

Lake Erie

Walleye

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Fall 2001

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Fall Perchin' Erie's Central Basin

Lake Erie Walleye Migrations

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Lake Erie Fall Fishing is Fantastic

Fall Walleye Tactics

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On the Cover

Professional Walleye Fisherman and Author, Mark Martin, with a trophy walleye taken from Lake Erie in 2001. Lake Erie is still the "Walleye Capital of the World"

From The Editor

The date of this writing is September 12th, 2001, the day after. It's difficult for me to focus on the task at hand, as you can imagine, given what happened just yesterday. The Terrorist hijackings of our commercial airliners, the attack and destruction of the World Trade Center Buildings and the Pentagon, the loss of thousands of US lives, have left me, like most of us, shocked, full of grief and with feelings of rage and anger toward whoever planned and implemented these attacks on the US.

As I think about and pray for the thousands lost, and their loved ones I also pray that our leaders take quick and decisive action against these terrorists and all world terrorists. I believe our nation will rise up and become even stronger than before. Our freedom has a long legacy and it will continue, despite the terrorist attempts by others to diminish it.

This time has given me a chance to reflect on all that is good in our country and the true freedom we enjoy as citizens. I have vowed to myself to **NEVER** again take for granted the simple things that are our rights: Reading the daily paper, filled with thoughts and opinions of others; Going to work (for myself, not for some regime or dictatorship government) and earning a living to support my family; Attending religious services when and where I choose; recreating and enjoying my hobbies, such as fishing on Lake Erie. We are a fortunate people!

Back to the task at hand. This past spring and summer has seen some of the best walleye fishing in

See Editor, Page 5

Lake Erie Walleye

Rick Kubb, Editor/Publisher

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Walleye News and Fact File

Rebuilding Walleye Populations in Lake Erie

For years, anglers could load their gear, head for the Lake, and expect to catch 6 to 10 walleyes without a problem. Lake Erie was an angler's dream and a local economy's delight with over 3 million walleye consistently harvested each year in the mid-1980's.

Because of ideal weather conditions, the 1980's symbolized the pinnacle of walleye productivity in Lake Erie. Low winds kept nests undisturbed and mild springs permitted faster incubation and growth periods for the walleye. Severe winters caused some exotics and walleye predators to die. These weather factors along with ample numbers of walleye spawners produced record walleye hatches in the 1980's. Ohio anglers were delighted.

But as the decade expired, so did the walleye numbers. High winds and strong water currents disturbed smallmouth bass and walleye nests, decreasing numbers of young. Predatory fish like white bass, catfish, and white perch continued to compete with and consume walleye fry and eggs, impacting recruitment. The introduction of aquatic nuisance species such as the zebra mussel, round goby, and spiny waterflea, also added stress to the walleye by altering the ecosystem's equilibrium. Invading the Lake, these species altered the structure of planktonic communities by consuming food needed for walleye and other sports fish. Increased water clarity caused by phos

Lake Erie Walleye Action Was HOT this Summer

Lake Erie is maintaining its title as the Walleye Capital of the World. This past summer both the weather and the fish cooperated. Local walleye anglers are touting this year as the best fishing season in a decade, according to Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife.

“Overall, the walleye fishing has been very good this year, beginning with some excellent ice fishing last winter and pre-spawn fishing on the reefs and in Maumee Bay. Fishing in the western basin has really heated up since mid-June, especially along the Toledo Shipping Channel,” said Roger Knight, supervisor of ODNR’s Lake Erie Fisheries Unit in Sandusky. “Fishing success is affected by many factors and this year, many of the right factors are coming together.” Disappointing walleye fishing for many Lake Erie anglers for the past two summers was attributed to poor weather, an abundance of bait fish in the lake and lack of a large spawning class entering the fishery. This year, walleyes from an excellent spawn in 1999, now measuring 14 to 16 inches, are adding significantly to the fishery. Anglers are filling coolers with a mixed bag of walleyes ranging in length from 14 to 30 inches.

Fishing from private boats, charter boats and “walk-on” charters (larger boats that can accommodate up to 50 people) have all been successful, with many reporting limit catches, often in just two or three hours of fishing. The hot spots are concentrated west of the islands to the Michigan state line.

“Lake Erie gained its national reputation throughout the 1980s due largely to reef fishing in June and July. The lake was ideal walleye habitat, with moderately turbid waters that allowed walleyes to be active throughout the day. Moreover, record numbers of fish were present in the walleye population. Yet, walleye fishing was generally over for most anglers by mid-August,” Knight said. “But since the 1980s, water clarity has increased, walleye abundance has declined to a moderate level, and walleye feeding behavior has changed. Walleye schools tend to be distributed in patches and anglers often have to search for these

schools to be successful.”

To compensate for these changes, walleye anglers have adopted new tackle and fishing methods. Weight-forward spinners that were once the rage of Lake Erie anglers are now just another lure in the walleye angler’s tackle box. Worm harnesses, mayfly rigs, small spoons, and crankbaits are now equally popular baits.

“While casting is preferred by many anglers, our data clearly show that trolling produces more fish per hour expended, probably because trollers cover more water and are more likely to encounter an active school of fish. Walleye anglers should not give up on late summer and fall fishing, as we have observed high catch rates in late-August through October in recent years.”

Some of the recent hot spots include the area between the Toledo Shipping Channel and the Michigan state line, West Sister Island area, south of Middle Sister Island in Ohio waters, C and B Cans, the Reef Complex and north of Niagara Reef.

The legal bag limit for walleyes on the Ohio waters of Lake Erie is six from May through February, and four during March and April.

Most anglers are fishing for walleyes, but Lake Erie also provides excellent fishing for yellow perch, smallmouth bass and white bass.

A fishing report is available by calling 1-888-HOOK FISH (1-888-466-5347). Callers in the local Sandusky exchange should call 625-3187.

Despite the current trend in lower-than-average water levels on Lake Erie, all ODNR fishing and boat access facilities are open and fully operational at this time. However, boat anglers are reminded to follow navigational charts.

Cormorant Update

Populations of double-crested cormorants have exploded in the eastern half of the United States due to improved water quality in the Great Lakes and catfish fanning in the south, which allows for greater winter survival of the birds. But this federally-protected, deep-diving water bird is wearing out its welcome with sportfishing groups across the Great Lakes that fear cormorants are depleting key sport fish stocks.

Lake Erie researchers, as well as those on other Great Lakes, have determined that cormorants are very opportunistic. That is, they consume prey fish that are most readily available. Researchers have found that the primary diet of cormorants on western Lake Erie is freshwater drum and baitfish (gizzard shad and emerald shiners), while walleye, smallmouth bass, and yellow perch are seldom consumed.

ODN-R Division of Wildlife biologists are closely monitoring colonies of cormorants on West Sister, East Sister, and Middle Sister islands in Lake Erie for habitat destruction and nesting competition with wading birds. Over time, the cormorants' ammonia-rich guano can kill low-growing vegetation used by other nesting birds. West Sister Island is a crucial nesting site for black-crowned night herons, great egrets, and great blue herons. In fact, the island supports the largest colonies of these wading birds on the Great Lakes.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been issuing depredation permits in 13 states (not Ohio) for the limited killing of cormorants to protect fisheries. The Service is currently developing a regional plan to control growing populations of cormorants that are harming fish and wildlife populations. Measures may include egg oiling, egg addling, and nest removal.

Lake Erie Fishermen
Find up-to-date fishing reports at
www.walleye.com

From Editor, Page 2

years. I won't go as far as some who have compared it to the heydays of the 1980s, but it was good. The best fishing was in the western basin and the central basin. Eastern basin anglers found walleyes more difficult to come by (see Joe Fischer's Eastern Lake Erie Report).

Smallmouth Bass fishing and perch fishing in late summer have also been fantastic. The early indications for the fall perch season are very promising. Many limits reported (and a few in my boat too!).

Many dedicated anglers are looking forward to the late fall walleye bite off of Huron, Ohio. The fishing there in recent years has been incredible, all the way up to late November. Whether from boat, pier or shoreline, night anglers likely will have a lot of fun in the coming weeks off of Huron. Walleyes, be on your guard!

In this fall issue of the magazine we again (has it been 6 years already?) report on the annual status of the Yellow Perch fishery in Lake Erie with lots of statistics and numbers, for those that care for that kind of stuff. We also have several articles on perch, walleye and smallmouth fishing, with emphasis on fall fishing. These have been contributed by some of the best fishermen to tread Lake Erie Waters including Bud Riser, Michael Veine, Ted Takasaki, Mark Martin, Mark Hicks and others. Enjoy and till next time, continued good fishing!

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The 2001 Yellow Perch Report

by
Rick Kubb

During the mid-to-late 1980s the yellow perch populations in Lake Erie were among the highest on record. Limit catches by fishermen were extremely common during that time. In the early to mid 1990's the perch populations experienced a rapid decline.

In recent years Fisheries Agencies have put forth efforts aimed at rehabilitating the perch population. In 1996 the state of Ohio posed a 30 perch daily bag limit. Similarly the State of Pennsylvania places an 8 inch minimum size limit and a 20 perch daily bag limit on perch. Tighter regulations were also levied on commercial fishermen.

In the past few years it is apparent that perch stocks are improving in Michigan, Ohio and in Pennsylvania waters of Lake Erie. Perch stocks are still low further east in New York waters.

This report represents our seventh consecutive year of reporting annual data on the status of yellow perch stocks in Lake Erie. The data used in this report have been obtained from official fisheries status reports obtained from Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York fisheries agencies. These reports were produced in the spring of 2001 and the data in them represent the perch stocks as evaluated in the year 2000. As in previous years, we examine each

state individually to obtain an overall view of the yellow perch fish stocks lake-wide.

Michigan Waters of Lake Erie

In general Lake Erie yellow perch abundance has been slowly on the increase in Michigan waters of Lake Erie since 1992. From 1992 to 1998 the yellow perch harvest increased from .25 million perch to .55 million perch. However catches were lower in 1999 (.4 million perch) and lower yet in the year 2000 with an estimated .22 million harvested perch (see figure 1).

Charter boat anglers success rate for yellow perch was about double that of non-charter anglers during the 2000 season.

In the year 2000, the yellow perch harvest was dominated by age 4 fish (1996 year-class) in Michigan waters, accumulating 42% of all fish taken. In combination, age 2, 3 and 5 yellow perch contributed 52% of the harvest. The average length of harvested age 2,3 and 4 fish was 7.3 inches, 7.7 inches and 8.3 inches respectively.

Biologists suspect that the increased abundance of yellow perch in the western waters of Lake Erie has resulted in slightly slower growth of these fish, primarily the

result of increased competition for food among perch and among other species.

In the year 2000, only one Michigan commercial fishing license was active on the Michigan waters of Lake Erie. This fisherman operated a commercial seine in the shallow embayments along Michigan's Lake Erie Shoreline and harvested primarily 'rough' species such as carp, buffalo and catfish. The fisherman did not target nor had any impact on the yellow perch fishery.

This year (2001) the numbers of harvestable yellow perch in Michigan waters should increase due to the full recruitment of the 1998 hatch.

Ohio waters of Lake Erie

Yellow perch abundance in Ohio waters improved again in 2000, relative to the low numbers in the early 1990s due to successful reproduction in four of the last six years and reduced fishing mortality. The strong 1996 year class was mostly responsible for this increase. With moderate reproduction success in 1998, the numbers of yellow perch available to Ohio anglers in Lake Erie will be about the same as in 2000. Looking beyond the year 2001, an

average 1999 hatch and a below average hatch in 2000 will likely result in slightly lower numbers of yellow perch available to fishermen in the next couple of years.

Ohio sport and commercial fishermen were within their allotted quotas in 2000 for the third consecutive year. The 30-fish daily bag limit is again in effect for 2001.

