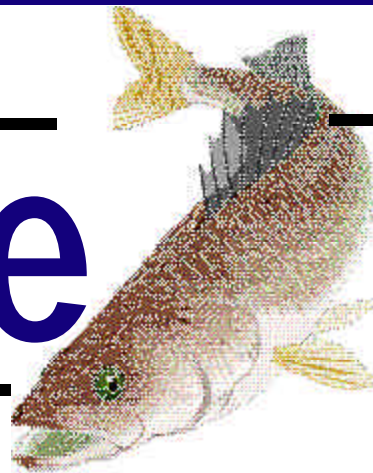


**Lake Erie**

# Walleye



**Spring 2003  
Vol. 9 No. 1**

[www.walleye.com](http://www.walleye.com)

*The Complete Fishing Scene on Lake Erie*

**Spring 2003**

- Ten Pound Walleyes Galore
- Lake Erie 2003 Forecasts
- Beat the Erie Winter Blues -Head for the Keys
- The Walleye Road to Nowhere
- Thinking Ahead for Big Walleyes
- Buckeye Steel; Ohio Steelhead Program Booms
- Planer Board Basics
- The Eastern Lake Erie Report



*Plus*

*Walleye News & Fact File  
Charter Fishing Information*

*Dockage for Lake Erie Fishermen  
Lodging for Lake Erie Fishermen*

## In This Issue

Vol. 9 No. 1

Spring 2003

## From The Editor

- 5** Walleye News & Fact File
- 8** Ten Pound Walleyes Galore  
*by Michael Veine*
- 11** Lake Erie 2003 Forecast  
*by Captain Phil Cadez*
- 12** Beat the Winter Erie Blues -Hit the Keys  
*by Rick Kubb*
- 18** The Walleye Road to Nowhere  
*by Mark Martin*
- 20** Think Ahead for Big Walleyes  
*by Rick Olson*
- 22** Buckeye Steel; Ohio Steelhead Program Booms  
*by Chip Gross*
- 25** Planer Board Basics  
*by Bruce DeShano*
- 27** Central Lake Erie Walleye Forecast Mostly Cloudy  
*by Bruce DeShano*
- 28** Another Year of Great Fishing Expected for Lake Erie in 2003  
*From Ohio DNR*
- 31** The Eastern Lake Erie Report  
*by Joe Fischer*
- 33** Fishing Charters
- 35** Dockage for Lake Erie Fishermen
- 35** Lodging for Lake Erie Fishermen
- 36** Lake Erie Fishing Tournaments for 2003

As of this writing (March 28<sup>th</sup>), it is finally feeling more like spring. Lake Erie again looks like a lake and not the FROZEN TUNDRA of just a few short weeks ago. The excellent ice-fishing experienced by many this past winter is now a memory. Marinas are slowly beginning to open, docks are slowly starting to appear in the water. Fishermen are checking their tackle and their boats. Soon, anglers will be chasing walleyes.

Preliminary reports are that walleye numbers should be up and the forecast is promising. A very solid 2001 hatch will introduce good numbers of 13-15 inch walleyes into the fishery this year. The strong 1999 hatch will produce fish in the 16-18 inch range. Also, larger fish in the 20-26 inch range will be available from the good 1996 and 1998 catches.

A big question remains on the extent of the 'dead zone' this summer in Erie's central basin. We'll have to wait and see if this problem persists and how much it will affect the walleye catches in central Lake Erie.

And water levels continue to sink. The forecast is that Lake Erie water levels will be down another foot from a year ago. Keep a spare prop in your boat this summer.

This past year we lost one of Lake Erie's finest ambassadors, Jim Fofrich Sr. Over the years Jim worked relentlessly to protect and conserve Lake Erie's fishery resources. Most recently was his leadership in the smallmouth bass fishery with his participation in numerous tag and release projects.

See Editor, Page 7

### Lake Erie Walleye

Rick Kubb, Editor/Publisher

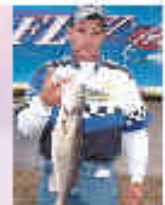
Published each Spring, Summer and Fall for Lake Erie Fishermen. Annual Subscriptions are \$9.95

To subscribe call 1 800 347-4519, send check or money order payable to Lake Erie Walleye, Lake Erie Walleye, P.O. Box 421 Ballwin, MO 63022, or order online at [www.walleye.com](http://www.walleye.com).

# Contrary to popular belief, **WINNING IS EVERYTHING.**



Bruce "DOC" Samson  
2002 Wal-Mart RCL Walleye  
Champion and winner  
of \$300,000.



For the Plautz boys, fishing is in their blood. (top to bottom) Don Plautz is an RCL winner. Son Jimmy took second in his first RCL event. And younger son Dan finished 6th as a co-angler at the 2002 RCL Championship.

(top to bottom) Rick Franklin took third at the 2002 RCL Championship and Tim Leska won \$75,000 as the top co-angler. And Rick Olson, who has won both RCL and PWT Angler of the Year titles.

With a victory and three top-10 finishes at the 2002 Wal-Mart RCL Walleye Championship, Team Crestliner has definitely arrived. See the Crestliner Tournament Series at your local dealer, and you'll understand why these guys have the winning edge. Call 800.889.7020 (ext. 690) during regular business hours for your nearest dealer. [www.crestliner.com](http://www.crestliner.com)



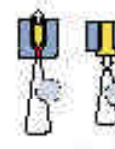
## INNOVATION. PERFORMANCE. RELIABILITY.



The HPW high speed fuel pump delivers fuel at 700psi for greater atomization, increasing durability and fuel efficiency.



The Multi-Chump Priming System keeps your battery's charge whenever the engine is running.



Internal opening injectors improve fuel distribution and reduce the chance of engine build-up.

Yamaha HPW Covered Fuel Injector





SUSPENDING!

"HOT LIPS" EXPRESS

Trotting Depth:  
Size 34 - 35 ft.  
Size 32 - 33 ft.  
Size 30 - 31 ft.



Maumee Walker

# Walleye Power Plugs!

NEW!

TWO MODELS!  
•SUSPENDING  
•FLOATING



"ROCK WALKER"

The Lure with the Golden Lip

Trotting Depth:  
Size 34 - 35 ft.  
Size 32 - 33 ft.



"POWER MINNOW"

Available in two sizes:  
3 1/2" and 4 1/2"

SUSPENDING!

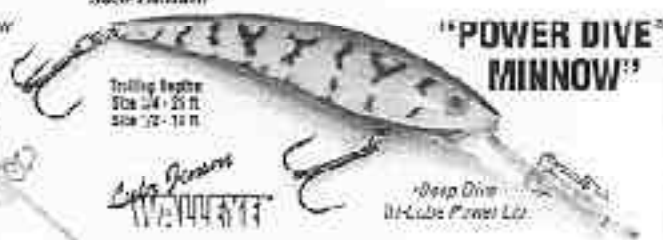


"FINGERLING HI-CATCH"

Natural Minnow Profile

Trotting Depth:  
Size 1 - 29 ft.  
Size 5/8 - 12 ft.

SUSPENDING!



"POWER DIVE MINNOW"

Trotting Depth:  
Size 34 - 35 ft.  
Size 32 - 33 ft.

Deep Dive  
Hi-Lube Power Lip

LUHR-JENSEN™ & Sons, Inc., P.O. Box 297, Hood River, OR 97031 • www.luhrjensen.com

Toledo, Ohio based

## HOMERUN CHARTERS

.....WE GET FISH



Wade the fabled Maumee River walleye spawning grounds with professional guides  
[WWW.HOMERUNCHARTERS.COM](http://WWW.HOMERUNCHARTERS.COM)



- fish the hot locations
- use the correct presentation
- can provide all equipment
- decades of Maumee River experience
- pictures of your trip on a website
- 10 free Walleye Weapon lures

\*\*get 10% off our Internet Rates with this ad  
[WWW.HOMERUNCHARTERS.COM](http://WWW.HOMERUNCHARTERS.COM)

Also Available:  
neoprene wader rental  
hand built IM6 graphite rod rental  
custom matching reel rental  
fish filleting & bagging  
lunch

Questions?? [info@homeruncharters.com](mailto:info@homeruncharters.com)  
or call Jason Arbinger 562-673-0629

# Walleye News and Fact File

## Lake Erie water levels will be lower this year

Lake Erie water levels will continue a downward trend, according to the January lake level forecast from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps is calling for June water levels to be about 8-9 inches lower than June 2002 levels, and this is similar to levels observed in June 2001.

Roughly 90 percent of Lake Erie's water is provided by inflow from the Detroit River, coming from the three upper Great Lakes. Therefore, adequate winter precipitation in the upper Great Lakes basin is a key factor in maintaining Lake Erie's water level. According to the Corps' report, precipitation in the upper Great Lakes Basin has been below average this winter. December precipitation for the Lake Superior Basin was 67 percent lower than normal. In the Huron Michigan Basin, the December precipitation rate was 57 percent lower than normal. In the first three weeks of January, the Superior Basin had received only six percent of normal precipitation and the Huron-Michigan Basin received only nine percent of normal precipitation.

NOAA's Climate Prediction Center links the unfavorable precipitation forecast to the now "mature" phase of the current El Niño condition dominating the tropical Pacific Ocean. The Center predicts that the remainder of the northern winter will see drier-than-average conditions over the Ohio Valley and much of the Great Lakes. Much of the upper Great Lakes region currently is classified as being in moderate to severe drought, with drought conditions expected to intensify and expand at least through April 2003. Unless precipitation increases substantially over the next two months - which appears unlikely Lake Erie boaters will see low water levels and increased boating hazards similar to those experienced in 2001. Lake Erie boaters should remain aware of minimum water depths in their boating areas and of underwater obstructions such as reefs and shoals. Also remain cautious while boating on days with strong westerly

and southwesterly winds, which can temporarily lower the lake level further, making shallow harbors difficult to re-enter.

## Lake Erie's Water Levels Who's Responsible for Lake Erie's Water Levels?

Anyone strolling on Lake Erie beaches during recent summers saw the differences-beaches wider than normal, vacationers cautiously edging their boats away from visible reefs, and docks resting several feet higher than the vessels connected to them. Unlike the 1980s where shoreline property owners battled erosion caused by high water levels, since 2000 the shipping industry and recreational boaters have struggled to get their vessels through low waters. What was a common Lake Erie water level of 574.1 feet in July of 1997 dropped to a surprising 571.7 feet three years later. So who's responsible? Solely Mother *Nature*.

### Hydrologic Cycle

Like all the Great Lakes, Lake Erie's water is governed by a natural circulation system in which water evaporates from the Lake, condenses to form clouds and is returned to the earth's surface as precipitation. Water enters the lake basin as precipitation directly over the lake's surface, from groundwater, from runoff from the surrounding land, and from tributary rivers and streams. Yet about 80 percent of Lake Erie's water comes from the upper Great Lakes through the Detroit River (see above). Water evaporates from the lake's surface when it comes in contact with dry air, forming water vapor. The vapor stays as a gas, or it condenses to form fog and clouds. When clouds form, precipitation falls, creating a continuous hydrologic cycle.

### Factors Affecting Lake Erie Water Levels

Lake levels are affected mainly by wind set-up and by changes in precipitation, both locally and throughout the Great Lakes basin. Fluctuating water levels in

Lake Erie are natural occurrences and are primarily a result of changes in the amount or rate of precipitation. Because precipitation during the winter is likely to be stored as snow pack or frozen ground water, Lake Erie experiences its lowest lake levels during late winter. The combination of runoff from melting snow and ice (both locally and from the upper Great Lakes) and increased local precipitation tends to produce higher lake levels during the spring.

Wind set-up is caused by the persistent blowing of wind in a single direction over a prolonged period of time. This produces a “piling up” of water at the downwind side of the lake, triggering the level at the opposite side to drop by the corresponding amount. This natural phenomenon can result in extensive spring flooding at Buffalo, New York during a prolonged strong west wind, or flooding in Port Clinton during an extended strong east wind. When the winds cease, the water will eventually return to its original level.

