Secrets for Summer Walleyes

by
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Summer walleye fishing can be a little tough, but it doesn't have to be that way. The key is understanding how warming water temperatures and a changing environment can effect walleye location, and activity levels.

A walleye's environment is one that is constantly changing, with walleyes reacting accordingly. To stay with the fish, anglers need to be willing to change how and where they fish for walleyes, and keep an open mind. Doing the same things in the same places, time after time, will probably yield less than satisfactory results.

Transition

As walleyes vacate early season hideouts, in favor of deeper summer haunts, there's a period of time when fish are in transition. When there aren't that many fish shallow, and there aren't that many deep, fishing can be a bit sporadic.

However, as more and more fish show up at their new "home for the summer", the action can only get better. With an increase in numbers, your chances for finding a few active ones greatly increases.

Walleyes don't all do the same thing at the same time, and when it comes to feeding movements, it's like they take turns. Some will be totally inactive, some may be starting to stir a little but won't move far to take a bait, and others may be extremely aggressive and willing to take just about anything you put in front of them. Those are the traitors that can give up a schools identity, and location.

Summer Location

Summer location can include deep, offshore structure, like sunken islands, bars and humps. Look for structures that have most of their mass above the thermocline. Structure that is too deep will see little walleye activity, if any, until after the fall turnover.

Larger structures will often out produce the smaller ones, simply because they can offer more feeding opportunities for 'eyes on the prowl. However smaller ones can be easier to fish, because of their simplicity. There's only so many places they can hide. You can quickly check the top, sides, and the base of the break, with a good graph, like the Raymarine L 750. The L 750 provides incredible definition, and has a white line feature that allows the user to identify fish that are holding tight to the bottom.

If they're there, go ahead and fish, if not, it's time to move on.

Larger Structure

Larger structures will require you to spend more time watching your electronics, and less time fishing. Walleyes can be anywhere, and it doesn't pay to fish where they're not. To find them, you can save some time by cruising the entire structure, making note of where you saw the largest concentrations.

In that situation, a Global Positioning System can be a huge asset, as concentrations can be marked with an icon, allowing you to return after your search is completed. The Raymarine 425 is a GPS that possesses the new W.A.S.S. capabilities, and is accurate to within nine feet, which can help get you back to an exact spot.

Another option is dropping a marker which can be a good idea, and will help keep you oriented with the area you're fishing.

Searching

One of the best places to start your search, is near a break line that drops quickly into deeper water. The top of deep structure can play host to perch, baitfish, insects and crayfish. Active walleyes will often be found cruising the top edge of a break, where they can quickly move up to grab a bite to eat.

Another place to find summer eyes, that is often overlooked, is the transition line where hard bottom meets soft. Where gravel or rock changes to mud or silt, a transition line is created, and can concentrate fish. Transition line fish see little attention by most anglers, and can be one your best bets for a shot at a real hawg.

Presentations

Once you've found a potential area, and have marked at least a few fish, it's time to get down to business. The early season presentations of rigging and jigging may still produce, but quicker methods, like trolling spinners, really start to pickup. Rising water temps can push a walleye's metabolism to the boiling point, and increase the chances that he'll react to a speedier technique.

One of the top summer producers, is a spinner and live bait combo. Spinners possess an element of speed, and it's the speed that can often nail walleyes with a bad attitude.

To get a spinner in the "zone", it's hard to beat a spinner and bottom bouncer combination. A bouncer can get a bait where you want it , and run relatively snag free. Bouncers in the two to three ounce range are the ticket, and allow the user to keep the bait close to the boat.

By keeping it close, you can react to sudden depth changes. You can also lift the bait off the bottom, to get it in front of any high riding fish that you mark on your depth fmder.

If you see a fish riding high off the bottom, try to lift the bait to the same level. Walleyes tend to feed up, and by lifting your bait up, you increase the odds that he'll take your offering.

You'll want to keep the spinner snell short, let's say three feet or less. Longer snells allow for more drop, and result in more snags.

Bait

The odds on favorite bait for dressing a spinner rig, is a big fat juicy night crawler. However leeches can be effective at times, and minnows can turn late summer 'eyes when nothing else will.

Feeding

One thing to keep in mind in your quest for mid summer ' eyes, is the fact that walleyes continue to feed, and do so more heavily than at any other time of the year. The key is to find them, and then find out what they want.

Quite often, what they want is something with a little speed. Think about it, not only does a walleye's metabolism increase, but so does it's prey. Everything is moving at a faster pace, and it's a fast paced world we're living in.

See you on the water.

Editors Note: Ron An/auf is a former two time PWT Trail Champion.

Fish Ohio's Lake Erie Artificial Reefs!

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