

Scented Plastic Baits

Most anglers today are under the impression that the newest generation of scented soft plastic baits are little more than yesterday's plastics dipped in some sort of a concoction that is little better than the product hawked by snake oil salesman of the past. I am here to tell you that this is far from the case. The baits that I personally have the most experience with are made by Berkley, specifically, Powerbait and Gulp. Their Scientists have spent thousands of hours chemically dismantling scores of natural foods and flavors in order to develop baits with unnaturally strong scent release systems and, therefore, the capacity to catch more fish. What their efforts has led to is a totally new type of bait that effectively bridges the gap between live and artificial baits or Mother Nature and Science.

What makes these new baits so appealing is that they are incredibly similar in texture and chemical potency to livebait, but with all the shape, action and color advantages that soft plastic baits can offer. It's hard to believe, but when worked properly I feel they look better than the real thing and the fish seem to agree. In my testing, I have found that the fish are doing more than just reacting to the color and action advantages of plastics. They aren't just striking the bait, they are eating it. About 50% of the fish caught require a pliers to remove the hook. Now that we know why they work, the most obvious question is how to make use of them in your quest to catch more fish.

The most apparent use is in conjunction with jigs. The jig is of course the most universal lure of all time and has easily accounted for the majority of fish caught. Combined with the newest generation of plastics this great tool has been made even better. There are numerous styles of jigs available and not all are compatible with plastics. The best jigs to fish with plastics are of the long shank variety with a wide hook gap to allow for better hookups due to the bulk of the plastic. The gap in most jigs is insufficient for this, but there are few that have come out recently, that work quite well. My personal choice is the Oddball from Bait Rigs. It has the necessary gap with a unique head style the swims the bait nicely while keeping the jig (and bait) riding in a nose down fashion while the hook remains at about a 45 degree upward angle. This results in less snags, better hookups and a more natural and productive presentation.

Rigging and presenting jigs and plastics is quite easy and straightforward. There are many body styles to choose from. They run from traditional twister tail styles to shad bodies and crawler and frog imitations. They are all attached to the jig in the same manner. Simply start the hook through the bait while upside down and thread onto the jig. The farther back you can place the hook point the better. Fish them as you normally would with an emphasis on swimming and hopping to provide more lifelike action. Snap jigging works exceptionally well with plastics and is a deadly technique that I will cover in detail in the future.

Another presentation that just begs for the use of plastics is Bottom Bouncers and spinners. Bring a bag or two of plastic crawlers in a couple of different colors along on your next outing and rig them as would a nightcrawler. You'll be amazed at how well they work while also allowing you to be more efficient as you don't have to constantly replace the bait due to small fish, perch, etc. I have also found that the 2 inch grub bodies can actually significantly outfish minnows while used with a single hook spinner. Livebait only comes in drab, unexciting and basically camouflaged patterns, but using plastics will allow you to play around with different colors and patterns to see what the fish prefer on any given day.

By keeping an open mind and by doing a little experimenting hopefully you can increase your catch and ultimately your enjoyment on the water this season.

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