

Oh, Those Erie 'Eyes

by

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Trolling is probably the most universal methods for catching walleyes on Lake Erie. Trolling and covering as much water as is necessary to find active, biting fish. Far and away the most conventional presentation of trolling for walleyes is by anglers forward trolling them on handheld rods. In most conditions it would simply look like the anglers are just towing their lures behind the boat. As with anything that appears to be so apparently basic, there are a number of variations that enhance the productivity of the presentation. The first of these is lure selection. In shallow water presentations anglers will want to run small lipped floating stickbaits (Rapalas, Rebels, Storm Lures etc). As they find the need to work progressively deeper they will move from small sized crankbaits to larger lures with bigger deeper diving bills.

The color of the lures will often prove a key as well. Under bright, clear water conditions the natural, lifelike lure finishes are likely to be your top producers. On dark days, or at night, the brighter chartreuse, Firetiger, and phosphorescent colors will be the best.

At this time of the year combining spinners and crawlers along with Rapala Sad Raps will give the angler a variety of baits in the water when fished in conjunction with snap weights and off-shore planer boards. Boards give you the option of fishing multiple lines and covering lots of water fast and with this variance in depths you cover all columns of water for both suspended and bottom feeding fish.

Trolling is used in covering certain structures and precise trolling means catching fish. One way that I have solved the problem with boat control is by using a Drift Control sea anchor. A sea anchor is a cone-shaped under water windsock, simi-



lar to those at airports that detect changes in wind direction. Drift Control sea anchors aid boat control in two ways. First of all, they slow your drift in strong winds. Secondly, you can use them to fine-tune subtle boat maneuvers in rough seas or heavy current.

Most anglers who fish large expansive lakes or rivers carry a sea anchor with them daily. The rule is usually that one Drift Control sea anchor is adequate for most boats and conditions. Sometimes on Lake Erie when the wind is really stiff I will attach two Drift Control sea anchors, one to each cleat off the bow section both starboard and port. This will increase my control and allow me to run my engine at higher rpm's to combat the waves.

When fishing alone in a console boat in heavy winds, I troll headlong into the wind with a sea anchor tied off the bow according to which side the wind is coming from. By letting out about 8 feet of rope, the bag trails next to the console. I can yank it out of the water with a safety cord if I need to without getting out of my seat and I never lose control of the boat.

Walleye fisherman on Erie aren't the only ones using this method. Bass fishing has virtually exploded over the last few years. In the early season it is not uncommon to find smallmouth bass in good numbers along the rock, and shale reefs of the islands that dot Lake Erie. Boat control is as essential when fishing for bass as well as for walleyes. As many anglers know, fish are usually most active near the windblown shore, but probably presenting a bait to them can prove a trial.

Anchoring limits you to a single spot when the fish may be someplace else or spread along the breakline, and short wind drifts have you motoring, casting and reeling most of the time. Bass anglers therefore, want to slow down their presentation and not be blown off breaklines. Here again the Drift Control sea anchor is used.

By tying off two Drift Control sea anchors to the windward side of the

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boat the boat drifts perpendicular to the contour or breakline. Occasionally the bow mount trolling motor will correct the drift or in some circumstances the kicker motor will have to be nudged into gear to compensate for gusty winds.

All in all the walleyes and bass can be easily caught on Lake Erie. By using some simple techniques of trolling and boat control it won't be long before you will be saying, "Oh Those Erie 'Eyes." Hope to see you on the water soon!

Article is reprinted from the February 2003 Fishline, a publication of the Southtowns Walleye Association

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"The sport fishing catch for yellow perch was tremendous last year and we anticipate it continuing," said Isbell. "Last year we saw a lot of 30-fish limit catches, and better angler success than in previous years. We should see a repeat of that success again this year."

Ontario will receive about five million pounds and Michigan, Pennsylvania and New York will share the remainder.

Ohio's daily bag limit for sport anglers remains at 30 perch per angler. Existing commercial fishery regulations also remain in effect

The Lake Erie Committee remains concerned about changes in the Lake Erie environment caused by aquatic nuisance species and climate driven impacts on lake levels. Spring weather patterns adversely affected walleye and yellow perch hatches in 2000 and 2002 and the committee anticipates major cuts in walleye and perch TAC in 2004 and 2005 to help offset these poor hatches. Work by the member agencies will continue through the summer to determine strategies for reducing harvest where necessary and for protecting Lake Erie's valuable resources.

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Consequently the commission is forecasting that agencies and anglers should prepare themselves for reduced catch limits in 2004, for both walleye and yellow perch.

"With our regulation cycle we're going to put forth our proposals for the 2004-2005 fishing season later this summer," Kayle said. "Right now, we're expecting changes, but we will be pouring over the data as well as

the social and economic impact of any law changes before we decide what to do."

Pennsylvania's possible solution to its anticipated requirement to reduce the harvest next year may include an increase in the minimum size limit. That state's Fish and Boat Commission is exploring the possibility of increasing the size limit from the present 15 inches to 20 inches. Kayle also said he expects to see a series of public forums that will address the issue, allowing the fishing public to hear the division's arguments.

"The thing in our favor is that we haven't even come close to meeting our quota so we should still have some buffer that we can live off before we would have to make some serious cuts," Kayle said.

For this year Ohio's Lake Erie anglers will continue to live under a daily bag limit of 6 walleye if taken between May 1 and February 28, 4 fish if caught between March 1 and April 30. Ohio's yellow perch anglers can currently keep 30 fish per day.