of the cool shade under the weeds.

The crappies watch for minnows swimming

along the outside edge of the weeds and will dart out and grab some of the minnows if they get close enough to where the crappies are hiding in the weeds.

When crappies are looking out to their sides, a school of minnows at a distance may look like a series of little flashes as the sun catches the sides of the minnows as they move.

Anglers can use spinner blades to provide a similar flash to the crappies to help them see anglers baits going past the crappies on the edge of the weeds.



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I like to slow troll with my MinnKota bow mounted Ulterra along the outside edge of the weeds, using a 7 foot St. Croix Panfish series rod with a light action, so I have enough rod to get out to the side of the boat and a soft enough rod tip so I don't rip the paper thin lips of a crappie when I set the hook.

I seldom use jigs heavier than 1/16th ounce jigs for crappies. I like jig heads with a spinner blade for crappies, whether I am using a Northland Bro Bling Jig, Thumper Jig, Firefly Jig or a Gypsi Jig with a clip on jig spinner.

I will also cast or troll small jig spinners with a jig and plastic tipped with a tiny piece of nightcrawler. Another option is a micro spinner blade with a few small beads and a plain hook. I will weigh down the micro spinner rig with a split shot sinker about 24 to 30 inches up the line from the hook.

I will use small minnows, plastics, nightcrawlers, wax worms or small leeches on the jigs, depending on what the fish want. Scented plastics like Northland Impulse will also work for crappies fish plain or with an additional piece of bait.

When searching for crappies I like to cast out the spinner jig or spinner rig to the side of the boat and slow troll close to the outside edge of the weedline or along sections of reeds where the deeper water comes up tight to the edge of the reeds.

I will try to match the speed of the boat with the amount of line I cast out in order to keep the bait in the upper half of the water column and tight to the weeds.



If anglers can catch one crappie it is a very good sign there may be more crappies nearby. Two crappies is the beginning of a pattern and three crappies means you have probably located a school of fish.

I will also have a bobber rod rigged, so I can hold in the area with spotlock and cast to the school of crappies. I like to use a micro spinner on my bobber rig, so I can flutter the spinner close to the crappies and give them the flash they like to attract them to my bait.

I like to spot cast the bobber rigs to the edge of the weeds and work them a couple of times to get the attention of the crappies. If I don't get any response, I will reel up the line and cast the bobber to another spot along the edge of the weeds.



The nice part about fishing crappies in my area is there are not many little fish. The crappies can be up to 14 inches and beyond in many lakes. The big crappies hit like bass and give up a good fight on light tackle.

Crappies are one of the best eating fish in the lakes. I usually let the big fish go regardless of species, with the best eating size crappies between ten and twelve inches in my opinion.

Brian 'Bro' Brosdahl is a year round Walleye fishing guide, panfish enthusiast, outdoor promotor and product developer for many of the top companies in the fishing industry.

Please follow my fishing adventures on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook social media platforms. Good Luck Crappie fishing this Summer. We will see you on the water, Brian "Bro" Brosdahl





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**Z-Man's Newest Ned Rig Goes Snag-Free, *Radically Realistic***





***Finesse BulletZ™ Weedless Jighead and Finesse TRD CrawZ™ arrive just in time for ICAST***

What looks to the casual observer like the simplest jig and softbait pairing possible has actually become one of the most potent bass-catching systems ever devised. The Ned Rig, brainchild of Hall of Fame fishing writer Ned Kehde, pairs a mushroom style jighead with a small softbait, most notably a





Z-Man® Finesse TRD™. The jighead pivots and activates the softbait as it traverses the substrate beautifully, small, sleight hook stinging bass with minimal hookset pressure.

As early Ned Rig methods spread across the continent, the tackle techs at Z-Man already envisioned similar finesse fishing success in dense vegetation and wood. The resulting Finesse BulletZ™ Weedless Jighead now allows anglers to Ned Rig in heavy cover, enticing even more bites in areas where the finesse baits hadn't gone before.

Simultaneously, advancing the Ned Rig into the realm of realism, Z-Man has revealed its next-gen finesse bait, the TRD CrawZ. Marrying snag immunity with subtlety, the two new Z-Man offerings come together to greatly expand the versatility of an already exceptional method.



Bassmaster Elite Series angler Luke Clausen, who wielded prototypes of the new TRD CrawZ all last year, says the 2-1/2-inch ElaZtech® bait brings biological realism to the basic 'Ned' arrangement. "First thing you notice



about the TRD CrawZ is how it stands up on bottom and waves its claws, just like a little crayfish,” observed longtime Z-Man Clausen. “How many other crayfish baits can do that?”



The answer: Only those baits composed of buoyant, non-toxic ElaZtech. Most other PVC baits sink to bottom, tip on their sides and . . . die. Conversely, the lively posture of a live crayfish or Z-Man’s Finesse TRD CrawZ nearly guarantee they’ll get eaten. Just ask the bass.

“The TRD CrawZ is a subtle, unassuming little critter,” says Clausen. “But it’s realistic and lively enough to leave no doubt as to what it simulates.

“You can rig a CrawZ on a Finesse ShroomZ or NedlockZ jig or one of the new Finesse BulletZ and get a nice slow rate of fall,” he continues. “Especially in clear

water and on pressured bass, this little craw bait’s going to be a player. I’ve even fished it successfully on a dropshot and caught some good smallmouths.”

Anatomical elements of the CrawZ boost visual appeal and enable crayfish-centric propulsion. A flared, tucked-under tail and flat belly accentuate gliding action on the descent—the same subtle hover-drop motion preferred by finesse fans. Beady little crayfish eyes, segmented thorax and true-to-life



swimmerets elevate eye candy and add secondary layers of movement. Bulbous, buoyant claws float away from the bait's body at rest and flap with twitches of the rod tip--a near-perfect mimic of a crayfish's natural defensive reaction.

"The CrawZ is already a classic in clear water smallmouth environments," says Joe Raymond, a leading-edge bass guide and Z-Man confidant, who is testing the new bait on the Susquehanna and Juniata Rivers, Pennsylvania. "It hasn't been easy keeping this thing under wraps," he laughs. "This little cray-bait's been so good for smallmouths here that people are starting to get antsy, begging me to share my new bait."



"The Finesse BulletZ Weedless Jighead and CrawZ combo gives finesse anglers a lot of new possibilities," adds Clausen. "No doubt, Z-Man has taken the Ned Rig to whole new levels of cool."

Composed of Z-Man's popular, progressive softbait material, ElaZtech boasts unearthly durability, surprising softness and high relative buoyancy—a property that breathes life and realism into all Z-Man finesse baits.

Available in 6-packs in ten radical patterns, including Canada Craw, Molting Craw and The Deal, Z-Man's 2.5-inch Finesse TRD CrawZ lands at outdoor retailers in July.

Arriving in stores in early August, new Finesse BulletZ Weedless Jigheads—available in 1/5-, 1/6-, 1/10- and 1/15-ounce sizes— feature an extra strong, custom size-1 extra wide gap VMC® jig hook. A molded "keeper" holds ElaZtech softbaits securely, and allows for quick, easy rigging. Its snag-free, bullet shaped jighead marries seamlessly with popular ElaZtech finesse baits, including the Finesse TRD, Hula StickZ, TRD HogZ and the new TRD CrawZ. For more information, visit [www.zmanfishing.com](http://www.zmanfishing.com).



