

# Lake Erie Springs Enormous Walleyes

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with  
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**W**e routinely fish the Great Lakes in spring and we've found that they all have two things in common - big walleyes and more big walleyes. Nowhere is this truer than Lake Erie.

The first step to success is finding the walleye's general location. History is a great teacher, and seasonal migrations will elude to some clues as to where to begin your spring search. On Lake Erie, the spring action occurs right after spawn, in areas north of the expansive reef systems in the Western Basin. As Spring progresses, concentrations of big walleyes begin moving east and usually in early May the fishing will be good in areas around the Bass Islands. By the end of May, Erie's big fish move into the Central Basin and begin setting up in their summer patterns.

The next step is to pinpoint the walleye's specific locale in a given area ... after all, you've got to fish

where the fish are if you're gonna catch 'em. The key to successful



**Springtime plus Lake Erie equal huge walleye, when the weather is right!**

spring Great Lakes fishing is figuring out the primary feeding depth. Not bottom depth ... fish feeding depth. Walleyes can be on the bottom, but especially in the Great Lakes, they like to suspend and feed on roaming schools of bait fish. So, you ask, how does one find the feeding walleyes? Simple, use your electronics to find either big fish "arcs" or "clouds" of bait fish. Suspended fish are easy to see ... the hard ones to detect are the ones rubbing their bellies in the mud basin. If you are running a quality unit like a Lowrance (e.g. 350A or X-85) or Eagle (e.g. Optima or Ultra) try turning your gray line up to 31%. Also make sure the Sensitivity is running at 85% or higher. With those adjustments the units will show darkened "bumps" on the bottom which in spring is just what we're after.

Other electronics that have become very



### **Trolling small planer boards is a very productive way to catch springtime walleyes**

important to fishing on Great Lakes waters are GPS's (Global Positioning Systems). Improved technology and increased "angler demand" have brought the price of these units down dramatically over the past couple of years. A reliable hand-held unit such as the Lowrance GlobalMap 100 offers full GPS mapping capability, 12 channel receiver dependability and easy operation for under \$400 ... and it fits in a shirt pocket or can be mounted to the dash of your boat. More permanently mounted units like the GlobalMap 1600 are also available, or even the new LMS 160 Map which combines a state-of-the-art GPS mapping unit with sonar capability. These new Lowrance products have truly brought mapping to a new level, with the ability to allow you to create your own, highly detailed maps of areas you are going to fish. These units come

with Lowrance's IMS Map Create software that, with the use of a home computer, enable you to build area-specific maps that can be uploaded onto your GPS. Mapping features include such goodies as US Navigation Aids, US Rural Roads, and US Coastal Wrecks and Obstructions to name a few. With this advanced software package, you can also take your GPS information such as waypoints, plot trails and fish icons, and save that info back to your computer for future reference. Make no mistake ... this is the future of fishing technology!

If you get several days of stable weather with warming water temperatures, trolling crankbaits will prove more productive. Subtle to moderate action lures like Storm ThunderSticks, Rapala Husky Jerks and Storm Deep Jr. ThunderSticks are good choices.

Run them behind Off Shore in-line planer boards and try to cover several depths - anywhere from 5 feet down to the bottom. You're looking for a feeding level for walleyes. Often our best setup is running a Deep Jr. ThunderStick 50 feet behind a board (that means it's only running down about 10 feet even if we're over 30 feet of water). At what ever depth you are marking fish, set your lures to run just above the fish. Walleyes feed "up", so they are much more likely to see your offerings passing over-head than if you were to fish below them. Popular Great Lakes colors include: Metallic Rainbow Trout, Rainbow Trout, Blue Mackerel and Black/Silver, but don't be afraid to try any of Storm's new Clown colors for '99 ... they all tested out to be HOT!

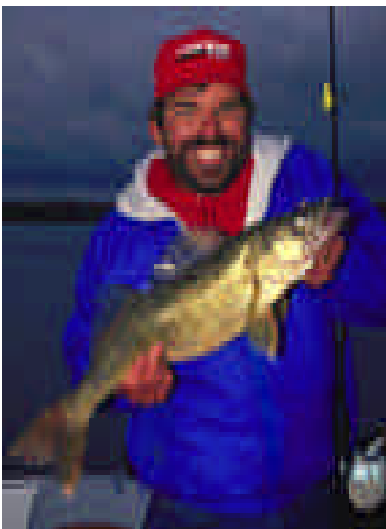
If the weather is unstable (as it is 75% of the time in the spring), pull out open water spinners. P/K Tackle's Open Water Spinners are tied with 14-6 FireLine, #6 Silver Plated Blades, two #4 Mustad Triple Grip hooks, and a chartreuse or red bead body. For an extra touch of "Flash" ... try one of the new P/K Tackle Palladium Plated Spinner Blades ... these are the ultimate in "shiny" and can really make a difference on a tough spinner bite. Bait up with a big juicy nightcrawler and you have a deadly rig.

These spinners can be run suspended by letting out 100 feet of line, attaching an Off Shore Snap Weight (1/2 ounce to 3 ounce) and then letting out enough line to drop it to the desired depth. Similar to cranking, initially cover several depths to determine the active feeding level.

When fishing conditions get tough (cold fronts, cooling water, etc.) walleyes will often move to the bottom. In that case, let out only 10 feet of line before adding a heavy Snap Weight (3 to 6 ounces), and free spool the weight until it hits bottom. Let the boat drag the spinner a while, then free spool it again, hitting bottom. At this point the Snap Weight should run just above the bottom positioning the spinner right in the walleyes' faces.

Keep switching around lures, colors and depths until you catch a fish. Make a note of the setup that was successful and start to move more baits into that zone. By keeping track of which "program" is producing, you can home-in on the best presentation for the day.

No where in the country is fishing for trophy sized walleyes more in vogue than on the Great Lakes, and specifically Lake Erie. While walleyes can be found throughout this prolific body of water, understanding the walleye's seasonal movements and habits is essential to consistent success. Start off the season on the right foot. Spring into action and experience some of the best walleye fishing the world has to offer.



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