

Path of Least Resistance

A fact that most of us are aware of-but nonetheless need to reminded of-is that all creatures are by nature opportunistic...and will always take the path of least resistance to whatever they are seeking. There are two overriding biological forces constantly at work in all animals, including humans. That being the need to eat, and to procreate. Come to think of it, even with the rung we claim on the evolutionary ladder as a so called "higher life form"; we find much of our time occupied in the same pursuits...albeit our motives are typically more pleasure orientated than a matter of survival.

We "need" to eat, but we don't "have" to consume a 16 ounce T-Bone with all the fixings washed down with a half dozen beers...but we do. This is the difference between needing and wanting and we as humans generally let the want over-ride the need. In the animal kingdom, simple survival rules the day and wildlife isn't afforded the luxuries we enjoy. They must be ever diligent and learn to take advantage of opportunities as they present themselves, all the while remaining as efficient as possible. If it takes more calories to capture a meal than the meal supplies, then it amounts to a net loss. These specimens quickly remove themselves from the ecosystem and we are left with only those that have learned to adapt and are keenly honed in recognizing any signs of vulnerability; keying on quick, easy, and profitable endeavors in the sense of energy gained versus energy expended.

As fisherman, it is extremely important that we apply these lessons to our presentations. You can have the absolutely best lure, live bait, or combination thereof and still not manage to elicit a single bite. It all boils down to how we manipulate our baits. If our intended quarry deems that the offering is too difficult to catch, then it will most likely be ignored, and in many cases, actually cause the fish to leave. This is even more apparent while we are ice fishing. Obviously the water is cold and the fish's metabolism is correspondingly low, thus they are less than willing to expend any amount of energy chasing down a meal.

Walleye's represent the epitome of this and we need to adapt our presentations accordingly. On more outings than I care to admit, a stationary bait below a tip-up has amounted for nearly-if not-all fish caught. When it comes to our jigging approach, subtle often equals success. Not only in our jigging motions, but in our lure selection as well. Unless the fish are absolutely tearing up everything in sight, I tend to go with presentations that will give the appearance of a distressed baitfish-therefore extremely easy snack-focusing on their opportunistic nature and triggering the learned behavior of striking injured prey.

Your lures don't necessarily need to look like food, just display these characteristics. The mere appearance of an injured or dying minnow is universally irresistible to fish in any mood. I've found that JB Lures Jig-n-Eye tipped with a minnow head or waxworms for scent, presents itself well in this regard. It has an extremely slow and erratic motion while falling, creating the proper illusion and allowing the entire package to be completely engulfed with a minimum of effort.

It's imperative to resist the temptation to overwork this or any other bait. Simple lift-fall motions coupled with long pauses is all that's needed. To be consistently successful, we should always be diligent in presenting our baits in a manner that the fish will immediately recognize as an easy target and ultimately strike.

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