

Reservoir Reversal

Ever notice how when targeting walleye's on larger Reservoirs, the action will steadily improve to a fever pitch as early Summer progresses, only to seemingly come to an abrupt stop over the course of just a few days. This is particularly true in Reservoirs that are deep enough to support large forage bases such as Shad, Smelt, and even Herring.

The fish are still biting...just not where you were just a short time ago. In the case of larger mature fish, they will typically transition to the aforementioned immense schools of open water baitfish. Therefore, the shoreline structure combined with livebait presentations you had been keying on...becomes spotty at best. Unless you have perfect wind conditions pushing into very sharp breaking points that drop directly into the deepest water of the old river channel or major creek arms, your efforts are most likely best spent elsewhere.

A couple of telltale factors will indicate when to move with the fish. One is water temperature. Once it hits 70 degrees and keeps climbing, take note. The fish themselves will point you in the right direction as you will begin to notice that you are not only catching fewer large fish on each spot, but that several small fish have suddenly appeared. I believe this is due to the fact that the various minnow species and age 0 and 1 panfish the larger fish have been heavily feeding on are considerably whittled down. Thus, the mature fish begin to move on and provide the space needed for the small fish to clean up what is remaining.

Now that the majority of the larger fish we like to catch have vacated the shallows, we now need to find them. This is actually much easier than most folks can imagine. Simply move directly out into the Reservoir from where you were previously catching them. In many cases they will just slide out horizontally at the same depth they were-just now suspended over deep water and chasing the plentiful schools of open water bait. One extremely important key to staying on the fish once they do suspend is by paying careful attention to the thermocline. As this is where the baitfish will be found-obviously-so will your walleyes. By using high powered sonar units with digital capabilities to clearly sort out and display this information you can easily stay with them on a day to day basis. Raymarine units display even the slightest thermocline as a thin blue line and consequently this is exactly where you will see your baitfish and predators interspersed with absolutely none of the irritating and confusing clutter you may be accustomed to.

Now that we have our quarry located, it is time to get down to presenting baits to them in an efficient manner. Trolling is the clear choice here as we can strain a lot of water in short order, contacting as many fish as possible. This is important as these guys are well fed and the more

fish see our baits, the higher the odds of hooking up. Also important to present numerous options and keep changing up until you find a combo that works. Leadcore with tiny baits in the range of #4 Hornets, Jointed Shad Raps, and 200 Ripshads are always good. Transversely, big baits that reach desired depths without aid such as 800 and even the Muskie sized 900 Reefrunners are standard fair. Spoons and Spinners presented on Leadcore or Snap Weights also have their place in the lineup. Generally a quick change of gears and a very short move and you are right back in business.