

Late Season Reservoir Walleyes

Once the calendar rolls around to August and lasting up to Late Fall, many fisherman have an extremely tough time making consistent catches of Walleye in Reservoirs. Most attribute this to high water temperature and come to the conclusion that the fish just won't bite until it cools down and the water turns over.

There is little basis for this argument. Due to recent drought, our reservoirs display more of a flow through nature and there is actually little or no turnover until very late fall.

So what has happened to the fish that we were beating up on from Ice Out until Early Summer? They have simply changed locations and your typical main lake point associated presentations begin to fail-because for the most part-the fish are not there.

I am going to relate to you a system for targeting Walleye in water that is unfamiliar to most anglers. These are fish that are found in the depths far from shore and not relating to structure, but to baitfish. In many large western impoundments Smelt are typically the main forage, with a growing emphasis on Shad and Herring.

These fish are largely untouched. The exception being Tournament Fisherman who have been exploiting them with increasing success over the last decade. You'll find them more conducive to biting; due to the fact that they have not been highly pressured and picked over all summer. They also tend to be mature fish that on average run much larger.

Now that we're aware of these facts: The next question is how to consistently find them. A good place to begin your search is directly adjacent to known shoreline producing areas. Surveying likely locations with top quality electronics (run of the mill units just don't cut it in this application) help us to find all the ingredients necessary for success. Namely: Thermocline, Baitfish, and Walleyes. I rely on my color Raymarine E Series to define the Thermocline as a thin blue line extending straight to the first major shoreline break. Directly above this is where you will find the large pods of bait and subsequently Walleyes.

The next part of the puzzle is using a presentation that will prove to be effective in enticing them to bite. The key is to cover ground and contact numerous fish with your baits running at the proper depth. This is best accomplished by precision trolling-specifically with line counter reels. This allows us to place our offerings exactly where we want them. Typically 20 to 50 feet down. Once a productive combination of lures and amount of line out is established, we can easily return them there and capitalize.

The only remaining factor is how do we get our lures down deep enough and what speed to pull them at. The speed part of the equation is fairly simple. It is hard to beat going a standard 2 mph, give or take a little. There are times when bumping it up to 3 mph or better can trigger more action, but this is best left as a refinement once all the other variables are in place.

Achieving the depth needed from our lures is the task many fisherman find most daunting. It doesn't have to be, as we have many tools at our disposal. Leadcore Line, Diving Planers, Inline and Snap Weights immediately come to mind.

For those of you just beginning to explore this presentation option, I would recommend starting out with 10/4 Fireline and deep diving plugs. The combination of the thin diameter line and large diving bills found on this style lure will help you to reach down to the depths needed, without the aid of other devices.

Reef Runner has several options that excel for this function. They were designed on the shores of Lake Erie expressly for the suspended deep basin fish of the Great Lakes and perform well anywhere Walleyes are to be found. Their Deep Diver and Deep Little Ripper are fine Smelt imitations, with the Ripshad series more closely resembling the growing Shad base many reservoirs now have.

Armed with a copy of Precision Trolling's "Trollers Bible", we can accurately predict where our baits will run with a given amount of line out. For example, if we choose the aforementioned Deep Diving ReefRunner;

we can expect it to run 30 foot deep with 200 feet of 10/4 Fireline out. Should we desire to go a bit deeper, an easy solution is to add a 1 ounce Snap Weight 20 foot ahead of the lure. This will give us 33% more depth at any given amount of line out. Thus in this situation, we can gain 10 feet for a total of 40 feet down. This will be plenty deep for fish suspended down to 60 feet. Be aware that these fish will come up a long way to strike and we always want our lures to be running above them.

Another vastly overlooked facet to be considered is targeting fish suspended directly amongst the tops of submerged Trees. These are fish that have not been contacted, as most anglers are not willing to tangle-literally-with the Trees.

I have been able to largely overcome this problem by using Ultimate Smart Link's Luresaver. Simply put, it replaces the standard split rings. When you become hung up, just point your rod at the snag and pull steadily. The Smart Link will release the hook and you get your expensive crankbait back along with the Smart Link, in 100% condition. Snap in a new hook and you are back in business in less than a minute, all without the use of any tools. All the while, your other lines continue to work for you. No going back and trying to wrench the offending lure free.

You may be asking yourself; "How does this work?" and "Won't it also release a large fish?" The answer to the first question is in the material used to construct the Smart Link. It is made entirely of surgical grade nickel titanium, which is flexible, strong, and will spring back to its' original shape. The reason you can trust it to bring in big fish is the fact that your rod is fighting the fish and not the hook, or your line for that matter. With the proper setup, there is absolutely no concern of losing fish.

I've had the opportunity to test this product in Tournament situations and have found it to be nothing short of phenomenal. It comes in two physical sizes and several test ratings. For the Walleye applications I use it in; I have found the large size in a 10 pound rating to be most effective.

By using 10/4 Fireline: We have plenty of line strength to open the Smart Link and with the long trolling rods used, assure that there is little pressure on the Fish and the Hook/Smartlink connection. To learn more about the SmartLink you can go to www.ultimateluresaver.com.

Another exciting aspect is that they have a unique teardrop shape. This lets the hooks swing freer, vastly improving the action and vibration of your crankbaits, as well as improving the odds of hooking up when bit. A tip is to replace the original hooks with a sticky sharp premium hook, such as Gamakatsu's Extra Wide Gap in red. The added action and contrasting color can make even a mundane bait come alive.

Hopefully I have shed some light on this subject and you can put the information to good use in your quest for consistent catches, year round.

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