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My Last Leopard Dock Wild Turkey Wraps For Crappies



Spring has started to find its end, but for many parts of the county last winter snows and cold weather seem to linger. We have heard from many anglers struggling to find the typical spring bite. Good luck. This is the May/June 2019 edition of ODU capturing articles on walleye, crappie and bass. One great article that all crappie guys will appreciate is "Shooting Docks". The last article comes from our friends at Jofie Lamprecht Safaris covering a leopard hunt. June will bring another magzine in the last week – and Enjoy.

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### Much Anticipated Minnesota Walleye Season

By Brian "Bro" Brosdahl https://www.facebook.com/brian.bros <u>dahl</u>

It was a long winter in my part of Northern Minnesota. Virtually everyone is excited for open water and the chance to get out on the lakes and catch some walleyes.

Anglers in many parts of the country will never know the joys of an opening day because they never close their season.

Minnesota allows their Official State Fish, the Walleye, to have a little time off to spawn and rest in the spring. The 2019 Minnesota Walleye Opener is set for Saturday, May 11th at 12:01 am.

I won't be on the water right away at midnight, but I will be in line shortly after dawn at my favorite lake, waiting my turn to put my Ranger boat into the water and get after some walleyes.

My guiding clients and friends know how much I like to fish with jigs for walleyes. Jigs are a simple way to present live bait to walleyes and other fish. Anglers can put almost an infinite amount of different actions on a jig and use them in many different ways.

Anglers can catch walleyes on jigs while trolling, drifting or fishing vertically in current just by hanging onto the rod and doing nothing, as long as the jig is in the right part of the water column. Jigs catch fish because of the live bait or plastics on the jigs that make them look like the real thing.

Walleyes can see very well and have a wide field of view along with good night vision, so they have much better eyesight than most of their prey. Walleyes also have the ability to taste and smell, along with being able to feel vibrations in the water, which all combine to help walleyes locate their prey.

Walleyes sometimes feed in small groups and sometimes in larger schools, depending on several factors like the availability of food and the weather conditions.

Walleyes feed on minnows, crayfish, small fish and insects, so they like a diversified diet. Walleyes feed along all types of edges, so they have access to a wider range of prey species best suited for different types of habitat in the same area.

Walleyes are limited to whatever types of habitat available to them in their home lake. Walleyes are capable of utilizing many different types of habitat, depending on what prey species are available to them in the lake.

Walleyes main concern is finding a plentiful food source they can exploit. If anglers can figure out where the most food is located in the lake, they will usually find a good number of walleyes taking advantage of the feeding opportunity.

Walleyes will often move from food source to food source during the summer, rolling with the changes that are usually driven by changes in water temperature.

Walleyes will go to whatever part of the lake that provides them with the best feeding opportunity. Once the "gravy train" wears out in one area, walleyes will move to another area where they can find their next best feeding opportunity.

Early in May in most of the lakes I like to fish have spottail shiner minnows as the preferred prey for most walleyes. Other lakes could have small perch, emerald shiners, golden shiners or some type of chub minnow as walleyes preferred prey, depending on what is available in each lake.

Shiners of all varieties are very temperature sensitive, so they need to stay where the water is cool and holds more oxygen. Anglers using shiners for bait





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should check out the new Frabill Magnum Bait Station, with heavy duty insulation like a cooler and built-in aeration to keep shiners and other bait alive for a full day of fishing.

I like to use spottail shiners and jigs for walleyes in my guide service as long as I can get them in the bait store. I prefer the Northland Long Shank Fireball Jigs with shiners.

I threat the shiner on the jig by putting the hook in the mouth and out the gill, slide the minnow all the way up the jig, then put the hook in the belly and out the back. I want the minnow hooked straight, so the minnow doesn't spin in the water.

I use different types of jigs and different size jigs, depending on how deep and what type of cover I am fishing. I like a 3/16th to ¼ ounce jig with a long shank when fishing in emerging weeds or on a clean bottom.

If I am fishing in rocks or heavier weeds, I will use a lighter jig to stay further off the bottom still be able to fish slow without getting snagged. I may use a stand-up jig with a flat head if I am fishing scattered rocks that are not too snaggy.

I hook the minnow on a short shank jig differently than on a long shank jig. I put the hook in the mouth and out the shoulder, to hold the minnow on the hook better and still keep them alive. If anglers have trouble finding live minnows for bait, they can try leeches or night



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crawlers. Scented plastics will also work for walleyes in many situations.

The right rod and line are important factors in jig fishing. I like the 6' 3" St. Croix Legend Elite in the medium light, with a fast or super-fast tip. I use 8 lb. Northland walleye braid for the main line and a 6- or 8-pound test Fluorocarbon leader.

I would have a tough time catching walleye on any lake without my Humminbird Helix 12 with Mega Chirp and Mega Side-Imaging. I like to look first and fish second.

I will look at potential areas to fish with sonar and side imaging, following contours I think will hold fish, until I see a pod of walleyes. Then I stop and fish. I will repeat the previous steps as necessary when the fishing slows down in each location.

Good Luck Fishing Anglers,

Please follow my fishing adventures on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook.

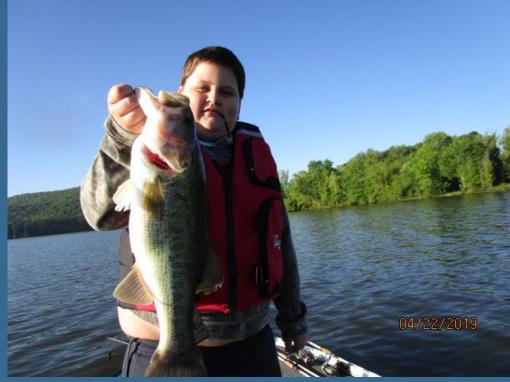
### *"On to summer fishing – check out the next article on chasing summer walleye."*

## Sharing Knowledge

By Capt. Mike Gerry

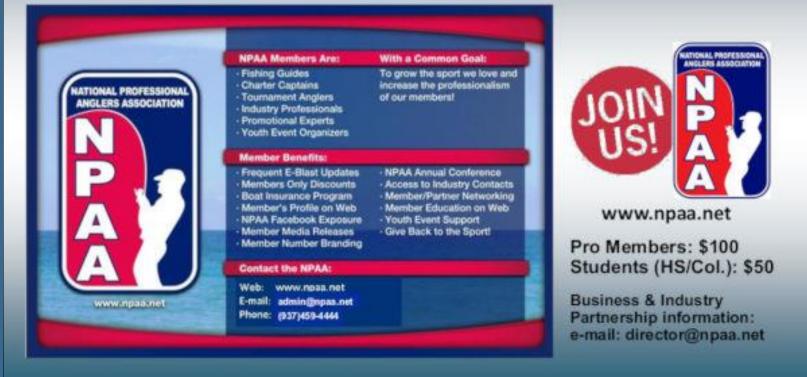
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As a believer in the fact that the more a person understands the movement, patterns and habits of fish the easier it is to become a seasoned fisherman. There is no doubt in my mind that knowledge is everything, it really doesn't matter what your trying to without accomplish the basic knowledge, it's difficult to achieve. Skills for bass fishing come in many different forms and from many different sources. with todav's internet at our figure tips it is certainly easier than it has ever been to acquire knowledge, but it still has its limits as knowledge must come experience and with experience comes with time on the water.



As you improve your physical fishing skills you must also improve your mental skills and I believe to really become a great angler your mental improvement must lead the way three fold over your physical improvement the reason is simply; if your in the right place at the right time you will catch fish regardless of your physical ability. Once you learn what a bite is and how to set the hook it pretty much hangs with you and improves easily over time. The bass however can move, and change, and adapting to changes caused by weather, water temperature, wind, current and more, is difficult so keeping up with the mental end of it is much more complicated and involved.

In order to gain a mental edge over someone else in life there are only a few ways to accomplish it and one of them is empowering your mind with information, reading, watching fishing videos, asking questions, listening to the more experienced and formulating your own ideas based on gained knowledge or shared information. Bass fishing is no different if you want to be the best get the best information, gain the best knowledge and work with the best, and most experienced and those dedicated to sharing their knowledge. It's also important to remember that not all information is real or created equal you have-to keep what works for you and plays into your style of fishing or life and use it to your advantage. As an example of an information based idea that can help any fisherman there is an on-line subscription based provider called "In the Spread" in my mind it is of the highest quality of information on fishing than anything I am in contact with as it empowers fishermen of all Join the Over 1200 NPAA Guides, Captains, Tournament Anglers, Clubs Angler Educators, Industry Companies, and Non-Profits All Working Together to Grow and Protect Sportfishing Nationwide



types with information that improves their skill level with solid based information. Their information comes from the very best of anglers with diverse backgrounds of many different types of fishing, they have one thing in mind and that is to share information with anglers working to improve their skills and become more knowledgeable from one day to the next. As someone who loves to help people learn and become better fisherman I have joined the "In The Spread" team and can tell you that working with them to be instructional and informative is as rewarding as catching a big fish or watching a customer catch a personal best. It does my heart good to see customers improve every day on the water or watch a young child have a successful day of fishing and sharing information is as rewarding for me and any of this. It just feels good to pass on the good times to the next generations.

Sharing knowledge is what it takes to be successful as a manager or coach for those around you; gaining that knowledge is what separates you from the rest and using that knowledge to your advantage is what makes you better. There is an old saying in coaching I used in my days of being a coach and that is the definition of "Luck' as luck is when preparation meets opportunity, being prepared with knowledge will always prepare you to be lucky!

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## Late Spring Fishing on Lake Erie's Western Basin

By Captain Julia "Juls" Davis

www.julswalleyefishingadventures.com

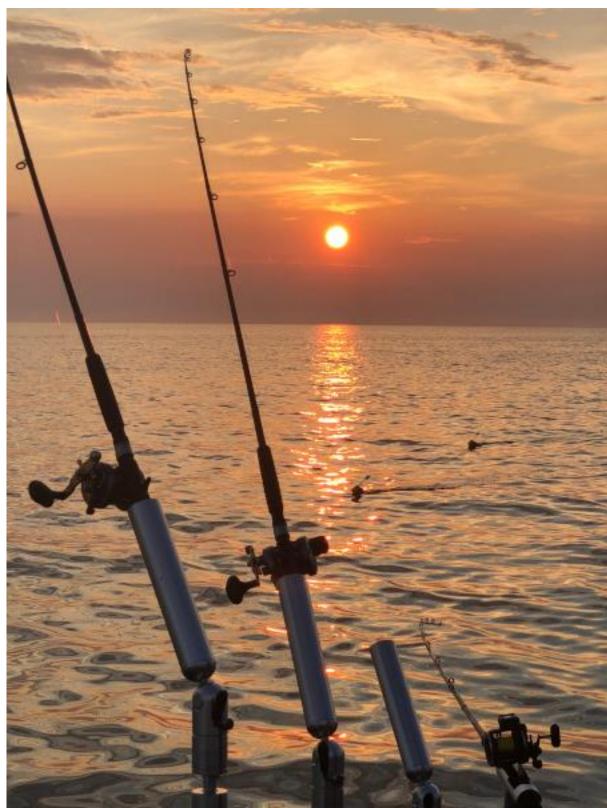
Mother Nature sure wasn't in a good mood for most of March and April and showed her temper tantrum in the form of gusty winds and lots of rain. But, with the start of May we are hopeful that she gets in a better mood and treats us kindly.

The water temperature in the Western Basin right now is anywhere from 47-51 degrees. Many of the walleye have already spawned, but some are still making their way to the reef complex to do their part in keeping this lake stocked with the toothy critter we all love to chase.

Some are already on the move back to the areas from which they came and will be putting the feedbag on before they leave the area completely.

Right now, through the end of June, is our prime season, due to the big of fish numbers concentrated in this area, but as the water temperatures rise many will make their way to deeper/cooler waters in the other 2/3's of the lake. That's not to say that all the walleye leave this end of the lake, because that's just not the case... there will still be plenty of fish to be caught here throughout the end of the year.

With the rising water temperatures, we start trolling a little faster, so this means taking some of the early bait presentations out of the and adding boat different ones. Some of those changes will be taking out the slow trolling baits and them with replacing baits that can be run faster. In my boat, the Smithwick Perfect 10's



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and Deep Husky Jerks will be replaced with the Smithwick Top 20's, Berkley Flicker Minnows, Reef Runners, Ripplin Redfins, Bombers, Bay Rats, spoons (both large and small), and double willow leaf crawler harnesses. I'm also trying out a few new baits like the "Reaper" from Walleye Nation Creation, and some Yozuri deep divers this season.