# The Year of the ChatterBait



By Ted Pilgrim

On morning strolls up and down Lake Hartwell's boat-launch docks, repeated murmurs and quiet nods toward casting decks appeared to form a pattern.

"Look, there's another one."

"Yep, it's that same ChatterBait."

"Man, seems like everyone's throwing that thing."

After the last sack of bass hit the scales at the 2018 Bassmaster Classic, a final tally of another sort emerged: Seven out of the top ten finishers had cast some type of bladed jig.

It didn't take a lot of detective work to discover the bait of choice was a ChatterBait — whether or not the anglers flashed Z-Man logos on their jerseys, or even called the bait by name up on the stage.

The ever-likable Ott DeFoe, who finished sixth, acknowledged: "I fished a ½-ounce green pumpkin bladed jig — the Bass Pro Shops version made by Z-Man."

Eventual tenth-place finisher, Gerald Swindle, gave further voice to what a lot of the anglers might have been thinking. "I caught every bass this week on a half-ounce Evergreen (Z-Man) ChatterBait, the JackHammer," said Swindle, "I'm not sponsored by 'em; I paid fifteen-ninety-nine a piece for 'em, just



## ODU MAGAZINE VIDEO BLOCK ([www.odumagazine.com](http://www.odumagazine.com))

like y'all do. I got about eleven-hundred dollars (worth) of them; I won't lie to you."

### **Winning Streak**

In truth, the remarkable current run of the ChatterBait dates back at least a decade, perhaps beginning when Bryan Thrift won the 2006 FLW Stren Series event on Lake Okeechobee, boating 19 of his 20 fish on the original bladed swim jig. Brett Hite opened the eyes of more anglers when he won the 2014





Bassmaster Elite event on Lake Seminole and the FLW Tour contest on Lake Okeechobee that same year—both on ChatterBait bladed jigs.

In just the first few months this year, the unique, vibrating, wobbling jigs took top honors at two more big name contests. At the FLW Tour event at Florida's Harris Chain of Lakes. First-, second- and third-place finishers all wielded a Z-Man ChatterBait JackHammer, thumping impressive largemouths amid clumps of submersed hydrilla. A few weeks later, Stephen Browning won the Bass Pro Shops Central Open at Ross Barnett Reservoir, catching nearly all his bass on a pair of ChatterBait JackHammer jigs.

For Hite, everything changed following Thrift's 2006 win, when he learned a difference-making trick. "The first ChatterBaits came rigged with a little split-tail trailer," recalls Hite, who's now won over a million dollars on the bladed jigs. "One of my West Coast buddies told me to pull off the trailer and replace it with a swimbait. First time I rigged a ChatterBait with a big bluegill-colored swimbait, a 5-pounder crushed it as soon as it broke free from a patch of grass. It was game-on from there."

After his recent Bassmaster Open win, Browning revealed that he married his winning ChatterBaits with two primary trailers. "At Ross Barnett, I threw a black/blue, 3/8-ounce JackHammer with a matching Z-Man DieZel MinnowZ during the darker morning hours, and followed it up with a solid white ChatterBait and white Razor ShadZ trailer in the afternoon. I felt the DieZel vibrated differently than the RaZor, and gave the bait more loft, which was key in dingier water."



## Walker's Way

Yet while recent buzz propelled the JackHammer bait into rarified air, another Bassmaster Elite Series pro professed confidence in earlier versions of the lure. "The Original ChatterBait is still one of my favorites," said David Walker, fresh off his 12th Classic appearance. "Similar to a sqaurebill (crankbait) or a single spin, the ChatterBait gives you that thump-thump-thump, but carries it to extremes.

"It's almost the perfect tournament bait, because it allows me to cover a lot of water and pick off more bites along the way. It's not a little fish bait, either; big fish attack it equally well. At this point, I'd say the ChatterBait has proven to everyone on tour that it's got a special action that results in big bites."

Walker emphasizes the power of a ChatterBait during the prespawn to postspawn periods, but says the lure can be just as good throughout summer. "I keep a ChatterBait rod on my casting deck pretty much year-around; it's almost replaced a spinnerbait.

"For me, a ChatterBait shines in two key situations. One, for fishing around shallow vegetation, especially on those 6-foot spawning flats, before the really thick grass comes up. I tell a lot of folks to fish the Project Z Weedless ChatterBait around vegetation because it's got a streamlined head that slides through the thick stuff really well. This design also allows for greater blade movement, and I think a little more vibration. I like darker colors, too. Green pumpkin and black/blue are two patterns that consistently produce."

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The second standout scenario, says Walker, occurs around floating docks, particularly in marinas, where large floating complexes cascade vast shadows. “It always surprises people how well a ChatterBait skips way up under docks,” he notes. “Bass that suspend under the planks respond really well to these baits.

“When shad are spawning in these marinas, one great pattern is a white or chartreuse-and-white Original ChatterBait with a 4-inch DieZel MinnowZ. This is a lively, buoyant trailer that lets you retrieve at a nice, steady speed, while floating over trouble spots; it’s so tough that even if you bang it around on sharp edges, it holds up no problem.

### **Trailers and Tackle**

“ElaZtech,” notes the Tennessee based angler, “fishes more dynamically than other materials. A tough, buoyant trailer like a RaZor ShadZ allows me to slow down my retrieve if I need to, but I still have the advantage of weight so the whole bait’s very castable. You put a RaZor or a DieZel MinnowZ on the back







of a ChatterBait and it stays there until you pull it off. For me, an original ChatterBait with a RaZor ShadZ is the perfect match. The whole thing flows together seamlessly. As the ChatterBait does its unique head wobble, it really activates the tail.”

Walker further praises the lure’s versatility. “It’s hard to beat a straight-up steady retrieve, like a lipless crank. Give it a pop to shake grass, if necessary. But I can also hang a craw-shaped trailer like a Turbo CrawZ on the back and fish it on deeper structure. It’s that flexible.”

Relative to tackle, Walker emphasizes the need to spool with 17- to 20-pound fluorocarbon rather than braid. “Fluoro offers the perfect feel for a ChatterBait. Braid is almost too responsive. Fluorocarbon lets me feel the rhythm of the blade, and alerts me to when a less aggressive bass slides up, nips and just disrupts the blade’s motion.” He also opts for a moderately stiff 7-foot casting rod that enhances casting control so I can hit specific targets, but also pitch or sidearm cast under cover. Browning agrees, tying his ChatterBaits to 20-pound fluorocarbon on a 7-foot St. Croix Legend Tournament “Sweeper Spinnerbait” rod.

“If you looked around at rods on casting decks during the Classic,” observed Walker “everyone was throwing a ChatterBait in one form or another. It’s simply been a confidence lure for tournament guys. I can’t imagine any hotter lure on tour right now.”



# A Whole New Spin

The Alabama Rig® (A-Rig) exploded onto the bass fishing scene in 2011. Downsized versions of umbrella rigs (aka spreader rigs) used for eons trolling pelagic saltwater and freshwater predators, these wire baits are designed to emulate a school of baitfish on-the-run. Their use sometimes controversial, A-Rigs have played dominant roles in many competitive bass fishing events.