In 2000 the combined private and charter yellow perch harvest was 5.5 million fish, nearly the same total as in 1999 (see figure 3). Private boat anglers harvested an estimated 5.3 million yellow perch just slightly higher than the 5.2 million yellow perch caught in 1999. Charter anglers harvested about .2 million yellow perch in 2000. In 2000, anglers expended 1.7 million angler hours targeting yellow perch. Again this is only slightly higher than the estimated 1.6 million targeted angler hours in 1999.

The 1996 year class made up 39% of the yellow perch harvest followed by the 1998 (28%) and the 1997 (21%) year classes.

Comparing Districts

The Ohio waters of Lake Erie are divided into three Districts (see figure 2). District 1 is comprised of the western basin, extending to Huron, OH. District 2 is in the central basin and extends from Huron to Fairport. District 3 extends from Fairport to Conneaut, OH.

Traditionally the greatest numbers of perch are harvested from the shallow western basin (District 1).

In 2000 a total of 2.9 million perch (combined private & charter) were taken there. A total of 1.8 million fish were taken from District 2. A total of .7 million fish were harvested from District 3.

Generally, yellow perch harvested by sport anglers are larger as one moves from west to east (see figure 3). In 2000 this trend continued. The average size yellow perch caught in District 1 was 8.4 inches and .25 pounds. This increased to 9 inches and .34 pounds in District 2. In District 3 perch taken by anglers averaged 9.3 inches and .42 pounds.

Commercial Harvest

In 2000 the total allocation to trap netters for yellow perch was 965,443 fish, the highest since the quota system was established. In District 1, a total of 240,578 pounds of yellow perch were harvested. In the central basin (combined Districts 2 & 3) a total of 721,618 pounds were harvested. The commercial harvest of yellow perch in Ohio waters was the highest in 10 years. The average trap net catch rate of 88 pounds/lift was more than double the ten-year average. The commercial harvest from District 2 accounted for 60% of the total commercial harvest for Ohio waters. The strong 1996 year class was the most abundant of the eight year-classes reported in the harvest.

Diet of Yellow Perch

The food that yellow perch consumed varied between the shallow western basin and the deeper central basin. In the western basin,

benthic macroinvertebrates made up the majority of the diets of yellow perch in spring and fall with zooplankton being consumed mainly in the early summer. The large mayfly nymph (*Hexagenia*) was the primary benthic macroinvertebrate consumed by yellow perch.

In the central basin, yellow perch consumed mainly benthic invertebrates in the spring, switching to zooplankton and benthic invertebrates in the summer and fall.

Adult yellow perch ate primarily benthic invertebrates (48%) and fish (51%) in the spring, switching to zooplankton (50%), fish (32%) and benthic invertebrates (19%) in the summer and fall.

Outlook for 2001

The excellent perch fishing anglers have experienced the past four years should continue through 2001 and beyond. Conservative regulations for sport and commercial fishers and improved spawns in the mid-to-late 1990s have helped Lake Erie's yellow perch stocks to gradually recover after low levels in the early 1990s.

Anglers can expect to see many fine catches of perch from a large 1996 year class, the largest hatch in 10 years. These fish will measure 8.5 to 10 inches. Added to the catch will be perch from the 1998 year class now in the 8-9 inch range.

Perch fishing will peak in September and October. The daily bag limit for yellow perch in Ohio waters will remain 30 fish/angler.

Pennsylvania Waters of Lake Erie

The 2000 fishing season provided an excellent yellow perch fishery for anglers relative to recent history. During the 2000 fishing season, anglers caught an estimated 169,824 perch (112,902 harvested). This represented a 172% increase from the 1999 catch (see figure 5).

Yellow perch angling was concentrated mainly in the central basin waters where over 70% of the harvest occurred. Although only 30% of the perch were caught in the deeper eastern basin waters, the relative numbers of fish caught in the eastern basin waters also improved compared to 1999.

August and September accounted for over 80% of the perch harvest in Pennsylvania waters.

The average length perch caught in Pennsylvania waters was 9.4 inches. The 1994 year class (age 6) accounted for the greatest proportion (33%) of the perch harvest. The large 1996 year class and the 1995 year class also contributed to the catch.

The outlook for perch fishing in Pennsylvania waters for the new few years is very good. Strong year classes in 1996, 1998 and 1999 will fuel the perch population growth in the year 2001 and beyond.

Commercial Fishery

The total allowable catch of commercial yellow perch is set at

only 29,000 pounds for 2001. It is anticipated that only around 20% of this total will actually be reached. In effect the commercial fishery for yellow perch in Pennsylvania waters is non-existent, at this point.

New York Waters of Lake Erie

The status of the yellow perch resource appears to have been improving in recent years. Gill net and bottom trawling programs indicated that the abundance of yellow perch is now increasing in eastern Lake Erie. However, it remains uncertain whether this recent increase is the beginning of a long-term recovery or simply the chance occurrence of two strong year classes within three years.

In 2000 in New York waters of Lake Erie, the yellow perch sport harvest remained very low with only 3,021 perch estimated to have been caught. This is lower than the estimated 5,360 yellow perch taken in 1999 (see figure 6). Fishing effort for yellow perch by anglers in 2000 was the lowest in 13 years. Of the few anglers that did fish for perch the relative size of yellow perch caught compared to points further to the west was high. The average size caught in New York waters in 2000 was 10.6 inches.

Fish Ohio's Lake Erie Artificial Reefs!

Updated Locations of All Lake Erie Artificial Reefs Based on ODNR/GEO Survey Side-Scan Sonar Data Updated August, 2000

Lorain

Polish Fisherman's Club Reef

41 28 .076 N
82 12 .758 W

The Mountain Reef

41 28 .150 N
82 12 .750 W

Lakewood

Cuyahoga County Commissioners Reef

41 30 .175 N
81 47 .266 W

1984 Experimental Reef Site "A"

41 30 .271 N
81 47 .533 W

1984 Experimental Reef Site "B"

41 30 .256 N
81 47 .041 W

Cleveland Stadium Artificial Reefs

Edgewater

Cleveland Stadium Reef West #1 (north)

41 30 .148 N
81 45 .575 W

Cleveland Stadium Reef West #2 (south)

41 29 .970 N
81 45 .416 W

Euclid

Cleveland Stadium Reef East (Euclid)

41 35 .933 N
81 33 .804 W

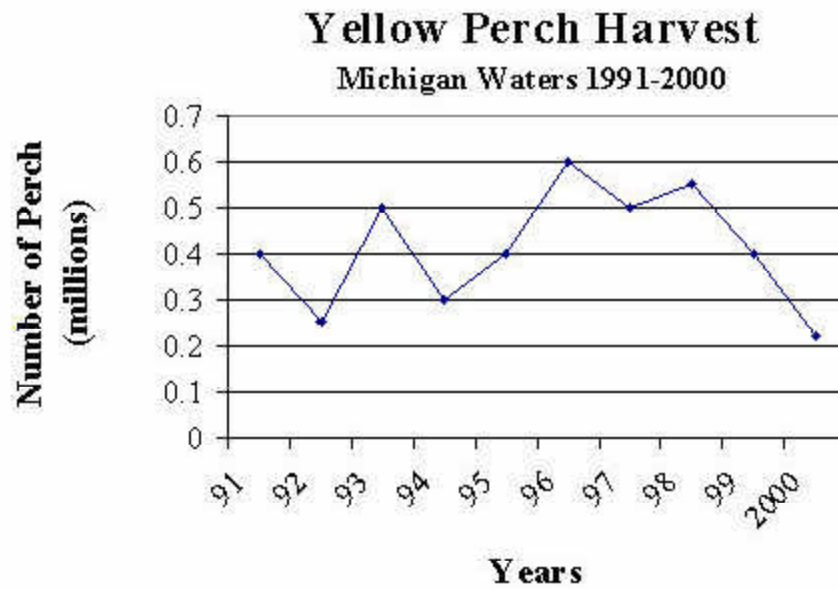


Figure 1. The ten year trend for yellow perch harvests in Michigan waters of Lake Erie.

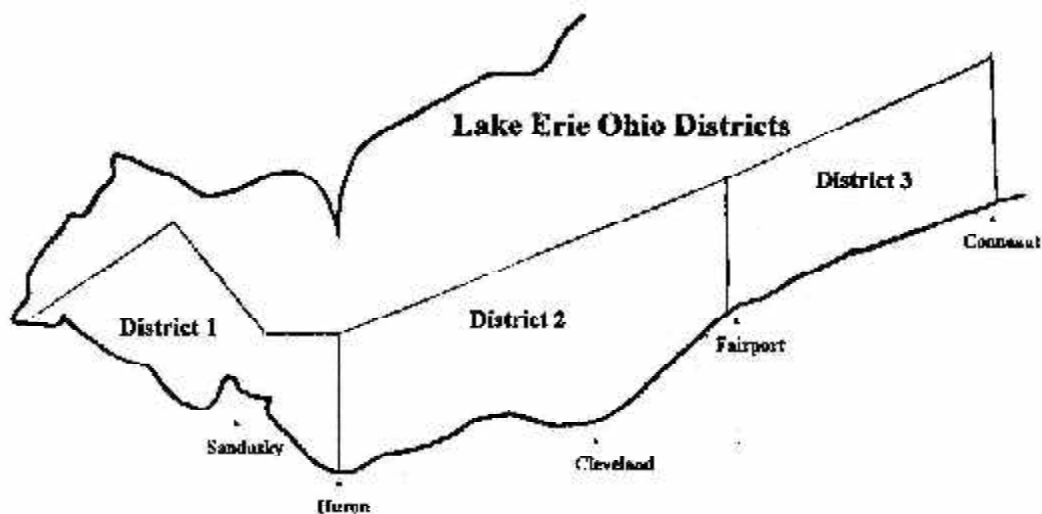


Figure 2. Map indicating the three Ohio Districts used in monitoring the walleye fisheries statistics in Ohio waters of Lake Erie.

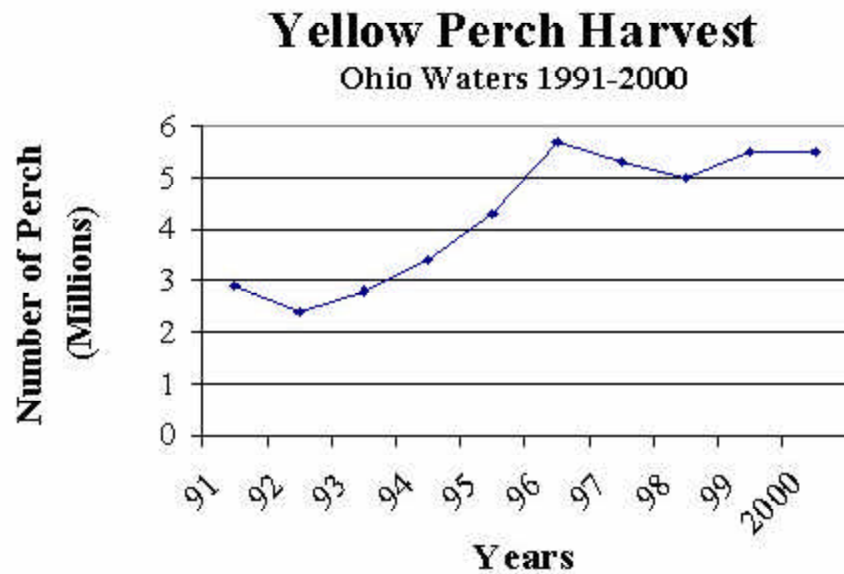


Figure 3. The ten year trend for yellow perch harvests in Ohio waters of Lake Erie.

