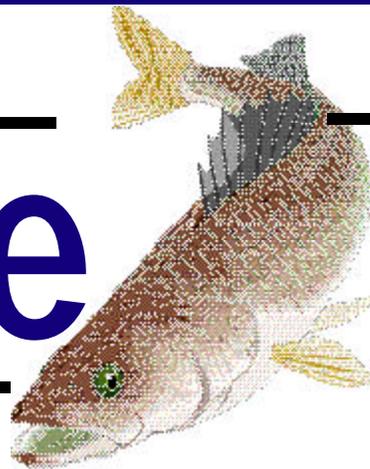


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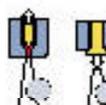
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## From The Editor

Well, another summer has come and gone and we are in the midst of fall. September and October is a special time for Lake Erie. The lake 'turns over' at this time each year causing the dynamics of the fishery to change. Without the thermocline acting as a boundary, walleye in the lake move more freely about the water column and into shallower water. This can be both frustrating to those hunting the fall 'eyes and rewarding, when the 'eyes can be found.

Later in the fall as water temperatures begin to plummet the walleyes head west to begin preparations to over winter. Areas off of Huron, OH are hot spots for walleyes at this time of year. Several of the central basin charter captains move their boats to Huron for this walleye action. The walleyes are feeding heavily during the fall, before winter sets in.

The perch fishing so far this fall has been very good. Seems that the size of perch is down a bit from last year but the numbers are there. Weather is the biggest factor controlling the success of the fall perch angler. Fall storms can really churn up the lake in a hurry. Not only does it keep boaters off of the lake but following a 'good erie blow' it can take a few days for the perch to gather themselves for another strong 'bite'.

Conditions on the lake can change quickly and anglers really need to be aware. Recently I took my wife, sister and father out for an early morning perch catch. The lake was calm and we limited out in a few hours and got back to the dock before noon. My mother heard how well we did and wanted to catch some herself, so we loaded back up and headed out at 2pm but the wind had picked up and was blowing 15+ knots directly from the east. After leaving the harbor we

See Editor, page 7

### Lake Erie Walleye

Rick Kubb, Editor/Publisher

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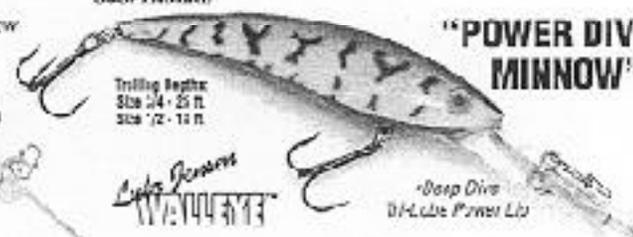


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# Walleye News and Fact File

## **CONSERVATIVE FISHING REGULATIONS RECOMMENDED TO PROTECT LAKE ERIE WALLEYE AND SMALLMOUTH BASS**

*Proposals would lower walleye catch limit, close smallmouth bass spawning season*

COLUMBUS, OH — Conservation measures designed to provide long-term stability for Lake Erie's walleye and smallmouth bass populations are being proposed by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife and may result in significant new fishing regulations in the 2004 season. The proposals will be finalized and presented later this summer to the Ohio Wildlife Council to be effective March 1, 2004.

ODNR's Division of Wildlife plans to propose reducing the springtime limit on walleyes from four to three fish per day from March 1 - April 30. The limit for walleyes outside of the March 1- April 30 period is planned to stay at 6 fish per day. Also planned is a proposal creating a year-round walleye size limit of 15 inches.

"Poor weather conditions during recent springs have resulted in inconsistent and minimal walleye reproduction in Lake Erie," said Gary Isbell, executive administrator for the Division of Wildlife's Fish Management and Research Program. "The outlook for the 2003 hatch is not good, based on the cold, stormy spring this year."

Isbell said that while many anglers are reporting some of the best catches seen in recent years, the concern is for the future of the fishery since reproduction has been poor in two of the past three years.

The Lake Erie Committee of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission has advised member agencies to prepare for a "40%-60% reduction in total allowable catches (TAC) for 2004."

"All Lake Erie agencies are examining regulation options best-suited to their area to meet this challenge," said Isbell.

State fisheries biologists are also proposing closing of smallmouth fishing in May and June, when the popular sport fish are laying eggs and guarding their nests.

The proposal comes in response to concern that the round goby, an invasive fish species, is adversely impacting smallmouth populations by preying on bass eggs and fry. Gobies arrived from eastern Europe in the ballast water of transoceanic ships and have multiplied rapidly during the 1990s, becoming abundant throughout Lake Erie.

Research conducted by the Division of Wildlife in conjunction with The Ohio State University over the last three years has documented that gobies are having a negative impact on smallmouth reproduction, as higher populations of round gobies dramatically decrease the number of smallmouth in the nesting areas.

In addition, tagging studies conducted in cooperation with the Lake Erie Charter Boat Association and Ohio Sea Grant have confirmed limited movements or small home ranges of smallmouth bass. Fish that are tagged and released are likely to be found at a later time in the same location. This raises concerns about removing smallmouth during the spawning season, and explains how serious nesting failures are to local populations.

Another potential negative factor impacting smallmouth bass is the double-crested cormorant, a bird that dives to feed on small fish including small bass. Neither gobies nor cormorants were present in Lake Erie just 10 years ago.

No fishing regulation changes are proposed for yellow perch or white bass.

The Division of Wildlife, based on a hearing to be

scheduled this summer, consultation with anglers, and further review of the recent research information, will finalize the proposals between now and September. Ohio Wildlife Council action will likely take place in October 2003.

### **Captains map strategy to fight walleye limits**

CATAWBA ISLAND — The Lake Erie Charter Boat Association thinks there's something fishy with new walleye limits proposed by state biologists. So they're pitching their own plan. At a sizable LECBA gathering recently at Holiday Village Motel and Charter Service, the charter captains talked shop with Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife personnel.

The controversy lies with ODNR's recommendation to drop the Lake Erie walleye bag limit from four to three fish per day during March and April, effective next year. Declining walleye numbers are blamed for the change.

The daily walleye limit would remain at six fish during the remainder of the year.

However, LECBA President Bob Collins said his group's 19-member board of directors favors a different strategy: Lower the bag limit to four from September through April, while retaining the six-fish limit during lucrative springtime months.

"(The charter captains) didn't see any evidence that would indicate that that wouldn't be better than cutting the spring limit to three for 60 days during the 'prime time' they'd be having their spawn," Collins said.

He said fishing captains took a "percentage hit" on profits a couple years ago when the state limit was lowered — and one way or the other, captains will incur another percentage hit this time around, too.

In fact, Good Time Charlie's Charters captain Charlie Eulitt has said the proposed limit reduction has "got quite a few people on the warpath."

"The burning issue now is, if the object is to protect the females, then a majority of the board feels that they'd like the possibility of closing the season, starting in fall and continuing on through to spring."

Collins said the meeting was productive, and that

ODNR officials made a good presentation. He said both groups have vested interest in preserving the Lake Erie fishery.

Other proposed ODNR fishing changes:

An all-year walleye size limit of 15 inches.

A moratorium on smallmouth bass fishing in May and June, during spawning season. Biologists blame nest predation by round gobies as a key reason.

The Ohio Wildlife Council is expected to vote on the proposals Oct. 15.

### **Big fish escape, but anglers rescued**

KELLEYS ISLAND (July '03) — When crashing waves swamped angler Pat Byle's boat, his 20-foot Ranger filled with water up to the instrument console. Soaking wet, he radioed for help, battling to stay aboard amid 8-foot whitecaps near Gull Island Shoal.

Luckily, Byle and his passenger were rescued. But when he tried to transfer his fish onto a competitor's boat, two beefy walleye got loose and swam off into the depths -costing Byle \$50,000, a \$35,000 boat and a Wal-Mart RCL Walleye Tour title.

