

# Get Off It!

Structure that is: Most of us are fairly well versed on the concept of structure and how fish (particularly Walleyes) relate to it. What I'm about to tell you may very well contradict all that you have learned up to this point.

Most fisherman feel that Walleyes are bottom orientated most or all of the time. This thinking is not always true and inhibits you from achieving more consistent and generally larger sized catches. Your bigger female Walleyes are extremely efficient feeding machines. They will set themselves up in areas so as to expend the least amount of energy for the maximum return in protein during their feeding efforts. Thus, they often position themselves away from the bulk of the smaller fish to avoid competition, feeding only when conditions are optimal for success.

A common situation is for them to hang out in loose pods directly adjacent to prominent structure, well above bottom. An example would be a flat that runs from 12 to 15 foot deep with a secondary break into 20 to 25 foot. While there may be smaller males on top of the flat my Raymarine graphs often alert me to larger fish suspended at roughly the same depth as the flat, within close proximity and over deeper water.

Believe me, these are not all carp! If necessary, take an Aqua Vu along and prove it to yourself. They will often be female Walleyes lounging around waiting for the prime opportunity to slide horizontally onto the flat, feed quickly and aggressively and then return to their comfort zone. All the while burning up very few calories.

These fish are in more of a neutral than negative mood as far as eating goes. Being as opportunistic as they are, if what they feel is a meal presents itself, they will take advantage of it, and can be caught. Fish are not all that different from us in this respect. Consider the situation where you may have finally pushed yourself away from the table after a big meal and have retreated to the comfort of your couch. If your wife were to walk by with a plate full of freshly baked cookies you are more than likely going to grab one.

Now how do we get the cookies (your bait) in front of the fish? This is where most of you will experience some uneasiness, as most all of your past Walleye angling has been bottom related. There are several methods to accomplish this, some being a little complicated and requiring considerable effort. The most straightforward and easily mastered technique is to pull plugs or a leadcore line spinner combination at the appropriate depth.

A general rule of thumb is to begin running your lures a foot or so above the depth of the nearby structure. This will allow you to swing onto the top edge of the break without hanging up. Simply troll in an S shaped pattern that brushes up to the structure and out away again to a distance of perhaps 50 yards. You are now covering the actual break as well as the adjacent open water where most of the larger fish will be.

This is not the time to run dainty little baits. Use large aggressive plugs such as the deep Reef Runner's and number 5 or larger spinner blades in conjunction with brightly colored Powerbait or Gulp. These fish are accustomed to eating large prey and will readily smack lures most folks think are too large.

Keep an open mind and give it a try.

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