#### **Types of Lake Level Fluctuations**

Because Lake Erie is a highly dynamic system with complex processes, water levels will naturally fluctuate due to seasonal, short-term, and long-term changes. Seasonal fluctuations in water levels are based mainly on changes in precipitation and runoff to Lake Erie. Although precipitation is fairly constant throughout the year, the winter snow pack does not contribute to the lake level rise until the spring thaw and related runoff. Thus, the lake is always at its lowest level in the winter. The biggest factor influencing Lake Erie water levels is the amount of snow and ice melt received from the upper Great Lakes through the Detroit River. The combination of snow melting and spring rains contribute to seasonally increasing lake levels from early March through early August. Evaporation is greatest in the fall and early winter when Lake Erie is relatively warm and the air above the lake is cold and dry. It can also be very significant during the long, hot cloudless periods of July and August.

Lake levels are also affected by day-to-day changes. These short-term fluctuations are due to storms, wind, or ice jams and usually last from a few hours to several days. Ice jams in the Niagara River, for example, will decrease the amount of water flowing out of Lake Erie, temporarily increasing the lake level. Sustained high winds (wind set-up) can also cause short-term fluctua-

tions, as described above.

Long-term fluctuation occurs over a period of years and depends on how wet or dry and hot or cold the weather is around the entire Great Lakes basin north of and including Lake Erie. Lake Erie experienced extremely low levels in the late- 1920s, mid-1930s, and in the mid-1960s. Extremely high levels were experienced in the early 1950s, and the mid 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. During the last few years, precipitation levels within the Great Lakes basin has been below average, which has contributed significantly to our current low lake levels. Source: FS-025 of the Ohio Sea Grant

### **“WALLEYE RUN” SET TO BEGIN ALONG SANDUSKY AND MAUMEE RIVERS**

One of Ohio’s most unique fishing opportunities is about to occur as the 2003 Maumee and Sandusky rivers’ walleye runs are about to begin, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife.

Each spring, as water temperatures warm and days grow longer, a small portion of Lake Erie’s walleye population make their way up the two northwestern Ohio streams to spawn. And although they represent a small portion of all Lake Erie walleyes, the run brings hundreds of thousands of the tasty fish within casting distance of eager anglers.

During last year’s three to four-week run, approximately 40,000 walleyes were caught in the Maumee and Sandusky rivers.

Walleye spawning normally occurs in these rivers anytime from mid-March through mid-April, but frequently the peak activity occurs the first week of April when the water temperatures range from 40 to 50 degrees. High, fast-moving water also increases the number of walleye in the rivers, especially if river temperatures are warmer than lake temperatures. Most of the river walleyes taken this spring will measure 18-22 inches, though some fish in both rivers will be much larger.

The best fishing areas in the Maumee River will be from Conant Street Bridge in the City of Maumee

upstream to the end of Jerome Road in Lucas County. Sandusky River anglers will find greater success from Brady's Island to Roger Young Park in the City of Fremont.

Though most anglers wade these rivers while fishing for walleyes, some choose to fish from boats. The ODNR advises boat anglers to always properly wear a life jacket, take precautions against overloading their boat and capsizing, be well dressed to avoid the onset of hypothermia, and be prepared to handle an emergency should one occur.

Legal fishing hours from March 1 through May 1 are sunrise to sunset and the daily walleye bag limit is four. Only fish that are hooked inside the mouth may legally be taken and any snagged fish must be immediately released.

Additional [fishing information](#) and [boating safety tips](#) are available on the ODNR web page at [ohiodnr.com](http://ohiodnr.com)

## **MORE THAN 80,000 TROUT TO BE RELEASED IN OHIO WATERS THIS SPRING**

More than 80,000 rainbow trout measuring 10 to 13 inches will be released in 40 Ohio waterways from March through May to enhance public fishing opportunities. The daily catch limit for inland lakes is five trout per angler.

Anglers age 16 and older must have an Ohio fishing license. Those anglers age 66 and older may obtain a free fishing license where licenses are sold. The season's new fishing license is now available and is required on March 1. The 2003 annual fishing license costs \$15 and is valid through February 29, 2004. A one-day fishing license is available and may be purchased for \$7 by residents or non-residents. The one-day license may also be redeemed for credit toward purchase of an annual fishing license.

Additional information about spring trout releases is available by calling a [Division of Wildlife district office](#) in Akron, Athens, Columbus, Findlay, and Xenia, or by calling toll free 1-800-WILDLIFE.

### **From Editor, page 2**

In March I attended the annual Charter Captain's conference where Jim Fofrich Jr. gave a moving speech on what his father meant to him and to the Lake Erie Community. He mentioned that one of the lessons learned was Jim's philosophy of what it meant to him to be on the Lake. Being on the lake was like being a guest in someone's home. While in the home one should show respect of both the home and those in the home. Lake Erie was truly home to Jim Fofrich Sr.

We hope you enjoy the new "ONLINE" format of our publication. In each issue we will offer the full magazine and individual articles in PDF format as well in HTML format. For those fishermen (and I know there are many) who have not yet caught on to the computer lingo, simply go to [www.walleye.com](http://www.walleye.com) to see what we're talking about. Wait a minute, if you're reading this, you are already there, that is unless someone printed this text out and shared it with you, and we hope that happens often.

The current issue will be fully displayed and available from our web site for NO CHARGE. Subscribers to the magazine will gain password access to all previous issues of the magazine. Since 1995 we have archived many dozens of articles on fishing Lake Erie.

Till next time, good fishing!

---

**[www.walleye.com](http://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*  
*Fishing Maps*  
*Visit the 'Braggin Board'*

*...and much much more*

# Ten Pound Walleyes Galore

by  
**Michael Veine**

**L**ast spring, Lake Erie provided the absolute best trophy walleye fishing this author has ever experienced. We

held a tournament out of Port Clinton last year April 17-19. During the tournament, the pros took 346 walleyes that weighed

Basin. In addition, during the same time period of the tournament, we caught boatloads of hawg' walleyes fishing the



**Here are two nice walleyes taken during mid-April: The one on the left is a male, the sag-belly on the right is an egg laden female. Photo by Michael Veine.**

managed to catch 145 walleyes that measured at least 10-pounds on my specialized charter boat, a decked out Lund - Baron. My success was certainly not a fluke either. Several of my fishing buddies also got in on the awesome action, which peaked during mid-April in the western basin.

Need more convincing? The Professional Walleye Trail (PWT)

from 10 to 14.27 pounds! Tommy Scarlis, who won the tournament, managed to weigh 15 walleyes that weighed 138.28 pounds. Pro angler - Ted Takasaki managed five walleyes in one day that weighed an eye popping 53.2 pounds! Nearly every PWT record was shattered during the event and the awesome fishing was spread out all over the East half of the Western

Michigan waters of Erie.

## **Where'd All the Big Walleyes Come From?**

Mike Thomas, a biologist for the Michigan DNR, says, "Those big, trophy class fish that were caught last year could have come from ten different year classes, but they were certainly at least 8-10 years old." He explained further,





**10-pounders like this one (top) were common catches last spring on Lake Erie. Photo by Michael Veine. Trolling stick baits behind in-line planer boards is the most productive tactic for trophy walleye during early spring on Lake Erie. Photos by Michael Veine.**

“Walleyes have a pretty fast growth rate on Lake Erie, at least until they reach about 26”. At that stage of their life, they slow down considerably. We’ve been conducting an ongoing walleye age/growth study on Erie for many years. Scale samples are taken from fish and analyzed under a

microscope. Determining the age of fish from scale samples has proven more accurate than the ongoing tagging studies, which are more valuable for migration data. The tags seem to slow the growth of the walleyes some.”

Thomas went on to say, “Once

walleyes reach a certain size, and it varies with each individual fish, the growth rate slows to about 1/4 to 1/2 inch per year. Females tend to be larger on average than males, however we do see some extremely large males coming from Lake Erie from time to time. One was checked last year that measured 32-inches!” He concluded, “Walleyes that live to 10-years and beyond are hard to age using scale samples because of distortion. Walleyes have been known to live for 15 years or more. We still see some walleyes that show up from the huge year classes of 1982 and those 1982 fish will be 21 years old this year.” Gary Towns is Michigan’s Supervisor of the Lake Erie Management Unit.

He provided me with some information on walleye year class estimates and overall survival rates. Towns said, “After one year, walleyes experience a 30 percent mortality rate each year. Once they attain a size where other fish and birds can’t eat them, that mortality rate drops significantly. Still, walleyes only have an average life-span of 3-4 years, so walleyes that attain trophy proportions are very fortunate indeed.”

Since we know that it takes walleyes at least 8-10 years or more to reach ten-pounds, and growth rates drop significantly once they get old, then those big walleyes are likely a mixture of many different year classes.

Gary Towns passed along these statistics: “1982 was the best year ever recorded for walleye recruitment. An estimated 1,000,000

walleyes made it to two-years-old that year. 1983 was a poor year with little recruitment. 1984-85 were OK years. 1986 was the second best year on record with over 60,000,000 walleye living two years. 1987-88 produced 15,000,000 each year. 1989 kicked out 10,000,000. 1990-91 each had 28,000,000. 1992 was a poor year, while 1993 bounced back with 20,000,000 and then 30,000,000 in 1994. 1995 was the worst year recorded, but 1996 was the third best year with 40,000,000. 1997 saw 15,000,000 walleyes make it two years, and 1998 had 10,000,000. 1999 was another good year with 30,000,000, but 2000 was dismal. 2001 was a good year with an anticipated 30,000,000. Preliminary samplings for 2002 indicate a poor hatch. Year classes are greatly influenced by weather events. Sedimentation from runoff and heavy wave action, which covers over the eggs, is the leading cause of poor recruitment. The heavy rains and winds of the spring of 2002 didn't do Lake Erie's walleyes any favors."

Most of the trophy walleyes in the system today probably came from the 1990, 1991, 1993 and 1994 year classes. We should also have awesome numbers of big fish coming from 1996 over the next few years. Mike Thomas believes that there are walleyes living in Lake Erie, from the 1982 and 1986 year classes that will weigh 15-20 pounds when full of roe.

### **Tactics to Catch the Big Ones**

By far, trolling accounts for the vast majority of trophy walleyes on Lake Erie. Mark Sak is a touring

walleye pro who last year placed fourth at Port Clinton and second overall in the PWT's eastern division. He says, "Every pro that fished the 2002 Port Clinton tournament trolled with stick baits. A couple guys tried pulling crawler harnesses during the prefish, but it was plastic all the way on the tournament days."

Mark Sak went on to say, "Most of the pros trolled Reef Runners and Rapala Husky Jerk Baits. I caught most of my fish in 22-23' of water and the fish were suspended in clusters at varying depths. We learned that our best success came by running the lures about 5-10' above the fish. Keeping the baits above the fish allowed them to see the baits overhead and come up for strikes. We set the lures back 50-120' behind inline boards using 10 pound-test, clear monofilament line."

Sak continued, "The fire-tiger Reef Runners seemed to work best in the morning, while blue and Tennessee-Shad Husky Jerks worked best later in the day. Most of top placing pros attached a piece of crawler to their crank baits, which made the walleyes hold on longer increasing the strike to catch ratio."

Some unique trolling patterns produced well in the tournament. Mark Sak said, "I set all of my lines on one side of the boat and kept them running close together to imitate a school of baitfish. Plenty of S-curves were incorporated into our trolling pattern and we tried to maintain a trolling speed of 1.2 miles-per-

hour."

My favorite cold water tactic is to troll very slow using subtle action stick baits such as Jr.

Thundersticks, Rapala Husky Jerks and Rattlin' Rouges. Dark colors seem to work best in cold water. Black/gold and black/silver finishes are my bread and butter, but lime green had its good days last year too. I troll at speeds that do not exceed one mile per hour.

When the water starts to warm up past 47 degrees, I switch over to faster action crankbaits and kick up the speed to 1.5. Shad Raps, Reef Runner Lil-Rippers, Rattlin' Rogues and CC-Shads are all good choices. As a general rule, I use dark colored baits in dirty water and bright, florescent patterns when the water is clear. It often pays to experiment though.

### **Hot Spots**

The Port Clinton PWT tournament was won near Kelleys Island. Other spots that produced top places were Rattle Snake Island, Green Island, Niagara Reef and West Reef. Mark Sak fished the water just out from Port Clinton Bay and said, "The bigger walleyes seemed to stick around more and stay in one place in shallower water. The fish that roamed in deeper water moved around a lot and were harder to stay on."

The Port Clinton PWT event had a tournament boundary that excluded Michigan's waters.