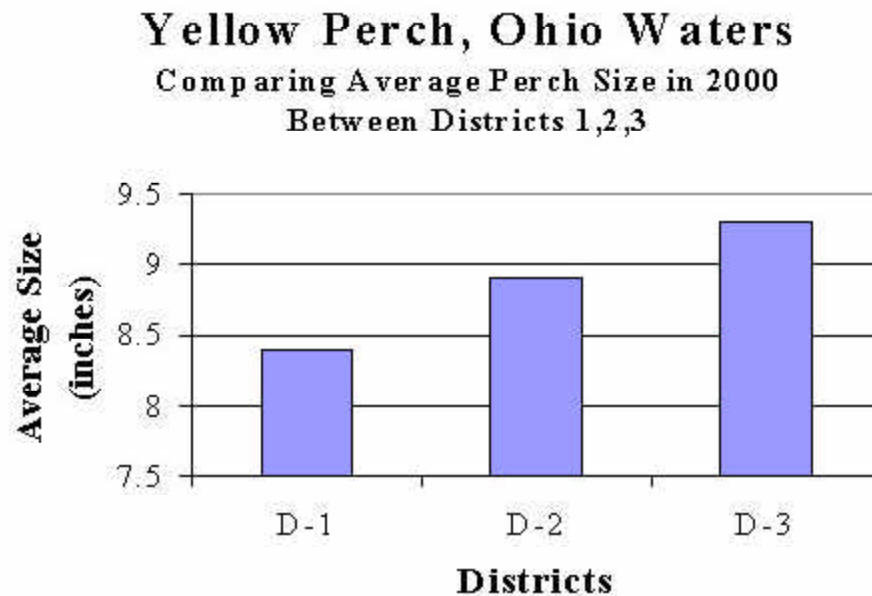


Figure 4. Yellow Perch average size comparisons of fish caught in the three Ohio districts

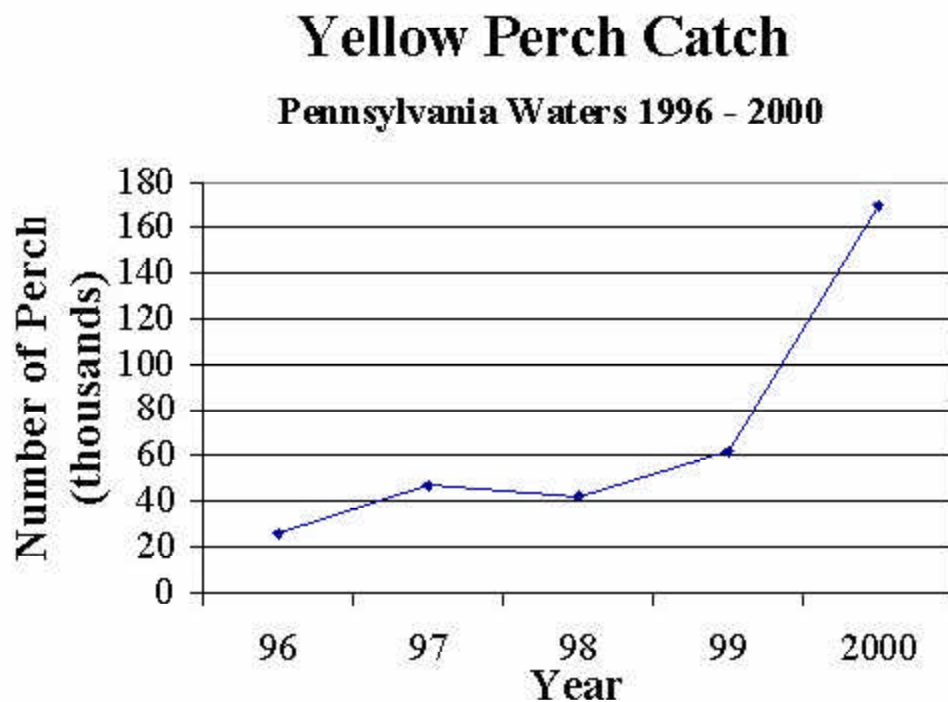


Figure 5. Five year trend of yellow perch harvest by sportfishermen in Pennsylvania waters of Lake Erie.

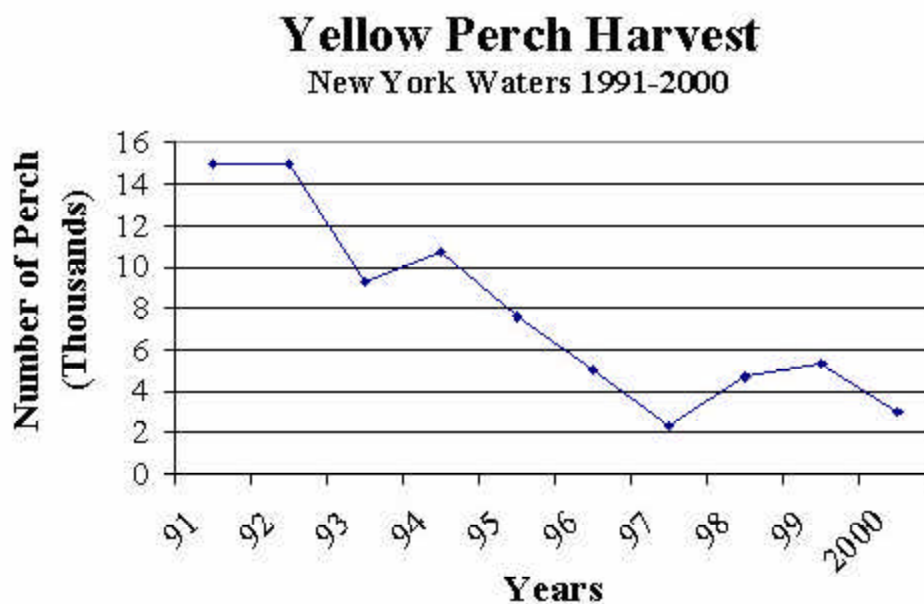


Figure 6. Ten year trend of yellow perch harvest by sportfishermen in New York waters of Lake Erie.

Fall Perchin' Lake Erie's Central Basin

by
Jeff Frischkorn

It was over in less time than it takes to watch a made-for-television movie. After just 90 minutes of lowering weighted perch rigs into 52 feet of Lake Erie water the five anglers were stowing their gear and battening down the hatches. While the perch were kind and generous, Lake Erie was showing its temperamental side with waves lifting the hull of Marv DeGreen's boat by as much as four feet.

Even so the fact that the boat's cooler was enriched by 150 plump, sweet-smelling yellow perch was cause for celebration.

"This is some kind of wonderful," said charter captain Steve Jager. "Another day in paradise."

The trip to heaven began as a

busman's holiday for DeGreen, Jager and Ron Johnson, all Grand River-based charter captains. By a fluke the three normally busy fishing guides were each without a hired charter on a recent weekday afternoon.

Grand River. This way the three

That was good fortune for Bob Ashley of Mentor and myself. We'd have the opportunity to join the three charter captains on a yellow perch fishing trip out of the

assembled when DeGreen shut down the boat's engines and released the anchor. Based on their experiences the three charter captains had attached sinkers weighing at least two ounces to each of the rigs.

"There's a lot of current down there and you need the weight to keep the perch rig from running away," Johnson said. Hardly had the perch rigs touched bottom when the fish began inspecting the baited offerings. Usually one fish was hauled aboard but enough double and triple headers were raised to spark more than a few "he-haws" and "yow-ees" from the quintet of fishermen.

"You might as well put that second rod away," Johnson said, looking at my pair of fishing outfits. "It'll only get in the way." Johnson was correct as the perch came so fast that the need for two outfits was outweighed by the simplicity of the technique. We only had to lower our rigs and then let the fishing lines go slack for a moment. Next was to jerk the rods up to set the hooks and then reeling in anywhere from one to three perch.

The fish were then deposited into a plastic kitchen trash can for temporary storage. "When the can's full there's about 100 perch in it," DeGreen said.

In less than an hour the trash can held a treasure of 100 fish. At that point Jager stopped fishing and offered a running sports television-style commentary. He cajoled when I raised three perch only to see two of them eject themselves before

being swung aboard. And Jager offered a bravo when anyone hauled up a particularly impressive perch.

"The perch are really nice size this year, and we're not catching any gobies and few sheepshead out here," DeGreen said.

And so the fishing trip was over only a short time after it had begun.

Walleye are fine and few things excite me more than a thrashing steelhead trout but when it comes to filling the freezer with fillets, and having a ball doing so, nothing beats Lake Erie's autumn run of yellow perch.

Fall is the prime perch season on Lake Erie. The past few years have been good to perch fishermen with limit catches often taken.

With perch selling for up to 14.00/pound in the grocery stores, many fishermen work to fill their freezers for the winter months.



Lake Erie Walleye Migrations

*Great Lake's walleyes are known to be highly nomadic;
some even migrate hundreds of miles*

by
Michael Veine

The inline planer board surged rearward signaling a sizeable fish on the business end. After a five-minute fight, I slipped the net under a thrashing, chunky six pounder. While I unhooked her, I noticed a dull, metal tag protruding from that tooth-lined mouth. On my charter boat, it's policy to release all pre-spawn female walleyes along with any tagged fish: Unless of course they are of trophy proportions and are headed for the taxidermist. Using needle nosed pliers, I rotated the tag around and wrote down the tag information in my fishing log. I also recorded the time, date, weight, length and capture coordinates in my log. We then released the fish so further study would be possible on the fish. Later that month, I collected all the tag data from April captures and sent it to

the Michigan DNR. A few weeks later and I received a letter thanking me for my assistance. The

letter also contained information on each fish. The six-pounder had been tagged two years earlier near Monroe, MI., less than a mile from where I caught her. In just two years that fish had nearly doubled its body weight and had grown six inches longer. Since we released that fish, it is now possible for someone else to catch it and provide additional growth and migration data for the study. Who knows, maybe some day she'll show up in my landing net again weighing over 10-pounds. Ah, wishful thinking.

Biologists and anglers from Ohio, Michigan, New York and Ontario, have been conducting inter-agency research on Lake Erie's walleye movements and migrations. The studies have shown that Erie's walleyes are highly nomadic, however they do possess homing



Continuing walleye migration studies will unlock secrets to help protect and enhance the fisheries for generations to come. Photo taken by Michael Veine.



walleyes each year during the April spawning period. Most years we've been very successful."

Haas went on to say, "On average, anglers catch and report 4 to 5 percent of the walleyes that are

instincts that consistently brings them back to the same spots year after year for spawning. The migration studies key on that homing instinct. Walleyes are captured using nets and boom shockers in the spawning areas where unique lip tags are attaching to the fish. After spawning, the walleyes disburse out. Eventually, some of those tagged fish are caught and the information is reported back. These returns continue to reveal some interesting and important scientific information on migration patterns. These studies directly help fisheries professionals manage our walleye resources and they also help anglers to key in on the best places to fish during the different seasons.

Bob Haas is a Fisheries Biologist overseeing the Lake Erie tagging studies for the Michigan DNR. Haas says, "During the spring, more than 80% of Lake Erie's walleyes end up in the Western

Basin and its tributaries. The Michigan DNR has been setting trap nets as part of a tagging study since 1978. We have historically netted walleyes just south of Monroe along a spawning reef. Our goal has been to tag 2,000



The recorded tag information or the physical tag can be dropped off or mailed to any participating state's (Ministry in Canada) Natural Resources field office. Make sure to include the exact location where the walleye was caught. Also, please list the date and time of the capture along with the length and weight of the fish if possible. People can also log onto the Michigan DNR website (<http://www.dnr.state.mi.us>) and enter the tag information online. The Michigan DNR will pass the information along to other state or provincial agencies as applicable. If the cooperator provides his or her name and address, some history on the fish will be provided. I've caught and reported over 100-tagged fish to the DNR and I get a kick out of seeing the bio on those fish.