Byle's boating accident — and fish misfortunes — capped a decisive day of Lake Erie walleye tournament action. Had the Wisconsin man not lost control of his pair of fish in roiling waters north of Kelleys Island, he said he would have returned with about 30 pounds of walleye. That would have defeated the other nine Wal-Mart RCL finalists by a 10-ounce margin.

"I'm not 100 percent sure what happened," Byle said afterward, visibly shaken. "It happened so fast."

The incident happened during a gale warning about 9:30 a.m., near a popular fishing site about two miles south of the Canadian border. Northeast winds of up to 25 knots churned the lake, spawning 6- to 8-foot waves.

Bob Domek, an Illinois pro fisherman, heard the distress call and motored to the scene. He pulled Byle and his amateur partner, Steve Anderson of Illinois, from the lake.

"We saw them yelling and screaming," Domek said. "It took a while to get there because the waves were so big."

Domek said only about 4 inches of Byle's boat were above water by the time he arrived.

"When we pulled up, I knew we only had a couple of chances to do this. So I told them when they get the chance, to just dive into the boat," Domek said.

The stranded men managed to board Domek's boat — but two of the five walleye didn't.

U.S. Coast Guard Station Marblehead dispatched a 47-foot rescue vessel and a 27-foot boat to the area.

Boater's Emergency Service also sent out two boats to join the search effort.

Coast Guard personnel eventually located the swamped boat and floating debris, then towed the boat to shore.

Byle survived the day's winner-take-all, Wal-Mart RCL fish-off with three walleye totaling 15 pounds, 15 ounces — good for sixth place out of the 10 finalists. David Kolb of Riverview, Mich., won the event with five walleye totaling 29 pounds, 6 ounces.

After rescuing the anglers, Domek's boat was battered by waves, shattering his windshield. The boat started to flood, but the men were able to pump out the water and get back to shore.

Byle said Lake Erie conditions worsened in a matter of minutes that morning.

"We went out to make another pass when a wave came over the back of the boat. So we had to get water out of the boat," Byle said. "I couldn't get the engine going when another wave came about 10 seconds later.

"I went to call for my day and another wave hit before I could give my coordinates. I'm very happy to be alive. I'm very proud of what Bob did."

The Wal-Mart RCL Walleye Tour also visited Port Clinton in April 2001.

In April 2000, six competitors in a Port Clinton InFisherman Professional Walleye Trail tournament rescued four swamped amateur anglers during a storm near Niagara Reef, about nine miles north of Camp Perry.

## From Editor, page 2

found ourselves in 3-5 footers and immediately turned back for a roller coaster ride back to safe harbor. The lake had gone from calm to heavy seas in only an hour or two.

In early September I had the opportunity to fish Lake Ontario with a good friend and charter Captain, Captain Frank Godina of Top Gun charters. Frank fishes Lake Erie in the spring and moves his boat to Olcott, NY for Salmon fishing from July through October. We had a great day on the lake, even though conditions were a little rough and a recent Lake Ontario storm had churned the lake up causing it to turn over and scattered the King salmon. We did get three hook ups that morning and I landed a 20+ pounder (see story inside).

Finally, the Ohio DNR is proposing new regulations for walleye. They propose to reduce the daily limit from 4 to 3 during the spring spawn from March through April as well as creating a year-round 15 inch walleye size limit. The Lake Erie Charter Boat Association (LECBA) would like to see the proposal changed and have offered their own view of lowering the bag limit from six to four from September through April.

Each of these proposals has merit and you can make a good argument for both, depending on what numbers you look at. Numbers can be deceiving though. Mark twain said "there are lies, damn lies, and then there are statistics".

Whichever proposal is adopted I feel all anglers will benefit in the long run. These conservation efforts will help us all enjoy walleye fishing for generations to come in wonderful Lake Erie. Till next time, good fishing.

# Hook, Fight and Net Walleyes Like a Pro

by  
Captain Michael Veine

It never ceases to amaze me how some anglers manage to catch any fish at all. It seems like poor fish fighting and netting techniques run rampant on Lake Erie and other Great Lakes waters. Thousands of walleyes are unintentionally released every year by anglers that haven't refined their fish fighting techniques. Here are some pointers that will put more hooked fish into your boat.

## Fishing Tactics to Improve Hookups

Hooking up solidly with fish in the first place is always the first critical step. Needle sharp hooks should be at the business end of every walleye angler's line. I sharpen mine with a hook honing stone. The hooks on nearly all my walleye lures also receive a minor modification. I bend the hooks outward slightly to better catch the mouth tissue of the fish. This modification should only be used when sticky sharp hooks are maintained and with strong hooks as well.

Minimizing line stretch results in more solid hooksets. Trolling with shorter setbacks will ultimately increase the bite to hookup ratio. This is the main reason why I attach rubber core sinkers in front

casting, keep casts close to the boat allowing the natural fluttering action of the lure to entice strikes, while at the same time improving hookup rates.



**Donna Veine waits for Roger Poore to reel the planer board to her so she can remove it. Michael Veine photo**

of all of my trolled crankbaits. It allows me to reach deeper depths with less line out. I also use heavy, low-stretch lines for crawler fishing with bottom bouncers, my primary walleye tactic from May through summer. Even when casting or jigging, hooksets become much more consistent with less line out. When jigging, try to keep your lines as vertical as possible by using a heavy enough jig. When

giving the line slack. Walleyes, and especially trophy class fish, are famous for clamping down on the bait with their bony mouths so hard that the hooks will not penetrate solidly. If the fish feels a jerk on the line and then gets slack, it will realize something is wrong and just spit the bait out; say goodbye. With steady pressure though, the fish will usually continue to hang on. We keep the rod in the holder

## Hooksets

Setting the hook properly on a walleye is critical. When trolling properly with inline planer boards, the fish should be allowed to hook themselves.

Most walleye pros agree that the proper way to fish inline boards is so they never release and stay positively attached to the line. When a fish first hits an inline board setup this way, resist the

temptation to jump up and yank on the rod. Jerking the line will just bounce the board across the surface

until the walleye pulls the board as far back as possible.

At that time, maximum tension is being exerted on the line and I can also determine if other lines may need to be cleared to allow the fish to be brought to the boat without tangles. When the board stops dropping back, we simply reel the fish in slowly and smoothly without any jerking or pumping. When reeled in smoothly, the board will glide to the boat without bouncing and submerging. The angler continues to reel the board in until it can be detach from the line. When doing this I stand up on the rear casting platform of my Lund while the angler either sits down or bends at the knees lowering the rod tip down so I can reach the board.

Even when I'm removing the board, the angler keeps reeling in the fish with the rod tip held high in the air. This keeps the fish moving towards the boat as smoothly as possible while keeping maximum tension on him at all times. The drag is set lightly to allow retrieval, but only at a slow pace. With this constant tension method, when the walleye does one of his famous headshakes, the hooks will simply bury deeper into his mouth.

I also keep trolling when a fish is being retrieved, which allows better tension on the line, keeps the fish in the back of the boat and also allows the other remaining lines to hook up with those coveted multiple hook-ups. I will slow my trolling speed down though if needed especially when trying to net the fish.

### **Tournament Winning Refinements**

All of my trolling reels are the same

Daiwa LC47SG line counters that feature a star-drag. Out of the box, I take the reels apart and give them a thorough degreasing. I then apply quality, lithium grease to the gears, drag system and clicker. This simple process will smooth out the mechanisms allowing more efficient fish retrieval.

A star-drag is the best system I've found for serious, experienced anglers to subdue walleyes and other Great Lakes game fish. Still, star-drags drive me nuts on charters because inexperienced clients usually wrap their knuckles around the knob inadvertently bumping the star drag, which loosens it up and allows line to pay out resulting in lots of lost fish. For this reason the clicker always stays on in my boat unless the angler has proven to me that he or she is cogniscent of gripping the knob by the fingertips. Savvy anglers always remove their gloves for this reason as well.

The clicker on all the trolling reels that I've tested tend to impair the efficiency of the drag system. Stated simply, with the clicker off, the drag system is much smoother and will catch more fish. With a savvy angler at the rod, the clicker should be turned off as soon as the rod is pulled from the

holder with a fish-on.