The jigging and blade bait rods will be replaced with Dipsey rods and Tru-Trip Jet Diver rods too.

As soon as fish are being caught at speeds above 1.7mph, I like to use this trick to help keep the batteries for the MinnKota Ulterra trolling motor nice and strong all day long. I fire up my 15hp "Baby ETEC" tiller motor and lock it in the straight position. Then, I set my Ulterra's power level on the remote to 4 or 5, depending on conditions. What this does, is it allows me to push the boat with the Evinrude and steer the boat with the MinnKota without using up all my battery power. This lets me fish all day with the confidence that my equipment will not run out of power.

With a full crew of 3, and myself, we would be allowed to run 8 lines, so my



trolling set up with these faster speeds is usually 2 dipsy divers on each side, one jet diver on each corner, straight out the back, and two Off Shore boards...either one on each side, or two on one side...again, depending on conditions and the bite.

The dipsies will have either a shallow diving Bandit, Ripplin Redfin, shallow lipped Bomber, double willow leaf crawler harness, or a spoon attached.

The jet divers do best with lighter pulling baits like the crawler harness, or the spoons, so the mechanism on the Tru-Trip can work effectively without being triggered by a hard-pulling bait. The Off Shore boards will be used to pull the harder pulling baits like the deep diving crank baits listed above.

A dipsey diver is a heavy diving disc that has a 0-3 setting on it, which allows it to dive straight

down at the 0 setting and out to the sides at the 1, 2, and 3 settings. The 3 setting would be the furthest out to the side. This allows you to run several rods on one side of the boat without getting everything tangled up. Each disc can be set to be used on either side of the boat too. It also has a trigger mechanism, that when engaged makes the disc dive, and when it's triggered, it comes up easily. If a fish doesn't trigger the mechanism when he grabs the lure, then a quick flick of the rod tip, while it's tight, will release the mechanism and allow you to bring that fish in without fighting the diver too.

The same tripping mechanism is used on the Tru-Trip Jet Divers and needs to be set in order to make

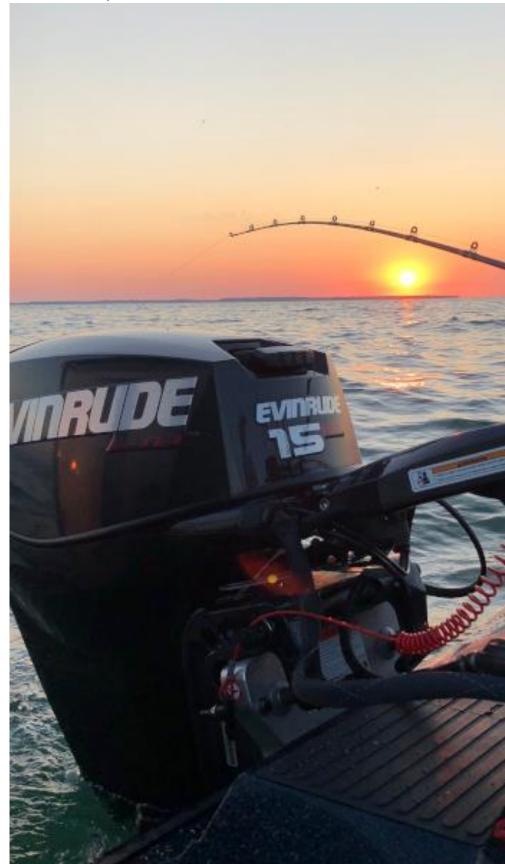
the Jet dive. However, the difference in the two divers is that the Jet can only be used to go straight back. It doesn't have a setting to make it go out to the sides of the boat like the dipsey. So, other means to get it out to the sides is needed. This can be accomplished by using big boards and running them down the tow line, or by using smaller inline boards like the Off Shore boards.

The most common sized Jet Diver used here is the "40", but from my experience, the 40's are a little too strong to use behind the inline boards and I would recommend the 30's.

Don't let either diver intimidate you. Both are very easy to use, and it makes fishing a lot of fun, because you get to see that fish hit when you see that telltale sign of the rod tip bouncing with a fish fighting on the other end. Just grab the rod, and give it a quick flick if needed, and reel that in that golden goodness!

Hopefully, this weather will straighten out and we'll all be happy anglers fishing in our flip flops and warm weather gear soon! Good luck out there and stay safe!

For more information on my fishing charters, you can visit my website at www.JulsWalleyeFishingAdventures.com





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## Total Setup For Summer Wormin', **A Beginner's Guide**

**By Shane Beilue** 

"If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen..." and if you can stand the heat, you need to



get out of the kitchen anyway and head to the lake in the summer months ahead, equipped with the most tried and true method for catching summer bass: the trusty plastic worm.

Generally speaking, the larger schools of bass will move offshore in the summer months and position along dramatic depth changes in the form of points, creek channels, submerged pond dams, roadbed, etc. These depth changes are referred to as "structure" and the brush, rock piles and stumps along these structure breaks are the specific cover in which bass will relate and position themselves to ambush baitfish.

The number one lure choice for reaching these offshore bass, proven over generations, is the plastic worm. What follows are suggestions for a total equipment setup in the summer months ahead, right after you grab gallons of ice water, a floppy hat and some sunscreen.

#### Lure

When it comes to plastic worms, there are countless offerings from multiple manufacturers to choose from: straight and curl tail, long and short, fat and skinny, not to mention every color in the spectrum. For simplicity when starting out, equip your arsenal with a straight tail and curl tail option in 6-8" lengths. For example, a curl tail worm like the Yamamoto Stretch 40 is a basic 6" offering and the Yamamoto Kut Tail is essentially as straight tail worm available in multiple lengths. Regarding color: various shades of green pumpkin and watermelon are always excellent choices in clearer water, while

the darker shades like black/blue or junebug excel in stained water.

For years the standard fare was a Texas rig set up consisting of a 3/0 to 5/0 offset hook and a slip sinker above the hook. This is still quite effective; however, the upsized shakey head jig heads that have come out in recent years makes for a nice alternative. The benefit of these jig heads, like the Sixth Sense Shakey Head or the Strike King Tour Grade Shakey Head, is they are quick and easy to rig and make for a compact offering that doesn't require pegging the weight. They also come in various weights and hook sizes to accommodate different depths, wind conditions and the size of worm you are using.

#### Rod, Reel and Line

Rod lengths have trended longer over the last several years for the simple reason of being able to move more line with less effort when you set the hook or make a long cast. Rod lengths of 7' to 7'6" are the norm for most anglers casting deep plastics.



#### ODU MAGAZINE VIDEO BLOCK (www.odumagazine.com)

Regarding reels, there's been another trend for offshore wormin' the past several years and that's toward faster reel speeds. Every turn of the reel handle yields a specific number of turns of the reel spool, with the standard gear ratio moving up to as fast as 8:1, meaning for every turn of the reel handle the spool will turn 8 times. Much like the longer rod length, the faster reel is a more efficient way to move line after you set the hook or when retrieving the lure back to the boat for another cast.

A very nice set up that's also quite affordable is the Quantum GForce rod in 7'2" length paired with a Quantum Accurist or Energy reel in 7:1 retrieve speed. This is a first-class combo that comes in somewhere around \$200 for the whole outfit. To go to the super-fast 8:1 retrieve speed, look at the Quantum Smoke S3 – it's a little pricier but silky smooth and lightning fast on the retrieve.

When choosing a line, fluorocarbon has so many benefits that it's hard to consider any alternative. Fluorocarbon is denser than monofilament; therefore, it tends to sink and not create a large bow in the line as the worm sinks from the surface. Fluorocarbon is also nearly invisible, so it outperforms braided line in that regard. Line size will be dependent upon how heavy the cover below and how clear the water. 12# test fluorocarbon is very common in light cover with 15-17# test for heavier cover. The Seaguar Red Label is very affordable, easy to find and performs quite well.

Finally, the number one barrier to most anglers trying to find bass offshore is the willingness to leave the safety of the successful spring shorelines and follow the bass out to deeper water. Dedicate yourself to studying a topo map, looking for prominent depth changes and start soaking that worm along bottom. And don't forget the water, floppy hat and sunscreen.



By Gary Maerz www.GermanikAngler.com

> There are few things I look forward to more teaching than my children to enjoy the outdoors, respect nature, and love fishing. I have been very fortunate in that my daughter is well on her way to all three and consistently finds wonder in the world around her. By two and a half years old, expressed she had sufficient interest in

fishing to warrant the purchase of her own pole. I would be able to beat the bank with my little lady angler. Watching her catch her first fish, and then, just two fish later, reel them in on her own, is one of the proudest moments in my time as a father. Likewise, writing about that experience and trying to help others create those same memories is my proudest moment as a writer.

My daughter, now five years old, regularly asks me to go fishing with her. Though fishing with her allows me to take maybe five to ten casts in a one-hour fishing trip, having my lure in the water at the same time my daughter is waiting on a dipping float is an enigmatic feeling: extreme happiness coupled with quiet satisfaction. And when I have time for moments of reflection, I often wonder how my father felt taking me fishing and appreciate a youth spent on the water (whenever possible) because of him.

#### **Fishing Takes Hold**

My love affair with angling has moved into its third decade. Dad first brought me fishing



sometime before my fourth birthday. My first catch was a rainbow trout taken from Rattlesnake Creek (a tributary stream of the Connetquot River located on Long Island, NY). I will never forget standing on the sandy bank looking into the surprisingly clear water as it flowed from large pipes that run under Sunrise Highway. Wearing a red and blue Donald Duck sweatshirt, I had a smile that went from ear to ear. I am not sure he knew what he had bargained for. Or maybe he did. Fortunately, he was usually willing to answer the call of, "Dad, take me fishing."

During my youth, when I wasn't participating in some sporting event (usually soccer and usually coached by dad) or away on a weekend camping trip with my grandfather's boy scout troop (another opportunity to go fishing with dad), my father could expect to be woken up to go fishing. The preference was always a day on the Upper Delaware River. However, a few hours hitting the freshwater oasis of Long Island was a welcome consolation. During the week, he would often have one of his friends (my uncles) pick me up so we could meet him after work to hunt some pickerel and panfish.

When we weren't able to go fishing, we would enjoy watching Bill Dance or Roland Martin. And to be sure, the World Fishing and Outdoor Expo was the highlight of my winter. Fishing strengthens family bonds and gives birth to memories. In that regard, my father was overwhelmingly successful.

Strengthen Bonds With the passing of time, I became a very different than man my father. It made things rocky to say the least, but we always had fishing. No matter how the tenuous relationship, animosity and tension seemed fade as if to carried away by a river and the promise of new memories. T know that the afternoons fly "the fishing on Island," day trips the Upper to Delaware, summers spent the lakes, on



rivers, and streams of the Poconos, and the annual excursions to Canada or Maine, maintained our bond as father and son. We are fishing buddies; have we shared lifetime а outdoors.

Memories are Born

I will never forget the look in his eyes one time fly-fishing on the Connetquot. It was August 2002 and with roughly one (1) hour left in our fishing day, I tied on a chartreuse Woolly



Bugger. Within minutes, the line went tight. I hooked what I thought was a nice rainbow. Then, the fish jumped and I realized this was the brook trout of a lifetime.

I called out to my father and netted the fish. He was almost as happy for me as I was and I was noticeably shaking. I had caught hundreds of brookies before, but not like this one. There was something else special about that trout though. My father, smiling as much as I, was remembering that he had done the exact same thing, on the same body of water, 20 years before. Two moments in time, linking father and son.

Then there was the time I caught my first 4lb smallmouth bass. He relished telling me the story of how my "laconelli" style screaming was heard from across the lake. The man my father was speaking with said, "Wow, you'd think that boy lost his virginity." My father turned to the man, smiled and said, "That is my son, and trust me, he got something big."

#### The Friend Next To Me

There is an expression I have always been fond of. "Friends will bail you out of jail; your best friend is sitting next to you in the cell."

While visiting my grandparents in Ocean City (Maryland), my father and I went to the Inlet Pier after dinner (around 8pm). We promised my mother that we would be back by 11pm. When we walked into the tackle shop (which lead to the pier), we saw a wall of Polaroid photographs from the night before. Elation is the word that comes to mind. Then we learned the blitzkrieg had started at 10pm on the incoming tide. I looked at my father, knowing the tide would be coming in at our promised time of return. He sighed, said "Let's go," and walked out on the pier only half hoping for success.