The Lake Erie migration study is revealing some interesting information to say the very least. Most of Erie's walleyes are tagged in the Western Basin, which should come as no surprise since the majority of Erie's walleyes spawn at Western Basin reefs and rivers. It's also no surprise that most of the tagged fish are caught from the Western Basin, which accounts for most of the sport fishing harvest on Erie. Only about five percent of tagged returns come from the Eastern and Central Basins combined. However when the percentage of the tagged returns are factored against the total catch from each Basin, statistics show that Lake Erie's adult walleyes spread out rather evenly all over the system after spawning.

Bob Haas says, "The tagging studies have shown that after spawning in the Western Basin, most adult walleyes migrate east in a circular

pattern. They move eastward along the northern half of Lake Erie during the spring and summer. During the fall and winter, those same walleyes make their way back "home" heading west along the southern region of the lake."

A good number of Erie's tagged walleyes are taken from rivers feeding the Western Basin, especially the Maumee and Detroit Rivers. Surprisingly, a good number of Lake Erie's walleyes end up in Lake St. Clair and the St. Clair River and they don't stop there either. Many of Erie's Walleyes are caught all along the Michigan waters of Lake Huron especially in outer Saginaw Bay. Some have even shown up at Thunder Bay near Alpena and still farther north all the way to the Mackinac Bridge. Research has also shown that as walleyes grow older, they tend to migrate farther. It's interesting to note that walleyes tagged in the Saginaw Bay watershed rarely ever disburse to Lake Erie.

Because Erie's walleyes pay no attention to boundaries, the significance of interagency cooperation is especially important pertaining to the management of the valuable resource. Researchers are taking the next step with radio telemetry studies of Great Lake's walleyes. These and other important projects will help biologists further unravel walleye travel secrets. Walleyes are perhaps the most 743 3.5m5spo tagged in the
waddr the 1986 spawning
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critical for the continued prosperity of our Lake Erie walleye fishery.



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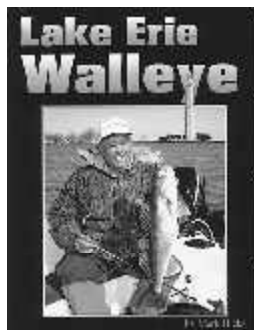
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Lake Erie's Fall Walleye Bonanza

by
Bud Riser

Each autumn signals an anticipated flurry of walleye action in Lake Erie's central and western basins. Late September or early October finds dozens of savvy 'eye hunters prowling waters from the east side of Cleveland to the Bass Islands. These anglers are tuned in to daytime and nocturnal walleye feeding action.

Lake Erie's central and western basin schools make what I call a "pre-spawn staging movement" each fall. Schools of big fish move in off their respective spawning areas and "stage" or rest, after putting on a feeding binge, fattening up for the spring spawn.

Thousands of central basin walleye move toward the shoreline dropoffs in search of young-of-the-year gizzard shad and other baitfish, drawn by warmer waters. They're often located

close to the first or second deepwater drops and move into shoeline shallows to surface feed at night.

The most popular areas for the past 2 years have been west of Lorain, OH with the bulk of the

activity taking place off Vermilion and Huron. I believe one reason for this is the big sandbar between Lorain and Vermilion. It provides fish with an underwater pathway leading to the western Vermilion area shoreline and offshore waters.

The shallow sandbar holds a large variety of baitfish, thus providing an underwater grocery store for walleye and other fish species.

I expect this to be a good fall season based on the numbers of good catches reported from the sandbar waters this summer. Many consistent limit catches came in from lat/longs ranging from 13 &



Large fish and lot's of 'em can be taken between Vermilion and Huron in the late fall. Some charter captains extend their fishing season by moving their operations to Huron during this period.

29 (Middle GPS co-ordinates) off Lorain to 23 & 34 off Ruggles Beach and points in between. Schools of fish ranged in various sizes with many 18 to 22 inch fish present, although a number of walleye from 25 to 30 inches were also caught.

Techniques are fairly straightforward, with trollers taking good catches one day, while spinner and worm guys score bigger casting on others.

Generally, trollers switch from spoons to rattling crankbaits or worm harnesses as lake waters cool down in October and November. Trolling speeds slow down too, with 1 1/2 to 2 mph most effective in water below 50 degrees. My favorite colors generally remain the same and include silver, gold, firetiger and perch patterns.

Sweep casting with weight forward spinners and crawler rigs takes plenty of fish in the 25 to 45 foot depths. One day will find 'eyes hitting half-way down and suspended while other days may dictate use of bottom bouncing rigs.

Don't rule out jigging on humps or where fish are concentrated heavily. Even this time of year finds me rigging one rod with a favorite chartreuse or fluorescent orange jig.

Check out the new ones from Northland Tackle. The Buck-Shot Rattle Spin has been taking a lot of bass and walleyes for me as well as Northland's new Thumper Spin Jig. Everybody knows that fish

love to hit a dropping bait and these two jigs occupy a regular spot in my arsenal of leadheads.

The Night Bite

The legendary night bite of the late 1980's off the Huron pier started an entirely new breed of walleye anglers—nightstalkers. My first experience on Lake Erie was back in the 50's for blue pike. Boy, has that changed!

Marblehead and Kelley's Island were my first island shots at night 'eyes. Shoreline casters were flinging rattletraps and other shad-bodied baits from every available pier and dock with fair success. Colors went the entire spectrum and tackle boxes looked like the Glidden Paint chart.

A couple of enterprising charter captains even anchored or drifted crews in nearby sheltered bays and coves. Word spread about the night bite and docks and piers soon filled up in Huron, Lorain and E. 72nd St. in Cleveland eastward to Neff Rd. and the Grand River at Painesville. Both of Huron's piers got so crowded that standing room became impossible.

At this point, I began wading for night feeding fish. It got me away from the insanity of the pier melee and I could enjoy a little solitude again...that is, until a school of hungry walleyes thrashed and splashed in 3 to 4 inch water around my ankles. They actually chased a school of baitfish past me and nearly on the sand! WOW!

I believe it was that November night in 1991 or thereabouts that I

saw nearly a 1/2 ton of walleyes caught from the Huron pier. Do the math! 100 anglers on the Huron pier and about 40 on the east Nickel Plate pier.

Figuring the fish were averaging about 6 to 8 pounds and many anglers had limit catches, you can see how it could happen.

Then the boats showed up! Ho Boy!

Night trollers catch good numbers of fish too...and hopefully they'll be thoughtful of the anglers on shore. DON'T BUZZ THE PIER CASTERS, PLEASE!

Here's the best night trolling info I can share with you. Rattling crankbaits generally outfish the quiet ones 2 to 1. Electric trolling motors outfish the gas motors 2 to 1. Sideplaners outfish flatlines 2 to 1.

I like to use light sticks on my in-line planer boards. If the light disappears, I've got a fish on...just like a lighted bobber. Northland Tackle has an assortment of FireLight Sticks in all your favorite color choices.

Most activity generally takes place in the period from 3 days before the 1/2 moon to 3 days after the full moon, but don't rule out the dark periods either. Some big fish have been caught then too.

One interesting thing I noticed ...night anglers at the islands, Marblehead and Huron used nothing but Rattletrap type of lure. Cleveland Anglers wouldn't go out without a magnum Rapala. Lorain anglers used both.

Lately the Rapala Husky Jerk has been the lure du jour in blue/silver and orange chin pattern. Last year on the Huron pier, a young man told me I

Try These Walleye Recipes

Drunken Walleye

3 lb Whole walleyes if possible
 2 ea Ancho Chiles; Dried, OR
 1/2 ts Red Peppers; Crushed
 1/3 c Red Wine, Dry
 1/2 c Onion; Chopped, 1 Md.
 1 ea Clove Garlic; Minced
 2 tb Olive Or Vegetable Oil
 3 ea Tomatoes; Md, **
 1/3 c Water
 1/4 c Parsley; Snipped
 1 ts Sugar
 1/2 ts Salt
 1/2 ts Oregano; Dried, Crushed
 1/4 ts Cumin; Ground
 1 x Salt And Pepper
 1/2 c Pimento Stuffed Olives; ***
 1 tb Capers; (Optional)

Whole Walleye. ** The medium tomatoes should be peeled, seeded and chopped. *** The olives should be sliced. Thaw the fish if frozen. Cut the chiles open. Discard stems and seeds. Cut the chiles into small pieces with a pair

of scissors or a sharp knife. Place the snipped chiles in a small bowl and cover with boiling water. Set aside for 45 to 60 minutes then drain. Place the chiles in a blender container and add the wine. Blend until nearly smooth. In a medium saucepan cook the onion and garlic in the hot oil until tender but not brown. Add the chile-wine mixture (or the crushed red peppers and wine to the saucepan), tomatoes, 1/3 cup of water, parsley, sugar, salt, oregano, and cumin. Bring to boiling then reduce the heat. Cover and simmer for 5 minutes. Meanwhile, place the fish in a greased 13 X 9 X 2-inch baking dish. Season cavity of the fish with salt and pepper. Stir the sliced olives and capers into the tomato sauce mixture and pour over the fish.

Cover and bake in a preheated 350 degree F. oven for about 45 to 60 minutes or until the fish flakes easily when tested with a fork. Carefully remove the fish to a serving platter. Serve with the remaining sauce.
 Serves 6

Five Star Fried Walleye

Heat oil (canola oil works well) in a large, deep, heavy pan. Oil should be 3 or 4 inches deep and frying temperature should reach approximately 375 degrees. Dredge walleye fillets in these three ingredients and in this order:

1. Lightly but completely dredge each fillet in tempura flour. Shake off excess.
2. Dip each floured fillet in a mixture of beaten whole eggs, a small amount of water and fresh lemon juice.

3. Dredge the wet fillets in Panko crumbs, covering completely. (Tip: Completely coat all your fillets or at least one batch at a time before frying).

Place 5 to 7 fillets in the hot oil at a time. Cook quickly — about 60 seconds this will make them golden brown on the outside and cooked through, yet moist and flaky on the inside. Thinner crappie fillets cook more quickly than thicker walleye fillets. Turn occasionally with tongs.

Remove from oil, drain briefly on a paper towel. Place in a pan and keep warm in oven while additional batches are prepared. Allow oil to reheat for a moment before cooking each additional batch of fish.

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From NO-SNAGG, page 16

features a Gamakatsu premium hook, making the jig ideal for live or artificial bait. The jig features an adjustable weed guard to allow snag-free fishing in a variety of conditions. According to Ted Takasaki, president of Lindy Little Joe, "The Veg-E Jig is designed to catch fish, not snags."

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Erie's Fall Fishing is Fabulous

by

Melissa Hathaway

Lake Erie anglers are having another fall fishing bonanza, as declining water temperatures stimulate fish to begin feeding, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR).

Yellow perch fishing is going strong across the lake with some limit catches of up to 13-inch perch being taken across the lake. Good perch fishing should continue as long as the weather permits anglers to get out on the lake.

True to tradition for September, bass anglers are reeling in many lunker smallmouth bass, especially in the islands area and off the reefs. Meanwhile, anglers wait in anticipation for walleye and steelhead trout to take off in normal fall fashion. "As water temperatures cool in the fall, fish form schools and feed more heartily to store reserves for the approaching winter months," said Doug Johnson, fisheries biologist with the ODNR's Lake Erie Research Unit in Sandusky. "Several factors make fall an excellent time to fish Lake Erie: Anglers often see some of the best action of the entire year, there is less boat traffic and booking accommodations is easier because it's the off-season for many Lake Erie visitors."