When fighting walleyes during tournaments, you want to retrieve the fish as quickly as possible, while minimizing the chances of loosing the fish. To accomplish this, I increase the star drag tension while bringing the board to the boat. You can get away with this because of the stretch in the line and the shock absorbing action of the board, which further cushions any action that the fish may take. When my partner is removing the board, I thumb the drag back a little looser. With a star-drag, quick adjustments can be made by an expert without upsetting the reeling cadence. As the fish gets closer to the boat and line stretch decreases, I loosen the drag even more. If the walleye is bulldogging below the boat, the drag is set so loose that line can only be gained by pulling the rod up and reeling down while keeping constant, steady tension on the fish at all times. This is the only time I use a conservative pumping technique on walleyes, when the fish is straight down. If the fish makes a run, I lower the rod and even use my body to absorb the



**This big walleye was Todd Staffords fish of a lifetime so careful attention was paid to fighting techniques. Michael Veine photo**



**Proper netting technique can put more walleyes in your cooler. Michael Veine photo.**

shock and the loosely set drag also keeps the tension constant. Some walleyes will inevitably be hooked by the skin of their lip and this conservative fighting technique will prevent those lightly hooked fish from tearing loose.

When the board is being retrieved, I always keep the rod tip high with the rod butt held at a 90-degree angle to the water. Once the board is removed though a decision needs to be made. If the walleye is on top of the water and is not fighting too hard, then I keep the fish up and get him to the boat as quickly as possible by quickening my reeling pace and keeping the rod tip high.

If the fish is a fighter, then I stick the rod out to the side of the boat at a 90-degree angle to the stern and keep the rod tip as close to the water as possible. This way the fish is encouraged to take his fight underwater where there is less of a chance of him throwing the bait. As the fish nears the boat, the rod is raised upward to a horizontal, 90-degree position, which usually brings him to the surface and the

waiting net. If the walleye stays down throughout the battle, then the most efficient fighting position is with a horizontal rod in the 90-degree position.

Also, by keeping the rod tip high or out to the side of the boat, if fish does manage to spit the bait, those dangerous hooks won't fly into the angler or other passengers in the boat. I have several scars caused by impaled hooks due to negligent anglers that failed to keep their rod tips up or to the sides.

### Netting Fish

Proper netting techniques start with a good net. I use Cummings nets exclusively. My walleye nets have an 8' long handle and a basket that is 2' wide. The net bag is deep and the nylon mesh is rubber coated to facilitate hook removal. I consider this sized net to be ideal in my 22' Lund or any smaller boat for that matter. If I were fishing from a larger vessel though, my net would be longer, but the hoop size would remain the same. Walleyes tend to be spunky fish around the boat, so a smaller hoop size allows quick net jobs especially when the fish gets around the motors. I have tried salmon sized nets twice that size, but they just don't work nearly as well.

My nets are all equipped with an Offshore pinch pad clip attached

about 8-10" from the base of the hoop. The clip holds the end of the net-bag and releases it when the weight of the fish hits the net. This little enhancement will prevent hooks from snagging into the net bag at inopportune times.

When fighting a walleye to the boat, care should be taken to keep the fish away from the motors. I run a kicker motor for trolling on my boat, which is mounted to the port side of my main outboard. I almost always direct the fish to the starboard side of the stern when trolling, which keeps the fish away from the prop-wash. When walleyes hit a prop-wash, it tends to blow them back and they could be lost as a result. If the fish won't cooperate and go to the starboard side, then we try to bring him to the net along the port gunnel away from the kicker prop-wash.

When netting a walleye I always wear safety glasses to protect my eyes from flying hooks. Unless it's really rough, I typically perch myself on my rear casting platform when netting fish. This allows me to get right on top of the fish and reach out behind the motors. As the walleye nears the boat, I always point the net right towards the struggling fish. This way, if the hooks come loose, the net acts like a shield. I've saved myself from dozens of flying baits with this technique and it also positions the net for a quick and efficient net job.

As the fish comes within striking distance of the net, the angler should smoothly pull back on the

**See Hook, fight & net, page 31**

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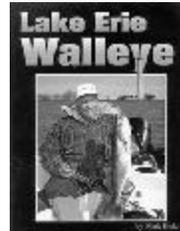
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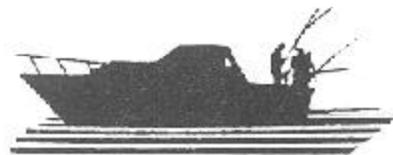
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# Bait & Search for Fall Walleyes

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 crank baits. 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

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 X-16, 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



**Fall walleye fishing is all about searching and finding the correct bait to use. Big fish are often the result.**

as big blobs on a locator. Shiners and the like herd up as well on inland waters, and predators are

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 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 crank baits 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. In the cool waters of fall, try running cranks and crawlers at the same relatively slow speeds—say 1.2-1.4 mph. 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 holofom 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.

# Lake Erie Fall Trophy Walleyes

by  
Captain Phil Cadez

Overall 2003 has been a good year for walleye fishing. After a tough April and early May the fish cooperated as the weather became friendlier. The 1999 hatch was the 4<sup>th</sup> best in the history of the lake. These fish were 17 to 21 inches and made up most of the limit catches.

While most anglers filled their coolers with these great eating walleye a few fishermen are waiting till late September and October when the trophy walleye return to the Western Basin. This large school will head for the deeper water off the coast of Cleveland. They stay there until the water temperature begins to drop. Last year was like a duck shoot when these big walleye returned. Many of these fish ranged from 4 to 11 pounds. They all were very well fed and fat.

There's quite a few charters that secure temporary dockage in Huron, Ohio, approximately 10 miles east of Marblehead. This makes for shorter runs to the fish. The fish begin appearing about mid September and stayed till the ice was on the lake with charter and local fishermen sharing fishing

information, it's a sure bet the word will spread about their coming back.

Most of these big walleye move towards the west in either large



schools or smaller packs. There's a lot's of boats looking for these fish and the trollers usually find them first. If you see a half dozen charters trolling in a formation you can bet they've found the schools. There's no structure, the bottom is either clay or sand. The fish will rise and fall as they feed on the schools of shad and minnows. The water depth of Huron is a little deeper than the Western Basin. You might be fishing in 40 foot of water or even deeper if you're 10 miles off shore.



When it's calm the trollers have a distinct advantage. They can keep moving in and out of the patches of walleye varying their depths till they find out what's working the best. When there's a chop on the lake most anglers prefer casting for these fish.

The trollers prefer using dipsy divers and plainer boards. They'll troll anywhere from 4 to 16 lines at once. Different colored spoons from 3 to 4 inches are the most widely used lures. Some of the local fishermen also troll deep diver big lipped minnow shaped lures with lots of success.

The casters will drift and use the countdown method

**When the weather is right fall is the right time to land good size walleyes**

after they've found the right depth. If the fish are high they'll use 1/2 or 3/4 oz egg sinkers on their 'walleye weapon' casting rigs. As most of the locals use these casting harnesses they experiment with colors and size of blades. All summer we've used a No. 3 spinner a few beads and a small hook at the end. A few anglers go to a no. 4 Indiana or Colorado spinner.

Colors most widely used are gold, chartreuse, silver, white, and bi-colored spinners. The beads can also be gold, red, green, chartreuse, yellow or white. A few anglers use a little larger hook at this time of year. They'll go from a No. 4 to a 2 or even No. 1. Regardless of the size we use only half a nightcrawler on these hooks. It's supposed to resemble a May Fly. If you use a big or whole worm without a stinger you'll just be feeding them if they bit short.

A few of the guides have gone back to weight forward spinners at this time of year. They prefer 5/8 or better yet 3/4 oz lures. Favorite lures are Erie Dearies, Crooked Eye and Parrish 'P' lures. Most popular colors are gold with gold blades, chartreuse, green and white, silver and green with large silver blades.