In a day before cell phones, we arrived home three hours late. To be fair, we caught two dozen weakfish (keeping the legal limit) and a fluke. Hoping mom would be fast asleep, we quietly snuck into the house. Our concern about waking her was unfounded. Mom was wide awake, sitting at the kitchen table with grandma. My mother was both angry and relieved, but the angry part seemed to be winning out. He knew the risk and still took it. I quickly explained to my mother that we stayed for the benefit of her father. Pop enjoyed freshly caught fish and would have missed out had we not waited for the Though diminished, Dad still tide. received an earful.



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I have a lifetime of memories; moments I hold on to; the moments I look forward to. Because my father took me fishing, I have been to some of the most beautiful places on earth. I spent my time in the woods and on the water, minimizing the mischief I would have otherwise found myself in. Because my father took me fishing, we have a solid relationship today.

I take my daughter fishing because my daddy took me fishing.

Gary is a nationally published, freelance outdoor writer with a focus on fishing related content. He owns/operates www.GermanikAngler.com and is currently a contributing writer for Rambling Angler Outdoors. You can visit his social pages on Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn,

Twitter, and YouTube.



## THE SNAG PROOF INSIDER Fishing Tips From The Pros

### Topwater Fishing in the Summer Heat and Taking Care of Your Tackle!

#### By Stephen LaRose

It's summertime! This time of year, most of us will spend lots of time outside, go on family vacations at

the lake, hang out by the pool, but for many anglers this would mean miserably long smoldering days in the sun.

First and foremost, take care of yourself. If you cannot handle the heat, please do not fish in it. Hydration is a must. Secondly, you need to use some sort of sun block. SPF 30 is great, but you will apply it often and a lot.... I suggest SPF 50+. I personally use SPR 100 and keep a long sleeve shirt on all day. Clothing with SPF built in is also great for protection.

Ok, now that we have us protected let's talk about gear. During summer months and in extreme heat we will need to make sure our tackle such as plastics or lures like frogs that have plastic skirts do not melt. Nothing ruins a good day of fishing more so than a box full of frogs that have melted legs. Sure, you can still fish them... or even replace the legs, but all that hard-earned money down the drain is just gut wrenching. This is something you also do not want to hassle with during a tournament. So, you ask for a simple fix... here it is. Add a little Baby

Powder. Yes, that is right. The baby powder will keep the moisture out and will stop any process of melting from



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starting. You do not need a lot and once you cast that bait the water will wash it off for you. You can do this with your frogs and other plastic lures that have thing rubber appendages that may melt in extreme heat.

Lastly, Fishing. Yes, we need to talk about fishing in the extreme heat. A lot of anglers will steer away from throwing topwater and most often a frog in hot temperatures. Why? I do not know, but I can tell you some of my biggest fish have come in the 90 – 110 range temperatures. Not just grass... I'm talking OPEN WATER, in front of docks, near lay downs, and of course grass and pads alike. Change up your cadence. Adjust your speed. They do not always like it fast and sometimes they just want it reeled slowly. Play with it until you figure it out, but do not just throw it to the side because it is 100 degrees outside. Trust me if you need that big kicker, throw a Snag Proof Frog on hot days when you are so frustrated you do not know what to do. It will pay off!



## Fishing Season Reminders

#### **By Bob Jensen**

It's a new fishing season for anglers across the Midwest and North America! Many anglers have already been fishing, others are looking forward to their first trip to the lake, river, reservoir, or pond. Following are some things to keep in mind when you get ready to go fishing.

First of all, make sure you have a valid fishing license. Some states offer options on fishing licenses. In Iowa you can buy a three year license that offers a cost savings, and you don't need to remember to get a new one every year, only every third year. Also in Iowa you can buy a license that allows an extra line. For a few dollars more, you can use three lines, which can be an advantage in some fishing situations, such as when using slip-bobbers.

Be aware of any new regulations that may have been implemented. There are frequently changes that we need to be aware of in daily and

possession limits and size limits. These are becoming more and more common. We need to manage our fisheries effectively if we want to continue to have outstanding fishing opportunities, and these regulation changes are attempts to do that.

Remember that if you're going to be trailering a boat in some states, you need to pull the plug out of the boat when you're on the road. This is to prevent the spread of invasive species. I put a spare plug on the key ring of my boat's motor as a reminder to put the plug in when launching. So far I've remembered every time.

Also remember to pull weeds off the boat trailer when you take the boat out of the water. This is another attempt to slow the spread of invasives. If you get into a routine when loading and unloading, you can accomplish these tasks and still get your boat in and out of the water quickly and easily.

Make sure the line on your reels is in good shape. Your line is the only connection between you and the fish. Use good line!







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when you leave.

Last of all: Do what you can to make this a safe and pleasant fishing season. Be patient at the boat ramp. If someone is having trouble loading or unloading their boat, ask if you can help. If the person wants help, good for you and good for them. If they don't want help, back off and let them do their thing. The open water fishing season goes by fast, enjoy it.

To see new and old episodes of Fishing the Midwest television, fishing articles and videos, visit <u>www.fishingthemidwest.com</u>. Make sure your landing net is in good shape. The bags on nets sometimes wear out: You don't want to discover that your net's bag is rotten when you're lifting that trophy out of the water.

Netting a fish is an important consideration. If you're going to keep the fish, netting it increases the odds of getting it in the boat.

If you're going to release the fish, the proper net will increase the odds of the fish's survival. Some nets damage fish, a few nets are designed with the fish's best interest in mind. Beckman Coated Nets are fishfriendly. The bottom of the net is flat, which supports the fish better, which keeps the fish in better shape for release. If you're in need of a new net, check the Beckman's out.

Now is the time to start checking out some of those close to home spots you've always thought about trying. Ask for permission to fish from local pond owners. Ponds are the first to turn on early in the year. Most ponds have bass and panfish and maybe some catfish. They can provide outstanding early season action. Get permission, then get out there. Be sure to clean up after yourself





# **Dock Shooting** For Crappies

St. Croix's Avid X helps put your bait places that promise more fish

Chances are if you're a crappie angler you've at least heard of the technique called dock shooting. What exactly is it? It's a lethal way to catch fish in hard-to-reach places that's part dock skipping—which many of us know from bass fishing—and part archery, in that jigs are launched as projectiles into these spots from a loaded rod.



Putting the mechanics of dock shooting aside for a second, the first question anglers typically ask is why use the technique. Missouri-based crappie tournament angler Steve Seifert explains: "I started shooting docks about ten years ago and the reason I started doing it is there were a couple guys fishing tournaments who were just killing everybody and nobody could figure out what they were doing. Then one day I ran into them on the lake and saw them shooting docks. I immediately took up the technique and the amount of fish I caught and the size of the crappies I caught increased dramatically. I just couldn't believe it. I've been doing it ever since."

Seifert's occasional fishing partner and friend, Dan Johnston, National Accounts Manager with St. Croix Rods, is another dock shooting convert. "For years anglers used to skip baits under docks but dock shooting is just a lot more accurate. It's something I've been doing for about five years and catching a lot more fish. You can put the jig into places that it's really the only way you can get it there."

Their remarks aren't that unique. Ask any dock-shooting crappie anglers why they use the technique and they'll tell you they catch more and bigger crappies as a result.

First off, crappies are very structure oriented—and structure can be multi-faceted. It can be something physical but it can also be a shade line—and crappies are notorious for setting up on that type of



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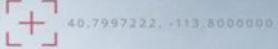
scenario. And the thing about docks? They provide both types of structure—the physical and shade lines. The docks can be shallow or deep; they can be over 50 feet or 5 feet of water—and the stage of the fish movement will determine where the fish set up. So, obviously, a boat dock being a motel for all kinds of fish, they are a high percentage area to fish for crappies. Considering the structure they provide, the bait they attract, and the shade they provide, docks are the perfect application for dock shooting, which comprises an underhand-loaded rod that shoots jigs into places that are physically just impossible to reach with an overhand cast.

Seifert comments: "Water temperature means a lot in crappie fishing—they seem to really get going as the temperatures start to increase and they seek out that shade. And they're looking for food, too—it's probably that more than anything. The shad and other minnows will hide in the shade so the shade lines provided by docks provide excellent ambush points for the crappies to feed. Even in the winter when the water temperature is down around 40 degrees on a nice sunny day you'll find crappies in the shade provided by docks. They might not be under the dock but they'll be in the shade off the dock. You'd think they'd be out in the warmth of the sun but they don't have eyelids so their physiology is part of it besides seeking out ambush locations to feed."

The beauty of dock shooting is your rod ends up preferably in a slightly ascended angle. That's advantageous for two reasons: 1) It levels the line going back in and under the dock, kind of like skipping a bass jig; and, 2) It puts you in a perfect position to start the retrieve because a lot of times crappies will hit the jig right away, especially on shallower docks.



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"Once you do get the bait back there, crappies don't like baits jigged real aggressively—they prefer baits more on the slide. Sometimes less is more with crappies and that can be either a horizontal slide, a dead retrieve, or a stop and go type retrieve where the jig falls but it's falling at you. Most of the time, the crappies will come in level or up with the bait. If they move down to chase a bait, they'll move faster to level out and eat the bait. So it's critical to understand that's one reason we use monofilament because it's a floating line along with the Bobby Garland three-inch Slab Slay'R, which rides beautifully horizontally in the water because of its design. You also need to be cognizant of the fact that you don't want to start on the bottom with the bait. You always want to stay above the crappies with the jig as a rule of thumb for crappie fishing in general," says Johnston.

#### How to Do It: The Mechanics of Dock Shooting

"Dock shooting is like any other fishing technique. Once the word gets out, people start trying it. But there are a lot of people who've tried it who don't like it—they just can't get the hang of it. You have to have a little hand eye coordination to do it," says Seifert.

The best way to nurture that hand eye coordination? Practice, especially time spent off the water, as Seifert explains. "Before I even thought about shooting I did a lot of trying to skip baits under docks, but it's not nearly as accurate as this. Shooting, you can put a jig into places that you'll be amazed. I used to practice in my driveway shooting at soda cans and once I got to the point of hitting them one out of three, that's when my dock shooting really took off. I think that's why a lot of people don't stick with dock shooting. They just haven't spent enough time practicing to be accurate."

In terms of the mechanics of dock shooting, most anglers hold the rod in their dominant casting hand with the reel bail open, their dominant casting hand pointer finger on the line, and then grab the jig in the left hand between thumb and pointer finger, pick out the target, load the rod from an underhanded position, and then let the jig fly.



"If you look at the eyes on a jig, I'm holding that with my thumb and forefinger. When I do hold the line, I don't hold it up against the rod, I hold it maybe an inch and a half off the rod and just hope that the line doesn't stick to my finger and then release the jig. With practice, you get to the point of just looking at the target and letting the jig go," says Seifert.



He continues: "I hold the rod in my right hand with the bail open, my pointer finger on the line, then grab the jig, load the rod up, and let it fly. I try not to think about what I'm doing too much, instead trying to hit the opening under the dock. If you hit the opening without hitting the water first the jig really goes back a long way. And even if you hit the water, that's the nice thing about the three-inch Slab Slay'R jig body, it bounces back really well."

With regards to required gear for dock shooting, one of the most critical components is the right power and action spinning rod. Ultimately, dock shooting is a technique that requires very specific performance; not just any rod performs the way it needs to shoot docks effectively.

"About five years ago St. Croix's Dan Johnston hooked me up with a couple St. Croix AVID X rods to try and the first thing I noticed how accurate was they performed. Ultimately, I could take more chances and get into really tight spots and darker holes. Distance-wise, I was shooting about the same distance as the rods I had used before but the accuracy was just unparalleled. I really fell in love with the AVID X AXS66MLF 6'6" medium-light, fast action model, and the reason I haven't gone to the 6'9" that Dan uses is I'm so accurate and comfortable with the 6'6" I just don't want to change. I've got three of the 6'6" models rigged up

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~ FREE DIGITAL MAGAZINE ~ betheadventuress.com for whenever I'm fishing a tournament and two when I'm just out fishing for fun. Another thing I like about the AVID X rod is it's got more guides and they're smaller than a fishing rod of a similar size. I think that's where the accuracy comes in."

As mentioned, Dan Johnston uses a similar rod, but slightly longer with a faster tip.

