

Lay Down Your Guns

Once fall rolls around, most sportsman's focus turns to hunting. Our hands begin to become more accustomed to the grip of a gun than the handle of a fishing rod. This is easily understood as we become programmed to beginning the annual pursuit of the various game and fowl species we are fortunate to have available. Here in the Dakota's, we are blessed with the added and nearly irresistible distraction in the form of numerous Pheasants.

If you can pull yourself away from the obvious allure of all of this activity; some absolutely great fishing is there for the taking, without the near circus atmosphere we can experience during the recreational months of summer. Your tourist types have packed it in for the year and nearly every other sportsman, resident and non-resident alike, will be gleefully clad in orange, tromping through the fields and marshes. This leaves our lakes all but abandoned. Which is a very good thing indeed, if you treasure solitude. About the only disturbance will be the strong pull you will feel when tangling with the fattest fish of the year. In particular, walleyes.

You will find the fish are generally conducive to biting as they are in the process of tying on a serious feedbag in preparation for the rigors of the upcoming winter and in the case of the large females, supplementing their developing egg sacks. All of this adds up to a strong to torrid bite with the opportunity for much larger than average fish, quite high.

There are no presentation or locational mysteries to solve as this style of fishing is about as uncomplicated as it gets. The biggest requirement is to simply put your gun down long enough to get out and do it. Select any natural lake with a good population of walleyes, show up just before sunset and begin casting a likely looking shoreline. Areas with sand or gravel are typically good with natural swimming beaches being a surprisingly good bet. Throw in any current due to in or outflows and the spot becomes great. The hour surrounding sunset is often best, but if you have the time and stamina, staying well into the night can also pay big dividends.

Presentation is straightforward, all you will need to do is cast and retrieve long slender floating lures in the genre of Original Rapala's and ReefRunner Ripstick's. The largest models are often unsurpassed, as they offer the size and profile of bait these large fish are keying on. The added disturbance created also makes it easier for the fish to locate and effectively attack after dark. This fall, I will be field testing ReefRunner's 900 series Ripstick, which will be available come spring. Measuring a full seven inches and a slightly more aggressive dive curve will allow for longer casts and the ability to effectively work areas with moderately deep water close to shore. This coupled with the unique action they impart should make it a great big fish bait.

Replace the beer with your buddies after a day of hunting for an evening of casting plugs for walleyes and you may just be richly rewarded. While they're bragging about over-exaggerated shooting skills and arguing the nuances of which breed of dog is better, you will be quietly knocking the socks off some huge fish. You can do this and still be back to the tavern in time to toss in a sober opinion or two and rub their noses in the fact that not only did you hunt, but finished the day strong with a true fall double header.

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