If you're coming in your own good sized boat you can put in at Huron and go out the river mouth to the fish. There's also ramps in Sandusky Bay or Marblehead. It will all depend when you come and how close to the Marblehead area the fish are. In November you won't need a boat you can catch these big fish at night casting crank baits just below the

surface. The walleye push the schools toward the lighted docks all thru the nighttime hours. It's strictly timing, they could be there at dusk or come at 4:00 AM.

Since timing is everything call the area first to determine when to come. A few helpful numbers might be of the Erie County Chamber of Commerce, 419 625 6421; the Huron Chamber of Commerce, 419 433 5700; and the Ottawa County Visitors Bureau at 1 800 441 1271. The numbers can help you with hotels, charters, and local bait shops. If you don't have a good sized boat, the best way to get in on this fantastic walleye fishing is to secure a local full time professional guide. These charters are usually set up to accommodate up to 6 anglers. Get a few friends together and call or search the web at lakeeriecharters. You can also e mail me at [capt.phil@cadez-charters.com](mailto:capt.phil@cadez-charters.com) for information. GOOD FISHIN!

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# Dog Gone Walleyes

by  
Rick Olson

Late summer and into early fall can make for tough fishing, especially if you're a walleye angler. Old marble eyes can become difficult to find, and even tougher to pattern. Most anglers have given up for the season, and many of our top walleye lakes become almost desolate. It may seem a little eerie to have so much water all to yourself but just because nobody's around, doesn't mean the fish aren't there. It's just that where and when they do what they do may have changed. Instead of giving up, you may be well served to do what you do when and where the walleyes are doing it.

The late summer/early fall period is a time of consistent locations and patterns (good or bad), that set up

and remain until late into August and even September. On many natural lakes throughout the Midwest the action can be pretty



**In early fall many of the top anglers will switch to live bait rigging. Under the right conditions, live bait can really turn the walleyes on.**

darn slow, especially if you stick with the usual tactics in the usual

places.

The usual tactics includes live bait rigging and jigging, both of which are main stays of any serious

walleye angler. The usual places include deep rocky bars and humps, or maybe underwater points, or even deeper weed lines all of which can fall into the category of "classic" walleye structure. Classic structure may start out as hot spots earlier in the summer but the action may begin to wane as hordes of anglers take their toll on the existing populations.

Another option available to all of those walleyes is to simply pull up stakes and move and head for greener pastures. They may head for more of the usual locations but on the other hand they may not.

Instead of more of the same they may actually leave

all of the usual far behind and head for wide open spaces, out in the middle of nowhere.

Rather than clinging tight to deep structure, late summer walleyes will often suspend far off the bottom relating to nothing else but their next meal. Suspended schools of perch, shiners, smelt, alewives and even immature sunfish and crappies can draw walleyes a long way from anything considered "classic". If there is enough bait suspended there is going to be a sizable following of walleyes, without a doubt. This phenomenon actually happens more often than you may think, and may be your best bet for nailing dog day walleyes.

Even if the usual spots are holding and producing fish there is a good chance that a portion of the population will be suspended and may be the secret to finding the super sized models. If you're after a real hawg a little time spent plying the great abyss may be the answer.

Determining if suspension is an option worth pursuing on your body of water requires a little investigation. A couple of factors that help make it all happen includes clearer water and a presence of suspended schools of bait fish. Walleyes don't suspend because it feels good, they do it because it's an excellent opportunity for filling their bellies. Water quality need not be crystal clear but the option may be eliminated by the presence of dark, dingy, or muddy water.

Finding suspended fish begins by taking a look around said deep

structure and heading into deeper and deeper water while keeping a close eye on the depth finder.

While it can be almost impossible to mark fish with your average graph when on plane, the Ray Marine SL1250 combined with High Definition Fish Imaging allows you to do just that.

The ability to mark fish while on plane can be a huge advantage as you can cover a lot of water in a short amount of time. They won't show up as classic arcs though, but instead show as spikes that are up off the bottom. If you're marking spikes you better slow down and get a better look at what might be down below. Clouds of bait and schools of bigger fish are what you're looking for and if it starts to show up you can bet at least some of what you're looking at is walleyes.

The next step is to get a bait in front of all those fish and see if there are any takers. The most efficient way to get the job done is to troll a crank bait at the depth where you are marking the most fish. It sounds a little complicated but it isn't all that difficult if you keep it in perspective.

All you really have to do is get close and the fact is there will probably be fish at many different levels. The thing to do is vary your presentations and try and duplicate what works.

First timers should keep it as simple as possible and you can do so by sticking with a couple of basic crank baits like the Shad Rap or Down Deep Husky Jerk. They have different diving depths and actions and are about all the

variety you will need. From there you can tie one on and vary the amount of line you have out to vary the running depth.

To achieve the maximum diving depth you'll have to let out a lot of line, like a hundred feet or more. You can also add an inline weight about eight feet or so in front of the lure to achieve even greater diving depths. By varying the amount of line you have out, or the size of the inline weight you're using, you can hit different depths. Working different depths is the key and even if you're marking fish from top to bottom, there is usually a narrow band holding the bulk of the biters.

Another thing to keep in mind is the spooking factor as suspended fish exhibit all of their natural tendencies including being extremely boat shy. Clip on planer boards are the way to go, as they can get your bait far and away from the boat and in front of fish that haven't been harassed. They're the way to go because they're inexpensive, easy to use, and easy to store.

If you get serious about trolling you may also want to add a couple of rod holders as holding on to a rod, a board, and a deep diving crank bait can get old fast. If you get really serious you might want to pick up a copy of Precision Trolling as it will tell you exactly how deep a specific bait will run with a specific amount of line out.

# Hot Fall Walleye Patterns

by  
Rick Olson

**P**roductive walleye patterns come and go and if you don't make the right moves at the right time you can get left in the dust, and that's no place you want to be. By the time most anglers hear about a hot bite the good times have already come and gone and all that's left is a few scraps, if they're lucky. The sharp ones seem to always get there ahead of the crowds, and in doing so are in the right place at the right time more often than most.

Coming in on the tail end of a hot pattern very seldom results in satisfactory results. More often that not you're left with trying to scratch one out here and one there, and is a tough way to put together a solid catch. It can still be done but the odds just aren't there and you may be better served by looking ahead for the next likely pattern to set up and see if you can get in the action a whole lot earlier.

As productive patterns set up it usually doesn't take long for word to get out and the hordes are soon to follow and the window of opportunity may quickly slam shut. They'll have some fun for a while but all that pressure will likely slow things down (way down ),

and the easy pickings are soon gone. With a basic understanding of seasonal movements and

natural and manmade lakes and even rivers to a certain extent.



**In the fall, walleyes often migrate to shallow waters while following schools of bait**

patterns you can stay ahead of the crowds, and take advantage of peak situations when they occur. Basic movements include a shallow to deep to shallow movement and covers the spring to summer to fall periods. While specific situations can vary, these movements occur on many of our

With the end of the late summer period and the beginning of early fall, the stage is set for a deep to shallow movement. Walleyes do what they do for a reason, and the reason is filling their bellies with as much as they can as easy as they can, and exactly why they make that move for shallow water.

The shallows are where young of the year baitfish begin their life cycle and where they hideout and develop while gaining weight and size. By late summer most will have developed to a size that hungry eyes find appealing and when they become extremely popular with big schools of foraging walleyes.

In natural lakes look for the mouths of shallow bays to hold good numbers of fish, as well as rocky bars and reefs,

and even weed flats, depending on what's available. Weeds can hold massive schools of minnows and immature perch as all of the greenery plays the part of nursery for most of the spring and summer. But by late summer and early fall some of those weeds will start to lay down and die leaving a lot

of that bait in a rather precarious position. Walleyes will move up to and into a weed flat and take advantage of the situation. Rock piles provide nooks and crannies for bait to hide out, and can also hold thousands of immature crayfish that perch will key on, which in turn will draw in old marble eyes.

