

Trolling For Walleyes

Trolling for walleyes is the best way to put a lot of fish in the boat, and to catch that trophy fish! Spring, summer, or fall, it doesn't matter they are all great times to troll. In the spring I like to use stick baits and fish shallow in depth, from 4' to 10'. At this time of year, your best chance at that trophy fish is to fish after dark. The big walleyes are most active in the low light, which is perfect for trolling in the spring. The bait fish move shallow and the walleyes will follow them right in. Some bodies of water that produce big fish during daylight hours this time of year are rivers and stained water lakes, but for me it is all about the night bite. Here are the things that I look for and how I like to fish in the spring. I look for big flats that have sand and gravel or small rocks. Remember these fish are getting ready to spawn or just got done spawning, so they are still holding in these areas. The baits that work best for bigger fish are the bigger stick baits like #11 or #13 Rapalas, Rogues, Flat Raps, or Husky Jerks. I also use Shad Raps, Shallow Running Shad Raps, Flicker Shads, and Wally Divers. Over the years I have found that these smaller baits seem to catch smaller fish most of the time. The bigger fish want the bigger profile baits and this holds true all year-round. The set up I like to use is a 7' medium spinning rod with 8# FireLine, a



1/8 ounce keel weight is used then to tie on a 3' 8# fluorocarbon leader on. I always hold this rod and surge it forward every 2 minutes, changing the speed of the bait. The other rod will be a 9' to 10' baitcaster, set up the same way as the spinning rod, but it will be in the rod holder with a stickbait attached to it. The crankbaits are on a 9' to 10' baitcaster with no additional weight, but I will always have the spinning rod in my hand.

When we move into summer, big fish start to move deep. This is the time to start trolling the basin of the lake. Here again, bigger fish mean using bigger baits for me, like Flicker Minnows, Rapala Tail Dancers, or Reef Runners. You will catch fish on the Shad Raps, Flicker Shads, and Salmos, however in my experience these smaller baits catch smaller fish. I like to put planer boards on the deeper diving baits. I use 10' rods with 17# FireLine and a 4' 15# fluorocarbon leader. The other rods will have lead core line on them right out the back of the boat. When fishing with lead core rods, I will put the smaller crankbaits on them. Summer is the best time of the year to increase your trolling speed to 2 - 3 mph, sometimes even faster. If you are not sure about lead core or planer boards, you can just run the long rods with FireLine; you just have to play with how far back you run the baits to get the right depth. I like to run my baits 2 to 5 feet off of the lake bottom, the fish will then come up to eat these baits. Set the rods at different depths until you find what is working for that day. The best way to keep track and control the depth that your lures are running is to use line counter reels; they are well worth the money invested.

Fall is my favorite time of the year for numbers of big fish!!! You can use all the methods that I talked about above at this time of year. I will troll the basin of the lake during the day and move shallow after dark. The walleyes are getting ready for winter and are pigging out this time of year. If I could fish 24 hours a day, it would be in the fall. Remember to switch baits and colors all the time until you find what the fish want that day. I have seen one color work one day and not the next so don't get stuck on one bait or color. To be successful at fishing, you have to be willing to think outside the box, get out of your comfort zone and try new things. If you are not finding or catching fish, do the opposite of what you have been doing. I know this is easy to say and difficult to do, but if you can make yourself try these different techniques, you will catch more and bigger fish. Remember to take a child fishing, they are the future of our sport!!