Yet, for most anglers who compete against their best buddies for pride or pocket change, multi-wire baits are simply another effective tool in the toolbox. Inspired by the possibilities that a multi-wire lure configuration provides under a truly diverse array of conditions, LIVETARGET recently introduced the versatile, customizable BaitBall Spinner Rig. Garnering massive recognition at ICAST 2017 and a recent “Best Freshwater Lure” award at Big Rock West distributor show, the LIVETARGET BaitBall Spinner Rig is





poised to make a tremendous impact on your fishing success.

No simple umbrella rig, the LIVETARGET BaitBall Spinner Rig boasts a radical design bristling with unique elements. The multi-wire lure incorporates hookless, soft-plastic “teaser” fish on three arms, a single willow-leaf spinner blade for flash in the center, and a specially designed “target” fish armed with a single sturdy black nickel hook riding, vulnerably, below the spinner. Anglers can quickly replace or customize any of the soft plastic target and teaser fish via the BaitBall Spinner Rig’s unique Interchange System.

Thoroughly steeped in the LIVETARGET philosophy, the teaser and target fish in the BaitBall Spinner Rig feature anatomically-accurate, three-dimensional details like scales, fins, and eyes, and are available in a full spectrum of color patterns ranging from ultra-realistic to attention-grabbing. The unique geometry of the wires supporting the teaser and target fish protect the lure’s single hook configuration, allowing the LIVETARGET BaitBall Spinner Rig to be fished effectively around and through cover, like docks, submerged wood and rocks, without worrying about snags and lost baits. And unlike traditional, heavyweight castable umbrella rigs, the LIVETARGET BaitBall Spinner Rig doesn’t require specialized rods and reels – or super-human musculature – to fish effectively. Available in four weights ranging from ¼ oz to ¾ oz, the LIVETARGET BaitBall Spinner Rig will feel right-at-home with the baitcasting combos typically used for spinnerbaits or deep-diving crankbaits.

The LIVETARGET BaitBall Spinner Rig is also perfect for searching on the slow-troll. Progressive bassers and striper aficionados often troll at painstakingly slow speeds – 1.5 to 2 MPH – through schools of marked, suspended fish. Locate an active school, put on the breaks, and let the casting begin.

The LIVETARGET Interchange System allows the angler to customize the profile and appearance of their BaitBall Spinner Rig. Providing a collection of three teaser fish and two target fish, each set of Interchange components provides a cost-effective pathway for changing the colors or sizes for any of the BaitBall Spinner Rig’s soft plastic bodies. By doing so, anglers can use their on-the-water observations to quickly personalize their BaitBall Spinner Rig, helping them to catch fish faster on combinations of their own creation.

The integrated action of the teaser bodies, the flash of the spinner blade, and the tuned vibration of the target fish provides the LIVETARGET BaitBall Spinner Rig with a unique blend of strike-triggering sensory inputs. Grant Koppers, founder and President of LIVETARGET, commented that the BaitBall





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Spinner Rig is, "one of the most innovative and unique products we have ever designed. In fact, we've been working on this concept for several years. Every variable to make this lure function and trigger strikes has been meticulously considered. The flash and vibration are unlike any lure ever created."

Available now, the LIVETARGET BaitBall Spinner Rig (MSRP \$13.49-\$15.49) is provided in three frame sizes, each with two weight options, making it simple to pick the right BaitBall Spinner Rig for shallow or deep-water applications. The award-winning bait is available in a spectrum of eight color patterns for effectiveness in a variety of water conditions, from gin-clear to murky mocha. These same colors and sizes are also available in the versatile Interchange Systems (MSRP \$7.99).

Create – innovate – dominate: this is the nature of competition, and the reason why better lures will always catch more fish. The LIVETARGET BaitBall Spinner Rig is, quite simply, better than any castable umbrella rig you've ever fished. Tie one on, and learn why LIVETARGET lures dominate freshwater, saltwater, and the competition.



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# 5 Things To Know To Catch More Lake Trout

By Dan Johnson

Lake trout are hard-fighting, great-tasting gamefish often misunderstood by the masses. If you'd like to catch more lakers this summer, factor these five facts from veteran trout guide Bernie Keefe into your fishing strategies.

## Frontal Assaults

Cold fronts give walleyes and other fish species lockjaw, but not lake trout. "Most people don't realize lake trout don't care about fronts, they just keep on eating," says Keefe. "I've had some of my best days in cold, bluebird conditions following a major front."

Keefe notes that many anglers flock to trout lakes when a front is coming. "They hope the approach of a storm fires up the trout," he says. "But in many cases, the fishing is only average. The real action comes



when the storm is hitting and continues after the front passes through."

As a bonus to post-frontal fishing, Keefe says he often has the lake, and the lake trout, all to himself. "People assume lakers will behave like walleyes and the fishing will be tough, so they stay home," he explains. "This reduces boat traffic and pressure, which helps improve the fishing even more."

### **Pressure Points**

On the flip side, an influx of anglers can wreak havoc on the action. "Fishing pressure is the number one bite killer for lake trout, bar none," says Keefe.

"If you see boats working a spot, don't waste your time on it," he adds. "Those fish have been educated. You might get a bite, but your odds of a banner day are more in your favor if you find a new spot with





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fresh fish."

### **Manage Success**

In a similar vein, Keefe cautions against overfishing a hotspot. "Particularly with trophy-sized lake trout, if you've got a good bite going in a certain area, such as a point, limiting your catch to two or three trout per trip can extend the spot's productivity," he says.

"If you catch more big fish than that off it in one trip, there's a pretty good chance you'll burn it for future trips," he continues. "It's almost like you need to leave a few fish for seed. If you leave fish there, other trout will move in. If you clear the area, other trout are less likely to settle there."

Keefe says the concept holds true with catch-and-release fishing, because released lakereels often relocate after being pulled from a particular piece of structure.

### **Exit Strategy**

Since lake trout often school by size, Keefe advises anglers seeking trophy trout not to tarry over pods of smaller fish.

"If you're looking for lake trout 30 inches or longer, you have to be willing to walk away from a hot bite for 15- to 20-inch fish, because your chances of catching a big fish in the mix are pretty low," he says.

"Big trout don't hang around small trout for a couple of reasons," he continues. "Number one is that the

big fish eat the small fish, which makes for an uncomfortable relationship. Second, mature lakers are grumpy old farts that don't like all the commotion of the younger crowd."

Ideally, Keefe looks for the rod-bending action afforded by a school of hungry, 25- to 27-inch trout. "Trophy lakers will hang out with these size fish," he says. "So you get to enjoy the fun of steady action, with a better than average shot at boating a big fish."

**Be Prepared**

"If you want to catch a large trout, gear up accordingly," he says. "Don't bring a knife to a gunfight."

Keefe outfits clients with medium-heavy, 6- to 7-foot Fenwick Aetos and HMG rods that are light enough to fish all day, yet powerful enough to handle trophy trout.

Further boosting fighting power, Keefe spools with 14-pound-test Berkley FireLine mainline, and adds a 10-pound 100% Trilene Fluorocarbon leader for good measure.

"We also use TroKar 810 jig hooks, which are the strongest and sharpest hooks around," he adds. "And keep an assortment of proven trout baits on hand, including Berkley Havoc, Gulp! and PowerBait tubes and minnow-shaped softbaits."

