

Explore the Possibilities

As we begin another open water fishing season, I would encourage you to do something a little different this year and break free from your traditional methods, keep an open mind and try some unfamiliar tactics. Perhaps do so in some new locations, and even some waters you haven't been on. Keeps things fresh and interesting, after all what have you gained in knowledge-or fun for that matter-by doing exactly the same thing, all the time? Broaden your horizons a bit and transform yourself into a versatile, consistent, and more satisfied angler in the process.

An option would be to take advantage of walleyes in all the shallow water opportunities that abound. We obviously have plenty of them to choose from and we had just as well get something positive from the high water conditions. Besides, it is a ton of fun as shallow fish are cooperative fish. Once we find them, catching a bunch in short order is usually pretty darn easy, and they will generally just knock the snot out of what we toss them. There are a lot of ways in which to catch them; jigs and slip bobbers come to mind immediately and are great options once you have fish located. I will outline the quickest method of doing the locating and often the best one to stick to in picking off the most active and often biggest fish available.

I am referring to taking a pro-active approach by casting crankbaits in order to cover a lot of territory in short order. Pretty straightforward too and a game that as they say is for ages 8 to 80 and beyond as it is quite easy to master. Simply throw a high action lure right up into the shallows and bring it back at a moderate pace. Sure, there is some tweaking you can do, but this is generally the best method and will work day in and day out. Hard wobbling baits draw the most attention, with models such as the 200 and 400 series ReefRunner Ripshads being a go to bait, as are any number of the jointed models available. We can always slow down and work these fish over with more subtle lures and or jigs once we have them found.

Where we throw these baits is key and we will want to concentrate on areas with cover for not only the walleyes, but the baitfish they feed on as well. Wood whether it is standing timber, stumps, or spots with limbs littering the bottom is always the top option in my opinion. Only one problem, as much as walleyes love wood, the treble hooks on our crankbaits like it even better and seem drawn to it like a magnet. You can either physically go in to retrieve your lure and ruin the spot or break off and sacrifice the lure at around \$10 a pop. Neither is desirable and I have found a solution that lets me get in the nastiest stuff imaginable (where no one else dares) and manage to not go broke in the process.

Lure Savers Ultimate SmartLinks www.ultimateluresaver.com have saved me frustration and countless lures while granting access to fish that are literally untouched. They are a split ring replacement that is made of the "memory" metal Titanium and open up under steady pressure when snagged and leave the offending hook behind. Recover your lure, snap in a new treble hook and you are right back at 'em in seconds. Match the model of Smartlink with your line size (I use the 10lb large and 10lb Fireline) and this system is foolproof.