Don't own a boat? Shoreline anglers can get in on the fall action

by fishing for yellow perch and smallmouth bass from piers and breakwalls. Steelhead trout can be found along central basin breakwalls, especially at Headlands Beach State Park, Fairport Harbor and Conneaut Harbor. These fish will later enter the lake's central basin tributary streams and provide even more action for wading anglers. In late fall and early winter, along the western basin, walleyes move in close to shore in late night feeding frenzies. Huron is usually the number one hot spot for this unique fishery.

Central basin anglers are also enjoying great fall fishing. "Traditional fall perch fishing is well underway and smallmouth bass action is picking up along the Fairport, Geneva, Ashtabula and Conneaut breakwalls," said Kevin Kayle, supervisor of ODNR's Lake Erie Research Unit at Fairport Harbor.

"We're also expecting another fantastic fall steelhead season. Earlier this summer, steelhead were biting with a vengeance on the open lake, which traditionally indicates excellent fall stream fishing." Anglers should expect to see steelhead entering into the rivers within the next several weeks as cool rains begin moving into the region.

During the early portion of the spawning run, the lower stretches of Lake Erie's tributaries hold a majority of the fish. As the season progresses and the region gets more rain, the steelhead move further upstream, increasing action in the tributaries of the main channels. Fishing will remain good throughout the entire winter as long as anglers can find an open pool in the ice.

Weather conditions are always a big factor for Lake Erie fishing and fall is no exception. Strong winds and heavy wave action can keep anglers off the lake for several days at a time. Colder water temperatures and rough lake conditions can spell disaster for unwary and unprepared small boat operators and their passengers. Anglers should get a Lake Erie marine forecast before traveling to the region and again before venturing out on the water.

Depending on individual angler preferences, there's a mixed bag of quality opportunities in store for fall anglers.

YELLOW PERCH

Perch seekers find success in Sandusky Bay, the island areas and the reef complex in the Western Basin. Central basin anglers fare very well in nearshore waters one to four miles offshore. However,

anglers should keep in mind that schools of yellow perch can be found anywhere in the lake.

Fall also provides excellent perch fishing opportunities for shore-bound anglers. Some of the best shore fishing locations include public fishing piers at Metzger Marsh, Catawba Island State Park, the Mazurik and Dempsey fishing accesses and breakwalls at Port Clinton, Sandusky, Huron, Lorain, Cleveland, Fairport Harbor and Mentor Headlands State Park.

Perch spreaders or crappie rigs tipped with shiners or minnows are the tried and true methods for this popular table fare fish. Most catches are in the 7 to 13-inch range with central basin perch slightly larger.

Anglers should note the daily bag limit for yellow perch is 30 fish per person.

SMALLMOUTH BASS

Increased weed growth from increased water clarity and several excellent hatches in recent years have boosted yet another great fishery for Lake Erie anglers — smallmouth bass. Fall bass fishing is particularly good around the Bass and Kelleys islands areas, western basin reef complex, Sandusky Bay, along rocky shorelines in the western basin, Ruggles Reef, and along harbor breakwalls from Cleveland to Conneaut. The live bait of choice is a softcraw, but anglers also use leeches, large minnows or work jigs along rocky shorelines.

Most fish are in the 14 to 17-inch

range. There is a daily catch limit of five smallmouth bass per angler with a minimum size length of 14 inches.

WALLEYE

The current state record walleye (16.19 pounds) was caught off Cleveland in November 1999, by an angler who was perch fishing. Western basin walleye anglers drift with worm harness rigs; cast weight-forward spinners fitted with a bottom bouncer; or cast or troll crankbaits, especially over reefs. Central basin anglers troll with worm harnesses, dippy divers, spoons and deep diving lures. Most catches measure 18 to 28 inches.

The number one hot spot in late fall is an area between Vermilion and Huron. As the season progresses, these walleyes will move to shore after dark in pursuit of bait fish seeking out warmer shoreline waters. Many anglers take advantage of this shoreline walleye fishery and line up along piers and breakwalls across the western basin and Cleveland area throughout November and December. Anglers cast vibrating, noise-producing lures that imitate baitfish. This fishery is very unpredictable with no way of forecasting when the feeding frenzy will turn on. When it does, however, it usually lasts only a few minutes. But the rewards can be huge with very large fish hooked.

STEELHEAD TROUT

More central basin anglers are targeting steelhead trout, especially when the walleye fishing is challenging. By late October, these fish

move into central basin tributaries to begin spawning runs, providing wading stream anglers a quality trout fishery during the cold-weather months. The ODNR Division of Wildlife stocks a total of 400,000 steelhead annually into the Rocky, Chagrin and Grand rivers, and Conneaut Creek.

Steelhead catches typically measure 19 to 28 inches. In the early fall, anglers should pursue steelhead from piers, beaches and lower parts of the rivers (near river mouths). With a spinning rod, use spoons, spinners, or hair jigs tipped with maggots under a bobber. With a fly rod, use a larger weighted fly pattern such as nymphs and streamers.

After cooler weather and fall rains, anglers should follow steelhead upstream and fish with spawn bags (trout or salmon eggs tied together in a mesh bag). As the season progresses, spin-casters also use jig and maggot combinations and minnows. Fly rod anglers use yarn flies, egg patterns, nymphs and streamers. The daily bag limit for steelhead is two fish from September 1 through April 30, with a minimum size limit of 12 inches.

For more information on central basin steelhead fishing, access the Fairport Fish Station's web site through www.dnr.state.oh.us/odnr/wildlife

Pro angler Jim Klick, 51, of White Bear Lake, MN, landed \$50,000 and a Mercury-powered Lund boat Saturday on Lake Erie after weighing in five walleyes that registered 40 pounds, 12 ounces. His partner, co-angler Cecil



Newman, 50, of River Rouge, Mich., reeled in \$15,000 for the catch in the first tournament of the new \$2.9 million Wal-Mart RCL Walleye Circuit—the world's most lucrative walleye fishing series. Western Lake Erie (Port Clinton) played host to the April 11-14th event.

"It doesn't get any better than this," said Klick, whose best tournament showing prior to the Wal-Mart RCL Walleye Circuit was a fourth place finish worth

\$7,500. "This is some kind of first class operation. There are people everywhere, and the parking lot is full of boats. This is cool."

The pair's impressive catch was the result of trolling crankbaits behind planner boards in clear water off Kelly Island, which is located about 12 miles east, northeast of the tournament's starting point at Catawba Island State Park.

"When I was paired with Jim on Wednesday, he told me that if he ever wins one of these (tournaments) he's going to retire," said Newman, whose best tournament showing prior to Saturday was a third place finish worth \$1,800. "I told him, 'Mister, I sure hope to see you retire.' This is fantastic. The RCL is definitely the way to go."

Klick and Newman qualified for the final round of 12 teams in eighth place after landing four walleyes weighing 23 pounds, 3 ounces Friday.

Competition began Wednesday with 154 anglers from 15 states taking off from Catawba Island State Park. After an impressive opening day in which 25 teams



Second place finisher, Ronnie Rhodes claimed 30,000 in prize money.

Fall Tactics for Walleyes

by
Ted Takasaki with Scott Richardson

Too bad for the fair-weather fishermen who have already put their boats away. Some of the best fishing of the year is just ahead. The shorter days and cooler water of late fall mean gamefish, like walleyes, go on a last feeding binge before freeze up when their metabolism slows for winter. Feeding fish are vulnerable fish. As a result, late fall can be the best time of the year to catch a trophy.

Walleyes begin moving to deep-water structure as the water cools down. Fish can be as far down as 25 to 50 feet or more on the steep, hard-bottom drop-offs next to points, humps and islands. Often, they can be found on the spots-on-a-spot that are the sharpest breaks nearest the deepest water available.

As always, start with the fastest tactic that works to nab active walleyes. Don't rule

out trolling crankbaits as a tactic even though water is cold. Trolling is still the best way to cover water

fast to locate active pods of fish. Tournament anglers have shown time and time again it works even when it's cold enough to snow.

Once a school is located, rig or jig to catch even more fish that may be in a neutral mood at the time.

Cold-water trolling

Many trollers resort to snap weights in the summer to take crankbaits deeper than they are designed to go. But, leadcore is more common in spring and fall to accomplish the same goal. There's no need in cold water to spread lines with planer boards to search for widely scattered walleyes as you do in warm water. Fish gather in schools tighter to structure in cold water. By long-line trolling with leadcore, you can get lures down deep and right behind the boats which will allow you to follow the breaklines more precisely. Crankbaits are in



Fall Trophy Walleyes are there for the taking for those anglers willing to bundle up, do some searching and try a variety of techniques.

the strike zone more as a result, and that equals more fish. In addition, cranks behind leadcore have a more subtle action, which works better in cold water than snap weights.

Start with a longer, medium-action rod to help absorb some of the shock of a strike on no-stretch, leadcore. Use 18-pound test leadcore line. Strip the Dacron back from the lead core middle and tie on a small #12 barrel swivel. Add an 8 to 10 foot leader of 10 to 12 pound monofilament, like Stren's Super Tough. Some people prefer to use no-stretch braided line for the leader. But, if you do that, make certain you set your drag very loosely. Fish can tear free from hooks if you don't allow some "give" in your tackle somewhere. Tie on a snap or ball-bearing snap swivel and you are set to go.

Ask at local bait shops to find areas of the lake that are producing. Don't be surprised if the best locations are in deep water near the mouths of feeder rivers and creeks that the walleyes will migrate up to spawn in spring.

Check the lake map for sharper drop-offs at the right depth that are likely to produce. Travel to one, and chart the break by following the contour and graphing it on your GPS. Or, drop marker buoys on the fingers extending from the structure and the inside turns where fish might lurk. Look for schools of baitfish and even larger marks that might signal walleyes below. Use an Aqua-Vu fish cam to confirm the presence of walleyes. Try a variety of lures to start.

Bomber 24A's are a good start. Shad Raps and Lindy Shadlings are likely to produce. Try Thundersticks if you have them. Remember, it's the leadcore that takes the crankbait to the bottom, not the crankbait's design. That means you can use anything you think might work, and that even includes shallow running floaters.

Stick with subtle wobblers in colder water instead of the more erratic ones. Keep in mind, larger profiled lures may be best because baitfish have grown bigger by this time and the fish are looking to fatten up for the winter. Use metallic colors for bright sunny days. Try bright, fluorescent colors like firetiger and chartreuse for dingy water. Change up often until you find something that works.

When you are ready, go to the beginning of the trolling pass you have laid out, lower the bait so it travels just off the bottom and use the gasoline kicker motor to move slowly ahead, 1.5- to 2 mph. Vary the speed to see what the fish want. But, remember, leadcore has greater water resistance than monofilament. The faster you go, the higher the bait rises. The slower you go, the deeper it dives. Stay in the strike zone as you follow the shape of the breakline as precisely as you can. Watch the end of your rod tip. Check your bait for hooks fouled with debris when you see the tip stop vibrating.

Mark the location with your GPS when you connect with active walleyes. Stay with the trolling tactic as long as it works. You'll cover more water and catch more fish by concentrating on the active

ones. When the action slows down, change tactics by slowing down your presentation by resorting to Lindy rigging or jigging.

Rigging for fall

Livebait often works when nothing else will do. Lindy rigs or NO-SNAGG rigs are the most natural way to reach deep fish.

Weight can be changed to reach various depths. Use enough lead to keep a 45-degree angle between your line and the water's surface while staying in touch with the bottom.

Use a Lindy Rattling NO-SNAGG rig to help walleyes find the bait in deep water where light is dim or when water clarity is poor.

Try 8-pound MagnaThin to the swivel. Start with a 4-foot leader. Lengthen it or try lighter line for finicky fish. Other modifications can be made to adapt live-bait rigs to conditions. For example, shorten the leader and/or switch to a NO-SNAGG hook to decrease hang-ups. Add a colored bead above the hook as an attractor. Try a colored hook. Vary presentations with your partner to let the fish tell you what they want.