Keefe also encourages trout seekers to master their on-board electronics. "Learn to adjust your sonar and interpret everything it's trying to tell you," he says. "My Lowrance sonar shows me fish other anglers miss. I can also read the trout's moods, which makes it a lot easier to pull the plug on a fried group of fish and go looking for the next hot bite."

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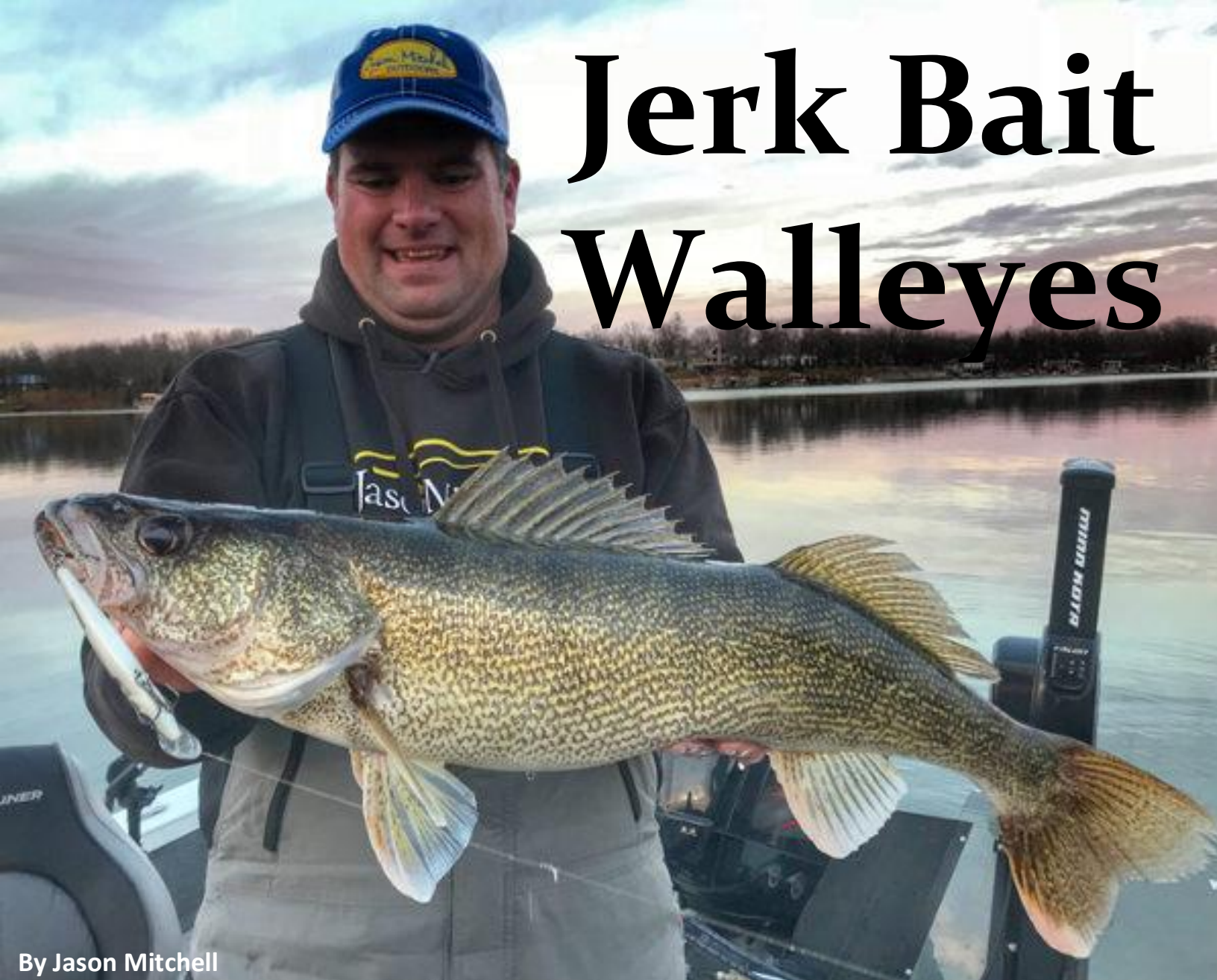




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# Jerk Bait Walleyes



By Jason Mitchell

Jerk baits can roll with a lot of different names and monikers. Twitch baits, minnow baits.... Basically any slender profile, shallow running, minnow shaped hard bait. The actions and characteristics can vary dramatically amongst different companies and lures. The classic lure that started this entire lure category is the original Floating Rapala which has a subdued action and very subtle roll and shimmy. Over time, other lures came on the scene like the Smithwick Rogue and Rattling Rogue, the Rapala Husky Jerk and X rap, Lucky Craft Pointer Minnow, Mega Bass Vision and the Salmo Rattlin' Sting.

This entire lure category can be fished to extremes. From slow steady retrieves where the lure has a tiny subtle footprint to a steady retrieve interrupted by pauses and stalls with suspending lures. Going the other extreme, some of these lures handle slashing speeds and can be snapped forward to get the lure to erratically slash or slide off one direction only to slide off to the opposite direction on the next rip. Lures that were designed for these sharp snaps have a much more aggressive action where anglers often snap the lure forward with a much faster retrieve that might include three rapid snaps during a reel revolution that causes the lure to snap and slash forward rapidly and stopping or hanging momentarily between snaps and then stalling momentarily longer as you bring your rod back towards the lure. The very best lures ride very horizontally on the stall and many of the most recent lure





designs feature long cast sliding weight transfers that aid in longer casts. The new Salmo Rattlin' Sting has been called an absolute jerk bait masterpiece by many astute walleye and bass anglers just because this particular lure does so many things so well.

Traditionally, bass anglers casted jerk baits in the spring and fall to cover water fast where walleye anglers trolled these lures in the spring and fall to cover water fast. Trolling jerk baits along rip rap or over shallow sand, gravel and rock contours is a proven big walleye equation each year. Another pattern gaining momentum each season is working these lures over flats and shoreline tapers that have emerging weed growth in less than ten feet of water.

Now walleye anglers have casted these same lures for years particularly while wader fishing in the spring and fall around rip rap, current bottlenecks and gravel but more walleye anglers are taking plays from the bass fishing handbook by casting these lures. Both casting and trolling jerk baits have advantages and disadvantages for working these lures to catch walleyes.

Trolling shines whenever fish are relating to large in descript locations where fish are spread out over broad areas or whenever you are in search mode trying to work through a new area fast. Because lures run at a deeper depth, trolling also shines whenever fish are deeper than five feet but shallower than ten feet and won't rise to chase down a bait.

Casting can be more effective whenever fish are relating and stacked up against a shoreline, are less than five feet or are positioned higher in the water column after dark or during wind. Casting is also much more efficient when fish are relating to the spot on the spot which is often the case when fish are on rock or relating to weed clumps.

Trolling is a broad brush where casting is precise. With the advancements in spot locking features on trolling motors and anchoring devices like Talons and Power Poles, precise fishing is easier than ever.