"The St. Croix AVID X AXS69MLXF 6'9" medium-light, extra-fast rod is my go-to rod for the technique. It's absolutely perfect. The fact that it's action is extra fast means you don't have to pull it back super far to get it to shut down and load right. The SCIII carbon material seems to provide the perfect deflection, protecting light line but also for shooting jigs a mile back underneath docks. It's really a sensitive blank, too, but in addition to that, the Kigan Z modified micro-guide platform lends itself to accuracy. I'm convinced that the fact that the guides are smaller and there are more of them just lends itself to much greater accuracy for dock shooting, which is critical. The entire technique is about extreme accuracy for getting baits into places that would be unimaginable. And if you don't have that in your set-up it's virtually impossible," says Johnston.

He continues: "There's a fine line in this between getting your jig way back in there, number one, but also getting it back in there accurately. It's one thing to shoot a jig a mile, but it's more important to hit your spot and then hope the jig goes in way back. The medium-light power, fast or extra-fast action rod is really the way to go."

Besides the right rod, a quality smaller- to medium-size spinning reel spooled with high-visibility sixpound monofilament is required. For both Seifert and Johnston, they tie the yellow monofilament directly to the jig, sans fluorocarbon leader.

Johnston remarks: "We get asked a lot why we don't use a fluorocarbon leader for dock shooting, instead tying high-vis monofilament all the way to the jig. The environments we're shooting jigs into is

pitch black and full of cables, hoses, hoists, and other structure, that I would bet everything own that crappies are not line-shy where we're putting the jigs. The fish are very opportunistic around docks unlike situations crappie fishing in high-pressured, gin clear water with limited structure where the fish will micro-analyze your offering."

When it comes to baits, both use Bobby Garland threeinch Slab Slay'R jig bodies on



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Double Silver Rainbow (153)	Bumblebee (168)	Gumdrop (177)	Bluegrass (181)	Cajun Cricket (195)	Electric Chicken (219)	Green Hornet (281)	Horsefly (287)
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Blue Ice (336)	Sweet Tea w/Lemon (346)	Pink Lemonade (347)	Tadpole (350)	Live Minnow (369)	Goldmember (373)	Keystone Candy (374)	Green Banana (378)
	HEN						
Ugly Duckling (381)	Red Horse Minnow (386)	Black/Chartreuse Silver (0303)	Black/Hot Pink (0364)	Orange/Chartreuse Silver (0809)	Powder Blue/Pearl White (1465)	Blue/Pearl White (1716)	Red/Chartreuse Silver (1809)

a variety of 1/16th-ounce jig heads. Seifert uses custom jig heads made by a local angler that he paints himself a combination of pink and pumpkin. When it comes to the jig body, Seifert says he almost never deviates from a white and chartreuse body. "When it comes to fishing tournaments, white and chartreuse is it. That's my winning dock shooting color combo," says Seifert.

Johnston concurs: "The Bobby Garland three-inch Slab Slay'R (see above) is my go-to bait. It's a big bait, which for obvious reasons is great. It's more of a boot tail slash spear tail so it skips great. It doesn't have a lot of appendages hanging off of it, which is critical. If you do hit the water you don't want something catching it and tumbling it down. This bait will skip way under a dock if it does hit the water."

#### When and Where It Works

Dock shooting is a technique that will work during the entire calendar year with a brief exception for when crappies move extremely deep during the coldest part of the winter. But even then, if there's an ample supply of baitfish in, around, and under docks, crappies can still be found near the manmade structures.

"I primarily fish crappies in the spring during their pre-spawn and spawn periods and then again

in the fall and early winter," says Seifert. "But dock shooting will work the entire year, including summer, when fish have a tendency to set up on the dock shade lines. As far as working docks, crappies just seem to like the shade. Case in point is Lake of the Ozarks. I haven't seen another lake with as many docks. It's 90 miles of rivers and creeks and it's loaded with docks and I wouldn't even know how many we have but that's a lot of shade."

Besides the awesome crappie fishing to be had at Lake of the Ozarks, dock shooting will work just about anywhere you find docks, whether that's a lake, river, or reservoir. And while the technique was popularized and has become a staple in the South, that doesn't mean that waters in the North and other parts of the country won't produce. Still, a fair amount of patience is required when seeking out fish because not all docks are created equal. You may have to try a dozen docks before you find a structure that holds crappies.

"For me, another thing that's a lot of fun about dock shooting is finding the fish. They're not going to be under every dock. My favorite types of docks are big—the bigger the better. Like those with big concrete decks. And as I'm driving down the lake and I see a dock sitting by itself, I'm definitely going to fish it. You're always looking for docks near points and drop-offs or ledges underwater. Part of locating docks with fish is definitely sped up using today's sonar technology. For example, we'll use sonar side imaging to look at docks before we fish them—and it depends how many fish we see under a dock if we'll fish it or not. If side imaging shows a bunch of fish underneath it we typically stop and fish it. That can be a real time-saver."

#### Have Some Fun

Besides producing more and bigger crappies, both Seifert and Johnston say that dock shooting is just plain fun. "As far as I'm concerned, dock shooting is probably the most fun way to catch fish I can think of," says Seifert.

That said, if you're looking for a new experience this season, get some dock shooting gear in order, invite a couple friends or family, and trailer your boat to the nearest waters with crappies and a multitude of docks. Of course, a little practice in the driveway shooting jigs first wouldn't hurt...



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### Walleye Spinner Fishing -Prime Time Basics

#### By Joel Nelson

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Walleyes are on a serious chew right now in most of the local lakes you fish. Sure, there are lulls in activity and certain days are better than others, but you couldn't pick a better time to wet a line. An exceeding demand for bait stretches the available supply as most lake systems are just ramping up in biological activity. Baitfish are spawning, but that young-of-the-year flush isn't of snack-size just yet, so predators lean on what food is currently available in the system. Couple that with the fact that the predator fish's metabolism is requiring more energy, and you have a recipe for some steady fishing.

What goes up, must eventually come down however, and in the coming weeks you'll see a slow and steady decline in the amount of suicidal walleyes you encounter. Fish will push out of the shallows and emerging weeds to more mid-lake structural elements and the outer edge of weedlines. They'll also encounter some of the first hatches of the year, and that's when you'll be ready to pull spinners.

#### When To Pull Spinners

The first major hatch of the year has always been a great time to start pulling spinner rigs,

crawler harnesses, or whatever local name you're used to calling them. Spinners are not exclusive to the bait they carry, but nightcrawlers on the business end of your rigs will reap benefits as mayfly and caddis nymphs burrow out of soft lake bottoms then travel to the surface. Walleyes eat more bugs than people realize, and spinners featuring a crawler presentation offer an enticing package of vibration, flash, and bug-like meat on the end of the line.

Of course, you're looking for the right fish in the right locations to pull on too. Spinner fishing is typically a moderate speed approach to finding and catching walleyes, so you're looking for fish that are near bottom, spread out along long breaks and occasionally clustered in pods across structural elements.

Usually, your electronics will tell you what speed approach is best. Fish scattered few and far between are often better suited for crankbait fishing, at least until you find them. Fish tightly concentrated in small areas call for slower approaches like slower live-bait rigging or vertical jigging. So often though, we're faced with a mixture of both, such that the medium speed approach of spinners pulled in the 1.0 -1.5 mph range doesn't put all of your eggs in one basket.

#### **Multiple Speeds**

Given the preponderance of fish so often strewn across a break, and our tendency to find pods of fish as we continue to pull, the problem with traditional spinners has always been that speeds less than 0.8 mph or so, depending on the size and shape of the blade, don't reliably turn the spinner blades for max attraction. That's where butterfly blades and smile-style blades come in.

Both butterfly and smile blade designs turn at slower speeds allowing anglers the ultimate flexibility in pulling at standard speeds to find and encounter more fish, while dropping down to as slow as 0.25 mph over concentrations of fish you want to really stare at your presentation. You cover two of the 3 major walleye speeds of delivery with a single system, giving you the ability to fine-tune your presentation as you go. Smile blades have been around for some time, and are a bit more bendable, but aren't as durable or put off as much vibration as the more rigid butterfly designs.

#### Weight Systems and Extras

Using the right weight style, and appropriate size is paramount to success when fishing spinners of any

variety. Most anglers pull these rigs on a wire bottom-bouncer, with a general rule of thumb being one ounce of weight for every 10 feet of water you're pulling in. Bottom bouncers work great in most situations, but even taller weighted "sticks" are the order of the day for jagged rocks, logs or other extremely irregular bottom.

Floats are another addition for many spinner anglers in snaggy conditions, or when fish are elevated a foot or more off bottom. These are typically put in-line on the spinner



rig, just in front of the hook, and can make all the difference with active fish.

Slow-death style hooks with an irregular bend another are addition we've been seeing in vears. recent Proven over the years on tournament trail, this hooking method requires a special slowdeath style hook, and а nightcrawler threaded all the the way up shank the to The hook-eye. bend in the hooks and rigging of the crawler causes it spin, and to these style hooks more are commonly with paired spinners of all types these days.

No matter how you pull a spinner rig, experiment with



the various blades, additions, rigging methods, and weight systems covered here for the situation you're facing on the water. Pairing the right tweaks at the right time will have you prepared to zig when others zag, and have you fishing ahead of the curve.

I'm an avid outdoorsman from Minnesota who works in the hunting/fishing industry as a pro-staff member and media partner. Visit my website <u>http://www.joelnelsonoutdoors.com/</u> or Facebook <u>https://www.facebook.com/joelnelsonoutdoors/</u> page when you have the opportunity.

## High School Fishing Makes a Difference

By John Kainrad



Three years ago, Justin Hevey was on the fast track to nowhere.

He had just completed what he referred to as a "pretty dismal freshman year" and he was about to enter his sophomore class at Okeechobee High School not far from the shores of the legendary Lake Okeechobee in Florida. Fortunately for Justin, the winds of change and a little well-timed fate intervened when a local law enforcement officer and a few like-minded parents decided to start a fishing team at the school.

For Justin, it was a turning point in his young life. His ability to join the Okeechobee High School fishing team that year was truly the difference between quitting school and eventually graduating this spring with his senior class.

"I had pretty much checked out, and quitting school was without a doubt where I was heading" Justin said. "Then the opportunity to become part of the inaugural fishing team at our school happened and all of a sudden I had a reason to go to school."

Justin's story is not a new one; it is repeated hundreds of times across the country each year with the emergence of the wildly popular high school fishing.

This movement is rapidly growing, and it is filling the void for a lot of students. In Justin's case, like many others, his situation at home was less than ideal and he found himself on his own more times than not. Fortunately, fishing is a family-oriented sport and his "fishing family" came to the rescue.

"I'm not really sure where I would be without our team," Justin said. "Having to make eligibility each week gave me a reason to go to school and actually study. Now I'm just a couple of months short of graduating and I absolutely have to give the credit to our high school team."

Team "mom" "Kimberly Wojcieszak also has seen the difference fishing has made at the school of 1,200 students in southern Florida.



"We started our first year with 14 students, and in just our third year we are at 36 team members and still growing," she said. "And as you can see in Justin's case, it has been the difference maker in his life."

Principal Dylan Tedders is another big supporter of high-school fishing. He is impressed by the way the program has brought school pride to Okeechobee High School.

"The program has given many of our students a sense of purpose and a great deal of pride in representing not only the school but the OHS fishing team," he said. "If this program helped just one student like Justin, then it is most certainly a win for us and we believe that our program will continually grow each year.

"It takes a little effort to get a club started but I think that every school in the country that has any access to water should consider adding a team to their program."

Mark Gintert, the executive director of the Future Fisherman Foundation and the former Bass Federation national youth director, (which started the Student Angler Federation over a decade ago) has seen many more success stories in high school fishing.

When we first started our high school fishing program, we coined the phrase 'Promoting Education through Fishing' "he said. "Justin is a great example of the power of this program."

Gintert takes issue with critics who minimize the impact of high school fishing. They claim that the majority of the 100,000 students who participated in high-school fishing in the last eight or nine years would have gravitated to the sport anyway. But that's not the way Gintert sees it.

He points to the fact that it's not unusual to see 100-plus boats—each with an adult volunteer and two high-school anglers—on lakes, rivers and reservoirs across the country on every weekend in the heart of the fishing season. Ten years ago those events never happened.