In big reservoirs one of the early fall hotspots occurs in the back of creek arms in necked down areas where bridges and their accompanying abutments funnel current and fish. Walleyes will hole up in said area and wait for big schools of bait like perch and white bass to be delivered to them. Where you fish will determine just exactly how you fish and the methods used can vary greatly and may include jigging, rigging, cranks and spinners.

Working shallow rocks may require light lining a 1/16oz jig like a Blue Fox Foxee Jig tipped with a small leech, piece of crawler, or a minnow. Or you might try anchoring upwind and letting a jig tipped with live bait suspended below a slip bobber drift back over the tops of the rocks, especially if there are too many snags. Another highly effective method involves casting a small crank bait like a #5 or #7 Shad Rap and working it back through the rocks, allowing the bait to occasionally bang into the bottom.

If you have enough rocks to cover you may even try trolling the same sized Shad Raps over the available cover and run down the active fish. To work a weed flat you may want to get on the deep edge and drag a spinner and crawler combination behind a bottom

bouncer. If the weeds are sparse enough you might elect to get right into the middle of it all and try the jig and minnow combination.

Another consideration when working shallow cover is wind, and it would be a good idea to use it to your advantage. Heavy wind and waves can create current, current that can flush bait fish out of shallow hiding areas and into harms way. Waves pounding into shallow cover is a situation that walleyes instinctively know puts the odds in their favor as it creates an ideal feeding opportunity and walleyes will never ever be far away. A hard wind pounding into shallow cover for a couple of days can create the most intense action and something you don't want to miss out on.

Unfortunately there is no cut and dried method that will work in every situation so it would be a good idea to be prepared to do it all. The last thing you want to do is beat the crowds, be there when you should be there, and not be able to get the job done.

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# Lake Erie's Yellow Perch 2003 Hatch Best in Years

by  
**Jeffrey Frischkron**

**N**ot in nearly a generation has Lake Erie been the nursery for so many yellow perch. And it's been more than a decade since the lake's walleye hatch has shown such strength as well.

Ohio recently completed its lake-wide survey of this year's perch and walleye hatch. Both showed strong gains. 'The 2003 class of perch and walleye could be a year to remember,' said Kevin Kayle, manager of the Ohio Division of Wildlife's Fairport Harbor Fisheries Research Station.

Kayle said that for yellow perch as surveyed from Fairport Harbor west to Vermilion, the hatch was 'as good or better' than in the previous 16 years. 'The only other even remotely comparable perch hatch like this was in 1996, and we're now catching those fish as our jumbos,' Kayle said. Likewise, the yellow perch hatch in the Western Basin is looking good, Kayle said. 'You can say that as well for the perch hatch from Fairport Harbor east to Conneaut,' Kayle said.

Of great importance to Lake Erie anglers is the walleye hatch. 'It looks like the best walleye hatch in the Central Basin since 1990, and indications are that the hatch also is very good to excellent in the Western Basin,' Kayle said.

big of a surprise, Kayle said. 'We had a relatively cold and hard winter, which helps 'set the fish up' for spawning; they sort of shut down and don't expend much energy when the water stays cold for so long,' Kayle said. 'They're better prepared for spawning.'

Assisting the hatch was good precipitation this spring that allowed for good flow into the lake. In turn, that led to good production of forage for the just-hatched perch, Kayle said.

'And we had a dry April without storms that cause problems during the spawn,' Kayle said. 'Much of this also applies to the walleye.' Kayle said this year's hatch of perch should start showing up on anglers' stringers in late 2005 with the walleye graduating to the ice coolers in 2006.

'If our 15-inch minimum length proposal becomes accepted,' Kayle said. However, even with the good hatches the state has no intention of retreating from its conservative regulations. After all, this was just one year class, though an exceptional one, Kayle said.

'We'd like to see this spread out over three, four or five years; even longer,' Kayle said.

## **Enjoy Lake Erie Fall Perch Fishing**

The cooler days of fall herald the prime time of yellow perch fishing on Lake Erie. Light southerly or southwesterly breezes can bring out fleets of anglers young and old in search of yellow perch. The yellow perch's eagerness to bite and the simplicity of fishing techniques make this a sport revered by rookies and old-timers. All it really takes to catch some perch is a decent-working rod and reel with a crappie rig of 2 or 3 (size 6 or size 8) hooks and a sinker weighing 3/8 of an ounce or more. You can also use a perch spreader; a rig made of thin wire with a sinker in the middle and attachments for a snelled hook (a hook with a short segment of fishing line) at either side. Lake shiners are the best bait, but minnows, chubs or worms are fine. Fish at the bottom or just a few cranks up off the bottom. Sometimes, if the water is murky, anglers have attached flicker spinners and beads to their rigs for flash and attention-getting action.

Popular areas to catch Lake Erie yellow perch can be found outside any major harbor. Good locations to begin looking for perch are in 24-39 feet in the western basin and 39-52 feet in the central basin. Or just look for the nearest pack of anchored boats! As fall

Which really doesn't come as too

**See Enjoy Fall, page 31**

# Fall Fishing on Lake Ontario for "BIG KINGS"

*With Captain Frank Godina of Top Gun Charters*

by  
Rick Kubb

In Gordon Lightfoot's timeless ballad, the *Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald*, he sings "...and further below Lake Ontario takes in what Lake Erie can send her". These two wonderful Great Lakes are connected together via the Great Niagara Falls. Both Erie and Ontario offer fantastic sport fisheries. Erie is a warm water fishery with walleye, smallmouth bass and yellow perch being the primary targeted fish with the more recently introduced steelhead trout in the deeper central and eastern basins of Lake Erie.

In contrast Lake Ontario is a 'cold water' fishery, dominated by steelhead trout, brown trout, coho salmon and king (Chinook) salmon.

Combined, these two lakes offer a

tremendous diversity of fishing opportunities for anglers to enjoy within a very reasonable driving distance. One day you can be



**In the fall the mature King or Chinook Salmon are found In-Shore as they migrate and stage up near the rivers.**

getting your limit of walleye and/or perch on Erie as well as fun fishing with catch & release smallmouth bass, then drive a few short hours and get hooked up with a monster King Salmon on the deep cold water Lake Ontario.

There are a few Charter captains that take advantage of the diver-

sity of these two lakes by running charters on both Erie and Ontario. Captain Frank Godina of Top Gun Charters is one of those captains.

Captain Frank starts his season in April on Western Lake Erie for the spring and early summer walleyes. He fishes there until the end of June. In early July he trailers his 28 foot Rampage to Olcott, NY, docks at the New Fane Marina and fishes Lake Ontario up till the end of October.

Recently, Captain Frank invited my wife Karen and I to join him for some fun fishing for King Salmon.

We jumped at the

chance and planned to meet up with the captain during the first week in September. This was going to be a fun-filled and hopefully fish-filled weekend. On Friday morning we caught an early bird flight from St. Louis (yes, I'm still land-locked here) to Cleveland, where we keep a 24' Bayliner docked at Fairport Harbor, OH (the family boat).

On Saturday, we fished Erie and were successful in limiting out on perch. Later that day we got the perch cleaned and frozen in freezer bags of water for the return trip home and stored 'em in the freezer.

With no time to rest, we got in the car and headed East, destination Olcott, NY. Olcott is a small fishing village located about an hours drive from Buffalo, on the southwest shoreline of Lake Ontario. Total driving time from the Cleveland area is about 4 hours.

We had to be at the dock at 6am to meet up with Captain Frank so we decided to drive up that evening and stay overnight at the local "Lighthouse Motel", located just a stones throw from the Marina Saturday evening. The motel was clean and very affordable. The motel owners have signs everywhere instructing their guests NOT TO BRING FISH INTO THE ROOMS. Those that do pay a hefty cleaning fee. Most of the rooms are set up to sleep 6 fishermen.

After a good nights sleep we were up early to meet our captain. We stopped by a local café to grab a cup of 'coffee to go' and then met Captain Frank at the Dock. Although I've known Captain Frank for several years (he was one of the first captains to advertise in *Lake Erie Walleye Magazine* and on the [www.walleye.com](http://www.walleye.com) web site), this was my first opportunity to meet him. It's always nice to match the name with the face and shake hands, in person.