Early in the season before the water temperatures hit sixty degrees, I find that I catch more fish trolling jerk baits by pulling the boat with the bow mount trolling motor. By trolling with an electric trolling motor, I can creep along at slower speeds that might range from one mile to a mile and a half an hour. In extremely clear water, I often use planer boards, monofilament line and do a lot of S curves with the boat. So often early in the year, fish seem much spookier but as the water temps rise, I can get away



with a lot more. As the summer progresses, I find that I can pick up my speed to well over two miles per hour. Regardless of time of year, there are many days where I catch more fish with the rod I am holding by pumping and stopping the lure. Many hits will come on the turn or stop after a snap or pump forward.

Wind or weeds combined with really shallow fish often call for casting these baits. Again, early in the season, we often catch more fish with mono and often prefer a spinning reel as the slower gear ratios make it easier to crawl these lures forward. A few additional tips for casting... change up your retrieve speed and cadence where you methodically fish every cast a little different to find that groove that the fish respond to. As a general rule of thumb early in the year, it is really easy to fish these lures too fast. I have to keep reminding myself to slow down. What also happens almost subconsciously is that we tend to fish faster when we are excited. I find that I often have a tendency to fish faster after catching a fish for example and have to tell myself to slow back down. Finding that zone each day is paramount, and I even go so far as make every angler in the boat use the exact same rod and reel so that if somebody starts hooking up, we can match the retrieve speed by watching each other.

When fish are a little off, long casts often catch more fish because walleyes are notorious for following and pecking at the back of the lure for a considerable distance and fish will often follow the lure out over deeper water. When the fish are aggressive, short casts will allow you to make more casts right in the zone. When fishing over emerging weeds like cabbage or pencil reeds, fish high and make the fish come up for the lure as you won't catch anything if the lure is fouled up.

As the weeds keep growing higher, we often find ourselves using shallower lures as the season progresses to stay above the weeds. Strong wind and waves can also turn on a jerk bait bite.



## ODU MAGAZINE VIDEO BLOCK ([www.odumagazine.com](http://www.odumagazine.com))

As a rule of thumb, the sweet spot for running depth is double the height of the wave. In other words, in three-foot swells, try to run about six feet but big fish in particular have no problem riding the turbulence right below

the surface. Strong wind over rock or a hard bottom is typically an opportunistic pattern where casting or trolling jerk baits shine.

A few additional notes to consider. As the water temps heat up over sixty-five degrees and fish start responding to more aggressive cadences and faster speeds, braided line with a fluorocarbon leader can give the lure a much more pronounced action and is sometimes necessary for snapping off weed stalks.

Jerk baits in some capacity have been in tackle boxes for decades but are becoming more popular with mainstream walleye anglers. New lure designs have evolved that trigger fish regardless of attitude and time of year. Whenever fish are shallow, jerk baits are capable of finding fish much more quickly than many traditional soft bait and live bait presentations.

The author, Jason Mitchell earned a renowned reputation as a fishing guide on North Dakota's Devils Lake and hosts the outdoor television program Jason Mitchell Outdoors which airs on Fox Sports North and Fox Sports Midwest. More information can be found at [www.jasonmitchelloutdoors.com](http://www.jasonmitchelloutdoors.com).



# EXPERIMENT WITH COLOR TO CATCH MORE FISH

By Bob Jensen

People who like to fish spend a good amount of time talking about the different things that can help them catch more fish. There are a number of considerations that can partially or fully determine our fishing success, but perhaps the one consideration that we talk about the most is lure color. Beginning and expert anglers alike are always trying to determine how much of a factor lure color has on our fishing success. Following are some thoughts on lure color. In the minds of many accomplished anglers the lure color question is this simple: Sometimes color matters, sometimes it doesn't. When the fish are biting, they'll often hit any color you put out there. When they don't want to eat, color becomes one of several very important considerations. There are times when having the "right" color of bait on the end of your line will result in more fish being caught.

There are ways to increase the odds of showing a fish the color they might prefer on a particular day. Let's say we're after walleyes and we're using jigs with a soft bait trailer. If there are two anglers in the boat, one angler should try, for example, an orange jighead with a chartreuse tail: That's a great walleye color combination almost anywhere. The other angler should try a pink head, white body. By doing so, we're showing the walleyes four different colors. We're increasing the odds of showing them the color they want on that particular day.

Now, let's say the angler using the orange/chartreuse combo is catching more fish. If you want to fine-tune your color option, one angler should try an orange head/orange tail jig, the other should tie on a chartreuse head/chartreuse tail jig. By doing so, we're going to see if there really is a dominant color on that particular day. Sometimes there will be a definite color preference.





## We are more than ice anglers.

We hear a lot about "limit your catch, don't catch your limit" when it comes to open-water fishing. How you shouldn't dump your bait. Why you should let the big ones live to fight another day. But when the snow falls and the lakes freeze over, we don't forget those valuable lessons. We still handle fish with care. We still leave the ice cleaner than we found it. We still make conscious decisions at home to help improve habitat downstream. Because we are more than ice fishing fanatics.

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Crankbaits come in a wide variety of colors, and that's because there are times and places when one

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color is better than another. There are times when a natural appearing crankbait, a crankbait that looks like a real baitfish, will be better. And, there are those times when a weird, gaudy color that looks nothing like a baitfish will be better. Usually, natural appearing baits will be better in clear water, and usually the gaudy baits will be better in stained or dirty water. Usually, but not always. You need to keep experimenting with color until you get it right.

None of us know for sure how much of a factor lure color is in fishing success, and maybe we never will know. However, if you experiment with color, you'll probably decide that, at times, if you're using the right color, you'll catch more fish. This year, try different lure colors when the fish are biting good, and try different lure colors when they're not so active. You just might determine that lure color can make a difference.

To see all the newest episodes of the Fishing the Midwest television series, new fishing related tips, and fishing articles from the past, go to [www.fishingthemidwest.com](http://www.fishingthemidwest.com)





# A VERY VERSATILE HOOK

**By Jason Halfen**

Trapper Hooks are uniquely designed to address two persistent problems anglers face when using antiquated J-shaped hooks: First and foremost, J-hooks rock and rotate in a fish's mouth as the fish fights for freedom. The thrashing expands the initial point of entry and creates a path to escape. Second, the round bend of J-hooks allows soft plastics and live baits to slide freely along the hook shank as the bait is cast and retrieved, or fished through cover. That unwanted mobility leads to frequent adjustments between casts, consuming valuable time on the water. The patent-protected design of the Trapper Hook addresses both of these problems with two right-angle bends at the base of the hook shank, creating the Trapper Box, which locks fish – and baits – in place.

With Trapper Hooks, anglers spend less time re-rigging, while landing more striking fish. This is truly the ultimate “win-win” proposition for anglers, originating from a seemingly simple, “why didn't I think of that” change in hook geometry.

The Dropshot/Live Bait/Finesse hook from Trapper Tackle is poised to take the bass fishing scene by storm. Vince Hurtado, former B.A.S.S. Elite Series angler and Trapper Tackle pro, relies on Trapper Hooks for all of his finesse and dropshot presentations. “I fish with total confidence when I tie on a Trapper. The Trapper Box at the bottom of the hook keeps my baits rigged perfectly and keeps fish pinned so I know they are coming to the boat.,” says Hurtado, who has logged thousands of hours and hundreds of California Delta bass testing Trapper Hooks over the past several seasons.