So just how big is the high-school sport? Estimates have this program at around 45,000 active students

participating in two national high school circuits and several regional trails. That equates to approximately 2,500 high school teams or clubs. Add to that over 22,500 boat captains, 2,000+ team coaches and another 3,000 volunteers to those respective teams and you can add another 27,500 adults who serve this program. Add the students and adult volunteers together and you now have approximately 72,500 people actively participating in this program yearly.



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That leads us to the economic impact. As far as individual expenditures, recent surveys tell us that the average high school angler has over \$600 in tackle and equipment. That would put the tackle sales to this group at approximately \$26 Million! Now that number may seem a little daunting but F3 Director Gintert claims that entry into the sport is relatively easy for students and as they progress their natural tendency is to acquire upgraded equipment. There are also programs like the Future Fisherman Foundation's Tackle for Educators and Lew's High School Grant Program that help clubs and organizations with equipment for students who can't afford it" added Gintert

Add in the boats that are upgraded or purchased by adult coaches, gas for outboard motors and trip expenditures such as motels and meals, and you can see that high-school fishing has an impact on local economies and the fishing industry as a whole.

For Justin Hevey, just as his academic life has improved, so has his fishing ability. Recently Justin and his partner John Pearce won a Florida Southern District Regional event and have qualified for the High School Nationals. He feels that he has become a very versatile angler with the ability to fish any type of water but admits that catching a nine-pound largemouth on a frog was one of the highlights of his young career.

As for life after the Okeechobee High School team, Justin is looking at both the college fishing opportunities or joining the Coast Guard when he graduates in May.

Regardless of his choice, high school fishing and this young man's determination has paved the way to a better life.



# Time Of Transition

By Gary Parsons and Keith Kavajecz



The Summer peak is exactly that— walleyes will bite anything. Jigs, live bait, crankbaits, spinners, you name it. Every lake has a change that signals the end of the easy days. It could be rising water temperatures, shad spawn, shiner and perch fingerlings, mayflies, or all of these at once spreading out the fish and giving them more than their fair share of natural sustenance.



The peak starts when water temperatures hit 60F. At this temperature walleyes need to feed multiple times a day due to higher metabolism. Plus, many of the food sources mentioned above are not quite established so the lake's grocery store happens to be a bit bare. The fish love to be in shallow warming water and eat anything moving at a medium speed. Jigs with a swimbait like the

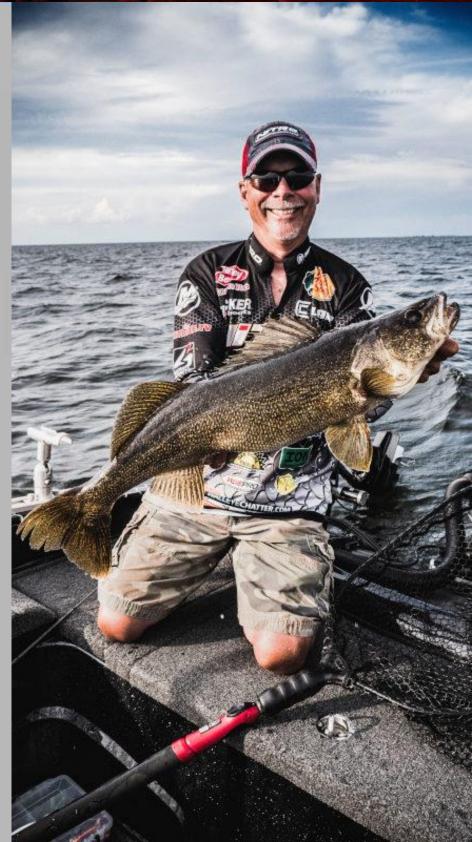


Berkley Power Swimmer (on a horizontal retrieve) or a fluke-style bait like the new Power Jerk Shad (on a jigging retrieve) are obvious choices. When the wind picks up a crankbait keeps tension on the line and can lead to more hook-ups. We have been using the Flicker Shad Shallow quite a bit lately.

That inevitable temperature rise to 70F stops the party. Smaller fish take over where larger fish once roamed, and the numbers of bites drops off dramatically signaling changes for fishermen. The lake may seem daunting but walleyes are completely predictable. They will head towards deeper structure, basins, and will chase suspended bait. In some ways this makes it simpler—we put away the live bait and focus on two fishing methods the rest of the year—high-action Shiver Minnows and deep trolling crankbaits.

These lures work best to target fish hanging on, or suspending off of structure. With the fish inhabiting all of these areas (plus a few in shallow weeds and wind-blown points) the missing link for success quickly becomes the skill to interpret sonar readings from the Lowrance HDS. An angler who can locate fish and determine the layout of the area using C-maps and Genesis Live mapping will make the right presentation choice.

A point with localized rock piles, inside turns, and boulders leads to a Shiver









The FLW has update its safety rule #9. "Pros may fish and charge batteries using an onboard charger by letting the combustion engine idle in neutral only if the boat is equipped with a certified and functioning wireless ignition -shutoff device and everyone in the boat is wearing a fastened U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device." The MOB+ meets ABYC requirements and can give you the flexibility to keep fishing while you charge your batteries.

Link to FLW rules: www.flwfishing.com/rules/flw





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Minnow jigging approach. Trolling these areas would take too much time letting out line and the lures might not actually contact the structure. Jigging can be done vertically to specific fish, casting and working shallow-to-deep with a snap retrieve, or even strolling at 0.7 mph popping the lures off the bottom. All of these options keep the lure in the strike zone for bottom-hugging walleyes and the erratic jumping motion of the lure triggers strikes all the way until late October.

The first sign for the trolling rods to exit the rod storage is empty structure. After scanning three or four deeper points, rock ledges, boulder fields, plus your favorite flat do not push the issue. The fish have moved. This will take some serious work but will be worth it. Two things also help the situation. First, the parking lots at the boat ramps will slowly empty out as anglers not willing to put in the time to locate the fish will find something else to do. Second, big fish will start to mix with the smaller fish making your Facebook posts even more impressive.

Firmly focused on the Lowrance screen, we start in the area of the structure we just reviewed. We fan out into the basin looking for loosely separated fish hanging near the bottom. With the right conditions these fish move up onto the point, but spend most of the time waiting for twilight, wind, or some other trigger. While other boats keep jigging shallower, a quick run through these fish with crankbaits on lead core or snap weights will put fish into the boat.

If the walleyes completely vacated the area, it is time to look for bait over deeper water. Downwind basins are a good place to start. In some bodies of water, the walleyes will be visible. In others, we simply assume the walleyes will be near the bait. Put GPS waypoints over single bait balls or even huge masses of marks. Fishing literally becomes a game of connect-the-dots. Trolling details have been covered in previous articles. Basically, we use the Precision Trolling app and Off Shore Tackle Planer boards to confidently troll crankbaits above the bait.

The one-two punch of jigging Shiver Minnows and trolling crankbaits goes on for months. Find one pattern and it will be consistent for the long haul. It takes some work, but it's worth it to find the Next Bite.





## Ten Easy Ways to **Catch More Walleye**

#### **By Jason Mitchell**

That late spring period is a coveted time for walleye anglers. More specifically, the post spawn time frame often creates great windows of opportunity. While each fishery can have a different personality and the nuances can vary, we have found some universal concepts that do seem to be applicable just about everywhere we fish.

Below are some hard-earned insights from our team that have not only narrowed our focus but also kept us on track. We often joke with fishing that we can never say "never" or "always" as there is always an exception, but the follow list is something to consider.

1 – Watch your temperature gauge. Early in the season when water temperatures are still on the cool side, finding the warmer or warmest water often means finding fish. Particularly during stable warming trends after the fish have spawned, we often find more fish using shallow water and the best shallow water is often the warmest. You will find fish on other locations but the locations that have the warmest water almost always hold fish.



2 – Trust and Incorporate Side Imaging. Because fish can often be shallow or high in the water column early in the year (especially when the sun comes out), you won't often see fish below the boat on traditional sonar. Where you can see fish however is with side scan or side imaging. I personally use a Lowrance HDS Carbon that I really like for showing fish. If you are first learning how to interpret what is on the screen, move the boat at a faster speed than the speed you would typically fish so that you get a more defined picture. An optimum speed is often around three miles per hour. Fish will often look bright and look like a stretched-out piece of rice with a shadow next to the mark. The shape of the fish can get distorted based on your speed and how the fish or boat is moving.

3 – Drink the Cool Aid. Colder water that hasn't been mixed up by wind is often very clear. On many fisheries, the water will stain up as it begins to warm. You can often quickly identify the best areas by how the water looks. You are not necessary looking for turbid or dirty water that has been churned up by wind but rather just a nice stain in the water that you can still see through. A good color will resemble cool aid. When the water really clears up, spend the time to look for that water with the stain. That stained water will often coincide with water temperature.

4 – Be Patient in the Morning. What we see so often when the water temperatures really cool off at night is that it takes a little while for some spots to get going. We so often find that we struggle to scratch a few fish in the morning, but the bite keeps getting better as the water temperatures warm



through the day. If I were to pick a prime-time day in and day out, early afternoon would be tops so don't give up on good spots too early in the day.

5 – When to Follow the Wind. Fishing the wind is crucial on SO many fisheries. Wind will distort penetration, hide light your presence and stack warm water into а location. Heat combined with wind is often a sure bet combination that produces fish.

6 – When Not to Follow the Wind. Knowing when to avoid the wind can be just as important. Excessive winds that start to muddy the water to a point where the water becomes extremely turbid can often be something to avoid. When wind creates enough of a current to suck up colder water from deeper or more expansive sections of a lake and then pushes that colder water onto the location you are fishing, simply avoid it. Wind is good until the water temperatures start to drop. Therefore, the



calm or protected locations can often fish better in extreme weather.

7 – Deep is an Option. Most of this list so far is geared towards active fish in shallow water but there are times when the shallows are devoid of life. If the season feels really behind schedule or if you are dealing with the after effects of massive fronts that crashed water temperatures, fast forward to channels and deeper structure. Most of the time, these locations can still be shoreline related

but you will also see fish pile up onto deep offshore locations in the most extreme weather or conditions. Remember as well that both shallow and deep are relative. There are some fisheries where shallow is ten to fifteen feet while that would be considered deep on other bodies of water. Each fishery will be unique.

8 – Slow and Slower. We catch fish with a lot of different presentations early in the season, but we often find that we need to slow down to catch fish. Not just the actual boat speed or lure speed but slowdown in how we fish where we catch more fish by being methodical. You can miss fish so easily by simply working too fast. You must find the fish and cover water but force yourself to slow down when everything feels right. We often find that we start to catch fish when we slow down and catch even more when we slow down There are a few even more. exceptions however. If you are fishing sand grass and low-lying weeds and you keep bogging down in the vegetation with a jig for example, pick up your speed and lighten your jig so you can glide and hang above it.

9 – Cast More. There are still many areas where most of the walleye fishing is done by dragging jigs or rigs below or



behind the boat. That no doubt works and should remain in your tool box but make a point to fan cast more this spring. You will be amazed how many days where you simply catch so many more fish.

10 – Two Punch. We often catch fish early in the season with soft plastics and jerk baits. These artificial options can be worked a touch faster to cover more water. When you wear out your welcome with the artificial options, come back through with live bait. A jig with a soft plastic truly compliments a jig with a minnow. Incorporate both into your arsenal and get confident with both. This one, two, punch will elevate your game dramatically.

Watch Jason Mitchell Outdoors on Fox Sports North every Sunday at 9:00 am. Find out more information at <u>www.jasonmitchelloutdoors.com</u>





## Downsize for Giant Results

#### **By Dena Vick**

A ¾-oz. bucktail spinner was the prototypical lure employed throughout the early decades of musky fishing. In the years since, however, musky terminal tackle has become increasingly diverse and highly specialized. As lure manufacturers cranked out the big, bigger and gigantic baits demanded by musky anglers, St. Croix Rods eagerly owned the mission of designing and selling the equally specialized rods engineered and built to effectively fish every one of them.

Musky enthusiast and St. Croix pro, Chas Martin, has witnessed the evolution of musky fishing, like St. Croix. "We're seeing the trend now that anglers are scoring on waters with down-sized presentations. In response, St. Croix has a whole series of rods that cater to these smaller

presentations and the design of these rods allows anglers to effectively throw smaller baits – cast farther as well as work these lures in the accurate and nimble way that's required. They really allow you to be a lot more precise. For example, The 7'10" medium power is my go-to rod for small jerkbaits and minnowbaits between 5 and 7 inches; it loads nicely and facilitates long casts into the wind," Martin says.

