

Walleye Now



These happy anglers are Paul Vercilyot and Wendy Albert of Aurora, Ill.

BY JOHN ANDREW

As the water temperature continues to cool down, more and more of our lakes will go through the fall turnover period (if your lake is deep enough) and the walleye action will continue to heat up quickly. Make no mistake, many guides have produced walleye this past summer right through the heat wave we all endured. Walleye anglers will now (and have already) experience a big improvement in the numbers of fish caught and coming into the boat.

We are going to discuss three locations and three techniques. Keep in mind, there are several other locations and techniques, such as the Great Lakes and trolling.

The first location to look for walleye is in the creek channels on many of the flowages and reservoirs scattered across Illinois and Wisconsin. These creek channel locations are usually narrow, around 20 to 100 feet wide, which can be and usually are littered with wood obstructions. Locating these areas is much easier than years ago, in conjunction with today's updated maps and GPSs that a lot of anglers now have. Locations where the channel comes into contact with shorelines, such as islands, mainland areas, and swamp sections are some of the best locations. However, at times,

mid-lake locations, which are slightly more difficult to fish, and the river or creek channels that come into contact with large flats that are common on several of the impoundments are also good areas to try.

First technique: start with anchoring your boat in the correct location to the creek channel and wood you are fishing. This is very critical and one of the biggest concepts to this technique. Working a slip bobber is, and always will be, one of the best choices for your presentation in these small areas. Sometimes simply using a bobber, a split shot, hook, leech, 'crawler or minnow works, and at times that's all you need. To expand on the presentation, we use specific colors for the straight hook, jig head and hook. A piece of colored Gulp! is pushed onto the hook before the bait, and at times colored split shot. Using glow-in-the-dark jigs, glow plastic, glow hooks, larger leaches, large 'crawlers and chub minnows work very well in those dark water impoundments.

Although not part of this technique, vertical jigging with small jig heads in between the wood structure can also be deadly, but you as a fisherman need a very soft touch.

Second location: if your water environment that you are fishing has turned over, a good location is the main lake



Kurt and Lenny Granger of Ottawa, Ill., caught these beauties.



Kelly and John Janson of Conover, Wis., with some nice walleye.

basin. Some lakes have several deep basins, as well as small and large rivers that may never develop a thermo cline, causing the walleye fishing to start at a different time. Each deep elbow of the river could be considered a basin area. Fishing the ledges, humps, and deep flats of these basin areas can and usually do produce walleye.

The second technique is jigging, wind drift jigging or vertical jigging. It is very productive for fall walleye. Locating deep structure and scanning the structure with your electronics to find these walleye is very important. Presenting your bait to these fish and then putting your first fish in the boat will boost your confidence. This type of fishing is daytime fishing; no nighttime fishing is needed to produce limits of these tasty fish when you are fishing deep. Remember, deep is relative to the water environment you are fishing. Some lakes or rivers may be deep at 35 or 20 feet, other locations may be 80 feet deep to produce the walleye.

The size of your jig head and the size of your hook are also important, as well as the type of fishing line you use. There will always be a place in fishing—whether deep or shallow, fresh or saltwater—for monofilament. Although all the rods that my clients use are filled with Berkley Fire Line in the smoke color. I like the six- or eight-pound-test. Why? Because the very thin diameter of the line increases the sink rate, helps my clients stay in contact with the bottom (which is the critical concept), and the sensitivity in the deep water that this line offers is second to none. When fishing dark water, we use glow jigs in various colors and they out produce everything else we use. When fishing clear water, we use darker jig heads, unless the lake or river has cisco or white fish, then we use white or chrome colors or a combination of those colors.

In early October, we also use a jig and a half 'crawler. Surprisingly, this works very well, but for us it only works during early fall; then it's all large minnows. Make no mistake about it, the 'crawler works well in early fall for my clients.

Third location is a current area between lakes or long, narrow channels between lakes, fishing at sundown through the night by the spawning cisco and white fish shorelines.

Third technique is casting imitation floating minnow baits. We are using



Bill and Joann Cox of Rockford, Ill., proudly display their catch. All photos were taken while fishing with year 'round guide John Andrew.

chest waders and moving very slowly, reeling very slowly! One of the critical concepts to our success is the size of the minnow bait, and the second concept is mandatory: no lights at any time, except a tiny penlight to unhook and release these fatties.

Fishing the current areas requires a very stealthy approach; no noise must be observed at all times. These fish are very spooky, yet will not leave once spooked but they will not bite. At this location a good braided line is needed due to the snags that are sometimes everywhere you cast.

The late fall spawning cisco and white fish locations also are very shallow. Here again, a good braid is needed due to the shallow rocks you will be fishing.

This is true trophy time!
Author's note: Some people say that we as anglers should not catch deep-water walleye. Should we stop catching deep-water muskie?

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