

The Eastern Lake Erie Fishing Forecast

by
Joe Fischer

The spring walleye fishing was very similar to 1999 with weather conditions duplicating last years early water warm-up. The nighttime near shore trolling was spotty with late night being the key to a successful fishing trip. A lot of the excellent 1998 class year of walleye have begun to show up as 13-17" fish during the night trolling stints. This portends for an excellent walleye fishery in the near future. I personally found the shoals near Van Buren point to be more productive than the Hamburg shoreline fishing. This, I believe, is partly due to less boating traffic in the shallow crystal clear Lake Erie waters around Van Buren Point. Hamburg, being near Buffalo, normally has heavy nighttime boating traffic with 40-50 boats trying to work a small area not uncommon on a given night.

The one pronounced difference this year, which is effecting all boating on Lake Erie,, is the water levels that are 2 feet below normal are still dropping as this summer progresses. Some of the shoals, which were heavily fished at night, have become too shallow for many boats to safely troll and areas, which were normally a little deep are now fishable at nighttime. The big story however, was the boat launches which in many cases were far to shallow for larger boats. The town of Hamburg boat

launch, which is a favorite site for nighttime trollers, was closed and the Town of Hanover launch on the Cattaraugus Creek was not usable until early summer. This left only Sturgeon Point, Buffalo's Small Boat Harbor and Dunkirk as the only good launch sites in an approx. 30-mile shoreline- Needless to say you can imagine the launch problems this caused during tournaments and summer weekends. A lot of larger boats that traditionally docked on the Cattaraugus Creek shifted to Dunkirk Harbor because of the extremely low water conditions.

The summer fishing once again produced many large walleye with 10- pound fish not uncommon. The size of these walleye are incredible when compared to normal walleye caught from some of the smaller inland lakes. Most of them have a large girth, which speaks well for the forage content of the Lake.

Fishing tactics continue to evolve with a premium being placed on depth and presentation of lures. Some of the new braided lines like Fireline are being used to get the lures down deeper with less need for weight. These lines also have another benefit 'in that they do not stretch like monofilament lines. This is very important when setting the hook on a walleye with 200 feet of line out. Braided line is also very thin which reduces its visibility

in the clear Lake water. Some of the Charter Captains also have started using Fluorocarbon leaders, which are practically invisible in the water. Berkley makes a line of fluorocarbon called "Vanish" which works very well as leader material.

The clarity of the water placed a premium on deep presentations in summer with walleyes suspending at depths of 60 feet or more being common. I personally caught walleyes as deep as 80-90 feet which was unheard of 15 years ago when water clarity was poor. The walleyes were again in small tight schools at varying depths. To zero in on these fish experienced Eastern Lake Erie walleye fishermen were trolling lures at various depths. It was not uncommon to run lures 30 feet down on one side of the boat with planer boards and Jet Ski's with lures on the other side running at 50 feet down.

This same approach can be used with Dipsy Divers and Downriggers. In this manner the presentation of lures cover a large area vertically, which enables you to zero in on the present depth of the feeding walleyes. Varying speeds also can be critical as the fish sometimes were aggressive and liked lures moving in the 2-3 mile per hour range whereas other times slow moving lures received the most action. I think it is very important to continually change

lures, depths and speed until you connect. Many Lake Erie Charter Captains change the lures every 1/2 hour until they find something that works on the particular day.

Successful Lake Erie offshore lures continue to change. It was not very long ago when lures like the Hot-n-Tot and Long A Bombers were dynamite on the lake but these lures now are mediocre at best. This year worm harnesses,, spoons and plugs were the most successful in the listed order. Watermelon, purple, Chartreuse, and pink were still the favorite colors but with the Goby fast becoming a food source for the walleye lures in various shades of brown started to connect with walleyes this summer. If you decide to try this exciting fishery one of the best ways is to acquire one of the new Hot Spot Fishing Map of Buffalo and Erie County. This map lists Marinas, Tackle Stores, Charter Captains, etc. It also has a detailed map of Eastern Lake Erie with G.P. S. coordinates highlighting all the fishing "hot spots". If you would Re one of these new maps simply call 716-858-8390. Up to date fishing information can be obtained by calling 716-844-1111ext. 4142. I think that once you experience the Eastern Lake Erie summer walleye fishery you'll be hooked!

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Try This Walleye Recipe

Potato Chip Coated Walleye

- 1/3 cup buttermilk
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 1 bag (4 oz.) potato chips, crushed
- 3/4 cup cornflake crumbs
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika
- 1-1/2 pounds walleye fillets, about 1/2-inch thick

Cut fish in serving size pieces. Dip in buttermilk. Coat with potato chip mixture, pressing lightly. Place on broiler pan. Broil 6 inches from heat for 3 minutes; turn. Broil until fish flakes easily at thickest part, 2-3 minutes. 4 to 6 servings

In a shallow dish or pie plate, mix buttermilk and pepper. On plate or waxed paper, mix crushed potato chips, cornflake crumbs and paprika. Set oven to broil and/or 550 degrees. Grease broiler pan.

The above recipe courtesy of www.OnLakeErie.com where you can find 101 walleye recipes online. Visit them at www.OnLakeErie.com/Recipes.htm