## ODU MAGAZINE VIDEO BLOCK ( [www.odumagazine.com](http://www.odumagazine.com) )

Far from a bass-only proposition, the Trapper Dropshot/Live Bait/Finesse hook also excels at securing and presenting a wide variety of live and natural offerings. Walleye anglers rejoice at how well Trapper dropshot hooks hold jumbo leeches, crawlers and live minnows, delectables that frequently tempt trophy whitetips from the depths. Carp and catfish chasers will find that corn and dough balls are accommodated equally well in the Trapper Box. Likewise, wader-clad anglers in pursuit of migratory trout and salmon will quickly learn that the Trapper dropshot hook excels when dressed with spawn bags and single egg presentations.

The award winning ultra-versatile Dropshot/Live Bait/Finesse hook from Trapper Tackle can truly find a home in any angler's tacklebox.

Anglers will find the Trapper dropshot/live bait/finesse hook in five sizes, ranging from #4 to 2/0, in packs of 6 (MSRP \$3.79) or 25 (MSRP \$14.99), with retail and on-line availability in December 2016. Until then, visit us at <http://TrapperTackle.com> to sign up for free samples and to learn more about the game-changing family of Trapper Hooks from Trapper Tackle.





## ***The 30 Foot Line...A Good Place to Fish in the Spring***

**By Capt. Tom Hughes**

It appeared to be a good day to go fishing. The skies were gray, variable winds to 5 knots, and we could keep in moving current throughout the entire day.

The crew met me at Sandy Point State Park around 6:45am. After a safety briefing and putting on the PFD's, we headed east on the Chesapeake Bay. Robert Weeren, Kirk and Evan Schmidt, were excited with the hope of landing some striped bass while using light spinning tackle and lures.

The flood current was moving swiftly as we cruised around the Western and Eastern Rockpiles, but no stripers showed up on my Garmin. We cruised on the west side toward Tolly Point. The water at Tolly Point was dirty so we crossed the Bay to the eastern shore.

There were a lot of boats chumming when we got there. To catch stripers on lures you must move away from these boats. You'll mark stripers, but they are keyed on nothing but chum. Using the chartplotter, I found the closest place that had clean water and moving current. We cruised there and found stripers on the 30 foot line...plenty of them. Once we arrived there catching went on for the next 3 hours.

The fish caught ranged between 17 and 30 inches. All were healthy and fought hard before coming to the boat.

Most Productive Lure: Z-Man, 5" Sented Jerk Shadz in Pearl attached to a 1/2 oz. BKD jighead.

Most Productive Technique: Crank-Crank, Jig-Jig

This is a 2-step technique where you jig the bottom then move the lure off the bottom and up through the water columns in a jiggling motion. It's highly productive on striped bass that are on the bottom or when suspended. Accomplish this technique by snapping the wrist rather than moving the rod using just the arm.

NOTE: The boat will be drifting down current with the motor off.

1st Step-Jiggling the Bottom - From the up current side of the boat, cast the lure out, put the rod at 9 o'clock and let the lure hit the bottom. Swiftly snap the rod to the 10 o'clock position lifting the lure off the bottom swiftly. When the line starts to descend again move the rod tip downward in sync with the line until the lure hits the bottom again. Do this 2 or 3 times.

2nd Step-Jiggling the Water Columns - The lure is still in the water after completing the 1st Step and on the bottom. Swiftly crank on the reel handle twice (\*\*Crank-Crank\*\*), then swiftly jig the lure twice (\*\*Jig-Jig\*\*). Do this until you get a hook-up or the lure is back to the boat.

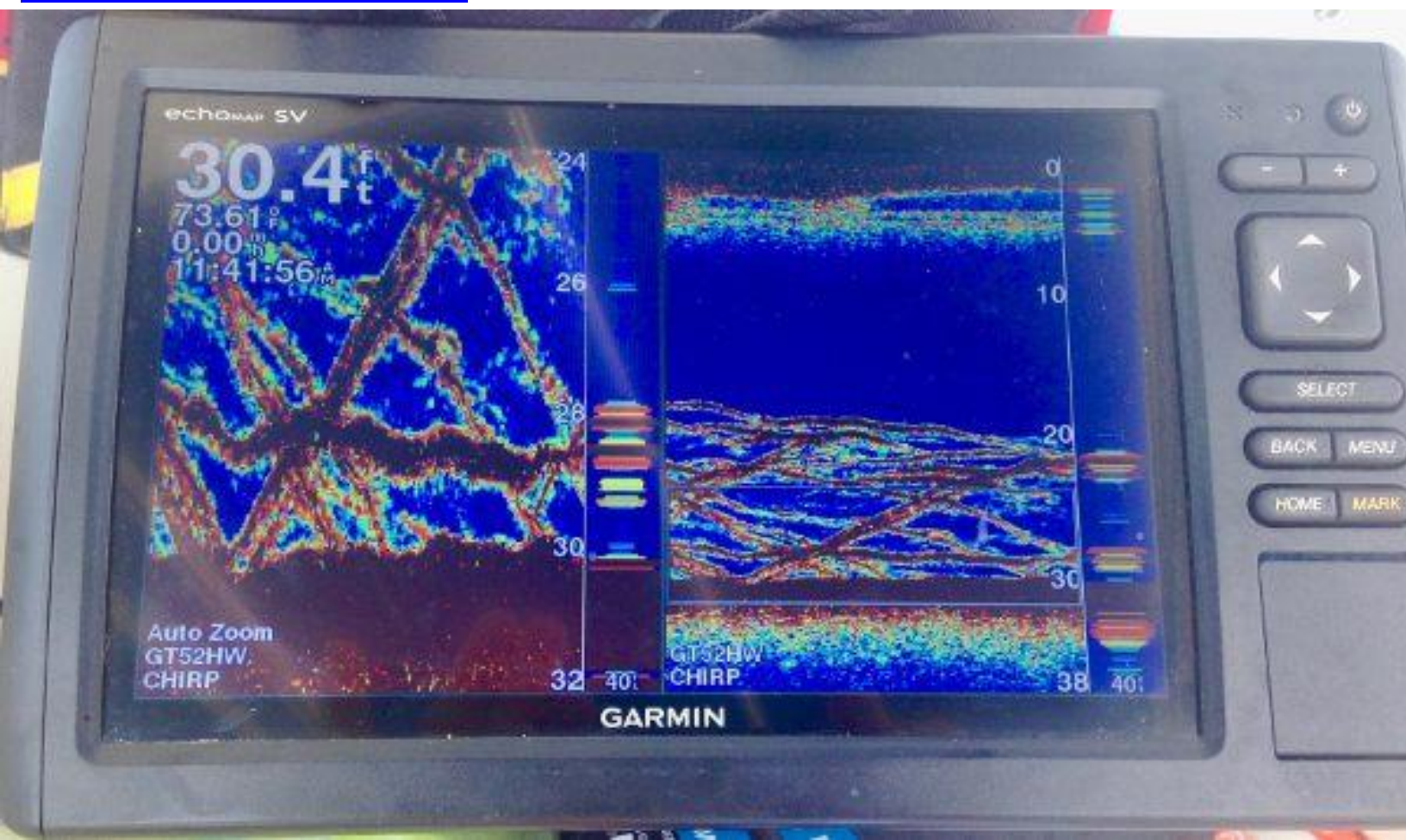
Thanks Kirk, Robert and Evan for allowing me to enjoy your trip on the Chesapeake Bay.

