

Summertime Reservoir Tactics

Most folks can manage decent catches of reservoir Walleye shortly after spawn, as the fish typically remain shallow for awhile and are susceptible to a number of different presentation options. Here in the Dakota's, bottom bouncers coupled with live bait rule the season.

Once the water begins to warm to around 70 degrees, it may not be the best way to go, as the fish are settling into summertime patterns. In particular, at midday and when there is little or no wind to stir the shallows. Without low light conditions or wave action kicking the food chain into gear, shallow water may hold only a few small fish.

If you experience this, it is time to begin looking for larger fish at the first drop off into deeper water. Here you will find the mature fish lounging around, waiting until conditions are conducive for them to move up, feed heavily and then quickly return. Add in the fact that they rely heavily on the feeding opportunities Smelt, Lake Herring, and Shad offer-and the shallows become extremely hit and miss without the aforementioned wind.

It may take a leap of faith for a lot of anglers, but I would encourage you to put away your bouncer rods and fire up the big motor and spend a little time cruising just outside the first break of your favorite live bait fishing spots, scanning with your electronics. Start at the 25 to 30 foot levels and go out from there. You will be looking for clouds of baitfish with marks of large fish both above and below them. This will indicate game fish feeding and you now know where all the fish you used to catch shallow have went. Using quality sonar helps immensely and I personally rely on Raymarine color graphs to accurately display this information.

Now that you have the fish located, it is time to put together a system that catches them. From an efficiency and effectiveness standpoint, there is nothing better than trolling to put some fish in the box. You are going to cover a great deal of ground while contacting large numbers of fish. This is key, as they will generally be in a neutral feeding mode and the more fish you go over the better. You also have the advantage of triggering a reaction bite on your side. These fish may snub their noses at something dangled in front of them, but can't resist taking a swipe at a bait quickly scurrying by.

There are a lot of different presentation options to use while trolling for these deep fish. To keep things simple, it is very hard to beat pulling deep diving plugs with Fireline. The added 25 to 30 percent depth gained with the Superbraid should get you down as far as needed. Crank bait styles such as the big ReefRunners will easily dive to 35 feet plus with 200 feet of line out. This is more than sufficient, even when going over depths of 65 to 70 feet, as many of these fish are suspended either with the clouds of bait we are marking or in the tops of submerged trees.

Troll in an S pattern alternating from very deep and then up to the break-line. You will eventually find some active fish that respond positively. Note where the majority of hits come from, stay at that level, and you are on the way to a successful day. Or, you could stubbornly stick to your bouncers and spend all day scratching your head as to where all the fish have gone.

DENNIS FOSTER
16 2ND AVENUE
MELLETTTE, SD 57461
USA

PHONE: 605 - 887-3451
CELLULAR: 605 - 450-1069
E-MAIL: dennis@nvc.net
WEBSITE: www.eyetimepromotions.com