Another benefit to the medium and medium-light power rods is they allow the correct pressure to be put on baits to prevent over-hooking or bent hooks. "Along those lines, the 8'6" medium-light has been my go-to for throwing lipless crankbaits and swim jigs, which are really effective earlier in the year," says Martin, who also also prefers the model for down-sized deep-diving crankbaits. "Whether I'm working a weedline or rocks, I'm pumping that rod all day long and the rod really decreases fatigue. And as far as the 9 footer, that's my in-line spinnerbait and smaller topwater rod, which is great on a number of levels including bombing casts a country mile, loading correctly on the hookset, and deeper figure-8s. Honestly, the entire line allows me to fish longer with less fatigue.

"Another thing that's really cool is if you ask a crowd of musky anglers 'How many of you have been injured by musky fishing -- or just injured in general?' The majority of anglers are going to raise their hand. The Musky Downsizer rod series allows more anglers to fish muskies with less physical stress on the body. St. Croix's mission is to provide every angler with the upper hand, and I think this series is another way to work more lures more effectively."





Fellow St. Croix pro, Jeremy Smith of Lindner's Angling Edge, agrees. A self-described small-river musky nut, Smith espouses the results-oriented benefits of the full spectrum of smaller baits during early and late-season cold-water conditions, as well as whenever and wherever muskies receive reduced fishing pressure. "Low-pressure fish tend to be much less selective," Smith says. "Throwing smaller baits helps any angler to stay in the game longer by decreasing angler fatigue and maintaining the focus and concentration it takes to convert on any given cast. Those critical benefits aside, smaller baits are also better options for the precision target casting that's often required on small waters." Smaller baits are also a great option for throwback applications when fish have followed—and ultimately refused—a larger bait.

The angler's dilemma is that small baits don't automatically equate to small fish, so rods that make presenting downsized baits more efficient must still be capable of hooking, fighting and landing monster muskies. St. Croix's new Legend Tournament Musky "Downsizers" consist of three unique freshwater musky casting models, purpose-built for fishing smaller bucktails, topwaters, crankbaits, jerkbaits, jigs and gliders with maximum efficiency.

St. Croix Promotion Manager and in-house musky nut, Rich Belanger, talks about the balanced performance characteristics of these three carefully engineered rods: "The Medium and Medium-Light power blanks are key to loading and casting these rods with the smaller, lighter lures they were designed for. And while that seemingly light power might concern some, fast tapers and generous lengths provide rapid access to that power during the hookset; they really are the perfect tools for presenting downsized baits with the guts to hook, fight and land even the biggest fish."

## Do The Early Season Walleye Dance

By Chip Leer www.fishingthewildside.net

Think early-season walleyes, and what else comes immediately to mind? Jigs, of course! Specifically, jig-and-minnow combinations you can make dance to whatever tune is playing that day, or even that hour.

I say this because jig fishing is a lot like dancing; you're trying to make a personal one-on-one connection, only the ballroom is under water. Because its lead head and hook are one, you can place the lure and the attached minnow exactly where they need to be—and drop, drag, hop or swim them in whatever manner required to entice a big walleye to follow your lead.



In the early post-spawn season

from New York to the Dakotas and high-percentage beyond, target areas are typically rocky or gravel shorelines, adjacent sand flats and hard-bottom zones in general. scattered Walleyes be can throughout these areas, usually in water 12 feet deep or shallowerwhich makes long-line wind-drifting or slow-trolling a perfect approach.

My preferred set-up for this is a Northland Fire-Ball Jig because its short shank creates a seamless transition between "artificial" and "live" when you hook a shiner or fathead in the mouth and out the top of the head. Any fairly aggressive walleye interested enough in picking up the minnow is





sure to get the barb, too.

Sometimes you need only to drag the bait across bottom to elicit strikes. Often, however, adding a subtle twitch, stronger hop or even a hard rip to the forward motion is necessary. The quick acceleration followed by a free-fall with the minnow streaming naturally behind the jig head can trigger a reaction strike from a lethargic walleye, or call in a more aggressive one from farther away.

Frustration sets in, though, when walleyes are less committed. When you can feel a fish pick up the shiner by its tail, but won't go as far as the hook point. You make the set and reel up a minnow head hanging in

#### ODU MAGAZINE VIDEO BLOCK (www.odumagazine.com)

the bend—or maybe a jig that's stripped clean. And, yes, it can even happen during the spring flush.

Northland unveiled a brand new version of the Fire-Ball for this year; the Long Shank Fire-Ball designed to turn short-biters into walleyes in the net. Push the point into the minnow's mouth and out the gill, then slide the baitfish forward until its lips touch the jig head. Turn the hook and push the point up from underneath so it exits near the dorsal fin. Now the barb is back where those picky eaters tend to grab the minnow.

Over rocks and rubble I use the round-head version, letting out just enough line so the jig bumps a rock every now and again. Depending on drift-speed, you may have to go light or heavy; just so it maintains random bottom contact without falling down into the rocks.

Where vegetation has emerged from the bottom, tie on the new Stand-Up Long Shank Fire-Ball. It slides through the weeds cleanly, and holds the minnow more vertically where it's more visible to the fish.

Absolutely, I am more than eager to fish the Long Shank Fire-Balls this spring. But you know what? This same scenario will occur again in the fall when the big girls move shallow and you need a big red tail or sucker to tempt them. Oh yeah! It's going to be a great season.

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 <u>www.fishingthewildside.net</u>

## The Most Versatile Rattlebait Ever

Veteran freshwater anglers know how important it is to keep quiet on the approach. Bang a tackle box against the gunwale, drag a cooler across the deck or wade a little too forcefully and predator species instantly scatter. Get the right sounds working below the surface, however, and you can really light up the bite, which is why lipless rattlebaits continue to attract a growing legion of fans.

Most rattlebaits have a lot going for them right from the start. In addition to all that subsurface fish-attracting noise, game fish can feel the vibrations these lures produce from a significant distance and home in on the target. The flash and wiggle as they rip through the water can also be a head turner since the basic shape of most models mimic baitfish species of various sizes. As a genre, rattlebaits also lend themselves well to a variety of retrieves.

Still, most anglers would rather have a little more than a little less when it comes to



fish-catching potential and design. That makes the LIVETARGET<sup>®</sup> Golden Shiner Rattlebait worth serious consideration when laying out your heavy hitter arsenal. Wide at the shoulders and deep through the body, these multi-species baits sport a super-detailed profile to augment a perfectly pitched harmonic rattle. Already recognized as one of the most versatile lipless hardbaits ever created for largemouths, bronzebacks and spotted bass, Golden Shiner Rattlebaits are just as likely to tempt landlocked stripers, walleye, trout, pike and slab-sized panfish.

Of course, first impressions are important when it comes to crossing paths with pressured lunkers, but it's the fine details that make a rattlebait great. Check out these lures and you'll see plenty of technological innovation rolled into a remarkably lifelike and compact package. For starters, they are internally weighted, exceptionally balanced and brandish a pair of super-sharp premium Daiichi<sup>®</sup> hooks. Hold a LIVETARGET<sup>®</sup> Golden Shiner Rattlebait in your palm and you'll notice it feels slightly denser than other rattlebaits of similar size. That little bit of extra weight allows smaller sizes to cast farther, reach greater depths and fall with a tantalizing, medium-speed sink rate that's simply irresistible. Cast one out and watch it fly across the water. Reel it in and feel the tight wiggle and strong vibrations that closely match the real McCoy.

Getting back to that lifelike finish, the LIVETARGET® Golden Shiner Rattlebait series is designed to





perfectly mimic young golden shiners as you might expect, but it also matches up well with juvenile shad and other baitfish species. Hold one up for close inspection and you'll notice three-dimensional scales, fins, gill slits and lively eyes. As for versatility, try a broken retrieve around structure for black bass or troll across open water with your kayak or electric motor to locate schools of landlocked stripers. Vertical jigging works well when your targets are tightly schooled, especially if these lures are allowed to fall on completely slack lines. You can also rip them along weed edges, or use a "retrieve and drop" approach. It's all good.

With nine natural-looking color patterns and three sizes to choose from, there's plenty of opportunity to match the hatch or most any specific fishing situation. The brand new 2" (¼ oz.) size provides an edge in clear water and early spring when temperatures are still on the cool side. It's also effective throughout the summer whenever predators key on small baitfish. The larger 2 3/8" (1/4 oz.) or 2 7/8" (1/2 oz.) sizes pick up steam as waters warm and target species grow increasingly more aggressive.

Interestingly, some anglers are also using these lures straight through the winter for ice-fishing, both as a primary point of attack and to draw fish from surrounding waters directly beneath their holes with the combination of that tight rattling sound and sharp vibrations from rapid twitches. Walleye and jumbo yellow perch respond particularly well when several anglers work LIVETARGET<sup>®</sup> Golden Shiner Rattlebaits simultaneously using sharp, 1-foot snaps of the rod. Tip the front hook with half a shiner and

there's no telling what you might haul through the ice. Catch the action on an Aqua-Vu underwater fishing camera for even more fun and thrills.

One overlooked but important aspect of these super versatile lures is their cast-ability. Perfectly balanced, they fire straight and true with rarely a tangle so you can reach out to the fish without risk of spooking skittish schools or busting up the baitfish pods. That extra distance can be a real deal-maker around surfacing bass in open water, or when casting for early spring walleye and stripers in the flows below a dam following winter shad kills. In both instances, a pop 'n drop approach can lead to savage strikes and big innings.

In terms of rigging these super lipless rattlebaits, a 6'10" to 7'2" medium action St. Croix Legend Glass series casting or spinning rod is ideal for most applications. Pair that with a 6:1 gear ratio reel and 15-lb test Seaguar Smackdown fluorocarbon line because it's tough, has a thin diameter for ultimate casting distance, and digs deep on the troll or retrieve. For a leader, run an 18-inch section of 15- to 20-lb. test Seaguar Tatsu<sup>™</sup> fluorocarbon directly to the lure. Buy a spool to use strictly as leader material and it can last for years.

With LIVETARGET<sup>®</sup>'s focus on lifelike patterns, there aren't any flashy fire tiger or bright red options in the Golden Shiner Rattlebait line-up. Then again, the natural shades and soft glow selections have been covering all the bases – and all the "basses" - so there seems little reason to mess with success.





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## **THE RIGHT CRAPPIE POLE FOR THE TECHNIQUE – PART I**

#### **By Bernard Williams**

Social media is loaded with questions from users asking what's the best pole for this or that technique. Well sometimes the answer is simple, sometimes it can be a combination of two or more poles. I'm here to shed some light on what specific poles I use for my favorite techniques. I've also interviewed some of the best crappie fishermen in the country.

This is going to be a multi-part article. I don't like to give my readers too much to digest at one time. This is somewhat of a long article, it could be 5 small articles but it is what it is. The only way to grasp what I'm saying is to go out and try it and perfect it.

Spider Rigging – Slow Trolling

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It all depends on what weight sinkers and how fast you want to troll. I prefer ½ oz sinkers and a max speed of .5 mph. I select the Redesigned PST's (Pro Staff Trolling) Poles.

These poles will support weights up to 1.5 oz. This pole comes with Reinforced Hi-Vis Tip. According to B'n'M, these poles have the most championships of any pole on the market. I enjoy being able to control the big MS Crappie. The PST's are for man-handling big crappie and handling the hard bites.

If I'm fishing shallow water with a single jig, I use the BGJP (Bucks Graphite Jig Pole) or the Capps and Coleman Tolling Pole. I can put on a single jig as small as 1/16th and as large as 1/4th. This is a finesses fishing pole.

With each of these poles, I can see the strike very easily. The length can be up to you, whatever length pole you feel comfortable with. I like 16' poles when I'm fishing open water and 12' to 14' when I'm fishing stumps.

The 8-Time National Champion B'n'M Pro Staff Team of Ronnie Capps and Steve Coleman has set new heights in tournament fishing using the above techniques. "14' BGJP's are excellent for slow trolling in timber. As you get older the longer poles get heavier and harder to see the pole tips. We've perfected our technique to a point where we use the 14's in the grass, stumps, and brush piles." According to Ronnie, "The BGJP poles are superb for pushing one jig or double minnow rigs. With high-vis line we can detect the slightest strike."

#### **Single Pole Jig Fishing**

The BGJP has been on the market over 30 years, it was my first crappie pole. I moved from a Crappie Duster Type Telescopic Pole. It taught me what the "Thump" felt like and caused me to



get addicted to crappie fishing. It's for the traditional vertical fishermen, the single pole jig fishermen.

