

# Fall Trophy Walleyes

by  
Captain Phil Cadez

The year 2002 has been a good year of walleye fishing on Lake Erie. The 4th largest walleye hatch in 1999 will ensure many good fishing days for quite a few years. These

record high temperatures of 80 degrees as a result of another hot summer.

While most anglers filled their coolers with great eating walleye a

big walleye returned. Many of these fish ranged from 4 to 11 lbs, they all were very well fed and fat.

Quite a few charters secure



Lake Erie “casting weapon” caught this nice walleye. Photo by Capt. Paul LaCourse

fish average about 18 inches and were all over the lake. There was also a few 1998 and 1997 hatched fish being caught. These fish ranged from 20 to 24 inches. April and May were slow again because of inclement weather and cold water. June thru August were again the best months to fish our shallow lake. The lake rose to

few fishermen are waiting until late September and October when the “trophy” walleye return to the Western Basin. These large schools head for the deeper water off the coast of Cleveland. They stay there until the water temperature begins to drop. Last year was like a duck shoot when these

temporary dockage in Huron, OH, 10 miles east of Marblehead to make a shorter run to the fish. The fish begin appearing about mid September and stay until the ice is on the lake. It doesn't take long for the word to spread when the fish make their comeback.

Most of these walleye move towards the west in large schools or smaller patches. There's lots of boats looking for these fish and the trollers usually find them first. If you see a half dozen charters trolling in a formation you can bet they've found the school.

There is no structure, the bottom is either clay or sand. The fish will rise and fall as they feed on the schools of shad and minnows. The water depth off Huron is a little deeper than the Western Basin. You might be fishing in 40 foot of water or even deeper if you're 10 miles off shore.

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

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

The casters will drift and use the countdown method after they've

found the right depth. If the fish are high they'll use 1/2 or 3/4 oz egg sinkers on their "walleye weapon" casting rigs. As most of the locals use these casting harnesses they experiment with colors and size of blades. All summer we've used a No. 3 spinner with a few beads



**Angler's with a few walleye caught in June. Photo by Capt. Paul aCourse**

and a small hook at the end. A few anglers go to a no. 4 Indiana or Colorado spinner.

Colors most widely used are gold, chartreuse, silver, white and bi-colored spinners. The beads can also be gold, red, green, char-

treuse, yellow or white. A few anglers use a little larger hook at this time of year. They'll go from a No. 4 to a 2 or even No. 1.

Regardless of the size we use only half a nightcrawler on these hooks. It's supposed to resemble a May Fly. If you use a big or whole worm without a stinger you'll just be feeding them if they bite short.

A few of the guides have gone back to weight forward spinners at this time of year.

They prefer 5/8 or better yet 3/4 oz lures. Favorite lures are Erie Dairies, crooked eye and parish "P" lures. Most popular colors are gold with gold blades, chartreuse, green and white, silver and green with large silver blades.

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

you can catch these big fish at night casting crank bait that stay a few feet from the surface. The walleye push the schools toward the lighted docks all thru the nighttime hours. It's strictly timing, they could be there at dusk or come at 4:00 AM.

**See Fall Trophy, page 32**

## From Ten Tips, page 12

securely engulfing the fish in the mesh. Incidentally, Cummings is now starting to offer nets with an offshore release already installed.

### Pack Mentality

It seems like the vast majority of Lake Erie anglers like plenty of company, because most folks fish among packs of other boats. While it's true that fish can be caught in the huge armadas, keep in mind that the best fishing is usually found elsewhere, especially if you're after bigger walleyes. I almost never fish in the packs, preferring instead to find my own fish away from everybody else. In fact, when too many boats start to cluster around me, I usually move elsewhere. If you want to catch big fish, then you need to fish away from the packs. Besides I hate the stress of all the boat traffic.

### Rubber Core Sinkers

Whenever I fish with crankbaits, I always attach a rubber core sinker one rod-length ahead of the lure. Those sinkers function by stopping debris from sliding down the line to the lure. They also allow a shortened setback, which increases hook-setting efficiency, reduces tangles and quickens the line setting and retrieval process. Rubber core sinkers will not damage the line and they can be easily changed when different weights are needed to target varying depths.

### Sharp Hooks

One of the keys to consistent

hookups with tough-mouthed walleyes are sharp hooks. Most baits, out-of-the-box, have rather dull hooks. I've tried just about every method for sharpening hooks and have settled on the sharpening stone as the best method. The stone I use has narrow slots where the hook is gently pulled through. A few passes on the stone and the hook is ready for business. I also replace my hooks whenever they get bent or damaged. By keeping a supply of hooks and my stone ready to go in the back of the boat along with needle nose pliers, I'm ready for action.

### Get Out Fishing

The one thing that stops more anglers from catching walleyes is simply not getting out on the water enough. Many folks list fishing as a low priority that ranks behind just about everything else in their lives. Several friend of mine never seem to have enough time to get out on the water, so it's no wonder that they are stressed out all the time. You won't be doing yourself, your work or your family any favors by not going fishing if you succumb to a stress related illness that could have been prevented by more time relaxing on the water. Do your health a favor and schedule your fishing times as top priorities and stick to your guns on your fishing dates. Also, when the weather is stable for several days in a row during early spring and the temperatures are mild, get out on the water at all costs. The reward of big walleyes will be worth just about anything. Send questions or comments to [veinemr@aol.com](mailto:veinemr@aol.com).

## From Fall Trophy, page 14

Since timing is everything, call the area first to determine when to come. A few helpful choices are the Erie County Chamber of Commerce, 419 625 6421, The Huron Chamber of Commerce, 419 433 5700; Ottawa County Visitors Bureau at 800 441 1271.

These numbers can help you with motels, charters and local bait shops. If you don't have a good sized boat the best way to get in on this fantastic walleye fishing is to secure a local full timed professional guide. These charters are usually set up to accommodate up to 6 anglers. Get a few of your friends together and call or search the web at [lakeeriecharters.com](http://lakeeriecharters.com). You can also e mail me at [capt.phil@cadez-charters.com](mailto:capt.phil@cadez-charters.com) for information. Good fishin.

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