**See Ten Pounders, page 24**

# Lake Erie 2003 Forecast

by  
Captain Phil Cadez

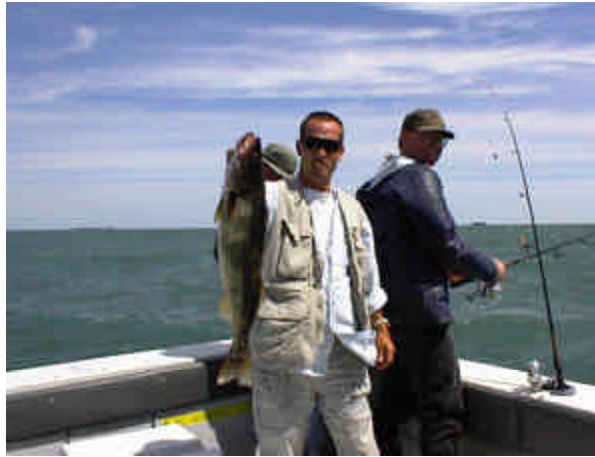
There's not too much talk of Global Warming with 12 inches off ice on Lake Erie. The Midwest has had one of it's coldest winters in a long time. At this writing, mid February, only Mother Nature will determine when the spring thaw will be.

Walleye anglers are excited because most of the limits that will come in will be from the 1999 hatch. The 1999 hatch was the 4<sup>th</sup> best hatch in the recent history of the lake. They will be from 18 to 21 inches and weigh in at nearly 3 pounds.

Last year the P.W.T. set record catches in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of April. The conditions were perfect until about a week after they left. Then the weather turned horrible and the water resembled chocolate milk. The Ohio Division of Wildlife stated that bad weather just about devastated the 2002 hatch. This will hurt our fishing in a few years.

As the water warmed up in late May the big schools of walleye near West Sister Island turned on. These good eating 2 pound fish filled the anglers coolers that casted weapons. Weapons are merely No. 3 spinners with a 16 to 20 inch leader with a small hook tipped with a worm. Once again

gold chartreuse, orange and chartreuse, silver colors worked the best. The trollers also had great success.



Fishing stayed good thru June and July as the fish moved to the east toward the Bass Islands. There were some good catches in the Canadian waters but not as good as the 2001 catches. The Canadians still are allowed to net walleye but have quotas. Some of these nets seem to be a mile long and do a number on the fish.

The smallmouth bass has continued to be very good. There was some catch and release jig fishing in May, but the best time was late July, August, September and October. The summer and later fishing was fantastic using softcraws.

The walleye returned in late September from the east and were caught from Lorain to Huron. Most of this fishing was trolling but some casters did well also. October brought some high winds and shut the fishing down for a while. Most anglers pulled their boats early because of low water.

The yellow perch fishing in 2002 was super from April thru October. Around the island areas many jumbo's were caught on minnows and worms in 30 feet of water.

I spoke with Doug Johnson from the Ohio D.N.R. and he feels that the 2003 season should be as good as or better than 2002. The final results weren't in yet so I can't give you the 2002 figures. The walleye should be good again in late May, June and July.

The bronzeback fishing should be super again as it was in 2002.

**See Forecast, page 23**

# Beat the Winter Erie Blues - Hit the Keys

## *Fishing with Captain Bob Brown of Sundance Charters*

by  
Rick Kubb

The Great Lakes region has had one of the coldest and snowiest winters in some time. As I look out over Lake Erie (in February) a solid sheet of ice can be seen stretching to the horizon. Lakes Superior, Michigan, Huron and Erie have been 90% covered with ice this winter.

A small number Lake Erie charter captains do take advantage of ice conditions and offer ice fishing charters. What do the other Lake Erie captains do in their 'off season'? Many captains charter part-time and they have their regular jobs to attend to. The majority of the full-time captains take some much deserved time off during the winter to re-charge their batteries as chartering is hard work and can be very draining toward the end of the regular fishing season. A number of captains head south to Florida to fun-fish. A chance to relax in the sun and fish for themselves with no hassles and no customers to have to satisfy.

Then, there is Captain Bob Brown. There's no idle time for him during the winter months. Instead, he charts full-time down in the Florida Keys. Captain Bob Brown of Sundance Charters works out of Channel Grove Marina near Port Clinton from

operation. A quick trip to the Florida Keys for some sun (and fish) sounded like just the right thing to beat the winter blues. I wasn't going to pass up this opportunity!

We flew to Fort Lauderdale on a Thursday afternoon, picked up a rental car and made the short 2 ½ hour trip to Marathon Key. It's an easy drive from Fort Lauderdale, taking the Florida Turnpike around busy Miami to US 1. Once you enter the Florida Keys the drive is very scenic. The Florida Keys are measured in Mile Markers beginning at Mile Marker 0 at Key West. Marathon Key is at Mile Marker 50.



**Captain Bob Brown with a good sized Amberjack taken off of Marathon Key in early March. He'll soon be heading north to charter the waters of Lake Erie.**

May through October, then each year he heads south in November and through the middle of May he charts in Marathon Key, Florida.

Captain Brown and his wife and first-mate, Anne invited my wife Karen and I down to fish with them and learn about their winter

We checked in to our hotel at Coconut Cay Resort and Marina (more on where to stay in the keys later) and after a relaxing dinner at the Barracuda Grill just down the street, we retired for the evening. The next day we stopped by the 7- mile Marina, where Captain Brown keeps his



**Karen Kubb, Captain Bob and wife Anne back at the dock with 'schoolie' dolphin fish. These are good eaters!**

boat so that we would have a good reference point as we were to report early on Saturday morning for our fishing trip.

We spent Friday relaxing in the sun over at Bahia Honda State Park, a beautiful park with numerous swimming/snorkeling beaches, changing facilities, boat ramps and available dockage. We joined a group snorkeling trip to one of the famous Florida reefs. The reef was beautiful, teeming with hundreds of species of fish. Barracuda were numerous too along with a few reef sharks.

Friday evening we had an easy dinner at the 7-mile Grille, next door to the Marina. A family run diner, the food was very good, not fancy, but very reasonably priced. Many of the locals dine there.

Saturday morning came early and we reported to the Marina at 8am. Captain Brown and his wife (and

first-mate) greeted us at their dock. We went aboard and the captain explained to us our plans for the day. He explained that the past few days the bite had been slow and that we'd do a combination of bottom fishing near some well known wrecks and then drift and slow troll for dolphin and possibly sailfish.

Soon we were underway and headed out for our first destination. Just outside of the 7-mile Marina we passed under the 7-mile bridge. Captain Brown explained that the 7-mile bridge is a favorite among captains for tarpon fishing which would be starting to heat up in April. Some of the best tarpon fishing is between the pilings of the bridge where there is current. Since it's only a 5 minute run from his Marina, Captain Brown often runs two or more Tarpon trips in a day.

Just past the 7-mile bridge we met

up with another captain who kindly shared with us his morning catch of live Pilchards and Pinfish baitfish. After filling the bait wells we were off to do some bottom fishing and a short time later we arrived over the first spot, a wreck in about 200 feet of water.

The winds kicked up and seas were quickly 4-6 feet which made bottom fishing difficult. The wind and current would drift us over the wreck in only a few minutes, not giving us ample time to sit over the fish. We would then pick up our lines and Captain Brown would re-position us over the wreck. His Garmin 180 chart-plotter made this a relatively easy thing to do but was time consuming as we needed to repeat this every few minutes.

The bite was slow. We had a few nice hits but couldn't land a fish. We then headed to another wreck location and dropped our lines again. It wasn't long till I had my hands full with a 20 pound Amberjack, which we released. Nice fish. Again, conditions were not conducive to bottom fishing because of the wind and current. We then decided to head off shore another 10 miles or so to deeper water (400-500 feet) to look for dolphin (also called Mahi-Mahi).

When dolphin fishing, captains search for 'weed lines', long stretches of floating weeds that can stretch from several hundred yards to over a mile. They also search for any floating debris. The smallest flotsam whether it be a small log or plastic milk jug amazingly can hold fish. In the open ocean there is little cover for small fish and the smallest fish will congregate around anything that

floats. This is the start of a food chain and at the other end of the chain can be a large Dolphin or Sailfish.

As we moved along a well-established weed line we were all on the lookout for floating debris and what might lie beneath it. We trolled using a number of presentations. We did a fast troll (around 10 knots) using Ballyhoo and artificials and did slow trolls (3-4 knots) and drifts using live Pilchers for bait.

While trolling we ran four rods, two off the back and two off the outriggers. We were trolling for about 2 hours when we got our first hit, a small 'schoolie' dolphin. Then all heck broke loose with 4 schoolies hooked up at the same time. Anne mentioned that it's like a 'Chinese fire drill' when you get into a school of small dolphin. Boy it was fun. While the fish were around us, the captain threw in a handful of Pilchers for chum and we kept one schoolie dolphin on the hook swimming beneath the boat to attract more fish.

The next 10 minutes was fast and furious, with a dozen or so hookups and landing 6 dolphin in the boat. Then, just as quickly as it began, the fish had moved on. These small dolphin run in large schools. When dolphin reach maturity they normally travel in single pairs. We were hoping to find a large bull or cow dolphin but it wasn't to be on this day.

After our run-in with the dolphins we headed back for port. Back at the dock, we chatted while Bob cleaned our fish. Captain Brown has been chartering in the Florida

Keys since 1980. He normally heads south from Lake Erie in November trailering his 29' Stamas, an excellent sized fishing boat for Florida waters. He typically will run 150 or more trips in the winter and early spring season, sometimes running two half-day Tarpon trips each day. This works well as Tarpon fishing is best both early in the day and late in the early evening (Dawn & Dusk Fishing).

Captain Brown offers 'reef/wreck' bottom fishing where he will fish off of the shallow reefs as well as off the deeper reefs and wrecks in waters up to 200' feet in depth. There he targets Grouper, Snapper, Amberjacks and other bottom fish. He fishes mostly live-bait including Pinfish, Pilchards, Ballyhoo and Mullet. Cut bait Squid and Shrimp are also used.

His offshore fishing targets Sailfish, Dolphin, Wahoo, Kingfish, Tuna and an occasional Marlin hook-up. Trolling baits include Ballyhoo and artificials, mostly soft plastic squid.

The Marathon area offers some of the best fishing in the Keys because of the close proximity of deep water to the shallow reefs. There is a shelf that runs along the reefs that quickly drops off in depth. You can go from 20 feet of water to 250 of water in only a few minutes of running. Many species of both bottom and offshore fish run along this shelf and it's within easy range for the fishermen.

Sundance Charters run \$550 for a full 8 hour trip and \$375 for half-

day trips. Tarpon fishing is priced at \$350.00. Captain Brown's and first mate Anne's customers are typically couples or families. Usually 2-4 customers are on board a single trip. He doesn't run the typical '6-pack' charters one sees on Lake Erie in the summer-time. Captain Brown will clean your fish and freeze them for you, should you wish to take some back home.

As we were leaving the dock and heading for the 7-mile Grille for dinner I asked Captain Brown when he would be heading back north. He mentioned that his last Florida charter was the second weekend in May and his first Lake Erie Charter was the following week and that he was going to have to hustle back for that first trip. No rest for the weary, I guess.

At Captain Brown's suggestion we headed back over to the 7-mile Grille where they prepared our dolphin (Mahi Mahi) catch. What a deal. They cooked our fish to our liking (grilled, fried or blackened) and included all the sides for only \$8.00. You can't beat that. Some diners will do this and others will not, citing health regulations and insurance issues.

After dinner we checked in at our second accommodation, the White Sands Inn. The following day we headed down to Key West (a short 50 mile jaunt) for a day of sight seeing. We had breakfast just a block from the Ernest Hemingway House at a place appropriately names Ernest's Diner. After taking in the sites, we headed back for a relaxing final day. Monday would mean back to work!

When visiting Key West I suggest you go early in the morning, before the masses arrive. Key West is 'bumper to bumper' cars any day of the week in the afternoon and it gets really hectic in the early evening as people from everywhere go to watch the famous sunset. My wife and I agreed that we would beat the crowds and enjoy the sunset from Marathon Key. The views are just as nice there with a few thousand fewer people!

