

# Alternate Trolling Option

While some walleye anglers remain a bit stubborn, most have come to at least acknowledge the effectiveness of trolling crank baits. For a lot of folks it may not rank high on their favorite way to catch fish-but the results simply cannot be argued with. It all comes down to basic logic...instead of presenting our baits to possibly a few dozen fish, we are contacting hundreds and perhaps even thousands, over the course of a day. The law of large numbers comes into play and your odds for success increase dramatically.

If you are one of the diehards who cling to the idea that the only way to catch walleye's is with live bait, I can offer you some suggestions that just may make the transition to trolling a bit easier.

For the past few seasons I have been working on developing alternative presentation options to incorporate while trolling crank baits. I'll outline one that has proven to be very consistent and will often out-produce the most deftly presented lures.

This employs throwing the fish a one-two punch, in that we can use distinctly different methods at the same time. This will let the fish decide which option they prefer. While some may respond well to one, others that snub their noses, will react well to the other.

What I'm referring to is trolling spinners in conjunction with crank baits. This may sound somewhat contradictory, but can easily be done if we maintain proper speed control. By staying in the 1.8 to 2.0 mph range, we are at the upper limit for spinners and lower level for a properly tuned crank bait to wiggle effectively. I have found the big deep diving ReefRuners work extremely well for this, as they provide plenty of action and appeal at lower speeds.

Run these off boards and up to ten feet from bottom to cover a wide swath both vertically and horizontally. Even if the fish are pinned tightly to the bottom, they will come up and crush these baits. I actually think it may be better than putting it right in their faces as once they rise to investigate they will generally commit.

Your ace in the hole will be to run two spinners directly behind the boat on lead core line. If you haven't ran lead core before, it is not as intimidating as you might think. The first word of advice would be to forget all you have heard or read about splicing in colors and amount of line to let back. As with anything, keep things as uncomplicated as possible. Simply spool an entire roll (100 yards) onto an oversize line counter and use it to determine the amount you need to let out to achieve your desired depth. The general rule of thumb is five feet for every color (30 feet). So, if you want to target 15 feet, 90 feet out would be a good starting point. Continue to slowly pay out more line until you bump bottom, then reel up a bit. You can now be confident that your bait is where you want it.

On the terminal end, you will want to splice in 6 to 8 feet of 10lb Fireline and tie a snap to the end of this. To the snap I attach a Mack's Lures Hot Wings. This is an attractor made of spinning mylar blades that gets the fish's attention. By trailing a spinner and crawler behind this, we have added the final trigger and some meat to seal the deal.

We are not looking to be subtle here. We are moving these baits fairly quickly and looking to elicit a reaction bite. To this end, the more disturbance and commotion we create the better. JB Lures Ventilator Spinner Blades fit the bill nicely for this. They are a uniquely designed Colorado blade with vents to allow water to flow through and over the blade, creating much more triggering capabilities than a traditional blade. I personally hadn't been a huge fan of spinners until I started using these and continue to be impressed. Another tip would be to go with a size 5 blade. Seems to defer panfish and consistently gets bit by bigger walleyes.

If pesky panfish are presenting a problem and tearing up your crawlers, using a Gulp nightcrawler

can help alleviate the nuisance. Also gives you the option of adding a contrasting color to the scheme as they come in bright hues.

Give this a try next time out and I firmly believe that you will become a convert. If you should have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

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