We boarded "Top Gun" and a few minutes later we were headed out of the harbor, along with 4-5 other captains. Captain Frank explained to us that all of the captains from Olcott 'work together' and share information each day. They are a very closeknit group of captains.

As we headed out Captain Frank explained the days plan for fishing. We would start out doing 'In-Shore' fishing for mature King Salmon. If the lake was right and not too rough we would then head 'Off-Shore' to fish for Cohos, Steelhead and immature Kings.

He mentioned that the inshore Big King fishing was excellent up until a few days earlier when a large front blew over the lake causing it to 'turn over'. With the lake turn over the water temperature stratification all but disappeared and the Big Kings had scattered. The water temperature was at 68 degrees, pretty much from top to bottom.

Nonetheless we set up and began a slow troll east in about 90 feet of water. We set up with four lines out on the Big John downriggers using spoons at depths ranging from 60-80 foot. We also put out three Dipsy rods, again using spoons at the same depth ranges.

Captain Frank uses all Daiwa reels and Browning Rods. He uses 9-10 foot rods on the dipsy's and shorter 8 foot rods on the down riggers. He uses wire line on the dipsy's and 30 pound test monofilament line on the downriggers.

Wasn't long till we had our first hook up. I reeled in a first year

king (called a Shaker), about 15 inches long which we released. The pretty, silvery colored fish fought well but will be someone else's trophy in a couple of more years.

Looking at the Captain's Furuno color depth finder, we were marking some big kings, although as the captain reminded us, they were scattered about and not in the numbers of just a week ago. It is impressive though to see a big king on the color fish-finder as they really stand out among the bait and other markings on the screen.

Captain Frank received a call from another captain who hooked up a big king with cut-bait. So, we changed up and put a couple of 'flasher' rigs together with cut-bait to replace a couple of the spoons we were running. Captain Frank uses pre-packaged neatly shaped cut herring and slides it into a rig behind a 'flasher' The 'flasher' is a rectangular shaped (3"x 5") board that twirls in the water in a 5 foot circle and really moves the bait around. This is effective for mature Kings that have moved In-shore and are not as active as are the Kings of early summer when they are Off-shore and feeding more heavily.

About an hour later we had another hook-up. This was a big king. After about a half hour or so of fighting this one we almost had it to the boat when it released. Captain Frank gave me some encouragement by saying that on average only about 50% of big kings are landed in the boat.

As we continued our troll Captain Frank explained to me the differ-



**Karen Kubb with Captain Frank Godina at the helm of Top Gun, searching for BIG KINGS.**

ences in In-shore vs Off-shore fishing in Western Lake Ontario.

In the summer months, beginning in July, almost all of the fishing is 'Off-shore'. That is, about 10-20 miles offshore where the right temperatures and the bait are found. During the summer months the fish are in a feeding frenzy looking for large schools of bait. There is a real mix of fish caught including steelhead and brown trout, coho salmon, and king salmon, both the immature kings (also called teenagers) as well as the mature kings.

As fall approaches in late August and early September the mature Kings begin a migration to shallower waters In-Shore. They begin to stage or school together for a run up one of the rivers. There is a period of a few weeks before the lake turns over when the Big King fishing is excellent

and most of the captains fish In-Shore during this time.

As we were talking fishing, out of the corner of my eye, I saw a downrigger release and BANG,



**Captain Frank with a "Flasher" rig designed to move the bait in a circular pattern enticing big fish to strike.**

we had another Big King ON! This one we did land, a 20+ pounder. I took my good old time with this fish, taking only the line the fish would give me. It seemed like more than an hour before I had the fish to the boat. My wife Karen kept the actual time at about 20 minutes. The strength of these fish is amazing. I would bring in about 10-20 cranks on the reel then the fish would dive down and take out another 50-100 feet of line with it. This pattern repeated itself several times, till the fish tired. Captain Frank netted the fish and it was 'in the box'.

Earlier, one of the other captains headed offshore and reported a building sea and conditions weren't very good so we decided to stay inshore. We trolled for another hour or so then decided to call it a day.

As we headed to the dock, Captain Frank explained his

operation to me. His boat "Top Gun" is a 28' Rampage with twin 350 Chryslers and plenty of room in the cockpit for a group up to six fishermen. The electronics on the boat include a Furuno color depth finder and Lowrance GPS map system. The captain uses a Big John multi-troll system which gives speed and temperature both at the surface and at the cannon-ball at the depth fished. He uses a Raytheon auto-pilot with remote control allowing the captain to steer the boat from the back of the cockpit.

Captain Frank begins his season on Lake Erie in April for walleyes. In July, he moves to Olcott, NY for the Salmon fishing on Lake Ontario. He runs about 55 charters a year. He would like to (and could) do more charters but he is not yet retired from his day job.

Captain Frank has been chartering for 7 years but has been fishing with the professional-type rigging for close to 20 years. Frank explained to me that over the years he got to know and become close friends with several of the charter captains on both Erie and Ontario. After a while he was running with the same type of boat and rigging and was catching as many fish as his captain friends. He eventually decided to get his captains license and begin his own charter.

Many of Captain Frank's customers are 'repeats' and several of them fish with him on Lake Erie in the spring, then come to Lake Ontario for the summer and fall fishing for salmon.

A good number of his clients find "Top Gun" over the INTERNET where he advertises on the [www.walleye.com](http://www.walleye.com) web site as well as other web sites. He receives enough business from the INTERNET that combined with his repeat customers he really doesn't need to advertise elsewhere and he no longer does the 'Sport Shows' as they are too expensive with travel, hotel and booth costs and everything else that goes along with it.

Our day on the lake with Captain Frank came to an end as we headed back into the harbor and to the dock. We had our fish cleaned by one of the mates from another charter boat. He neatly dressed the 20 pound King and bagged our fillets for us. We put the fish in the cooler and after thanking Captain Frank for a wonderful day on the lake we headed back to our home port, Lake Erie, where we would again fish for perch the next day. This was a fun trip as we experienced the best of both worlds, Erie and Ontario for all they had to offer!

*Captain Frank Godina runs "Top Gun Charters" and can be found at [www.walleye.com/topgun.htm](http://www.walleye.com/topgun.htm). You can also reach him at [fishtopgun@hotmail.com](mailto:fishtopgun@hotmail.com) or by calling (724) 927-6912 or (724) 822-9712 -boat.*

## 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

# Three T's of Fall Transition, Turnover & Trophy Walleyes

by  
Perry Good

**A**s predator fish begin their fall feeding habits, their focus centers on large forage. Young of the year perch, cisco, river shiners and chubs, along with other forage, such as frogs, crawfish and even their own offspring will be targeted. Successful trophy hunters will match the hatch, almost scientifically, at this time of year. Imitation of the forage base is very critical and a key to productivity during the summer feeding binge!

Feeding forays are anything but mysterious! The fish have to eat a lot as summer activity increases. The predation cycle is in high gear on reefs, large points and adjacent flats.

Veteran anglers can predict these movements, and position themselves for hot late summer or early fall action on the biggest fish of the year. Big fish become vulnerable for longer periods in the fall because they move into areas where baitfish are staging, some remaining in the general area through winter. To catch walleyes during fall transition and early fall consider the tendency for walleyes to move up.

An obvious relationship exists between prey and walleye movements during this transition period. Forage fish move shallow during turnover and early fall because cooler water now becomes available there. And walleyes follow their food to these areas. The sunlight penetration also

makes a big difference as to where the walleyes are located on any given hump. You wouldn't think that sunlight penetration would go down as far as 25 or 30 feet but in clear lakes it does. So when fishing, pay close attention



to the sun and make sure that you fish the shady side of that hump. More active fish will be found in this area.

I prefer shallow rock humps with big, boulder-sized rocks. I also prefer them to be fairly close in proximity to shore. They don't necessarily have to be tied to the shoreline, but they should be fairly close.

