

As the days are growing increasingly shorter and we are inching ever closer to the beginning of another hunting season; we sometimes lose sight of all the potentially good to extremely good open water fishing that is left to be had. Real beauty of this is that your tourist types are long gone, along with the frustration they bring. Can be downright peaceful and leaves you to concentrate on finding and catching fish.

Concentration and a little thought are definitely in order in early fall, as on most bodies of water, walleyes are in a stage of transition. Heat of summer is past us and water temps are cooling, but not overly cold. Thus, the walleyes will often find conducive water temps from the top to the bottom of the water column. Bottom line is that the fish are much less predictable and can be found literally anywhere, depending upon the day and weather conditions. Meaning they can be anyplace from a couple of foot of water relating to shoreline structure, all the way out into the main basin of a Lake or the deepest channels in a River or Reservoir...and most anywhere in between.

These fish will be looking to lay on fat in preparation for the quickly approaching winter months. Thus, our main focus in finding fish is determining where we can find the highest concentrations of bait. In my mind anyway, walleye's are one of the laziest and most opportunistic fish to be found. This is not a criticism, actually a complement on their inherent nature. These fish are downright efficient and are biologically programmed and honed to expend the least amount of energy needed to consume the maximum amount of energy gained (calories) in return.

Unless there is a very limited forage base, they simply will not waste a lot of energy chasing down a prey fish here and there. They will key on the largest populations available and wait until conditions are stacked heavily in their favor before vigorously feeding. This explains why they can become surprisingly aggressive and downright easy to catch at times. When you experience this you have landed right on a spot where all the elements are in line for them quickly take advantage of the situation. Transversely, this also explains why they can be all but impossible to entice at other times. The conditions are not to their advantage and they will just lounge around waiting for the next opportunity. Frustrating and we have all spent way too

much time working on fish displaying this neutral to negative attitude...to no avail. Generally best to just pick up and make a substantial move to try your luck elsewhere. You can always come back and check on them later.

This is where quality electronics are a vital tool. Unless you have ultimate confidence in a spot, it's best to scan each potential area thoroughly before even wetting a line. Remember these fish can be anywhere, so do not fall into the trap of preconceived notions as to their location. My personal choice for performing this task is the Digital Capabilities offered by Raymarine. I can quickly and confidently run over an area at speeds up to 20 mph and spot everything I am looking for. Once again large pods of bait are key, and the tell tale larger marks of predators at or below their level will indicate a spot worthy of further investigation. Takes a bit of patience, but you will generally be rewarded for resisting the temptation to throw a line down in the first spot you pull into.