Tired of the winter fishing blues? Then head on down to the Florida Keys. You're likely to experience some of the best fishing in the world! If you want to fish with Captain Bob Brown of Sundance Charters travel between December and Early May. If you arrive in late May you'll miss him as he'll be tackling walleyes on Lake Erie by that time!

You can contact Sundance Charters by visiting their web site at [www.sundancesportfishing.com](http://www.sundancesportfishing.com) or by calling (800) 282-1712.

## Where to Stay in the Florida Keys

While in the Keys we stayed at two great locations, both of which are 'fisherman friendly' and close to the several Marinas on Marathon. **Coconut Cay Resort & Marina** is located at mile marker 50.5 and just a few miles east of the 7-mile Marina. Coconut Cay offers the comfort and charm of a Bahamian style resort, quietly tucked away from the busy highway on the bayside of Marathon. Accommodations include 7 waterfront cottages that sleep 6



**Coconut Cay Resort (above) and the White Sands Inn (below) are both "Fisherman Friendly" and reasonably priced resorts close to area marinas and charter fishing opportunities.**



persons. Each cottage has a private patio and barbecue grill alongside a scenic canal with dockage right outside your door that can accommodate boats up to 22' in length. Additionally, there

are 17 individual rooms and one suite that includes a living room area with sleeper sofa.

Each unit boasts different combinations of bright Bahamian colors. All units have cable TV. Coconut

Cay also has a very nice swimming pool with a view of the bay front waters and the Marina. There is also a nice area called Sandy Point with lounge chairs and hammocks nestled among Coconut trees with a very nice view of the famous Keys Sunsets.

The Owner, Jim Rhyme explained to us that he purchased Coconut Cay in May of 2002 and just opened in September. Everything has been totally redone, from plumbing to paint. He plans to expand the property and add another 40 or so rooms.

Fishermen are welcome and can bring their own boats. Smaller boats can be accommodated along the canal wall and larger boats can be docked at the Marina where several 'live aboards' dock year round. Those that want to stay longer can dock their boats at Coconut Cay for around \$600.00/month.

Rates at Coconut Cay vary depending on the season. The cottages are typically \$179-\$199/night) and the single rooms are \$79-\$99/night). Discounts are given for weekly stays and stays during off peak times from September through early December.

The staff at Coconut Cay are all very friendly and were very accommodating. The manager Chris Dungca went out of his way to make our stay an enjoyable one. You can contact Coconut Cay by visiting their web site at [www.coconutcay.com](http://www.coconutcay.com) or by calling their toll-free number, 1-877-354-7356.

The **White Sands Inn** on nearby Grassy Key I also highly recommend. White Sands is owned by Janice Stephens and managed by her daughter Rachel Price. They purchased the property 4 years ago and have done everything right. The White Sands Inn is on the Ocean-Side of the keys.

There are 11 units each a little different from the other. Last year the owners purchased the adjacent property which they call the Sunrise Beach House. This house contains 3 nice rooms, each with different appointments and accommodations from 1 to three bedrooms and all have a view of the ocean. Amenities at the White Sands include a private sandy beach, private pier, boat ramp, Tiki Hut, Bar-B-Q grills, a very nice heated pool with a nice view of the ocean. Guests can also enjoy the use of a paddle boat and ocean kayak. Rachel is a Justice of the Peace and offers special wedding packages at the White Sands.

Room rates at the White Sands range from \$75/night to \$250/night depending on the season and the room, since each room has different qualities and accommodations.

Although there is no deep water dockage available, the property is located on the famous 'flats' area where fly fisherman come from all over to fish the shallow area for bonefish, reds and other flats fish. The former owner of the property (formerly named the Golden Grouper) would hold fly fishing and flats fishing seminars. Rachel explained to me that they have many repeat fly-fishing customers that come down every

year and enjoy the nearby fishing grounds.

You can contact the White Sands Inn by visiting their web site at [www.whitesandsinn.com](http://www.whitesandsinn.com) or by call- ing (305) \_\_\_\_\_ 743-

**What are the top selling Michigan Scorpion Stinger Spoons that the Professionals Use?**

- Bloody Nose
- Blueberry Muffin
- Boy/Girl Copper
- Cat/Dog
- Chicken Wing
- Confusion
- Copper Dolphin
- Freezer Burn
- Halloween
- Hog Wild
- Kervorkian
- Mass Confusion
- MayFly
- Mixed Veggies
- Monkey Puke
- Oil Slick
- Perch
- Purple Parrot
- Rainbow Trout
- Shrimp
- Superman
- Watermelon GH
- Yellow Jacket
- Yellowtail

**Order Your Scorpion Stinger Spoons at [www.walleye.com](http://www.walleye.com) or call toll free 1-800347-4519**

*List based on survey conducted in fall 2002 of Lake Erie Charter Captains*



**Have a Boat to Sell?**  
Try the Lake Erie Walleye  
Boat Classifieds

at  
**www.walleye.com**  
List your boat for sale  
for only \$49.00  
with photo

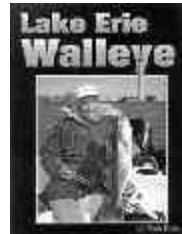
List till it sells!!  
Call **1-800-347-4519**  
or visit  
**www.walleye.com**

With over 6 million  
hits to the  
walleye.com web site  
each year, your boat  
will "BE SEEN"

## Lake Erie's Dynamic Duo!

### *Lake Erie Smallmouth*

Learn how and where the experts  
catch smallmouth bass throughout  
Lake Erie. Includes 41 detailed  
fishing maps.



### *Lake Erie Walleye*

Top guides and tournament anglers  
reveal how they catch big walleyes  
from Lake Erie.

**Big River Press**  
**P.O. Box 130**  
**Millfield, OH**  
**45761**

\$14.95 each, plus \$3.50 shipping.  
(Ohio residents add \$.93 tax per book.)

**WOW!**

*Buy both books for only \$28.58,  
shipping included. Save \$8.48*

# FishUSA.com

**COMPLETE WALLEYE FISHING GEAR**

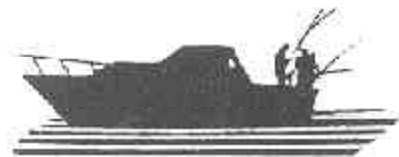
*Great Prices Flat \$3.95 Shipping Fast Delivery*

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



On the web: [www.FishUSA.com](http://www.FishUSA.com)  
By phone: 800.922.1219

## Nemecek Insurance



*Marine Insurance Specialists*

**800-686-3474**

**RICK NEMECEK**

[nemecer@nationwide.com](mailto:nemecer@nationwide.com) (419) 732-3624

## Lake Erie Fishermen

Find up-to-date fishing reports

at  
**www.walleye.com**

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](http://www.walleye.com)

# The Walleye Road to Nowhere

by  
Mark Martin

**L**earn the principles of open water on Erie and you'll be ready to take the technique anywhere in walleye country.

When walleye fishing, sometimes there's no place like the middle of nowhere. We're talking far from any underwater point, hump or weed bed. We're talking far from flats, creek channels or any bottom-altering oddity that has fish written all over it on electronics. Yes, we're talking walleyes in the middle of nowhere, open-water roamers that chase bait partway down in the water column across miles of vast expanses.

Daunting? Maybe at first. Incredibly productive? You bet.

The best open-water walleye fishing on earth starts on Lake Erie in April and continues throughout the year. Meanwhile, while walleyes tend to hang closer to structure on inland waters until early summer, that's when a percentage of the population starts suspending. And that's where and when you can extend the principles of Erie's open-water trolling to anywhere in walleye country.

To start trolling for middle-of-nowhere walleyes on Erie or anywhere else, you'll need some

specialized gear, a motor that will troll down to slow speeds and a willingness to wander in search of wandering walleyes. From there, successful open-water trolling depends to a large extent on speed



**Mark Martin with a good sized walleye. He's caught a few of these over the years.**

control and just what constitutes the best potential water in the middle of nowhere. Even when you're 15 miles from shore on Lake Erie or Saginaw Bay, the smallest features make all the difference in the world.

## Chairman of the Boards

For starters, gather up your planer boards and line-counter reels with matching rods. The planer boards I use are by Church Tackle, and they come in three sizes: the TX-6 Mini Planer, about the size of a deck of cards and best for pulling lightly weighted spinners and unweighted crankbaits; the TX-12, a great all-around board that will support up to two ounces of weight with clip-on or inline weights; and the TX-24, a magnum board with lead ballast to hold even heavier weights or even to troll with leadcore line. Another asset of the Church Boards is the fact that the clips are easy to open, making it quick and simple to get the board on and off the line.

For reels, check out the new C3 line-counters from Abu Garcia, which are built on the tried-and-true 6500 frame and come with a sophisticated line counter with LCD readout that can be calibrated for line size, type (even superlines) and spool fill.

If you already have a 6500, it's possible to buy just the counter to install on C3 and C4 reels. All you do is remove the end plate and slip the counter into place. Distance of baits behind boards, we'll find out in a moment, is a crucial part of the equation. Next, team the reels with the 7-foot, 10-inch Berkley Lightning Rod in the Signature Series with telescopic butt section stout

enough to hold up to 3- to 4-ounce bottom bouncers off the boat without boards. The 8-foot, 6-inch model has a softer tip that is perfect for trolling crankbaits and spinners with clip-on weights on boards with its flex, it also helps keep big fish from coming unbuttoned. So does monofilament such as 10-pound-test Berkley Trilene XT, which incorporates some stretch into the picture but has plenty of toughness for landing monster walleyes.

Another key ingredient is a motor to troll at slow speeds. Which ever kind of motor it is your big motor or an auxiliary kicker it has to be able to troll down to slow speeds for Erie walleyes in spring. If your big motor doesn't idle down, you can often slow the progress of the boat with a pair of 20-inch drift socks from JNB Originals, one on the starboard and one on the stern. I also use them when trolling with my kicker motor in big waves to smooth out my presentation and keep the boat from surging. For my kicker, I use the Mercury 9.9-horsepower BigFoot four-stroke with a Panther electronic steer. With the long 20-foot cord for the remote control, I can steer from anywhere in the boat, and the Merc idles down to under 1 mph, which is crucial in cold water.

### **Seek and Strain**

On the water, the first thing I rely on is my electronics. The two most important units in my boat are the Lowrance X-16, a color unit that spots fish in vibrant reds whether they're a few feet under the surface or pinned to the bottom, and the Global Map 3000. The Global Map is also critical because it allows me to monitor trolling speeds to the tenth of a mile an hour and accommodates mapping cartridges from Fishing Hot Spots. On the electronic maps, I can see a wreck or a tiny

bump in the bottom in the middle of nowhere and troll over it. When I catch or mark fish, I put out GPS waypoints so I can return and work the same fish time and again.

In spring on Erie, it's incredibly important to be able to mark fish and bait. Sometimes I run with my big motor at 25 mph just looking for schools, a possibility on the X-16 but an impossibility on most other units. (Tip: Turn up the ping speed on the unit to help mark fish at high speeds.) I might cover a couple of miles of open water, and then when I mark clusters of fish, I punch in a waypoint and return later to fish them.

Nothing beats long, thin crankbaits for cold-water walleyes on the inland seas. My favorites are No. 10 and No. 12 Rapala Deep Down Husky Jerks. Most of the time I put them 30 to 80 feet behind the Church Boards to reach 10 to 15 feet, the most productive depth level I've found. At times, though, the fish are even higher, in the top five feet, which necessitates putting out a Husky Jerk a little as 15 feet behind the board. I also like the No. 9 Rapala Tail Dancer 35 feet behind the board to keep the bait at five or six feet.

Since I'm trolling slowly, usually between 1.0 mph and 1.5 mph, I'm able to use spinners at the same time.

Tie up some harnesses with #2 hooks and Northland holographic spinner blades. I've come to lose far fewer fish on single hooks than on trebles, and the Northland blades give off the right amount of flash to attract roaming walleyes from a distance. I weight them

with a 1 1/2-ounce Northland Rock Runner bottom bouncer when open-water fishing, even though I'm nowhere near bottom. (Remember, I'm in the middle of nowhere.) I'll have about a six-foot leader between the spinner and the bouncer and then experiment with the distance behind the board from 20 to 40 feet, again covering similar depths of eight to 18 feet. I put the bouncers on the inside boards and the cranks on the outside boards.