These poles come in 6 sizes, from 8' to 16'. B'n'M just redesigned these poles with new Dynaflo Guides that make the poles lighter and more durable. No more inserts that can pop out. The reel seat is new for a more tighter and balanced feel.

The BGJP telegraphs the hit to your hand as well allowing you to see the hit on the tip. The BGJP has the background to control the fish when lifting one out stumps or brush piles.

If this is your favorite method, I suggest you move up the in price to one of the "Cadillac" premium series rods, Duck Commander DOUBLE-TOUCH, Sam Heaton Super Sensitive, the Bucks Best Ultra-Lite Bottom Seat Touch System, The Bucks Gold Jig Pole, The Russ Bailey Signature Series, or The Whitey Outlaw DOUBLE-DUTY. These poles are a little costly compared to the BGJP but they come with added features like super-sensitive tips and cork handles that make it worth the price.

#### Long Line Trolling – Fast Trolling

Finally, my favorite technique, Long Line Trolling, Pulling Jigs or whatever you call it. I think it's one of the most productive fishing styles for our lakes in the south. It can be deadly when the water temperature reaches the 50-degree mark.

Pre-spawn, spawn, post-spawn, or summer fishing, long-lining is great when the fish are scattered. Long-lining allows you to present your bait to lots of fish by covering more area quicker than slow trolling or vertical jig fishing. It's a reaction bite technique. You can find fish in places where you never expect them to be.



My setup is the following: 2 - 18's PST on the outside, 2 - 14' BGJP's, 2 - 10' Roger Gant Difference, 2 - 8' Roger Gant Difference on the inside. I use Shimano 2500 series reels rigged with 6# BPS or Mr. Crappie Hi-Vis Mono.



If I want to fish 5' to 8' or less I'll use 1 - 1/16th oz. FinSpin Jig Heads at 1mph or less. 8' to 12' I'll pull 1 - 1/8th FinSpin Jig Heads at 1 to 1.2mph. You can double the 1/16th's between 8' to 12'. I usually double the 1/8th for 12' to 15' and increase my speed by .1 - .2 mph. If you see your jigs bouncing off the bottom, increase your speed or shorten your distance. For depts less than 5 feet I'll pull a single 1/32nd and vary my speed until I get the bite dialed in.

I cast my jigs as far as possible and then whip off a couple of times and place them in the rod holder. My partner, Don Terry of Jackson, likes to flip the bail and let the line spool of by itself for 30 to 45 seconds. I've seen him fish as far as 125 yards or more behind the boat. His theory is, he wants

to fish the quiet water behind the boat. I can't complain, I've seen him catch huge fish back that far. So, if it works, don't knock it.

My favorite baits for pulling is the Fin Commander Slab Curly. This curly tail has tremendous action. They come in 25+ color combinations. I also like the Bobby Garland Stroll-R's they also come in over 40 color combinations.

Longlining is an excellent way to introduce kids to crappie fishing. The fish basically hook themselves. No need to set the hook, simply pick up the rod and start reeling. You must be careful when reeling in the fish to keep them between the line spreads. That's the reason we vary the pole lengths. I'll get into more about making the turns in the next part.

#### **Power Trolling – Fast Trolling**

Power Trolling is kind of a new technique, however, some say it's been around a while. In the old days, it was done with cane poles. Now we use high density, heavy-action graphite rods. B'n'M designed a pole strictly for Power Trolling. It's called the POW-R-TROLLER, it comes in 14', 16', and 18'. I prefer the 16' mainly for the ease of use and it's reach.

Power Trolling allows you almost the same advantages as Long Line Trolling with couple major advantage. You can turn around on the fish much faster. If I'm long line trolling and go thru a school of fish, i.e. if I catch a couple at one time, I got to make a huge sweeping turn and try to come back on the school. If I'm power trolling and run thru a school, I can turn much faster, I can even stay with the school if necessary.



Another advantage is I don't have to reel in a fish from a distance. All I have to do is lift the fish in the boat and I'm right back fishing. The speeds are the about the same and I control the depth with the sinker weight. The POW-R-TROLLER poles are designed to hold up to 3 oz. weights. The collar allows the pole to fit securely in your rod holder.

The POW-R-TROLLER is a specialty pole, it's not designed for anything else but power trolling. It's too heavy for slow trolling. It's ideal for handling rough fish at speeds from 1mph to 2mph.

#### Pulling Crankbaits – Fast Trolling



Pulling Cranks have become one of the favorite summer and fall techniques all over the country for crappie. can remember when I other started fishermen looked at me like I was the biggest idiot on the lake, until I started loading the boat. My, my how thing change when you're having fun.



Each year I see more

and more boats using this technique. You can utilize this method with any bass rod but to effectively apply this technique to crappie fishing you've got to have the right pole combination. Here again, my setup includes 8 PST poles, 2 - 18', 2 - 14', and 4 - 10'. The PST give any crankbait the perfect action. The depth is controlled by line distance. I use line counter reels to accurately measure my distance. I also prefer braided line because it saves my cranks and it takes less line out between the rod and the crankbait.

Crankbaits can be pushed or pulled effectively with the POW-R-TROLLER. If you choose to pull with the POW-R-TROLLER, they can be used as your 4 outside poles.

The key point to effectively pulling crankbaits is to have the correct spread. You want to carry a path at least 40' wide. The wider your path the more fish see your baits.

#### Conclusion

With this being a multi-part article, I'll continue in the next issue with more interviews and details on each of the aforementioned techniques. I'll give a few specifics on when, what, and where these poles can be used.

I must mention that several of the poles can be double-duty poles, in other words, you can use them for multiple techniques. The most versatile pole in this group is the BGJP. The ole standby pole that's found in lots of boats.

As with any of my articles, i'm giving you my preferences, my opinion, only because I'm tried and been sucessful using what I'm telling you. You be the judge, use your preferred poles. All I aske you to do is try and learn these techniques. You never know when they'll come in handy. Whether you tournament fish or not, learn something new that you can throw at these crappie, you can be sure they're getting smarter just to stay alive. Bernard

# ENDY THE HARVEST

Wild Turkey Wraps

By Ken McBroom www.ramblingangler.com

Turkey season has ended and hopefully you have a turkey or two in the freezer. If not see if a turkey hunting buddy might share a little. This recipe is a great way to switch it up a little from the popular fried turkey breast. When friends and family brag on your new-found recipe, be sure to talk up the hunt and how the turkey got to the table. Keep the hunt alive and enjoy the harvest.

#### Ingredients

#### The Marinade

- ✓ 1/4 cup olive oil
- ✓ 2 Tbsp white vinegar
- 2 Tbsp Worcestershire Sauce
- ✓ 1/2 tsp ground pepper
- ✓ 2 cloves minced garlic or 1 tsp garlic powder
- ✓ 1 tsp salt
- 1 Tbsp brown sugar

Wild turkey provides delicious meat for delicious recipes like this one.

Mix the marinade ingredients in a bowl and add the cubed turkey breast and marinade for a couple hours in the fridge before wrapping with the bacon.

1 lb thick cut bacon. You will get two wraps for each slice of bacon by cutting each slice in half. Plan accordingly with the number of turkey breast morsels you prepare.

1 can sliced jalapeños. You can use fresh jalapeños and slice them yourself but I like the pickled



jalapeños because they aren't so hot and I like the flavor a little better when used in a wrap like this one.

1 pound wild turkey breast. Again, plan accordingly with your bacon slices. You will be cutting your meat into 1" cubes. The turkey breast I used was somewhere around three pounds so I had about one pound of extra marinated turkey breast so I just froze it for next time.

#### Directions

Cut each piece of bacon in half. Place one slice of jalapeño and one cube of turkey into center of the bacon slice. Tightly roll the bacon over the turkey cube and hold it in place with a toothpick or two.

Heat the grill to medium heat and place the wraps on the grate and cook slowly. Turn your turkey wraps every few minutes. You can keep a spray bottle handy for flare-ups from the bacon grease but I like the flare-up to get the bacon sizzling before I spray the fire out. Once, the bacon is fully cooked and crispy, your turkey breast should also be fully cooked. Let the wraps rest for five minutes before serving. If you are making these for party favors, they will stay plenty juicy in a warm oven until ready to serve. They are also really amazing the next day so don't throw out your leftovers. I like to serve my wraps with a dip or two like hot mustard or honey mustard but they are delicious all by themselves.

I can feel turkey season in the air with the grass starting to green up and buttercups showing up from out of nowhere. Get out in the woods this season and enjoy the hunt but don't forget to enjoy the harvest too and share some of your turkey with friends and family and show them how hunting provides more than just the kill.

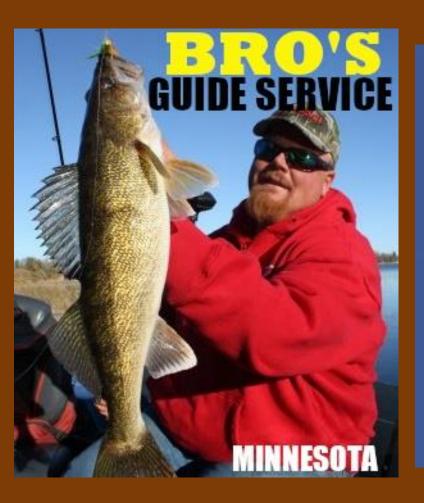
#### **About the Author**

Ken McBroom is a freelance outdoor writer and photographer. For more information please visit <u>www.ramblingangler.com</u>.



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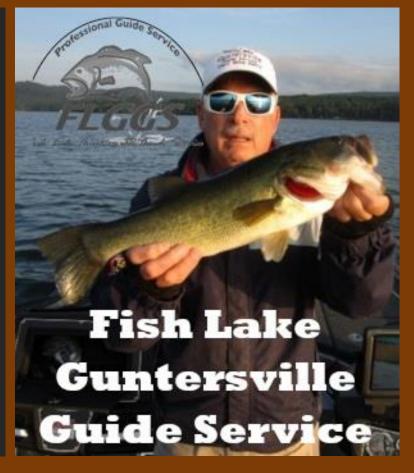


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My LAST Leopard... And I Mean It This Time! **By Bob Aman** 

For some of us, a specific hunt and the resulting trophy carry such significance that out of a hunter's deep respect for his quarry we might choose to never hunt another of that species. This status is rarely awarded I suppose, to say . . an impala, or a warthog. But might be reserved for a particularly challenging and rewarding hunt, perhaps an elephant, a giant eland, or bongo.



Well in my case, that special honor goes to leopard. During my nearly eight years residence and extensive hunting in Zimbabwe, I was one of the Zimbabwe Hunter's Association "members on call" to assist ranchers suffering livestock losses to beefeating leopards. I spent many nights sitting in a hastily made blind on the down-wind side of a decomposing calf carcass only to learn repeatedly, that beef-eating ranch leopards that have managed to survive the gin traps, cage traps, poison, and dogs . . . learn to kill the calf, feed once, and NEVER come back. Indeed, if ever a cat deserved a black gown, mortar board, and Master's Degree, it would be one of these repeat offender beef-eating leopards making his living on a Zimbabwe cattle ranch. Well, after many attempts over three plus years, Lady Luck FINALLY smiled on me and when a lovely big tom that had killed a calf on a ranch outside of Chivhu returned to his kill, I was waiting. This cat won the ZHA "Best Cat" trophy in 1993. The emotions, satisfaction, and relief from collecting such a good trophy, and after such a long effort, So much so, were overwhelming. that I felt this, my first leopard, might also be my last. One hard-earned cat of this class definitely punched MY leopard ticket!

Well, very sadly the skin from that leopard was lost. The years passed, and I gradually came around to thinking I should try to hunt another. After all, no self respecting African big game hunter's trophy room would be complete without this important member of the big five!

But as I was no longer a resident of a country where leopards were hunted, I would need to do the hunt with a Professional Hunter. Call me selfish, but I couldn't entertain the idea unless two things were in place; one, that there be a very good chance of having an opportunity on a big, mature male, and two, that the Professional Hunter be someone that I felt a strong One who connection with. viewed his occupation not as a business, but rather a "way of life". For whom conducting a safari was not work, but rather a passion.