The rocks, if they are close enough to the surface, absorb heat from the sun like a solar panel. The warmth attracts minnows and you know the rest. A few scattered weeds growing up between the rocks can be a

real bonus.

Massive bait schools break up and walleyes head for specific structural elements that funnel scattered, roaming forage past specific spots. Look for long fingers or spines that protrude toward the main lake. Roaming baitfish usually congregate along these fingers and filter down them. Walleyes wait at the tips. Find those spots and you'll find big walleyes. Bright warm days are preferred to cold, blustery ones. The sun is lower in the sky this time of year, so light penetration is decreased. However, bright days will cause the water to warm up, which will turn fish on. Frequently, action will be better from mid-day on. A wind coming into the rock pile can be advantageous, although I have enjoyed some nice catches on, calm days. Remember that the angle of the sun's rays is not as direct at this time of year so the fish can be quite shallow. The direction of the wind will have a lot to do with how the fish locate. Usually they will be working the windy side of the rock pile.

These spots vary but are based on factors like: water temperature, availability of baitfish, oxygen, light level, structure and schooling tendencies. Success rests with proper presentation. Once you have located the edge and fish, the next step is to entice them to bite. Your bait presentation will depend upon the

See Three T's, page 31

# Going for an Early Fall Spin for Walleyes

by  
John Kolinski

There comes a point each fishing season when slowing down is the best way to speed up your walleye catch rate. When the crankbait bite crawls to a halt on our Midwestern lakes and rivers, or when your travels take you to big bodies of crystal-clear water like the Great Lakes, it may be time to break out the bait box and go for a spin. And while I've successfully fished spinner rigs and live bait as early as April and as late as November, they have proven most effective during that late-summer to early-fall period when walleyes are nomadic, forage is abundant, and a little finesse is in order.

Like most top walleye presentations, spinner rigs offer versatility. From blade and bead size and color to bait choice, weighting options and lead lengths, they can be adapted to effectively work everything from deep-water structure to shallow stained-water bays. That shallow water bite rates as one of my favorites. Walleyes in skinny water are usually aggressive and explosive. It's also one of the simplest situations in which to present a spinner rig.

When walleyes can be located in water from 3-10 feet deep, bottom bouncers, drop weights and snap weights aren't usually necessary. I like to slide a 1/8th-ounce bullet weight or split-shot onto my line and use a 6- to 8 foot leader back to a crawler harness. If there's any floating debris in the water, such as weeds broken loose by waves and wind, the bullet weight will usually catch them before they foul your rig, and keep you fishing effectively.

In those cases, a two-hook harness is probably the way to go just in case any debris gets past the in-line weight. When the water is free of debris, three-hook harnesses will help you hook and hold more fish. Certainly, shallow-water walleyes can be spooky, especially in calm conditions.



Hand-held rods are an advantage in this situation because they'll let you know exactly where your bait is at all times. One important note about bottom-bouncers: They are called "bouncers" for a reason. They are not meant to be dragged around on their side, nor are they effective when presented in that fashion. Keep them in touch with the bottom, not entrenched in the bottom. Structure these days often includes zebra mussels that can slice through monofilament or fray Fireline instantly. Rather than risk losing the walleye of a lifetime, add a couple of line floats to the rig in place of the beads.

Open-water calls for a third presentation. Instead of inline weights or bouncers, snap weights come into play. These fish are usually located in extremely clear water. In-line weights and bottom bouncers run too close to the spinner and harness for these skittish fish. Snap weighting eliminates those concerns. It's a method that requires a bit of fine-tuning to find the most effective combination, but I usually start with a leader of 20-30 feet, then attach the lightest weight I can depending on water depth, wind and wave action and trolling speed, which is typically the slowest I can go and keep the spinner blades turning. The tricky part is determining how far to let the snap weight out after clipping it to the line. It will depend on where the active walleyes are located within the water column. There are books and charts available to help anglers put the right numbers together. Another method is to run however many lines the local law allows with different lead lengths from the snap weight to the rod. Once you find the one that is working, just adjust the rest accordingly. No matter how you present spinner rigs, it's important to understand that you are not trying to appeal to a walleye's appetite. It's unlikely that night crawlers factor seriously into the diets of open-water walleyes or even those late-summer 'eyes in shallow water situations. Rather, spinner rigs attract walleyes through the color of the blades and beads, the sound and vibration the blades or rattle beads make and, ultimately, the scent the bait provides. Big Colorado style blades can be deadly and I almost always fish at least one as

large as a No.7.

Lindy Hatchet Blades - Lindy's Hatchet Blades offer more of a thumping action that triggers bites when other blades aren't getting it done.

There are other times when willow leaf blades, which spin faster at slower speeds, do the trick, and still other times when the style blades get the fish going. A couple of my tournament-fishing friends add stick-on eyes to their blades for extra attraction. With very few exceptions, spinner rigs should be fished as far away from the boat and as far apart as traffic allows. In clear water, it's inefficient to fish rigs so close together that the same fish can see two of them at once. In open-water situations, walleyes are often suspended and will move away from an approaching boat. They'll shy away from boats and motors in shallow water, too. In-line planer boards take care of those concerns by carrying lines as far away from the boat as the angler desires, and the new Tattle Flag additions let you know if a small fish or any debris has found the hooks. For many of the same reasons, it's often productive to impart a fluttering action to your rigs when the wind won't do it for you. In calm water, simply put the motor in neutral for a few seconds before engaging it again or troll in an "S" pattern that will keep the speed of your spinner rigs changing constantly and moving up and down through the water column. Some anglers experience frequent line twist that can be caused by tight turns, incorrectly hooked crawlers or minnows, inoperative swivels or a combination of all three. Make sure when you hook a crawler that you catch just the tip of the head with the top hook and force the crawler to stretch out and straighten itself so the other hook or hooks go in through the same side. When I

fish minnows or chubs on spinners, I've found that pushing the hook through the top of the head first and out through the mouth rather than the other way around keeps them swimming straight. Adding an extra swivel can also help reduce twist. Finally, it pays to take good care of your spinner blades. There's no reason to allow blades to tarnish or let the paint chip off by throwing them carelessly into a tackle box compartment. I keep my blades looking shiny and new by storing them in 2x3 zip lock bags according to size and color, and storing them in a compartmentalized Flambeau 5004 tackle box.

As summer begins to fade, don't forget about all the options spinner rigs provide. When the water's clear and forage is abundant, it may be just the change of pace needed to relocate a few fat, sassy walleyes to your livewell.

*Editor's note: John Kolinski is an eight-time championship qualifier during his seven years of professional fishing on the Professional Walleye Trail and Masters Walleye Circuit. His articles can be read in a number of publications and at top walleye-fishing sites on-line.*

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# The Eastern Lake Erie Fishing Report for Fall 2003

by  
**Joe Fischer**

**T**he old adage that 10% of the fishermen catch 90% of the fish could be used to assess the offshore Eastern Lake Erie summer walleye fishery in the summer of 2003. The walleye fishermen that fished several times a week could keep close tabs on the nomadic small schools of walleye and consistently return to port with near limit walleye catches in late July and August. Once again worm harnesses seem to work the best followed closely by Ronesky and similar stick baits. Spoons tipped with worms also started producing later in the summer. The veterans followed

the old adage "run silent run deep" using Downriggers, Dipsy Divers, Jet Planers, wire line, braided line and other devices to attain the desired depth of the suspended walleye schools. This year the majority of the walleye seemed to be west of the Cattaraugus Creek, which is a return to the typical pattern of the offshore walleye in the summer. Last year was unusual in that a lot of walleye seemed to stay to the

east of Cattaraugus Creek instead of gradually moving west as the summer progressed.