The best part of the system is that it's not just for Erie anymore. In summertime on inland lakes, I use the same technique but with higher-action cranks such as Storm Hot n' Tots and ThunderSticks and smaller Northland blades in size 3. For weight, I either stick with the bouncer or use Church clip-on weights to get the spinners down. Later in the year, though, it's a bit more difficult to fish cranks and spinners at the same time. Typically I stick with one presentation over the other, pulling cranks at 2.0 mph and spinners at 1.0-1.6 mph. Once again, look for fish and bait on the electronic and you're in business.

Trolling for walleyes in the middle of nowhere undoubtedly requires an attitude adjustment. Gone are the rock pinnacles and underwater castles that are so productive in many situations. Now is the time to start searching far and away from any underwater feature with electronics to find the fish and begin straining the water column with crankbaits and spinners. The fish are out there!

# Thinking Ahead for Big Walleyes

by  
Rick Olson

So much good walleye water and so little time. With all of the great angling opportunities available to today's walleye angler, you might get the feeling of being a bit favored. The problem with it all is deciding on just where to start, as you can't be in all places at the same time. An acceptable option is to be in as many places at the right time as you can.

Fortunately for us the right time doesn't necessarily happen in all places at the same time, and can vary greatly. The key is determining what creates a peak condition and then being there when it all happens. Peak conditions include finding numbers of fish holed up in specific locations and possessing a serious snackin' attitude. Another key is finding that particular scenario at a time when the given food supply is at a seasonal low.

Besides seasonal trends there are also cycles in the predator prey relationship whereby the numbers of available predators varies along with the amount of available bait. Spawning success can vary from year to year and may create a surplus or a void. Good spawning conditions

can create strong year classes of walleyes and will result in a predominant size range. A couple of good years back to back can create a wave of fish that may be

effect just how much food is going to be available to all those predators.

A good situation for anglers includes strong year classes of walleyes that have grown into adults, combined with a shortage of available bait. That is a scenario destined to make hero's out of just about anybody, and is a situation you definitely want to take advantage of.

When a couple of strong year classes get into the adult range they begin to eat more and more, and some of what they key on will be what their larger brethren have had mostly to themselves, until now. With a big new eating machine on the scene all of the predators (including the larger models) find the going tougher, and they become more and more vulnerable.

Predicting when a situation like that will take place is over most angler's heads, and even the professional biologists. The thing to look for is trends, as trends can reveal the existence of said conditions. Trends can last for a year or more, and is something to be aware of. Look for a good fall bite to carry over into the winter and into the next spring, and beyond. A tough fall on the other hand, may



**The author reveals some of the secrets to finding big walleyes like this one.**

followed as they proceed through their expected life cycle.

The same can be said about bait fish and minnows that experience the ups and downs of good and bad spawning conditions, and will

stay tough through the winter and most of the following open water season.

The thing is, when an imbalance occurs mother nature eventually reacts and the situation rectifies itself. When it does, things can quickly go from incredible to pathetic, and is to be expected. If you've been riding a hot bite bubble for several months or more, understand that sooner or later it's going to burst and things could get tough for a while.

Mille Lacs Lake in Central Minnesota has recently gone through a huge swing with the last couple of years producing incredible action, but a big hatch of perch and minnows last spring brought it all to a screeching halt by early fall. Lake Oahe in South Dakota has gone through a major transition as well and is in the process of getting back to normal after a couple of really tough years. Lake Erie doesn't seem to have the numbers it once had but what is there is big, really big. A recent PWT tournament required a twelve pound minimum to win any of the money in the big fish pot. It's all part of the cycle, whether it's natural or man made.

One thing you may find when angling under peak conditions is that there are a whole lot more walleyes available than you may have ever imagined. On the other hand tough conditions may give you the feeling that you've been working the Dead Sea when nothing could be further from the truth.

The effects of a swing are more pronounced on a larger body of water, maybe because of the

sheer number of anglers and the reporting of good and bad results. Whatever the case, it happens on large and small bodies of water alike.

Even systems that rely on yearly stockings to bolster their populations go through highs and lows, depending on how well the fry that are released fare. For whatever reason, a particular stocking will do exceptionally well and create a strong year class of fish and will start to show up as bunch of pesky runts, that is until the year after and the year after that, and so on, and so on.

How you should deal with a particular situation will depend on what you're faced with. For example, if you're riding a high and not fairing that well you better make some moves because something has to be happening some place. Quicker presentations may be in order, like pulling spinner and crawler harnesses, or running Shad Raps through likely areas. If you have your basic presentations down pat, it becomes more of a matter as to where you do what you do.

And if you're working under the negative effects of a low you may have to take your time and work over likely areas with a fine tooth comb. A fine tooth comb may include using slow pinpoint presentations like live bait rigging and jigging. You could try tipping a jig like a Blue Fox Foxee Jig with a leech or piece of crawler and slowly cover every inch of available real-estate in search of the few biters that are left. If you think the walleyes are looking for something moving a little faster you may have work with a quicker

presentation like trolling a crank bait through the same areas, but work it over and over again.

If you can, it would be ideal to follow the peaks and take advantage of favorable situations when they arise but it's not always possible. If nothing else you could use the knowledge provided as an acceptable excuse to lay on your friends after a tough day on the water.

---

**Order Your  
Lake Erie  
Fishing Maps  
online  
at  
www.walleye.com  
or by calling  
toll free  
1-800-347-4519**

**\* Lake Erie's  
Western Basin**

**\* Bass Islands**

**\* Major Reefs**

**\* Sandusky Bay**

**\* Central Lake Erie - West**

**\* Central Lake Erie - East**

**\* Eastern Lake Erie - West**

**\* Eastern Lake Erie - East**

**Also available**

**\* Detroit River**

**\* Lake St. Clair**

# Buckeye Steel

## *Ohio Steelhead Program Booms*

by

W. H. (Chip) Gross

In the waters of Lake Erie and its Ohio tributary rivers and streams mainly east of Cleveland, there is a fishing phenomenon occurring the likes of which Buckeye anglers have never before experienced.

Steelhead trout-many weighing more than 10 pounds and measuring in excess of 30 inches-are being caught by the thousands, and the fishing looks to only get better.

Richard Popp from Mentor, Ohio, knows this fishery first-hand. A steelhead fisherman for the past decade, he has landed and released thousands of fish. But not quite all of his steelhead have made it back into the water; a 14-pounder hangs on his office wall.

"I catch them in the lake in the summer and in the rivers in the winter," Popp said. "I like to troll when I'm on Lake Erie. The fishing is so good that we've had multiple steelhead on the lines at the same time." Popp went on to say that steelhead hooked in the warmer waters of summer tend to either jump or fight ferociously across the surface, earning them the nickname "silver bullets."

Steelhead are simply sea-run rainbow trout that have been transplanted to the Great Lakes from their native Pacific Northwest. Stocked into tributary streams as smolts (six to nine



**Steelhead are getting more numerous each year in Ohio Streams and in Central Lake Erie.**

inches long), the young fish make their way downstream to Lake Erie where they grow to maturity and take on the steely-gray color

that gives them their name. In the fall, they return to the tributary river or stream where they were stocked to spawn. The fish find their individual stream by smell and can detect homing scent clues up to 30 miles away.

Steelhead may stay in a stream all winter until the water begins to warm in the spring and they return to the lake.

"Each spring we stock a total of nearly 400,000 Manistee- strain steelhead in the Rocky River, Chagrin River, Grand River, and Conneaut Creek," said Kevin Kayle, fisheries biologist for the ODNR Division of Wildlife. "They grow rapidly, feeding primarily on emerald shiners, smelt, alewives, and gizzard shad. These fish may live up to seven years and, unlike salmon, don't die after spawning. They just keep eating and getting bigger."

Kayle went on to say that steelhead average 2 to 3 pounds and 18 inches after just one summer in Lake Erie, 6 to 7 pounds and 25 inches after two years, and 8 to 10 pounds and 29 inches after three summers in the lake. "The fishing that Ohio steelheaders are now experiencing is a combination of good fishery

science and years of just plain hard work,” said Gary Isbell, executive administrator for fish management with the Division of Wildlife. “With the recent success of this program, we are looking at the possibility of stocking even more Lake Erie tributary streams with steelhead in the future.

Are you hooked yet? If you’re a serious Ohio angler and you’ve never fought a Buckeye steelhead, you owe it to yourself to give it a try.

### State Record Steelhead

Ohio’s state record steelhead trout was caught in Lake Erie on October 2, 1996, by Mike Shane of New Middletown, OH. It weighed 20.97 pounds and measured 36.5 inches long!

### Stream Etiquette

To ensure a quality fishing experience for everyone, fishing etiquette should be kept in mind when fishing rivers or streams. For instance, if someone is already fishing a particular stretch of river that you want to fish, it is common courtesy to ask if they mind before you join them. Another unwritten rule of the river is that once a fish is hooked all other anglers fishing in that stretch should reel in their lines, giving the lucky angler room to fight and land the steelhead. Anglers are reminded that it is illegal to fish or trespass on private property without permission of the landowner. Littering, including leaving items as small as spawn-bag material and cigarette butts, is also illegal.

### Steelhead Fishing Regulations

Anglers fishing the Ohio waters of Lake Erie and its tributaries are reminded that steelhead must be at least 12 inches in length before they are of legal size. The bag limit for steelhead and salmon is five, either singly or in the aggregate, from May 1 through August 31. From September 1 through April 30 no more than two steelhead or rainbow trout may be taken per angler per day.

### Free Fishing Publications

Many public fishing areas are open to anglers on northeast Ohio rivers and streams. For a list of these areas and more steelhead information, contact a wildlife district office and ask for any or all of the following free Division of Wildlife publications:

- Fishing Prospects - Northeast Ohio
- Trout Fishing in Lake Erie (Publication 34)
- Lake Erie Fishing Guide (Publication 276)
- Ohio Fish Identification Guide (Publication 334)

### From Forecast, page 11

Many 5 pound “jumpers” were caught. There’s lots of food for these sport fish so they remain “fat and sassy”.

The perch fishing was super last year and should be as great in 2003. There’s many good sized perch available because the Division of Wildlife limited the net and catch limits. These limits really worked with positive results.

Plan ahead to come to this vacation area. There’s lots of charters, ramps for your own good sized boat and motels to stay in. These areas get booked up months in advance. Don’t wait till March or April unless you can come up during the week which is a little slower but not much. Weekends seem to be a zoo with the population doubling or even tripling. Traffic is congested and it seems everyone’s in a hurry to get out in the lake.

You might try calling 1 800 BUCKEYE and ask for information on Ohio’s northern shore from Toledo thru Huron this summer. Port Clinton seems the central area for anglers to flock to. If you want to talk fishing you can e mail me at [capt.phil@cadez-charters.com](mailto:capt.phil@cadez-charters.com). GOOD FISHIN!

---

**www.walleye.com**

**Lake Erie**

**Walleye Scene**

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

---

**Michigan Stinger  
Scorpion Spoons  
Order yours at  
www.walleye.com**

**New for 2003  
THE PRO SERIEIES**

**From Ten Pounders, page 9**

Even though I am licensed to charter in both Michigan and Ohio waters, I haven't fished in Ohio during March or April since 1999. The Michigan waters are that good, and in my opinion they offer one of the best trophy walleye areas during early spring in the world. The good news is the action is close to shore so the fishery is accessible to smaller boats. In fact, last year, my most consistent action occurred in water less than 10-feet deep between the Detroit and Maumee Rivers, which is a major staging area for pre and post spawn walleyes. If you have any questions, email me at [mikeveine@trophyspecialists.com](mailto:mikeveine@trophyspecialists.com).

---

**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

**Advertise in  
Lake Erie Walleye  
Magazine**

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

**Sign up for three  
issues and receive the  
THIRD AD FREE**

**Call  
1 800 347-4519**

or visit  
[www.walleye.com](http://www.walleye.com)  
for more information

**"Year Round Walleyes"  
by walleye Pro Mark Martin**

*Everything you NEED to know  
to catch walleyes!*

Order your autographed  
copy today! for only \$19.95  
plus \$3.00 S&H  
Send check or money order

to:

Mark Martin  
POB 103

Twin Lake, MI 49457

Michigan residents add 6% sales tax





# Planer Board Basics

by  
Bruce DeShano

Few anglers would argue the effectiveness of planer boards. In fact, many would argue that planer boards are the most deadly lure delivery system ever invented. Not only do planer boards enable anglers to fish multiple lines and lures, the amount of water that can be quickly covered with a planer system is second to none.