Tight Lines,

Capt. Tom Hughes

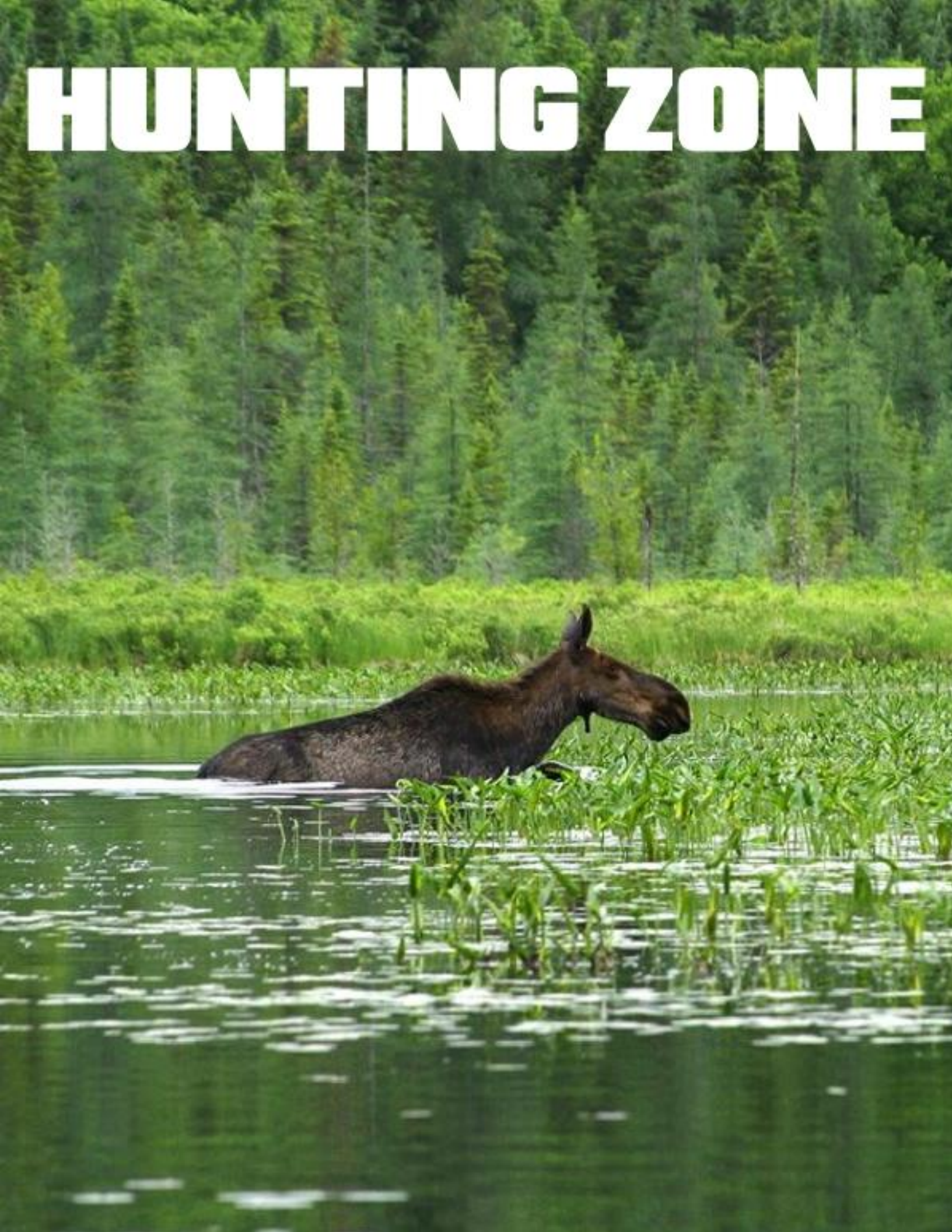
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# HUNTING ZONE







# STILL OF THE NIGHT

By Dustin Catrett

Peering into the scope, the night takes on an eerie hue under the green glow of thermal imaging as the shriek of a dying rabbit adds to the mounting anticipation. “Keep your shoulder close to the scope and be ready,” whispers my guide Juan while raising the volume on his hand held call. Using a night vision monocular, he sweeps the open field from side to side scanning for movement as I stand poised against the tripod. Minutes later he spots something creeping into view. “Bobcat at two o’clock,” he whispers. “Move slow until you find it in your scope.” The tripod spins smoothly as I carefully swing the gun searching through the emerald haze for anything that doesn’t resemble a cactus.

“You on him?” he asks.



“Not yet,” I reply.

“More to the left, quick.”

Scanning further, eventually a large cat-like shape materializes in the crosshairs.

“Do you have a shot?” he asks.

“Yes.”

“Take it.”

Slowly I squeeze the trigger as the cat turns its attention back to the spinning coon-tail decoy in the center of the field. With no roaring recoil, the light Savage .223 slumps the feline dead in place. “Congratulations! It looked like a big tom,” says Juan. For me it’s a bucket list trophy I’ve wanted for years, for Juan Saenz it’s just another night on the prowl. Employed as a hired gun by one of the many hunting ranches in south Texas, he stalks everything from coyotes and bobcats, to would be trespassers while protecting their most prized commodity – whitetail deer.

### **Predator Control**

Coyote are a particular threat to whitetail particularly during spring when fawn stock survival is crucial. Anxious landowners who’ve invested thousands of dollars to grow trophy deer are happy to see pickup beds filled with their corpses so much that many times are willing to trade hunts and property access in exchange for services. Bobcats play a minor role in fawn mortality, but for quail hunting operations can still decimate egg production if not kept in check, while raccoons destroy corn feeders and consume eggs leaving ranchers with a





seemingly endless task of keeping predators in check. “On a lot of ranches like here in Zapata County you can see a direct result with the success of their fawn crop from year to year when the predators are properly managed,” said Saenz.

### **The Trophy Factor**

While predator control will never be synonymous with trophy hunting, in recent years has found a niche into mainstream hunting acceptance. With out-of-state clients paying premiums to hunt trophy whitetail and exotics then experiencing an exciting fast paced hunt for a unique leopard spotted bobcat or fast paced coyote shoot, competent guides and landowners garner sizeable tips for successful outcomes while performing a beneficial management practice. With its boom in popularity, the demand for predator specialists like Saenz has risen considerably, and nowhere is there a more target rich environment than South Texas. A modern day sheep dog of sorts, the McAllen native is passionate about his work. “It’s a really fun sport to get into and a great part time job for networking with landowners as well,” he said. In a region of the country where many guides, ranch hands, and property owners compete in predator hunting events that offer cash prizes and ornate belt buckles for categories such as the heaviest bobcat and coyote, Saenz prefers to focus his talents more on client service than individual recognition. “The predator hunting contests are really fun and I use to compete, but my main focus nowadays is keeping the landowner happy and making sure my clients are successful.”

