

Last Chance

Once November rolls around in the upper Midwest, we as fisherman enter a very strange period, as far as activity is concerned. Meaning the angler-not the fish. The fish remain quite active, probably even more so than on the much touted Harvest Moon nights we've been programmed to believe hold some mystical status. As good as they are, the fishing does not decline leading up to first ice. In my opinion, it actually continues to improve.

Particularly for the shore bound angler looking for large walleyes. Walleyes are accustomed to moving into the shallows and taking advantage of water temps that are favorable, along with a multitude of prey options that are now available. Heavy weed cover is beginning to thin and fall to the bottom, exposing and providing easy access to the vast numbers of juvenile panfish and minnow species the underwater jungle has been nurturing all summer. Coincidentally, all of these have now grown large enough to provide a perfectly proportioned meal. Throw in frogs migrating from sloughs and backwaters into the main lake, and the table is all set.

As stated earlier and spelled out above, the activity is more than sufficient to provide us with us with ample opportunities, especially when it comes to big fish. The only thing lacking in the equation is the human element needed to stroke a couple of the big girls out for a quick photo-or if you haven't been fortunate enough to tangle with one before-maybe one for the wall.

The dilemma lies in the fact that most of us also have varied outdoor interests and the allure of hunting tends to leave our fishing endeavors seriously behind. Easily understandable, although quite difficult to overcome. If you can manage to put your smoke poles down long enough to entertain the idea of a last outing or two before first ice, you stand a very good chance at being richly rewarded.

The best part of this is that the actual fishing part of this is very simple and straightforward, and at times, dare I say-quite easy. You don't even have to spend much time in the dark, if you choose not to. The bite will start in mid-afternoon as the sun now has a low and glancing angle which only has a meaningful effect at high noon. Thus, walleye's will instinctively begin moving much earlier than most folks tend to believe, while letting us fish during the warmest part of the day.

As far as location is concerned, a number of spots will prove very conducive to holding catchable numbers of fish. Areas with slowly tapering shorelines leading directly into relatively deeper water will do nicely. Toss in some varying structural, cover, or bottom composition and the spot just gets better. A few rocks strewn through an otherwise sand or gravel bottom is good, as are sparse weeds. A very overlooked option on many lakes are swimming beaches. Sand has often been hauled in and provides a distinct change in bottom composition in areas that were otherwise unsuitable for this purpose.

Beach combing is as easy as it gets, simply walk the shoreline free from ankle busting

boulders and overhanging limbs and cast, then slowly retrieve large shallow diving crank baits. ReefRunner's new 900 series is perfectly suited for the task as casts a mile at a full seven inches long, while providing an easily findable silhouette for the fish to home in on. Fished slowly, it has a slow undulating rolling action that fish will deem vulnerable and readily attack.

'Nuff said, do it if you dare to be different.