In addition to straining water and offering multiple lines, planer board fishing is also the best way to tempt strikes from wary species such as brown trout, steelhead or heavily fished walleye; However, these sought after species aren't the only targets of planer board fishing. Hardly a fish swims that doesn't regularly fall prey to anglers using a planer board system. Salmon, trout, walleye, steelhead, muskie, pike, bass and even large panfish such as crappie and white bass are commonly taken with the help of these trolling aids.

Planer boards are effective and easy to use. To get the most from these trolling aids, anglers must understand a few of the basics of planer board fishing.

## UNDERSTANDING DUAL BOARD SYSTEMS

Different types of planer boards

are designed for different fishing applications. Anglers can choose from two types of planer boards. The most popular type of planer board system are dual boards or what some anglers refer to as



mast systems.

A dual board planer system includes a set of boards that feature two runners attached parallel to one another. The Riviera Dual Planer Boards are collapsible, making them easy to store even in small boats. These boards also feature three tow point adjustments for different wave conditions and a durable maintenance free design. A dual board system also requires a six foot planer mast that mounts near the bow of the boat. A tow line/reel system attaches to the mast and allows the planers to be easily deployed and retrieved.

The boards of this type of planer

system are normally set to run 50-100 feet out to the side of the boat. In calm water the boards are set out the furthest. Fishing lines are attached to a dual board system by using specially designed spring loaded pinch pads. These pinch pads with the fishing line secured between their jaws are then attached to the tow line using a shower curtain hook (aka quick clip). As the boat trolls forward, line is played off the fishing reel allowing the line release and lure to work down the tow line towards the planer board.

Commonly called planer board releases, Off Shore

Tackle is the worlds largest manufacturer of planer board releases designed for all types of fishing situations. The size of these line releases, pad diameters and tension settings vary depending on the size and type of fish to be targeted. The line release has two functions. First it must hold the line securely while trolling at a variety of speeds and varying line diameters. Second this fishing aid must release its grip on the line



once a fish strikes. Designing a release that masters these functions is no easy task. A quality release provides enough tension to insure fish are solidly hooked before the line slips free. It's also essential that the release function over and over again without damaging the fishing line.

Most releases on the market either have too much tension, or not enough. Many of these products abrade the line and few can withstand the tortures of day to day fishing. It's important to note that no single release is universal to all types of fishing. That's why Off Shore Tackle produces a wide variety of line releases that are suitable for all trolling applications.

When targeting smaller species such as walleye, lighter tension releases are employed. The OR-10 release is the best selling walleye release on the market. The sliding spring allows the tension setting to be easily adjusted as desired. When fishing in rougher water or for larger walleye, the OR-14 release is the ideal choice. Like the OR-10, this release has a sliding spring adjustment. The slightly heavier spring tension of this release allows anglers to troll in rough water or at faster speeds without false releases. .

Larger species such as trout or salmon require line releases with more spring tension. The OR-3 was designed especially for anglers who target steelhead, brown trout and trophy walleye. The larger pad diameter of this release increases the friction on the line without having to signifi-

cantly increase spring tension. The amount of tension desired can be adjusted by how deep the line is placed in the rubber pads. The deeper the line is placed in the pads, the more tension it requires to trigger the release.

The OR-17 is similar to the OR-3 except the release has stronger spring tension. Ideal for high speed trolling or when fishing in rough water or when pulling large plugs, dodgers and other attractors, this product has been an immediate success with salmon anglers. For muskie anglers, the OR-30 is the most requested planer board release. This release is similar to the OR-3 and the OR-17 but it has the heaviest spring tension available.

Also available is the OR-19, a small release with a very strong spring tension. Popular with charter captains who prefer a release with extra tension, the OR-19 insures positive hooksets and the maximum number of landed fish. Often when a fish strikes a lure attached to the OR-19, the line doesn't pop free of the rubber pads. The angler however can easily trigger the release by simply snapping the rod tip quickly toward the release. Triggering the releases as desired helps charter captains manage lines and reduce tangles better when two or three fish may be hooked at the same time. Matching line releases to the target species insures that anglers will enjoy the best possible success.

Dual board systems can be used on virtually any boat and for any species. The primary advantage of this type of planer board system

can't be disputed. Once a fish strikes and the line is popped free from the release, the angler is free to fight the fish. This convenience is the primary reason so many dual board systems are currently in use.

Dual boards also have the advantage of being able to deploy large numbers of lines. Many anglers fish up to five lines per side with the help of dual boards. Anglers who are often faced with rough water also favor dual boards. The larger board size helps this planer system plow through rough water when fishing both with and against the waves. The versatility of the dual board system is a major reason why so many anglers swear by them.

#### **WHY IN-LINE BOARDS?**

In-line boards such as the Off Shore Tackle OR-12 Side Planer have seen significant increases in sales in recent years. Price is one of the major reasons these small boards have caught on so quickly. For less than \$50.00 a pair an angler can get started planer board fishing. Compared to dual board systems, in-line boards are less expensive. In-line boards also have some other unique features that has helped them carve out a significant niche in the planer board market.

Because in-line boards attach directly to the fishing line, the board becomes a strike indicator that makes it easy and fun to tell when a fish has been hooked. The weight of a struggling fish causes the board to surge and sag backward in the water. When two or

**See Planer Boards, page 32**

# Central Lake Erie's Walleye Forecast Mostly Cloudy

by  
**Jeff Frischkorn**

**A**s Kevin Kayle wrestles with moving the Fairport Harbor Fisheries Research Station into its new headquarters, he also must find the time to play tag with the important task of monitoring the dynamics of Lake Erie's fisheries.

"We're still headlong into doing our data analysis and with our move, it's requiring a lot of juggling," said Kayle, supervisor for the Ohio Division of Wildlife's fisheries research unit. This unit has moved from its downtown Fairport Harbor location — which was housed in an one-time physician's office — to a much larger complex on High Street.

Kayle managed to stop long enough from tossing the rubber balls into the air to discuss what lies ahead for Lake Erie's fisheries. Of chief concern and interest for most Lake Erie anglers is the status of walleye and the opportunity to fill a cooler this summer. While the immediate forecast looks good, the future is casting something of a shadow over the fisheries.

"The 2002 year class of walleye was almost a total bust. That was due to the cold, wet spring that saw a lot of bad storms," Kayle said. Kayle did say that plenty of spawning walleye adults were present last spring but that condi-

tions were not good for both egg and juvenile survival. "But the thing that can help offset was that we had a good hatch the year before. And those walleye should come into the fisheries this year as 12 to 15-inch fish," Kayle said.

In all, Lake Erie's population estimates should project to be around 40 million. That figure is, however, a marked decline from the early 1980s and into the 1990s when the lake had a walleye population approaching 80 million fish, Kayle said. "These are numbers, however, which we've been seeing the past couple of years," Kayle said.

Kayle ascribes to the theory that a hard winter is good for the walleye fisheries. Good hatches often follow a hard winter, especially if a spring is graced with good weather. Much of productivity is due to the physiology of the fish, Kayle says.

Likely too, a hard winter means a thump on bait fish populations as well as for egg-eating species such as white perch. While fewer white perch can mean greater walleye egg survival, a smaller baitfish population can help fishermen. With less bait, a walleye is more inclined to "hit a spoon that is dragged in front it," Kayle said.

As for yellow perch, a poor hatch also was encountered last year, Kayle said. "This population is being offset by a good 2002 year class, but these fish should be only 6 to 7 inches by fall," Kayle said. "We do have several other good year classes of perch that are producing, and will continue to produce, good catches. People just might have to sort through more fish."

Perch recovery efforts through conservative fishing regulations and the imposition of strict quotas by all Lake Erie stake-holders is helping to improve the species' population, Kayle says.

"We could, though see regression if we have a couple more years of bad hatches," Kayle said.

Among the brightest spots for Lake Erie is the recovery of its stock of white bass. As it was for 1999 and 2001, the white bass hatch for 2002 was good, Kayle said.

"The white bass fishing's as good as it's been in many years; it's just that they're not being sought by as many fishermen. That could change as more and larger white bass are caught," Kayle said.

Smallmouth bass populations are likewise strong. Good numbers of

**See Central Walleye, page 30**

# Another Year of Great Fishing Expected for Lake Erie in 2003

From  
The Ohio Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Wildlife

Anglers can again expect to find some of the nation's finest and most diverse fishing opportunities this year on Lake Erie, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife.

"Whether targeting the lake's famous walleyes, plentiful perch, hard-fighting smallmouth bass or steelhead trout, great fishing opportunities are available this year on Lake Erie," said Roger Knight, Lake Erie fisheries program manager for the ODNR Division of Wildlife. "Fishing should be good to excellent for most species this year," said Knight. "With a large charter boat fleet, numerous boat ramps and marinas, and shoreline access to the lake and its tributaries, anglers should take advantage of the fishing experiences that Lake Erie offers."

## Walleye

An abundant 2001 walleye hatch will enter the Lake Erie fishery this year. As a result, state fish biologists expect this season's anglers to reel in plenty of good walleye catches. The plentiful two-year-old fish from the 2001 hatch will measure 13 to 15 inches. Anglers can also expect to catch a good number of fish from the 1999 hatch that will measure 16 to 18 inches. Anglers should anticipate 20 to 26 inch catches

from the 1996 and 1998 hatches, as well as some fish from earlier hatches now in the Fish Ohio category at more than 28 inches. The reduced bag limit for Ohio anglers remains in effect at four walleyes during March and April and six walleyes the remainder of the year.

"Long cold winters normally benefit young walleye by helping reduce the numbers of other fish species - such as gizzard shad, alewife and white perch - who compete for the same food sources as the walleye," said Knight.

More important to a successful walleye spawn, he added, is warm and mild spring weather. Knight said it is worth noting that it was the combination of cold winters and mild springs during the 1980s that helped produce that decade's now world-renowned Lake Erie walleye fishery.

"We actually have just as many spawning walleyes in Lake Erie today as we did in the early 80s," said Knight.

## Yellow Perch

The excellent perch fishing anglers have experienced since the mid-1990s should continue through 2003 and beyond. Limit catches of large yellow perch, common across the lake last year, should

again be attainable on many trips. Many of these excellent table-fare fish will be in the 9 to 13 inch range with August, September, and October being the peak harvest months. Conservative regulations for sport and commercial fishermen and improved spawns have helped Lake Erie's yellow perch stocks to gradually recover after low levels in the early 1990s.

This season, thanks to an excellent hatch in 1996, anglers should continue reeling in fine catches of perch measuring 10 to 12 inches. Added to the catch will be perch from the 1998 and 1999 spawns, measuring 8 to 10 inches. Catch rates should peak in September and October and rival those of 2002. Ohio's daily bag limit for yellow perch remains at 30 fish per angler.

## Smallmouth Bass

Fishing for Lake Erie's third most popular sport species should remain good to excellent during 2003. Smallmouth bass anglers can expect to land smallies from 1995, 1996, 1997 and 1998 classes now ranging in size from 14 to 18 inches. Typical catches will be in the 14 to 18 inch range and weigh 1.5 to 3.5 pounds. Fishing should be good at many of the traditional spots especially in the spring and

fall. Successful spawns over the past decade have provided excellent smallmouth bass fishing opportunities across Lake Erie. Anglers target smallmouth bass from spring through fall with the best action occurring in May, June and September. If recent trends continue, anglers will see catch rates similar to that of 2002. Hot spots should include the Lake Erie islands area, Western Basin Reef Complex, Sandusky Bay, Ruggles Reef, and harbor breakwalls from Cleveland to Conneaut. The daily bag limit for smallmouth bass is five fish with a minimum size length of 14 inches.

### **Steelhead Trout**

On the open lake, anglers should look for peak steelhead action on the waters off Lorain to Conneaut throughout June and August, with catches measuring 19 to 28 inches. Many charter guides now offer steelhead charters as an alternative to traditional walleye charters. Once Lake Erie's steelhead move into central basin streams in the fall, these feisty fish provide additional angling opportunities for wading stream anglers throughout the fall and winter months. The Division of Wildlife maintains this popular fishery by releasing approximately 400,000 steelhead trout each spring in the Vermilion, Rocky, Chagrin and Grand rivers and Conneaut Creek.

