

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.

Advertise in Lake Erie Walleye Magazine

Full Page\$400
 Half Page\$200
 Quarter Page\$100
 Business Card ...\$ 50

Call

1 800 347-4519

or visit

www.walleye.com

**for more information
regarding**

advertising opportunities

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."

For more information on the Veg-E Jig or other Lindy Little Joe products, call 218-829- 1714 or visit www.lindylittlejoe.com.

Known as a leading freshwater tackle company, Lindy Little Joe, Inc. is credited with developing many of the freshwater lures and methods that dominate the industry today. The company also offers a complete line of market-leading terminal fishing tackle: NO-SNAGG sinkers, jigs, rigs, floats and accessories including name brands such as Lindy Little Joe, Thill and System Tackle.

Ted Takasaki's Newest Video - Just Released *Techniques of a Champion*

With Ted Takasaki
1998 In-Fisherman PWT Champion

Learn the techniques Ted used to capture the coveted \$100,000 PWT Championship in this Brand NEW, Action Packed 60 minute video!!

FREE gift from Ted with every order!!

Get your copy today!

Send \$19.99 + \$3.00 S&H to:

Ted Takasaki

1281 Sun Valley Drive

East Gull Lake, MN 56401

(Minnesota Residents add \$1.30 sales tax - \$24.29 total)

Great Offer!!

Order the Champion's video package
(all three of Ted's Videos)

Trophy Walleye Tactics,

Top Gun Walleye Tips

and the brand new

Techniques of a Champion

for the special price of \$45.99 (\$60.00 value)
plus \$6.00 shipping & handling

Visit our Web Site at:
www.walleye.com

for Up-To-Date
Information
on the

Lake Erie Walleye Scene

Fishing Reports
Charter & Lodging Info
Lake & Weather Conditions
Other Walleye Links
...and much much more

FishUSA.com

COMPLETE WALLEYE FISHING GEAR

Great Prices Flat \$3.95 Shipping Fast Delivery

Downrigger and Diver Rods
Trolling and Line Counter Reels
Spoons, Plugs and Bait Rigs
Divers and Releases
and much more . . .



On the web: www.FishUSA.com
By phone: 800.922.1219

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