Return to those spots where you caught fish while trolling. Focus on the transition areas between hard and soft bottoms on sharp breaks that drop to deep water.

Use big bait for the same reason as before - baitfish have had a season to grow. Imitate them by using big chubs up to 5 inches long. Hook them through the mouth to move

along the bottom faster. To provoke strikes, try tail-hooking them to cause the bait to struggle more. But, move more slowly when you present the bait in that way.

Use the bottom-tracking, or zoom, feature of your electronics to target specific fish that you will hover over.

Jigging in autumn

Vertical jigging is another effective way to target walleyes holding tight to deep structure. A 3/8th-ounce Fuzz-E-Grub will reach down to 30 feet and more when the wind isn't blowing. You'll need more weight than that in order to go deeper than that. A 5/8th-ounce Jumbo Fuzz-E-Grub, or even a 1-ounce, is a good choice. Bigger jigs may be good to try even in shallower water because they imitate the bigger profiles of big baitfish. Larger profiles provoke strikes from big walleyes looking for an easy meal.

Experiment with colors like white, smoke, orange/yellow, and glow. Let fish tell you what they want.

The Fuzz-E-Grub comes with a plastic body that sports a marabou tail that holds scent products longer. Don't be afraid to change them out to try twister tails and even plastic lizards.

Resort to stinger hooks when necessary. Cold water equals short bites at times. A stinger also helps to get a hook into a fish's mouth when you use the heavier jigs a walleye can't inhale easily.

If state law allows, jig with one rod and put a dead stick in the rod

holder using a NO-SNAGG sinker, a NO-SNAGG hook and a big chub.

Fishing heats up as fall turns to winter. Bundle up and try for a trophy.

From Wal-Mart RCL, page 24

(\$20,000) and co-angler David Gilbert of Decorah, Iowa, (\$6,000) with five walleyes weighing 33 pounds, 7 ounces; and pro James Myszkewicz of Burlington, Wis., (\$15,000) and co-angler Karl Elsher Sr. of Cortland, N.Y., (\$5,000) with five walleyes weighing 33 pounds, 3 ounces.

Run by Operation Walleye and named after retail giant Wal-Mart and boat manufacturers Ranger, Crestliner and Lund, the \$2.9 million Wal-Mart RCL Walleye Circuit features four regular season tournaments each with a \$390,750 purse and a championship with a \$1.4 million purse. The second tournament was held May 9-12 on the Mississippi River in La Crosse, Wis., followed by events on Saginaw Bay in Bay City, Mich., June 13-16 and Devils Lake in Devils Lake, N.D., Sept. 5-8.

After the four regular season tournaments, 200 pros and 200 co-anglers will compete in the Wal-Mart RCL Walleye Championship for a top award of up to \$400,000 in the Pro Division and \$150,000 in the Co-Angler Division. The championship will be held on the Fox River and Green Bay in Green Bay, Wis., Oct. 2-6. Green Bay

hosted the inaugural Wal-Mart RCL Championship last year when Scott Glorvigen of Grand Rapids, Minn., won \$300,000 and instantly joined the sport's top all-time money winners.

Entry fees for each regular season tournament are \$1,250 for pros and \$500 for co-anglers.

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Suspended Fall Walleyes

by
Mark Martin

In fall, walleyes can be anywhere—say, six inches under the surface in 80 feet of water or tight to bottom in 10 feet. Sound challenging? It can be, unless you know how walleyes drift off of structure and suspend in the vicinity of bait. Finding them is a looking game with quality electronics; catching them is a straining game with planer boards, spinners and crankbaits. The pattern holds true wherever you are, from Great Lakes to inland waters, and wherever walleyes are chasing baitfish. Which, it turns out, is everywhere.

The Baiting Game

The bait connection betrays the walleye's presence. In fall, when walleyes ramp up their feeding before winter, the fish will never be far from food. On the Great Lakes, you might see enormous pods of one- to three-inch gizzard shad skittering on the surface or

as big blobs on a locator. Shiners and the like herd up as well on inland waters, and predators are never far behind.

How do you find them? Start looking for structure on a map and then with electronics. Points,

humps and weed edges are all fair game. But when you look with a quality locator that pinpoints fish and bait, such as Lowrance's LCX 15MT, the key is to veer away from the structure and look over open water. If you've seen fish on structure at a certain level—15 feet, for instance—you can bet they'll be at that same depth over open water, from hundreds of yards to half a mile away from the structure. Walleyes will do this day and night. The most important thing to remember is not to glue yourself to structure—the walleyes will wander away from it if bait is present.

Search Mode

The best way to enter into search mode is to start trolling. This way you can cover water and zigzag to find fish. It would be far too time-consuming to jig or live-bait rig. Trolling, on the other hand, spreads lines to the sides of the boat and behind it—the better to cover a swath of water at different depths.

I always try to maximize my efforts with the most rods possible



Walleyes can sometimes be easier to find in the fall than in summer and spring. If you find the baitfish, chances are good that walleyes will be there too.

and the greatest coverage. Enter planer boards, the handy devices that veer lines away from the boat. With them, you can run more rods without tangling and pull lures through more territory. My new favorites for boards are from Church Tackle, which now makes smaller, more manageable models that still track well away from the boat. The TX-6, which is about the size of a deck of cards, is great for pulling crankbaits or spinners with snap weights of up to one ounce. Anything heavier will sink the board. Even small fish or a piece of weed will sink it, which is a big help when you're trying to keep your lures clean. A large fish will sink the little board like a bobber—something I love to see. With the TX-12, which is twice the size of the TX-6, you can get away with weight to two ounces, which you might need for deep spinnering.

Which brings us to my two favorite offerings in fall. While few people fish spinners after summertime, the reliable crawler harness keeps working through October and even into November. You can boost up a size or two with your spinners in fall to tempt more big fish. If, for instance, you were using No. 2 blades in summer, you now might want to try Nos. 4 and 5. The heavier thrum is often just what the walleyes want when they're starting to feed with gusto before winter. And since baitfish, more than bugs, are the main course of fall walleyes, try Northland's holographic blades. They come in silver shiner, gold shiner, golden perch and more colors to mimic baitfish.

By November, though, I normally

start switching to crankbaits. You can move them faster and cover more water (2.0 or 2.3 mph for cranks vs. 1.1 mph for crawlers), and since the fish are so keyed on baitfish, cranks will often do the job even better. Experiment with cranks and crawlers to find out. For the lures themselves, it's hard to beat Rapala Husky Jerks (in shallow and deep-running versions), Tail Dancers and Shad Raps. Again, match the colors to the prevalent baitfish and conditions—silvers around shiners and shad, brighter fluorescents in darker or stained water. You can trick out your lures with additional color with holoform tap from WTP, formerly known as Witchcraft. Add a strip of silver or glow to the lure's sides, something that's particularly effective at night.

If the structure is particularly steep or difficult to follow, you might want to try leadcore. I like it if I'm on a break that twists and turns and I'd have too much line out with boards. Even in 45 feet of water, you can often get down to the fish zone with 75 to 85 feet of line out.

For rods, I use two models by Berkley in the Lightning Rod Signature Series. One is the 7-foot, 10-inch offering. It has a heavier tip that will handle heavier snap weights. If, however, I'm using lighter weights or crankbaits, I switch to the 8-foot, 6-inch model, which has a more limber tip that tends not to tear out hooks. Still, you can get away with weights up to four ounces (say, if you're bottom bouncing next summer) or heavy-pulling cranks.

More than anything, targeting fall

walleyes is a matter of perspective. While it's easy and familiar to stay close to structure, that's not always where the fish are. Open your mind to the possibility of roamers and suspenders, and then go looking for them. They could be half a mile away from your favorite reef or hump. But you'll never know unless you try it.

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Proven Lures & Presentations for Smallmouths

Part 1: Jigs, Tube Jigs, Grubs, Carolina Rigs

by
Mark Hicks

Before Zebra Mussels invaded Lake Erie and drastically increased its water clarity, smallmouth anglers who preferred lures over live bait were practically limited to jigs. In the murky water, which was especially prominent in the western basin, bass relied more on their sense of sound to find food than their eyes. They could more easily locate a darkly colored jig scratching along the bottom than a flashing lure darting overhead.

Now that Erie has become dramatically clearer, its smallmouths see prey farther away. The bass now move greater distances to pounce on a

meal or lure. This opens the door to a gamut of lures that take smallmouth bass from top to

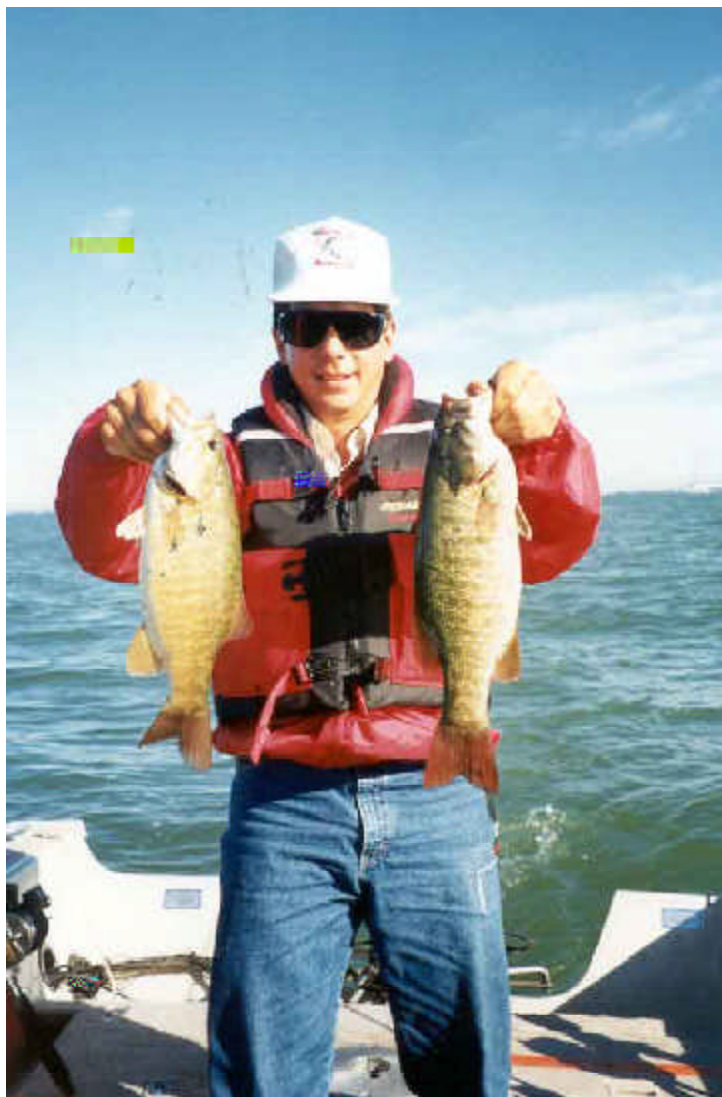
bottom. The key is matching the lure to the season and the conditions.

JIGS

Even though Lake Erie's smallmouths are now susceptible to a variety of lures, jigs still rank No. 1. For decades, the preferred Lake Erie smallmouth lure was a black or gray bucktail jig. Bucktail jigs continue to fare well, but they were nudged out of the top spot by jigs dressed with curly-tailed grubs. When plastic tube jigs found their way to Lake Erie, the response among smallmouth anglers resembled a mob scene at a rock concert. The enthusiasm for this lure has not diminished since.