Fishing conditions on Lake Erie can change hourly. Adjusting fishing methods according to current conditions is key to the best success. Anglers should take into account such factors as season, cloud cover, water clarity, boat traffic, wave action, and

amount of prey fish present. Electronic equipment to mark fish is advisable. Once a school of fish is located, anglers should try various techniques including drifting, trolling, and jigging at various depths in the water column.

For a recorded Lake Erie fishing report, call 1-888 HOOKFISH. For additional information on lodging, charter boat services, and local launch ramps, contact one of the following lakeshore visitors bureaus:

*Ashtabula County Convention & Visitors Bureau 800-337-6746  
Lake County Visitors Bureau 800-368-5253*

*Convention & Visitors Bureau of Greater Cleveland 800-321-1001  
Lorain County Visitors Bureau 800-334-1673*

*Sandusky/Erie County Visitors Bureau 800-255-8070  
Ottawa County Visitors Bureau 800-441-1271*

*Greater Toledo Convention & Visitors Bureau 800-243-4667*

*Ohio Division of Travel & Tourism  
800-BUCKEYE*

### **LAKE ERIE FISHING: A LOOK BACK AT THE 2002 SEASON**

Fishing for walleye, Lake Erie's most popular game fish, was very good throughout last summer at select walleye hot spots. Limit catches of walleyes ranging in size from 14 to 24 inches were common during periods in July and August. Some of the best 2002

western basin walleye locations included the Kelleys Island area, the Reef Complex, along the Camp Perry Firing Range boundaries, and the area from West Sister Island, along the Toledo Shipping Channel up to the Michigan state line. In the central basin, good areas included locations off Huron to Vermilion.

In 2002, anglers caught a total 700,000 walleye on the Ohio waters of Lake Erie, significantly less than the previous year's 1.2 million fish. Catch rates for private boat anglers peaked in August at approximately one walleye for every two hours of fishing, slightly less than the previous year. Charter boat anglers had better catch rates that peaked in July at more than one walleye for every two hours of fishing, down from one fish every one and a half hours in 2001. The annual catch rate in the western basin in 2002 was one walleye every two hours. The annual catch rate in the central basin was about one fish every three hours.

The largest percentage of the 2002 walleye harvest were three-year-old walleyes from the 1999 hatch measuring 14 to 18 inches. Other year classes of fish that made a showing were from the 1996 and 1998 hatches ranging in size from 20 to 24 inches. The current state record walleye was caught off Cleveland in November 1999 and weighed 16.19 pounds, a remnant of the large 1986-year class. Walleyes can live to be more than 20 years of age. On the down side, the cold, wet, windy weather in the spring contributed to a very poor hatch in 2002, which means the numbers of 14- to 16-inch fish will

be fewer in 2004. However, a strong 2001 hatch, as well as contributions from the 1996 and 1999 hatches and conservative harvests on a lakewide scale, should make for an exciting 2003 fishery and also carry over to 2004.

### Yellow Perch

Many top perch-jerking locales across both basins kept perch anglers busy and pleased. Ohio perch anglers filled coolers with 6.6 million yellow perch, a 20 percent increase over the 2001 harvest of 5.5 million. Angler pressure for yellow perch also improved from 1.6 million in 2001 to 2 million fish in 2002. Catch rates hit their highest levels during the traditional peak month of September, with anglers catching nearly four fish per hour, down slightly from 4.2 fish per angler hour in 2001.

### Smallmouth Bass

Last year angler pressure for smallmouth bass was an estimated 340,000 angler hours, down from 400,000 angler hours in 2001. The decline is most likely due to bad weather and lake conditions in May, a traditional smallmouth bass fishing month. Creel interviews reveal that most bass anglers practice catch and release with six out of seven smallmouth bass released after being landed. The state record smallmouth bass, taken in June 1993 by an angler fishing off the Bass Islands, weighed in at 9.5 pounds. The world record is 10 pounds, 14 ounces.

### Steelhead Trout

Central basin anglers experienced good steelhead fishing during August and September of last year. The steelhead harvest in 2002 jumped 41 percent from 29,000 in 2001 to 41,000. The popularity of Lake Erie's steelhead fishery continues to increase as more anglers discover this exciting sport fish in Ohio waters.

For additional news online, check out the ODNR Press Room at [ohiodnr.com](http://ohiodnr.com)

#### For Further Information Contact:

Tim Bader, ODNR Division of Wildlife  
(440) 352-4199  
-or-  
Andy Ware, ODNR Media Relations  
(614) 265-6882

### From Central Walleye, page 27

age 5 and older, Kayle said.

"The one thing that we continue to monitor is the survival of young bass. Our concern is the changing food web that involves the invasive round goby, but they are being incorporated in the bass' diet and so we're seeing faster growth rates with smallmouths," Kayle said.

Of course, the wildlife division's steelhead stocking program will continue to pour dividends into the lake's fisheries, Kayle says. "We set a record last summer for the number of steelhead taken from the lake: Just over 40,000 trout," Kayle said. "Steelhead saved a lot of charters last year and should do so again this year, absolutely."

Kayle said his staff is also looking at the lake's population of fishhook fleas. The concern is that the fishhook flea will be carried into new waters. This transportation will come about by those fishermen who fail to take precautions in cleaning fishing lines and downrigger cables, Kayle said. "The fishhook flea was discovered for the first time last year in the Central Basin," Kayle said. "We want to keep an eye on it."

Visit  
**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  
Fishing Maps  
Visit the 'Braggin  
Board'  
...and much much more*

**Advertise in  
Lake Erie  
Walleye Magazine  
Call  
1 800 347-4519**

# The Eastern Lake Erie Fishery Report for Spring 2003

by  
**Joe Fischer**

**B**efore we make our annual fishing forecast for Eastern Lake Erie for 2003 lets take a cursory review of what happened in 2002 because, as always, much of the forecast for 2003 is based on 2002. Last year started slowly with average early spring nearshore walleye fishing. The walleye fishing improved markedly during the annual Southtowns Walleye tournament in early July with fishermen establishing a new record catch with over 200 walleyes exceeding 9.45lbs! The good tournament fishing proved to not be a fluke as the rest of the summer and early fall was even better for seasoned offshore Eastern Lake Erie walleye fishermen. 2002 offshore walleye fishing was different than other years as the walleyes did not follow their normal mid-summer migratory pattern from the shallower water in the east near Buffalo to the deeper waters off Barcelona and Dunkirk harbors. Many walleyes were still being caught west of Sturgeon Point in 60-80 feet of water in mid to late August. In most of the previous summers the walleyes would have migrated into deeper water (70-100ft.) in early August. The reason for this lack of movement is unclear but a good guess would be that it is related to plentiful bait and water temperature.

Perch fishing was outstanding

with many limit catches especially in late summer and early fall. Many eastern basin fishermen switched from walleye to perch fishing because in their opinion nothing beats a fresh Lake Erie perch dinner!

The smallmouth bass fishing was excellent as it continues to become recognized as a world class fishery which is finally getting the recognition it deserves. It was not uncommon to catch and release over 20 good size smallmouth bass on an average day! For the first time the amount of people fishing for smallmouth bass fishermen is almost equivalent to the walleye fishermen on the eastern shores of Lake Erie.

Last years fall trawling surveys by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) revealed that the young of year (YOY) walleye class for 2002 was very poor. This bad news was easily offset by an excellent yearling class of walleyes from 2001, which are expected to grow to legal size by the fall of 2003. This "good year, bad year" spawning cycle is quite common with walleyes and other species of fish. The older classes of big walleyes from the 1980's are still around but are becoming scarcer every year. The walleye fishery for 2003 will be dominated by the good class years of 1996

and 1998. The eastern basin population will continue to be a quality rather than a quantity fishery with walleye averaging 4-6 pounds. I do not believe that this quality walleye fishery can be matched anywhere in the United States at this time.

Anyone interested in trying this trophy walleye fishery should consider fishing in August and September as recent NYSDEC surveys have revealed that the greatest walleye fishing pressure occurs in July whereas the peak walleye fishing in the last few years usually starts in mid-August through September! Close to limit catches are very common during the aforementioned prime time.

The August and September offshore fishermen generally have fiberglass boats larger than 20 feet as they sometimes venture a good 10 miles from the shore to find the walleye schools. The weather can be quite capricious in late summer and early fall with wind and rain sometimes arriving without much warning. It is advisable to monitor your weather radio if you have a smaller boat and are not sure of current weather conditions. Always remember Lake Erie is quite shallow and waves 3-5 feet can come up in a very short time and can make for a difficult trip especially if your destination port is upwind!

The lures of choice once again will be similar to last year with Ronesty plugs and spinner and worm of various colors and sizes leading the way. Tipping your body baits with a small piece of worm also has proven effective when the walleyes are biting short. The terminal tackle preferred by most offshore anglers is planer boards, Jet Planers of various sizes, downriggers, Dipsy Divers and wire and braided lines. A good fish locator and GPS satellite navigational system are also a must if you wish to locate and stay "on" the small tight walleye schools.

Don't be surprised if you catch quite a few steelhead this year as the population of this great fighting fish is very high due to the stocking efforts of primarily Pennsylvania and New York. The late summer offshore walleye fishermen are also fishing in 60-100 feet of water, which is considered steelhead territory along with the late summer walleyes.

The bottom line is that the eastern basin walleye fishery appears to have evolved into a stable quality fishery comprised of many class years of walleyes. Remember the new daily creel limit for walleyes in New York waters of Lake Erie is 4 fish at least 15" long.

Perch fishing will once again be very good in 2003 and I would expect to see more and more boats fishing for these delectable little morsels as the word continues to get out on the rebound of this popular Lake Erie fishery. The key to perch fishing is to move until you find a feeding perch school and if they stop biting continue to move until you find

them again. Look for small tight pockets of boats still fishing, this is a sure sign of fishermen probably working a school of perch. The bait of choice is a Lake Erie emerald shiner but in a pinch almost any minnow will work. If unsuccessful try fishing deeper water as the NYSDEC netting surveys have shown that most perch seemed to be found in deeper water than the fishermen were working.

Local sportsmen's groups such as the Erie County Federation of Sportsmen, the Erie County Fish Advisory Board, Southtowns and New York Walleye Associations have joined in a cooperative effort with the NYSDEC to develop plans for a potential walleye stocking program in the Buffalo river and Lake Erie. This stocking program could start as early as 2004. The initial program calls for an annual stocking of approximately 50,000 walleye fingerlings into the Buffalo River for a period of 5-7 years. If the program is successful, it could lead to an annual walleye-spawning run in the Buffalo River that would probably enhance the local population of walleyes in the eastern basin waters of Lake Erie. This program is based on the initial success of a similar program started in the Cattaraugus creek approx. 8 years ago. This cooperative venture between the sportsmen and the NYSDEC is the first of its kind on eastern Lake Erie; hopefully it will not be the last! Have a great 2003 fishing season.

## **From Planer Boards, page 26**

more of these boards are being fished side by-side it's especially easy to tell when a fish has been hooked.

When a fish strikes and is hooked, the board and fish are reeled in together. Depending on how the board is attached to the fishing line, the angler can either reel in the board and quickly remove it, or release the board and allow it to slide down the line while fighting the fish. We'll get in more detail on how to rig in-line boards in another feature.

Walleye anglers are some of the most devoted in-line board users, but these smaller sized boards can be used effectively on any species of fish. The important thing to know about in-line boards is not all are created equal. A good in-line board should be large enough to support the weight and drag of common trolling tackle such as deep diving crankbaits, snap weights, lead core line, attractors and other gear. Many boards simply aren't big enough to get the job done.

An in-line board should also be ballasted properly. The OR-12 Side Planer is carefully weighted so the board rides nose high and always rights itself in the water. Boards that aren't ballasted correctly tend to dive in rough water causing all sorts of problems.

Because in-line boards are small, they can be tough to see on the water. The OR-t2 features a bright red flag that contrasts with the yellow board, making them easy for other anglers in the area to spot. The OR-12 is also versatile enough to be rigged in a number of ways suitable for walleye, salmon, trout and a wealth of other species.