Now to more current times . . . I participated in the HEYM Challenge, in Germany in 2013, and there had the good fortune to meet Namibian Professional Hunter Jofie Lamprecht. It became immediately obvious that Jofie has tremendous passion for the bush, the game, and the hunt. We stayed in touch, and this past October he told me about an end of the season opportunity to hunt leopard on the Waterberg Plateau. He had a big tom on bait, but it had managed to elude them on two recent safaris. Outsmarting this cat would require some special tactics, moving the blind back to twice the normal distance from the bait, and if necessary, sleeping overnight in the blind so as to eliminate the disturbance of walking in to the blind just before sunrise. So, it wouldn't be easy, but if the tom they had captured on trail cameras was brought to bag, it would be a magnificent trophy indeed. So at last my two requirements were met (and then some!). Still, I have a very good friend that drew a highly sought after elk tag, and I dearly wanted to assist' on his November hunt, so the decision to quickly pack and head off to Namibia was not an easy one. None the less, now only a few weeks since that first October phone call with Jofie, I find myself on the Waterberg Plateau in north central Namibia. To further ensure our success, Jofie engaged the assistance of another PH, Jacques Strauss who brings extensive leopard hunting experience. Jacques had selected suitable trees, and hung warthog baits at five locations over a broad area prior to my and Jofie's arrival. A trail camera captured images of a large tom that hit one bait several times on the 10th, 11th, and 12th of November. We entered the blind for the first time well before sunrise on the 15th. The approach is worthy of mention. We

stop the Land Cruiser a good half mile before the path to the blind intersects with the soft red sand road. We quietly uncase the rifles, load up, and sit on the tailgate as the cruiser slowly moves forward until we are about a quarter mile from the pathway. The truck slows slightly and we step off quietly as the truck continues idling down the track and eventually parks some mile or so further on. There will be no stopping of the vehicle, opening & closing of doors, discussion about mis-placed gear, or such drama. This is as quiet, and unobtrusive an approach as can possibly be done. We walk silently down the road, and turn in on the path to the blind, a well trafficked rhino runway, now cleared so we can pass silently. The path is marked at intervals with a square of toilet paper and with our eyes adjusted to the moonlight, we are able to reach and enter the blind very quietly, and without using headlamps. We are settled in the blind by 0515, maybe a half hour before the earliest shooting light. Though our cat did not make an appearance, that first morning was not without it's drama, for while still dark we had a black rhino browsing, and stomping around as only a black rhino can do . . . just outside the blind. Ha! reality doesn't get any more real than when there is risk of having a rhino climb in to the blind with you!

We left the blind about 0900, and then spent the mid-day checking the other baits. None had been hit. Later than afternoon, Jofie and I were back in the blind, sitting in total silence before quietly slipping out just after dark. We repeated this same routine on the second, and third day, all with the same result – watching the early sun expose a lovely bait, on a lovely tree . . . all was excellent. Only the star of the show was so far, reluctant to take the stage. But whether shooting or not, each day on the plateau is amazing. The area is an absolute paradise for game. While on our daily movements checking baits, we saw rhino, buffalo, eland, roan, giraffe, and one particularly magnificent sable bull.

The baits were not lasting long in the November heat, so on second day we our hunted two warthogs freshened and our primary bait, as well as another. The prevailing wind was predicted to shift, so on the third day we positioned a second blind at our primary bait tree. This giving us two options, choosing the blind that would be best located for each day's wind This blind direction. was 92 meters from the bait. It seemed like a mile. Rhetorical question: "Why is it we think nothing of taking



an impala or oryx at a hundred meters, but when thinking of a leopard on a tree limb at that range, it feels like mission impossible?!!"

The evening of the 17th, we discussed the situation . . "he last hit the bait on the 12th, and all baits have gone cold since then". "He must have gone walk-about to check his territory . . . we'll be patient . . . he'll be back". Yes, the hunt was young, time was on our side.

Well our patience wasn't tested for much longer. Jofie said let's have an earlier start tomorrow, we leave the lodge at 0330, a half hour earlier than we had been. I should interject here that Jofie had mounted a motion detecting device on the bait tree. When activated, it transmits a signal to the receiver on Jofie's belt, and its' nearly silent "buzz" alerts us that something at the bait is moving. Early the next morning and shortly after we step off the slowly rolling Land Cruiser, the buzzer





sounds. It sounds again as we walk down the road, and again on the path to the blind, and yet again after we have guietly entered and settled in to the blind. There is no need for it to continue alerting us so Jofie disconnects the battery. Just settled in to our chairs, I check my watch ... 0455, and totally dark.

Jofie begins to nap. I sit quietly for what surely is an hour and a half, and check my watch . . . it reads 0507. I wonder about the motion at the bait, perhaps it is a honey badger, or a genet? Maybe it IS the Leopard? ... I hope that he hasn't been feeding all night, and having his fill will leave the tree before first light. After what seems like another hour and a half, my watch reads 0532 and looking towards the small opening in the



blind, there is some very early light. I remind myself that I must resist the temptation to attempt the shot before there is adequate light, and I decide that I will force myself to wait until 0545. The small opening in the blind is such that I must sit up and forward on the edge of my chair to both shoulder the rifle and see the bait. Jofie, being taller has a better view through the opening. At exactly 0545 I tap Jofie on the thigh and hold my hands up to my eyes gesture. binocular making а Neither of us had looked at this point. He sits up, has a look and whispers "he is there". Wanting to be very certain that we are on the right cat, I whisper "are you sure?" The response is affirmative. snuggle in to Jofie's lovely HEYM double rifle in 300 Win mag and set the forward trigger. The cat is in the tree, head to the left, quartering away due to the angle of the limb. What?!, he should be





head to the right, perfectly broadside as we planned! . . . Well, he walked over the bait, turned around, and was now on a part of the limb that changed the angle of our perspective. In wrestling with the bait he crouches, reducing the target size, and I wait. He moves a little more upright, presenting a better target and with satisfyingly steady cross-hairs I touch the set trigger. We both see the cat leap up, and then appear to fall, rather than jump from the tree. The shot felt good and we sit back in our chairs to wait. Jofie radios Jacques, and at just about the right time to go forward, Jacques, his tracker "G", and Waterberg Game Scout Thomas arrive at the blind. My rifle is now reloaded, the scope is removed, and the 50 meter leaf sight is flipped up. Jofie carries his HEYM double 500 Nitro Express, and Jacques holds a semi-auto 45 at the ready.

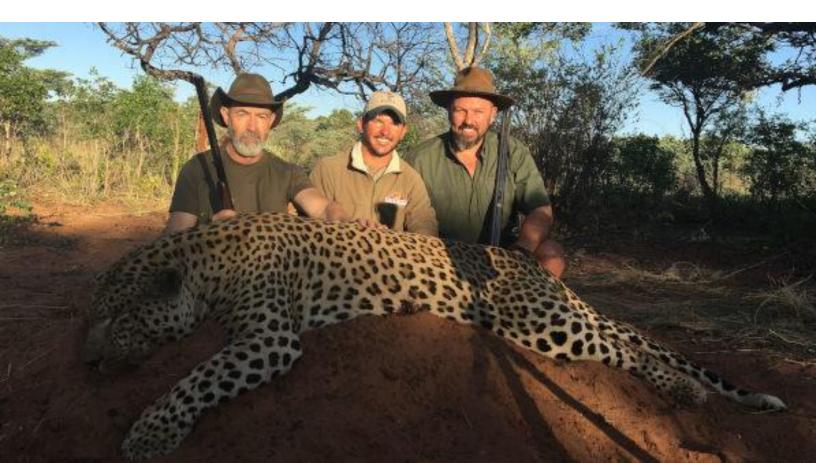


We approach the tree on full alert, and find . . . . no . . . . cat.

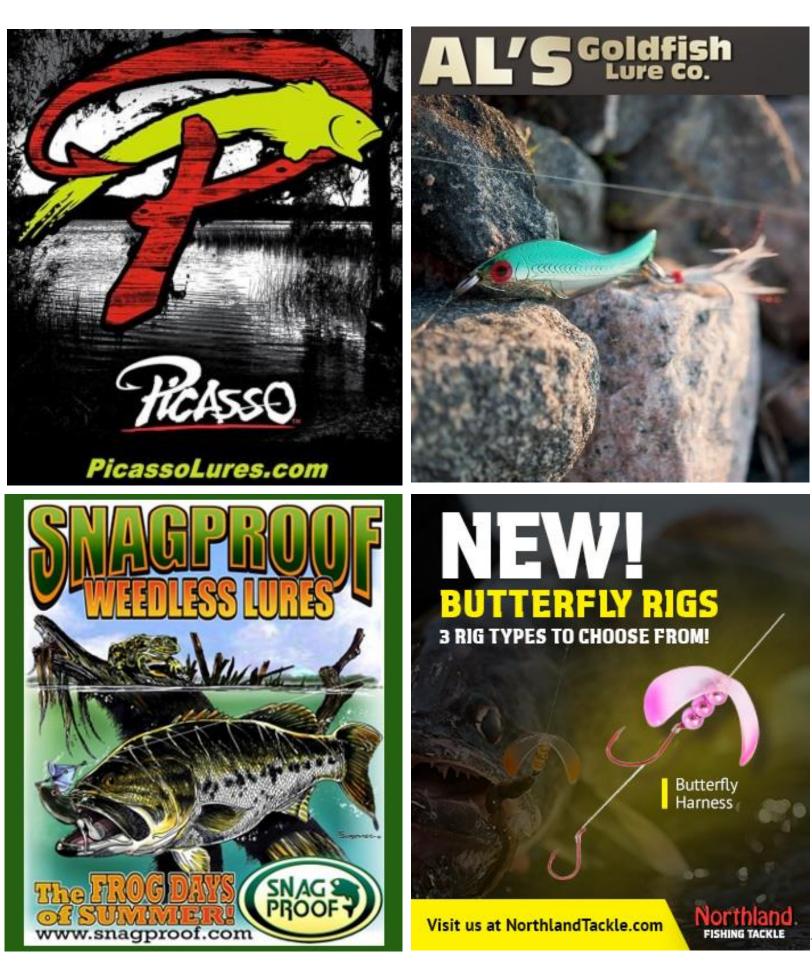
While Jofie and I stand guard over the immediate area, Jacques and G scour the ground and identify the tracks where he struck the ground, and then ran off to our right into a large somewhat clear area with low vegetation up to a foot or foot and a half high in places. This open area extended to maybe a 100 meters before the bush became significantly thicker. We spread out abreast, I am on the left, Jofie in the middle overlooking Jacques and G as they track. Safety off, finger on the trigger guard, rifle at port arms, we go forward one step at a time. No words are spoken. I am well aware, as are Jofie and Jacques FOR CERTAIN that a leopard can conceal itself behind the proverbial blade of grass, until launching its attack from very close range. I hoped hoped hoped (grammar edit over-ride) that we would get to face it somewhere there in the more open area, for if the tracks led us into the thicker bush, this follow-up would become a considerably more difficult proposition. We had advanced perhaps 40 meters, and I saw it first. SPOTS . . . barely visible in low vegetation. Laying on it's side . . . and . . . MAGNIFICENT. it had gone 75 paces from the tree. The bullet had done its work and we had our leopard. It was a BRUTE of a big tom. To say we were smiling? . . . After a few photos at the site where we found it, we did the now traditional "around the shoulders carry". Oh not me!... the cat outweighs me by 30 pounds! Jofie is a big man, former rugby player, and I'd guess about 220 pounds, all muscle. I might have saw just a bit of strain at first when adjusting to the load. Back at the lodge, it became clear why. On an accurate platform scale, the big tom weighed 85.2 kilograms (187.8 pounds). A BIG leopard by any standard!

It has been an amazing hunt, and a real pleasure to hunt with Jofie, Jacques, and team. An experience I will treasure for the rest of my days.

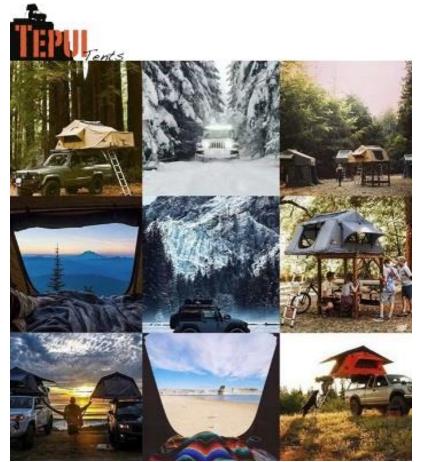
So I have once again reached that point where I can say my leopard hunting is now complete.

















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