TUBE JIGS

If you were limited to one lure for Lake Erie smallmouths, it would have to be a tube jig. Tubes take bass of all sizes throughout the season and often in greater numbers than any other lure. During



Lake Erie is now considered one of the top Small-



Tube jigs catch far more smallmouths from Lake Erie than any other lure. The slender jig hides inside the soft plastic bait. Scented and salted tubes work best.

a recent fall B.A.S.S. Federation Divisional tournament held in the western basin, teams of anglers from nine states and the country of Italy crushed every existing record for Federation tournament catches.

Overall, the three-day event racked up 1,429 bass, 221 limits and a total weight of 3,257 pounds of predominantly smallmouth bass. Lure selection for the tournament fell into the category of “no brainer.” So many of the competitors caught their bass on tubes that it was practically a one-lure tournament. The significant question was: What color tube are you using? For most it was some shade of green or smoke.

Berkley’s Power Tube, the first lure of this type to establish itself on Lake Erie, impressed many charter captains who previously relied only on live bait.

“The Power Tube,” says Capt. Bob Troxel, “is the first lure I’ve seen that competes head to head with live bait. Even clients who have little fishing experience regularly catch bass on it.”

Fat 3 1/2-inch tubes impregnated with salt, such as Kalin’s Super Salty Scented Tubes and Venom’s Erie Series Tubes have proven to be just as effective on Lake Erie smallmouths as Berkley Power tubes. The most popular colors include chartreuse, watermelon and dark green, all with black flake. Smoke and brown hues also score well. One reason tubes work so well is they mimic the primary forage upon which Erie’s smallmouths feed. Root a tube along the bottom and it resembles a crayfish or a fat goby. Swim it above the bottom and it appears to be a baitfish on the run.

Narrow jig heads, often in a teardrop shape, slide inside tubes and give these lures a clean, uninterrupted appearance that smallmouths find inviting. Jigs weighing from 1/8- to 3/4-ounce will handle anything Lake Erie throws at you, with 1/4- and 3/8-ounce sizes being the work-horses.

Early in the season, New York

smallmouth guide Jim Hanley rigs tubes with 3/8- and 1/2- ounce jigs and casts them to deep points where smallmouths stage prior to spawning.

“If it’s not too windy,” says Hanley, “I hold the boat with the electric motor and cast to the fish. Because the water is only in the upper 40s to low 50s, I want to keep the tubes on bottom and give them very little movement. In early spring, I love clear silver flake and firecracker colors.”

Fishing guide Terry Jones, who works both the New York and Ontario waters of the eastern basin, fishes tubes vertically early in the season.

“When the bass are on the breaks,” says Jones, “I stay right on top of them with my trolling motor and drop a tube straight down to the bottom.”

As the water warms and bass move up to the tops of flats and humps, drifting methods prevail. Many anglers fail to take full advantage of this phase because they overwork their tubes. Jeff Snyder recommends that you drag tubes with a long line that keeps them digging bottom. Hold the rod low and dead still.



Retrieve or drag tube jigs along the bottom with little additional movement.

“Just let the boat do the work,”

Thomas rigs a 5-inch Kalin's Salty Lunker Grub with a 1/4-ounce darter head jig that has a long-shanked hook. The long shank is crucial for securing solid hookups with these thick-bodied lures. After casting the grub and letting it touch down, Thomas snaps it up, sharply about 3 feet off the bottom and continues the jump-bump action all the way back.

“That big grub darting up brings out the smallmouth's aggressive nature,” Thomas believes. “They nail it on the fall.”

Jeff Snyder, another proponent of the 5-inch Kalin's grub, threads the bait on a 118- to 5/8-ounce football head jig. The wide, football head imparts a stable swimming action and avoids snagging in boulders better than other jig designs, especially with the drift-and-drag presentation that Snyder employs.

To give the jig even more bulk and animation, Snyder embellishes it with a hula skirt which he slips onto the jig's collar before fixing the grub in place. This combination is referred to as a spider jig.

Spider jigs almost seem too big a

mouthful for smallmouths, but the bass engulf them with relish. Snyder's most reliable colors are pumpkin-pepper, pumpkin with green flake, avocado seed and chartreuse salt and pepper.

The most crucial facet to effectively dragging a grub is the amount of line let out behind the drifting boat. Start by making a long cast into the wind. Then hold the rod tip low oia9 j 0 -267he

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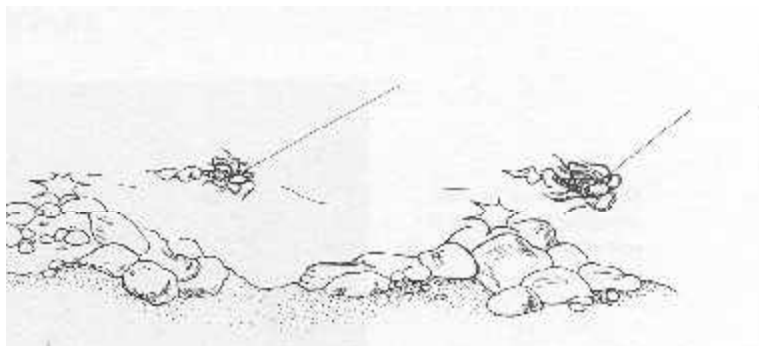
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says Snyder. “When I'm not fishing a tournament, I hold one rod in each hand. I can't tell you how many times I've hooked two bass at once.

GRUBS

A jig dressed with an undulating curly-tailed grub is the runner-up to the tube. A 3-inch grub was once the most popular size, but the 5-inch fat grub now holds the position of prominence. Joe Thomas, of Cincinnati, Ohio, relied on this lure to win a \$100,000 purse during a Red Man All-American bass tournament on eastern Lake Erie at Buffalo, New York.

“If you're after big smallmouths,” emphasizes Thomas, “you'll score better with big grubs.”



A football head spider jig resists snagging better than other jig designs when dragged behind a drifting boat.

test monofilament.

The business end of the leader should sport a 2/0 or 3/0 worm hook dressed with some type of soft plastic morsel. Curly-tailed grubs, 4- to 6-inch worms, tubes and reapers have all proven to be effective on Lake Erie. Hanley especially likes Berkley's Power Sand Worm. Rig the lures Texas style, with the hook's point embedded into the plastic to make them snag resistant.

A Carolina rig's heavy sinker beats a lively tattoo on Erie's rocky bottoms. The ruckus brings smallmouth bass around to investigate, at which point they find the plastic floating seductively behind. It's

usually an offering they can't refuse. Many anglers place one or two 8mm glass beads above and below the sinker to generate more noise. That's not a bad idea, because the commotion caused by the heavy sinker banging against the bottom attracts fish.

"The more noise you make," says Hanley, "the more fish you're going to catch. I've seen many days when a Carolina rig out fishes anything else. I'm convinced it's because the sinker rattles, pounds and bounces along the bottom."

Another fishing guide who praises the Carolina rig is Greg Horoky, who works out of Colchester, Ontario, in the western basin. Horoky is convinced that the

biggest smallmouths suspend above bottom and prefer larger baits. To appeal to these fish, Horoky and his friend Bill Gitlin developed Mann's Floating Jelly Tube in 4- and 6-inch sizes.

This fat plastic lure dwarfs conventional tubes and comes packaged with flotation inserts. The foam inserts make Floating Jelly Tubes float high off the bottom when rigged Carolina style with a 3- to 6-foot leader. Since the lure floats above bottom snags, Horoky rigs it with a straight-shanked 3/0 or 4/0 hook, tip exposed. He runs the hook's shank between the inside wall of the tube and the foam insert and out the nose of the bait.

"Just drag the bait behind the boat," says Horoky. "When the sinker hits and bounces off rocks, the tubes starts and stops and hangs in a bass's face. That's when they pounce on it."

SPLIT SHOT REAPER

Erie's smallmouths grow difficult to catch when they suspend high above the bottom, as they often do during the hot months. Live bait usually fares better than lures at this time, but Hanley recently discovered a finesse lure presentation that overcomes this challenging period: a reaper floating above the bottom behind a single split shot.

In the summer," says Hanley, "I see tons of fish on my graph suspended above the bottom, but I've never been able to catch them on lures with any consistency. Now I throw a reaper out over 25 feet of water and drag it behind the



A Carolina rig's heavy sinker makes a bottom commotion that attracts bass to the lure trailing behind.

boat like live bait. The split shot pulls the reaper down about 10 feet. This little setup has me suddenly catching those bass that have eluded me all these years. I bet I caught three or four hundred smallmouths that way last summer. And I'm catching the better fish doing this."

Hanley's split shot rig consists of a Clear Water Reaper-manufactured under his own name-rigged Texas style with a No. 1/0 light wire Daiichi worm hook. Pumpkin pepper with a chartreuse tail has been an especially productive color combination for Hanley. He pinches a small split shot (1/32, 1/16 or 118 ounce) about 12 to 18 inches above the hook and fishes the reaper with a medium-light 6-foot graphite rod and 6-pound monofilament.

"You just let it float out there doing nothing," says Hanley. "It's great. Just don't get carried away when a bass strikes or you'll break off. With that fine wire hook, all you need to do is raise the rod and keep the line tight."

JIG TACKLE

A sensitive 6 1/2 to 7 foot medium-action graphite spinning or baitcasting outfit serves nicely for jig fishing. Match the rod with 8 to 10 pound test monofilament. Heavier lines prevent jigs from getting deep, especially when dragged behind a drifting boat. Thinner lines made from Spectra and similar fibers help in this respect.

The drawback with light lines is that they don't stand up well to

zebra mussels which cover most of the bottom structures that Lake Erie's smallmouths frequent. Reduce breakoffs by rigging a 4-foot 12 pound test monofilament leader to a thin Spectra line. Attach the leader via a swivel, or join the two lines with a double UNI knot.

This article was an adaptation from Mark Hick's Book, Lake Erie Smallmouth. Part II will appear in the Spring 2002 edition. To order Mark's book on smallmouth bass fishing in Lake Erie, see page 17 or call 1 800 447-8238.

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The Eastern Lake Erie Fishery Report

by
Joe Fischer

The Eastern Lake Erie fishing report for 2001 is a "mixed bag" as usual with some surprises. The late spring near shore fishery for walleyes was generally slow with the best results coming on late night trolling stints off Hamburg and Dunkirk. "I usually caught between 2 to 4 fish on an all night trolling trip using the old reliable No. 11 Rapalas" commented seasoned nightfishing veteran Dave Goodberry. Dave's catch was actually above average because of his vast knowledge of the nearshore structure in the Hamburg area. The usual "hotspots" around Van Buren point and Lake Erie State Park also were erratic with fishermen sometimes catching near limits one night only to "strike out" the next night. Most of the fish caught were males from the relatively good 1998-spawning season. These fish run from 17"- 22" and are excellent table fare.

The early season trophy Small-mouth bass fishing was good with bass exceeding 4 pounds common. This bass fishery continues to be world class and is attracting attention nationally as the pro bass circuit is contemplating making a tournament stop of the New York waters of Lake Erie next year.

The big surprise was the return of the yellow perch. Anglers started catching these excellent eating fish early in the year in water 20 to 40

feet deep. The fish were in the 8-10" range with some exceeding 12". Catches of ten to twenty were common with some veteran Lake Erie "perchers" catching their limit. Generally you could easily spot the perch fishermen as they usually were found in close clusters of ten to twenty boats hovering over a school of perch. The key to catching these fish was to keep moving until you found the school and then be ready to move once again to stay with the nomadic schools of perch. The preferred bait was a live Lake Erie minnow. These fish continued to bite most of the summer but did move gradually down the lake into waters 40-80 feet deep off Cattaraugus creek and Dunkirk harbor. I would expect a great fall run as this delectable little fish tend to school up and feed before winter. Our local New York State Department of Environmental Conservation did predict that we would see a return of the perch but I doubt if anyone expected to see such prolific numbers.