# Lake Erie Charters

## Angel Eyes Charters

**Captain Gary Watkins**  
Toll Free at (800) 475-8655  
angeleye@infinet.com  
28' Baha Sport Fisherman,  
27' Sportcraft,  
Angel Bay Marina,  
Port Clinton, OH  
U.S.C.G. Licensed,  
Ohio Guide Licensed,  
Fully Insured

## Fashion Lady Sport Charters

**Captain Bob Banjoff**  
(440) 988-8849  
145 Luxor Lane  
Amherst, OH 44001  
27' Sportcraft Fishmaster  
Anchors Away Marina  
Marblehead, OH  
U.S.C.G. Licensed  
Member L.E.C.B.A  
Walleyes, Smallmouth  
Perch Charters

## Sassafras Charters

**Captain Lance Ehrhardt**  
(716) 896-6186  
www.walleye.com/  
sassafras.htm  
105 Bogardus Street Buffalo,  
NY 14206  
29' Baha Cruiser  
Chadwick Bay Marina,  
Dunkirk, NY.  
U.S.C.G. Master Licensed  
Member Eastern LECBA

## Lake Erie Charters

**Captain Phil Cadez**  
Phone: 1-888-686-4422  
capt.phil@cros.net  
3415 Stonyridge Dr.,  
Sandusky, OH 44870  
Six Captains, Four Boats  
Two 30' Sport Crafts,  
two 26' Penn Yans  
docked at West Harbor  
U.S.C.G. Licensed &  
Ohio Licensed Guides  
Members LECBA

## Dealers Choice Charters

**Captain Denny Lutz**  
(937) 866-8391  
(937) 654-0791-cell  
6615 Gillen Lane  
Miamisburg, OH 45342  
2001 Baha 30' Fisherman  
Wild Wings Marina  
Oak Harbor, OH  
USCG Licensed  
Member LECBA

## Doug's Charter Fishing Service

**Captain Doug Stein**  
(716) 774-0077  
(716) 912-6972 - cell  
stein1877@aol.com  
1877 Huth Rd.  
Grand Island, NY 14072  
28' Baha Sportfisherman  
20' Lund  
Niagara River and  
Lake Erie Charters

## Rising Sun Charters

**Captain G.W. Jumper, Jr.**  
(937) 652-2412  
captgwjumper@foryou.net  
613 College Way,  
Urbana, OH 43078  
30' Sportcraft Fisherman  
Green Cove Condominiums,  
Oak Harbor, OH  
USCG Licensed, Ohio  
Licensed Guide

## Dalton Gang Charters

**Captain David Dalton**  
1-800-367-4997 or  
419-935-1652  
Boat Cell: 419-706-1176  
www.walleye.com/  
dalton.htm  
U.S.C.G Licensed  
Ohio Licensed Guide  
Member L.E.C.B.A.  
Walleye \* Perch \*  
Smallmouth

**This Space Available**

## Le Chasseur Sport Fishing Charters

(734) 242-5721

www.walleye.com/lechas.htm

email: lechass@juno.com

**Walleye**  
Lake Erie, Monroe, MI  
April-August

**Salmon, Steelhead**  
Lake Michigan, Manistee, MI  
August-September

**This Space Available**

**This Space Available**

# Lake Erie Charters

## Dealer's Choice Charters

(937) 866-8391 (937) 654-0791 - cell

*Special reduced rates for  
smaller groups of 2,3,4 or 5 fishermen*

**New 2001 Baha 30' Fisherman**

Wild Wings Marina, Oak Harbor, OH

**Captain Dennis Lutz**

[www.walleye.com/dealers.htm](http://www.walleye.com/dealers.htm)

## Dalton Gang Charters

**Captain David Dalton**

**1-800-367-4997**

*Walleye - Perch - Smallmouth Bass*

U.S.C.G Licensed

Ohio Licensed Guide

Member L.E.C.B.A.

Ph./Fax: 419-935-1652

Boat Cell: 419-706-1176

[www.walleye.com/dalton.htm](http://www.walleye.com/dalton.htm)

Walleye \* Bass \* Perch \* Salmon

## Sturgeon General

*Lake Erie Fishing Charters*

**Captain Hank Cocain**

Licensed Captain and Guide

Keister Marina  
Ashtabula, Ohio

6914 Hassell Road  
Sharpsville, PA 16150  
(724) 962-4725



**Capt. Bob Viecek**

## Sandpiper

## Sportfishing Charters

Catawba Island, OH

701 Elizabeth Drive  
Huron, Ohio 44839

**(419) 433-6664**

## C'est La Vie Charters

Lake Erie Sport Fishing

Ashtabula, OH

Capt. Ray Lilak  
840 Almasy Dr.  
Campbell, OH 44405  
Home - (330) 755-3334  
Mobile - (330) 565-3963



Capt. Joe Romito  
28 Gertrude Ave.  
Campbell, OH 44405  
Home - (330) 755-7915  
Mobile - (330) 770-9365

[rcilak@aol.com](mailto:rcilak@aol.com)

## Windrift Charters

Lake Erie Sport Fishing

Captain Mel Fenger

**419-797-9803**

[www.walleye.com/windrift.htm](http://www.walleye.com/windrift.htm)

[windrift@cros.net](mailto:windrift@cros.net)

Anchors Away Marina

419-734-1395

Captain Gary Watkins

## Angel Eyes Charters

**800-475-8655** [angeleye@infinet.com](mailto:angeleye@infinet.com)

28' Baha Sport Fisherman & 27' Sportcraft  
Angel Bay Marina Port Clinton, OH

USCG Licensed  
Fully Insured

Walleye, Smallmouth  
Perch Charters

## Fire Escape Charters

28' Marinette  
Fully Equipped  
Insured



USCG Licensed  
Ohio Licensed Guide  
LECBA Member

**Captain Frank Henderson**

353 Highland Way, Worthington, Ohio 43085

**614-885-0192**

[fish4ufh@hotmail.com](mailto:fish4ufh@hotmail.com)

**North Coast Sportfishing**



## Dockage for Lake Erie Fishermen

**Brest Bay Marina**  
 4088 Brest Rd.  
 Newport, MI 48166  
**(734) 289-1234**  
 Wet Dockage  
 Rack & Launch  
 Winter Storage

**Fleitz Marina**  
 11109 Coruroy Rd.  
 Curtice, OH  
 15 min from Toledo  
 (419) 693-1247 - Office  
 (419) 836-1305 - Marina  
  
 On South Shore of

## Inland Marina

*1/4 mile East of Junction of Rt. 2 and Rt. 19  
 Near Port Clinton, OH.*

**For Reservations call**

**1-419-898-5071** (Bait Store)

**1-419-450-5681** (Marina Mgr)

Boat Dockage and Campsites Available  
 Daily, Weekly, Monthly and  
 Full Season Rates Available

- \* Camper Rentals
- \* Bait Store
- \* Boat Ramp
- \* Fishing Charters

*Excellent Walleye, Perch and Smallmouth  
 Fishing in Erie's Western Basin  
 the "Walleye Capital of the World"*

**Bay Point**  
 Private Marina &  
 Family Resort  
 10948 Bayshore Rd.  
 Marblehead, OH 43440  
 (419) 798-4434

**Luna Pier  
 Harbor Club**  
 10420 S. Harold Dr.  
 Luna Pier, MI 48157  
**(734) 848-8777**  
 Dock Space Available  
 Marina

**This Space  
 Available**

**This Space  
 Available**

## Lodging for Lake Erie Fishermen

**East Point  
 Cottages**  
**419-285-2204**  
 Excellent Fishing  
 Fishing Tackle/  
 Licenses  
 Fully Equipped  
  
 Bill & Cheryl Massie  
 PO Box 213  
 Put-in-Bay, OH 43456

**Lake Point  
 Motel**  
*On the Lakefront*  
 908 E. Main St.  
 Marblehead, OH 43440  
 Rooms \* Suites  
 \* Mobile Homes  
**Heat \* Air \* Cable**  
**Fish Cleaning Table  
 & Freezer**  
**(419) 798-4684**  
[www.lakepointmotel.com](http://www.lakepointmotel.com)

**Elle-Mate Rentals**  
 on Lake Erie, the "Walleye Capital of the World"  
 Between Oak Harbor & Port Clinton, OH, off S.R. 2  
 1,2 & 3 BR condos in Green Cove Resort  
**New 2 BR House near Marina**  
 AND  
**Great fishing** near Wester Sister Island.  
 Close to Cedar Pt., Put-in-Bay, Kellys Island  
**Call Elle 1-888-898-2300**

**This Space  
 Available**

**This Space  
 Available**

**This Space  
 Available**

**This Space  
 Available**

# Lake Erie Walleye Tournaments for 2003

**April 6. World Walleye Association: Lake Erie Division.** Catawba Island State Park, OH. Contact Dave Kidd at (330) 537-8603 or email: oh@worldwalleye.com or eyetaker@raex.com

**April 16-18 PWT** Port Clinton, OH Lake Erie \$1200/\$575 (218) 824-2542

**April 27. World Walleye Association:** Lake Erie Division. Huron Boat Basin, OH. Contact Dave Kidd at (330) 537-8603 email: oh@worldwalleye.com or eyetaker@raex.com

**May 28-31. RCL** Port Clinton, OH Lake Erie \$1250 (270) 252-1591

**June 7-8. World Walleye Association: Lake Erie Division.** Hotwaters, Lorain, OH. Contact Dave Kidd at (330) 537-8603 email: oh@worldwalleye.com or eyetaker@raex.com

**June 14. North Coast Charter Boat Association.** Beachcomber, Fairport Harbor/Grand River, OH. Walleye Tournament \$400/boat (8 rods max) Steelhead Tournament \$50/boat (8 rods max). 80% payback, first five positions. Contact Steve Jager: (216) 531-2754 or Bernie Roell: (440) 257-9544 or email: alurecharters@cs.com.

**June 21-22. Michigan Walleye Tour** Unknown MI Lake Erie \$250 secretary@michiganwalleyetour.com

**June (Date Pending). Fairport Harbor Rod & Reel Association.** Fairport Harbor, OH \$80.00/boat. (4 man teams, 8 rod limit) 90% Payout. Contact Jason Glatz: (440) 548-4102

**June 14 – June 22 Southtowns Walleye Association of Western New York.** Several Western New York weigh stations. Contact Pete Paufler vicepresident@southtownswalleye.com or sign up at their web site: www.southtownswalleye.com . \$22,000 in cash prizes plus boat, motor and trailer to tournament winner.

**July (Date Pending). Chagrin River Salmon Association.** 1st Annual Walleye/Steelhead Fishing Tournament. Willoughby, OH. \$150/three man team. (440) 942-4730 or email epav198@aol.com.

**July 19-20. World Walleye Association: Lake Erie Division.** Fairport Harbor, OH. Contact Dave Kidd at (330) 537-8603 email: oh@worldwalleye.com or eyetaker@raex.com

**July 12-13. New York Walleye Association. Ameri-Can Walleye Classic.** Chadwick Bay Marina, Dunkirk, NY. \$175/team (2-4 man teams). Limit 150 teams. Contact Jim Borucki (716) 897-1522 or George Boice (716) 874-2522

**July 9-11. PWT Dunkirk NY** Lake Erie \$1200/\$575 (218) 824-2542

**July 12-13. The Walleye Classic.** Port Colborne, Ontario \$400/3-4 person team (US). 100 team limit . Contact Dave Malloy (905) 834-9218.

**July 26. Western Pennsylvania Anglers. Lake Erie PA Lake Erie Unknown (724) 438-6909**

**August 9-10. 444 Walleye International Fishing Tourn.** Port Colborne & District Conservation Club. Marina H, H Knoll Park in Port Colborne, Ontario. 444 means 4 people/team, 4 fish/day and 4 pairs of poles. \$40,000 in cash & Prizes. Contact Mike Hili (905) 835-1891 Email: mhili@cogeco.ca

**August 16-17. Kinzua Allegheny Walleye Assoc.** Dunkirk Harbor NY Lake Erie \$225 (814) 726-3437

**August (DATE PENDING). 12th Annual Lake Erie Walleye Tournament.** ARU Marina, Ashtabula, OH. \$140/boat Contact Chuck Baker (330) 392-1591 ext. 223 or Nick Frangos (330) 759-0746. fishbanger001@netscape.net

**August (DATE PENDING). Western Reserve Walleye Association Open Event.** ARU Club, Ashtabula, OH. \$100/2 person team. Contact Jim Breedlove (330) 530-3909 or visit www.thewrwa.com.