Most fishermen had to really "pay their dues" as the walleye season



**Gary Dudek was the big Southtowns Tournament winner in 2003 with a 12.36 pounder**

started very slowly. This was especially true during the Southtowns Walleye Association's 19th annual walleye tournament as the water was cold and the fish scattered. This tournament generally has approx. 2000 entries and many large fish are caught. This again was true in 2003 as it took a 12.36-pound walleye to win. Cash prizes were awarded for the top 200 fish with low to cash exceeding 9 pounds. The walleye

that wins this tournament has gotten consistently bigger over the years, during the 1980's a 10-pound walleye was uncommon with 5-10 being caught for the whole Southtowns tournament and low to cash weighing between 7 and 8 pounds. Last year over 30 fish exceeded 10 pounds! The general trend in the eastern basin fishery has fewer but larger walleyes. This year however a lot of 3-5 pound walleyes have been showing up which is very encouraging for the future fishery. Southtowns is a very conservation minded club in that they strongly advocate catch

and release if the fish is not intended for consumption and will not even weigh in walleyes at their tournament that do not exceed 26".

The professional walleye fishermen (PWT) also had a tournament in the middle of July at Dunkirk. These fishermen quickly showed why they are pros as they caught hundreds of walleyes in their brief stay at Dunkirk. They fished a little differ-

ent then our local experts in that they used a lot of lead core line to get their lures deep. The vast majority of these fishermen had open bow aluminum boats between 18 and 24 feet equipped with large outboard motors so they would waste very little time getting to their selected fishing spots. These boats are great for smaller lakes but as many of our Lake Erie veterans know, are marginal for offshore Lake Erie fishing. The lack of weight and size almost caused a tragedy as one of these boats capsized during a gale force windstorm with 8- 12-foot seas on the second day of the tournament. Both participants were tossed into the sea but as luck would have it another tournament boat happened to accidentally discover them shortly afterwards. To accidentally discover anyone in the water in 8-12 foot seas, I believe is extremely unusual to say the least! One of the participants suffered minor injuries along with hypothermia and was treated in Lakeshore hospital. Both boats did not hear the earlier suspension of the tournament due to the high winds and rough water. The capsized boat valued at approx. \$80,000 went to the bottom and as of this article has not been recovered. The local soup kitchens benefited from this tournament as they received "unsavable" walleyes for their use. All of the PWT tournaments advocate catch and release and the fish are handled with due care but if the fish does not survive they are normally donated to local charitable organizations who distribute the fish to needy families.

Early reports seem to indicate that 2003 was an excellent year for walleye spawning on the Eastern Shore of Lake Erie. Historically a cold long winter followed by a rapid warm-up seems to produce the conditions nec-

essary for a good class year of walleye. I will have more on this once the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) completes their annual fall survey of the Eastern Lake Erie fishery. Preliminary reports are that the western basin also might have a benchmark year for walleye spawning.

The cooperative venture between the Erie County Federation of sportsmen, the Erie County Fish Advisory board and the NYSDEC is still being planned with the initial stocking of 50,000 walleye fingerlings to take place in Buffalo River next spring. This landmark program will run for approx. 5 years with an annual stocking of 50,000 fingerlings. It is hoped that the walleye eggs used for this project will come from local waters such as the Cattaraugus Creek, Smokes Creek or from the nearby open water shoals on Lake Erie. It is hoped that these walleye fingerlings will imprint on the Buffalo River and return to spawn in the future. This will stabilize the annual class year success of walleye on the eastern basin, which at this time is problematic at best. The success of spring open water spawning of walleye on Lake Erie is sometimes decimated by the tenuous weather patterns in early spring.

The cold water fishery in the deeper waters off Dunkirk and Barcelona Harbors was "hot" this summer with rainbows, lake trout and the occasional Salmon leading the way. The New York State record for Lake Trout was broken in August with a Lake trout that weighed in at over 41 pounds. It was not uncommon in August for offshore fishermen to return to port with a "mixed

bag" of fish which would sometimes include perch, walleye, smallmouth bass and cold water species such as lake trout or steelhead. The summer offshore steelhead fishing can be quite spectacular due to the annual stocking programs of Pennsylvania and New York State.

Summer perch fishing was spotty for the fishermen and to be successful the fishermen had to find the somewhat elusive schools of perch. The fishing should pick up this fall when the perch school and feed before the onset of winter. Last year the offshore fall perch fishing was great with limit catches (50 fish) not unusual. I think this will again occur during October and November. If the lake freezes I would expect to have a repeat performance of last year when the ice fishing was excellent.

Last but not least the smallmouth bass fishing continued to be world class in 2003. Mike Desforges of Ontario, Canada recently won a KEY professional bass tournament with a weight of 53-02 pounds for 15 smallmouth bass. He collected \$50,500 for his efforts. This fishery is getting national attention and more and more tournaments are coming to the area to check out this remarkable fishery. Fall musky fishing, which runs through the end of November can produce trophy size muskies for the hardy fishermen who want to brave the cold winds off Lake Erie in late fall. Muskies in excess of 50 inches have been caught this summer and supposedly the big ones bite in the fall! Almost all of the local musky fishermen practice catch and release in an attempt to preserve and enhance this fragile local fishery. I hope you had a good season, I certainly did.

rod; sometimes taking a step back is all it takes to bring the fish straight into the net. With a quick dip, the fish is scooped up. I then raise the net hoop above the water and work the long net handle back up the center of the boat far enough until I can back up off the casting platform and set the fish down on the casting deck for hook removal.

One of the biggest mistakes that I see netters make is to stick the net in the water and expect the angler to pull the fish into the net. This improper technique results in untold numbers of needlessly lost fish every year. I've literally netted tens of thousands of walleyes and other game fish over the years, so if you have any questions, [mikeveine@trophyspecialists.com](mailto:mikeveine@trophyspecialists.com) is my email.

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progresses, you may see yellow perch schools moving in closer to the shoreline, so some might be available to anglers out on piers and in the bays. Most of the fish this year are running from just under 8 to around 10 inches, but if you are lucky you can run into a school of jumbos that average 11-12 inches. Their light, mild flavor has made them a Midwest favorite as a dinner or a sandwich. Check out some of our [favorite fish recipes](#).

Yellow perch populations have rebounded from low levels seen in the mid-1990s, thanks to some good hatches and wise, cooperative interagency management. Recent high-quality hatches seen in 1998, 2001, and now 2003, will help keep the perchin' great for years to come. The current sport fishing regulations for yellow perch in Ohio's waters of Lake Erie include only a daily bag limit of 30 fish per angler. There is commercial fishing (trap netting) for yellow perch in Ohio waters of the lake. The commercial fishery is regulated by individual quota in the western and central basins of the lake. Sport fishers are reminded to be on the look out for and avoid commercial nets when fishing this fall.

*Reprinted from the Ohio Division of Wildlife web site*

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specific edge that you have selected. If the walleyes are directly below and concentrated on a physical edge you can backroll a livebait rig, jig, or a bottom bouncer rig, keeping the bait among the fish you see on the depthfinder. If you find the fish strung out along the edge, keep the bait moving and they will bite. If they're clumped up in one spot, hover over them and vertically jig them.

Rocks also attract fish, try rocky shorelines. Rock piles, humps or where rocks and weeds meet or are intermixed, work it over thoroughly with a jig or live bait presentation. Try to determine where fish are holding. Keep asking yourself the question what is their pattern? Constant bottom contact is essential even though it increases the potential for snags. Use a small jig head with a wide hook gap to deliver the bait in wavy conditions. Leeches are an outstanding rock bait because they can take the pounding. Drifting the breakline on a windy day is a way to catch trophy walleyes. The tackle is simple and the methods are easy to learn. First, use jigs tipped with a crawler, leech or minnow. The size of the jig should be just enough so you have contact with the bottom. For example, on a river like the Mississippi, I prefer to use 1/8 ounce or 1/4 ounce jigs. The important factor here is the shape of the head. The head of the jig should be round or a stand-up type of jig. This design helps when you are in an area that has snags, especially in timber or rocks. When I am on Mille Lac, I might switch to a lighter jig, spinner or a live bait floater.

With the cooling temperatures and the rough and tumble weather of fall don't put that boat away just yet, get out and fish the edges for some fall transitional walleyes. You might be surprised at the wallhanger you hook into.

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