I have always considered the annual Southtowns Walleye tournament as the one of the best barometers for determining the status of the local eastern Lake Erie walleye population. The tournament was scheduled the last week in June this year to enable more kids to fish as school would be out and also that being later in the season might hopefully improve

the walleye fishing. The goal of more children fishing the tournament was attained but the overall walleye fishing was quite poor. The tournament had a total entry of 2,100 plus fishermen but only 306 walleyes were weighed in. This was during a 10-day tournament! The total catch was undoubtedly more than 306 fish because one of the tournament rules calls for a minimum size of 26" before a fish will be weighed in but this still was the lowest number of entered walleyes in recent memory. The winning fish was caught by Dan Kroll and weighed 12.17lb. Incidentally Dan and his crew also had a great week as his crew boated over 40 walleyes fishing in or near Canadian waters. Two hundred fish cashed in this tournament with low weight being slightly over 8 pounds. Body baits and spinner and worm rigs coupled with Dipsy Divers, Jet Planers and Downriggers were once again the rigs of choice. The weather was a big factor as most of the days were windy with 4 to 7 foot waves common. This tournament for some reason has been cursed with some very rough fishing weather in recent years! If you have ever gone out on Lake Erie and experienced its unique ability to create a 2-4 foot chop in minutes you will not forget it.

Another local tournament held in July (Canadian 4X4), is a 2-day team total weight type tournament

that produced similar results with better than half the teams not even weighing in any walleyes on 1 of the 2 days! These results are very poor considering that this tournament annually attracts some of the finest local Eastern Lake Erie walleye fisherman from Canada and New York State.

The Professional Walleye Trail Eastern Pro-Am Tournament (PWT) came to Dunkirk Harbor in early August for a 3-day tournament. There were 126 professional entries competing for a top prize of approximately \$49,000. This tournament runs over 3 days with each contestant allowed to weigh in 5 walleyes daily. Amateurs also fished with randomly selected professionals every day for a separate division of prizes. The fishing once again was spotty with only 1 pro bringing in a creel limit of 5 walleyes each day. Some of the pros were even shut out one day of this 3-day tournament. The winner of this event was George Barach of Barryton, Michigan with a total weight of slightly over 89 pounds, which is less than 6 pounds per walleye. The amateur winner was Greg Seese of Bryceton Mills, West Virginia with a total weight of 86.30 pounds. These are still impressive numbers considering the difficult fishing conditions.

These pros ventured the entire length of the New York waters of Lake Erie in search of nomadic walleye schools and baitfish with mediocre results. This year is totally unlike the mid-summer of 2000 when there was a heavy concentration of Ohio walleyes present in the eastern basin and most veteran walleye fishermen

were bringing in limit or close to limit catches of walleyes in excess of 6 pounds. The type of lures used by the professionals was almost identical to the lures used during the aforementioned Southtowns tournament.

Cormorants are starting to show up in mass along the eastern Lake Erie shoreline as they start their annual fall migration. They also will deplete the tenuous walleye fishery. The round nose Goby also is now very well established in the eastern basin of Lake Erie as almost every fisherman I've talked to has caught many of these exotics. The effect of these invaders has yet to be totally determined but I will predict it won't be positive! It's very obvious to most veteran fishermen that Lake Erie is at a transition point and important decisions and sacrifices must be made by all stakeholders to protect and preserve this wonderful resource for future generations. We do not need a repeat of Nova Scotia.

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Marina to be expanded at Middle Bass Island

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) has been awarded a \$956,623 federal grant to expand and improve a public marina at Middle Bass Island in the western basin of Lake Erie.

"The grant will help provide more and better public boat docks at Ohio's future Middle Bass Island State Park," said ODNR Director Sam Speck. "There is a tremendous need for short-term dock space around the Lake Erie islands where recreational boating is so popular."

ODNR purchased almost 124 acres at the southern tip of the 758-acre island last year at a cost of \$6.75 million. The site includes a mile of undeveloped shoreline; glacial grooves and other natural features; wetlands and grasslands that house several endangered species of plants and animals; and a safe harbor marina.

So far, ODNR has installed 25 new docks at the island's marina to accommodate visiting boaters for stays of up to 10 consecutive days each. As many as 50 boats can tie up at the new docks — which cost about \$125,000 to install.

Daytime dockage is available on first come, first served basis. Dockside electric and water will not be available this summer. A reservation and deposit (credit cards accepted) are required for overnight stays. Boaters should call the Lake Erie Islands State Park Office at 419-797-4530 for reservation information.

Pro-Line Offers Two New Fishing Boats

The 22 Bay Boat



Load up your bait rods, your spinning rods and all your gear. While you're at it, invite a few friends along because Pro-Line's new 22 Bay Boat is so big and roomy it defies conventional styling for the typical bay boat. In fact, the only typical feature Pro-Line's new 22 Bay Boat has in common is that it's well suited for the shallow waters of spring-fed creeks, coves, bayous, tiny islands and winding inlets. It's also equally at home in the nearby coastal waters where some of the best bottom fishing occurs.

True to its Pro-Line heritage, the 22 Bay Boat is one serious fishing machine. The open deck layout offers 360-degree unobstructed fishing. A forward raised casting platform holds two large boxes that double as wet/dry and rod storage. The bow rail is split at the casting deck to make good bait placement or cast netting for baitfish easier. All hatch covers are designed with a true gutter system for keeping water out. A nice extra touch

that'll give fishermen a little more bang for their buck is that their new boat is pre-wired for the addition of a trolling motor!

The large open cockpit has lots of room to enable you to out maneuver your most stubborn hook-up and is backed with a baitwell with raw-water washdown. The molded center console contains full instrumentation, is ergonomically designed for quick access to the contra water-resistant rocker switches with resettable circuit breakers, and there's plenty of space for mounting all your favorite electronics. There's also storage space in the console as well as built-in tackle drawers to keep lures, hooks, and weights close at hand. There is a cooler under the leaning post, diamond non-skid decks, hatch covers and gunnels. Operating under the theory that you can never have too many rods on-board, the 22 Bay Boat has 9 vertical rod holders.

A proud, safety conscious partner of NMMA, Pro-Line exceeds industry construction requirements. F.I.S.T., wood free construction, superior materials and superior construction technologies enable Pro-Line to offer a transferable, 10-year hull warranty on every boat built. A fact that only adds to the strong resale value Pro-Line is known for.

From safety features such as

closed cell foam flotation to through-bolted hardware, the 22 Bay Boat is crafted with the same quality as Pro-Line's blue water fishing machines. All hardware is made from 31 6L marine-grade stainless steel. The external upholstery is 32-oz. UV-protected vinyl. Even the gelcoat is premium MaxGuard' gelcoat, to resist fading and scratches. The hull and deck are bonded together with adhesive polyester resin bonding putty, and all hardware is thru-bolted and backed with aircraft locking nuts.

Pro-Line also covers every 2002 model with Pro-Care, their comprehensive 5-year limited warranty. This includes the engines, controls, all mechanical and electrical systems, lighting, horns, trim tabs, factory-installed electronics and accessories, stereo and more. Pro-Care is transferable and comes with a 24-hour, 1-800 hotline, free towing and dockside assistance. For complete details contact a Pro-Line dealer.

The 22 Bay Boat is 21' 11" LOA with an 8'6" beam. Hull draft with engines up is 11 inches with a 13-degree deadrise. Fuel capacity is 60 gallons. The maximum outboard HP rating is 225 HP.

The 22 Dual Console.

Pro-Line introduces a newly engineered 22 Dual Console that offers runabout styling with fishing practicality. Let's face it, not



everyone is a hardcore tried and true fisherman, and not all boating excitement happens while trolling. Some boaters use rods and reels, some use fins, tanks and spears, and some just like to cruise the waterways and check out the scenery. Pro-Line's new 22 DC will more than satisfy the fisherman, diver or the cruiser in anyone.

The first thing that stands out about this new Pro-Line is her attractive looks. The sweptback lines and graceful curves give her a sleek, fast profile that attracts admiring glances wherever she shows up. But the real surprise is that unlike a more traditional runabout, fishability didn't have to take a back seat to looks. This is where the design team at Pro-Line always excels!

Once you get past the sleek styling, the first clue to her fishing heritage is the huge, self-bailing cockpit. Not only is there ample room for fighting a fish, the stern has a half dive platform with ladder for the divers onboard. There is also a 9.75 gallon baitwell with raw-water wash down, rod holders, under the gunnel rod racks and two built-in tackle boxes.

Beneath the cool shade of the color coordinated Bimini Top are twin consoles with drink holders, a

lockable glove box and watertight storage that flank a walk-through windshield opening on to a forward casting / sun deck with an insulated fish box and forward rope locker. For safety a marine grade stainless steel bow rail is through bolted and backed with aircraft locking nuts.

As for the runabout aspect of this boat, punch the 225 HP outboard and you're off and really running! The combination of full console instrumentation, the latest hydraulic steering technology and a 19 degree deadrise slicing through the water offers you full control and gives you the smooth feel and touch of an expensive go-fast boat.

A proud, safety conscious partner of NMMA, Pro-Line exceeds industry construction requirements. F.I.S.T., wood free construction, superior materials and superior construction technologies enable Pro-Line to offer a transferable, 10-year hull warranty on every boat built. A fact that only adds to the strong resale value Pro-Line is known for. From safety features such as closed cell foam flotation to through-bolted hardware, the 22 Dual Console is crafted with the same quality as Pro-Line's blue water fishing machines. All hardware is made from 316L marine-grade stainless steel. The external upholstery is 32-oz. UV-protected vinyl. Even the gelcoat is premium MaxGuard™ gelcoat, to resist fading and scratches. The hull and deck are bonded together with adhesive polyester resin bonding putty, and all hardware is thru-bolted and backed with aircraft locking nuts.

Pro-Line also covers every 2002

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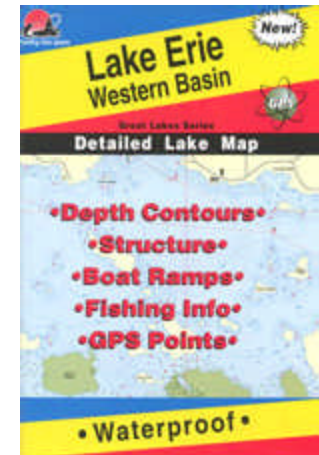
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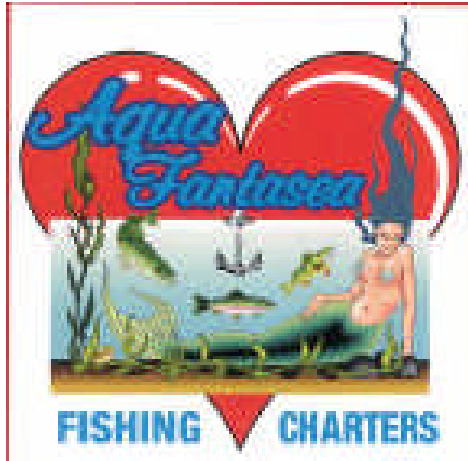
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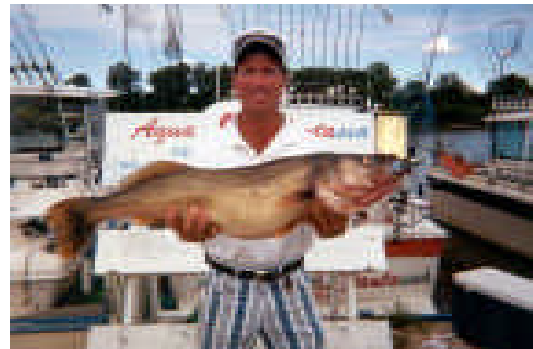
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