Just before dawn we moved to another area of the ranch that he assured was thick with coyotes. This time he took the trigger while playing a whelping call that within minutes enticed an aggressive male to come barreling towards the decoy. “Whoop!” he shouted, stopping it for a moment before pulling the trigger. “Boom!” the rifle sounded and the canine dropped dead in the middle of the road. “And that’s



pretty much how I do it," he said as we walked over to retrieve it. By late morning we'd bagged two more that were female before deciding to head in for breakfast. The bobcat I took would be mounted by a local taxidermist and shipped to my house in Florida at a later date, the coyotes were slated to be skinned, stretched, and hides sold to the fur market with Saenz earning a whitetail hunt from the landowner in exchange for his service. Tomorrow he's off to the nearby Varal Ranch to set up snares along a perimeter fence before guiding another whitetail client over the weekend. With any luck he'll put them on their first bobcat after they've bagged their buck, earn a good tip, then catch up on a few hours sleep before the sun sets again and its back out into the night in search of more predators.

**Dustin Catrett**  
**For predator**  
**hunts contact:**  
**Juan Saenz**

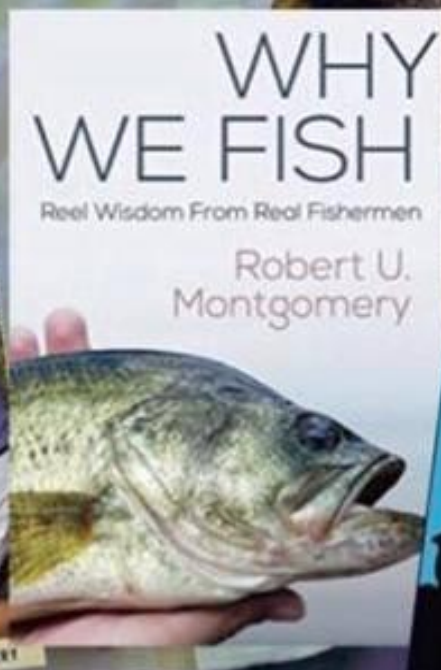
**Email:**

**[jsaenz12@yahoo.com](mailto:jsaenz12@yahoo.com)**





# ROBERT MONTGOMERY





# My New Knife

By Dana Benner

I'm not a collector of knives, guns or much of anything else. I like good products that I can use. Recently, I received a knife called the Jessmuk which is made by L.T. Wright. You know something? I really like this knife.

Designed by Chris Tanner, this knife is the modern version of a blade that I really like; the ulu. All knives are inspired by knives of the past and this knife is no different. The Jessmuk takes all of the attributes of the ulu and combines them with the tried and true camp/survival knife. The end result is a knife that really does it all.

The Jessmuk has an overall length of 9 ½ inches and a 5 ½ inch cutting length of the blade. What makes the Jessmuk special is how it incorporates the wide symmetrical blade of the ulu, which allows for straight cuts with just the flick of the wrist. Perfect for skinning a deer or cutting a roast.

Dinner is not the only thing this knife excels at. Need to make a tent peg; baton some wood for the fire or a survival shelter; how about a feather stick to get that fire started? This knife will do it. Forged with 1/8th inch 01 Tool Steel, this knife is designed for anything that the woodsperson could think of.

As I write this piece I am preparing for my first turkey hunt of the spring. Besides my Mossberg 500 shotgun, Federal Heavyweight shells and all of the other gear I carry in my Blackhawk bag, the Jessmuk will be among the gear I carry to the field. I hope that I will harvest my turkey early this year. You just never know, but a turkey will just be another step to filling the freezer, and the Jessmuk will be just the tool to use to process the ideal bird.

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Life teaches that cheap insurance comes in many forms. The latest of which for hunters is the \$39.99 OZ20 Vehicle Deodorizer by ScentLok. Simply plug this affordable marvel into your vehicle's all-in-one 12V receptacle and let the odor destruction begin.



The OZ20 Vehicle Deodorizer is one of several powerful new OZ Active Odor Destroyers, specifically designed to emit a powerful stream of ozone molecules that seek out and destroy virtually all types of odors and bacteria in their path. When ozone comes in contact with these contaminants, their chemical structure is changed to a compound that is no longer recognizable as an offensive odor. As ozone continues to attack these compounds, the odor is destroyed through oxidation. The ozone then reverts back to oxygen. Revolutionary CycleClean™ technology allows OZ Active Odor Destroyers to moderate output by alternating between active and resting phases for maximum efficiency and longer product life.

Even those who don't hunt will appreciate the OZ20's almost instant ability to deodorize the cabin of their car or truck. It'll smell so clean, in fact, that you might even consider starting your own ride-sharing business. Short of that, let's just say you'll be good to go for date night.

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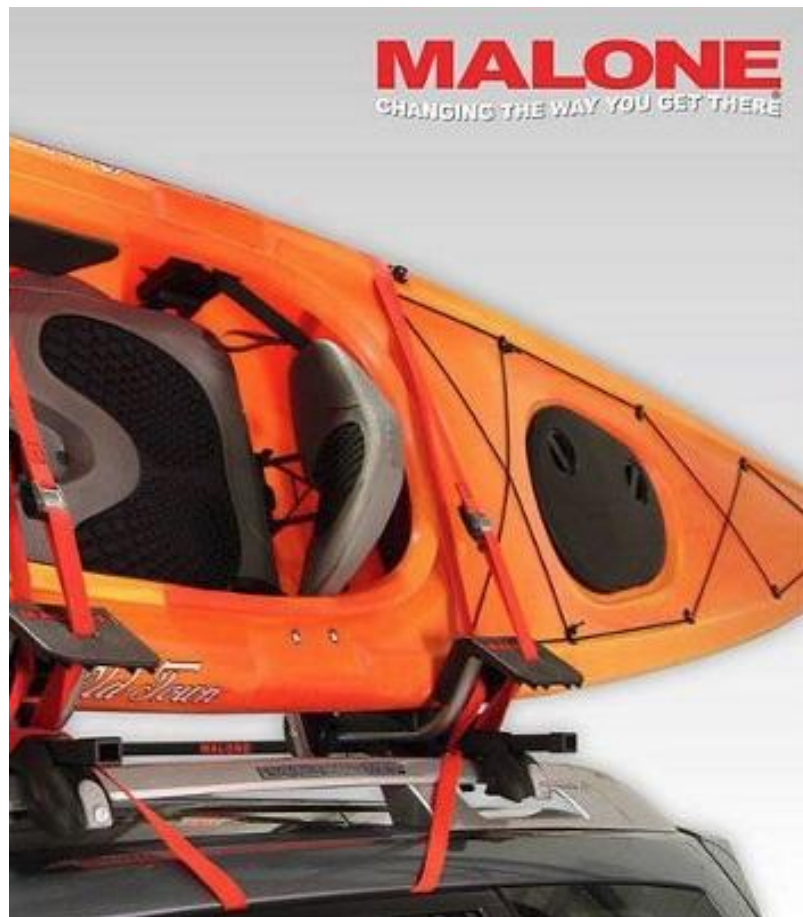
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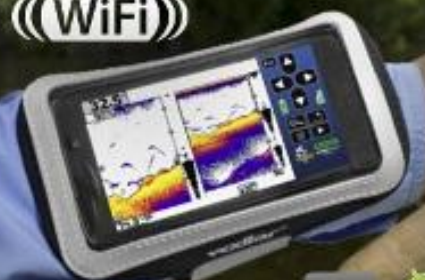
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