

Row-Trolling Walleye

BY JOHN ANDREW

Why row-trolling walleye? Because we are targeting certain water environments that have a fall migration of spawning baitfish that move extremely shallow at evening and nighttime hours during this timeframe of the year—early November.

Cisco and whitefish are a very abundant baitfish in certain northern Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois (Lake Michigan for Illinois), Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana and several northeastern states in the U.S.A.

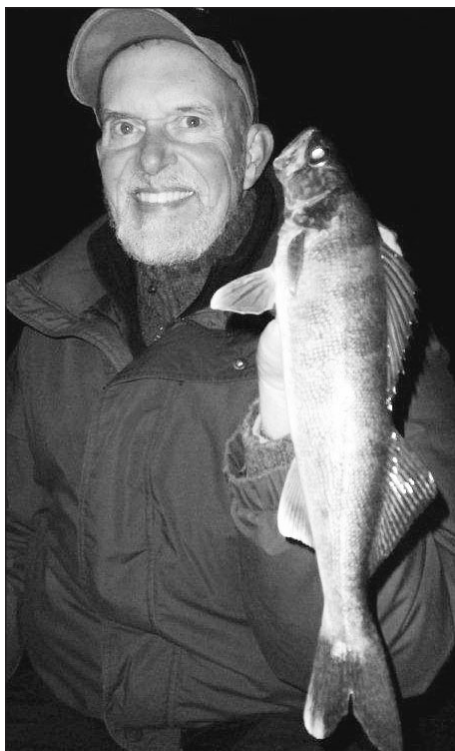
We troll in the evenings and into the dark along the shoreline areas where these high protein baitfish do their spawning. We also cast from shore. Trolling allows us to use several minnow imitating baits at once, using planer boards to get extremely close to shore and keep our row-trolling boat away from shore.

Yes, there are several people who motor troll these areas every year all across several states, but as you read your regulations you will find many, many good locations where these walleye stack up pursuing these baitfish where you cannot motor troll, so we row troll to great success. This is an under fished resource, as some of the biggest fish of the entire year are here to feed and you can intercept them. Do some more homework to locate these water environments and enjoy the bounty.

Use planner boards (yellow birds). There are several boards and brands of boards on the market that work extremely well. These boards allow you to stay 20, 50, 100 feet or more away from the shoreline and present your bait to the feeding walleye, as well as the giant muskie (another article coming soon). Being stealth is very important; this is close quarter fishing and you absolutely must be organized and quiet. Working into the dark hours of the night (starting at sunset) requires a very lifelike artificial minnow bait. Black and silver works, but there are other baits that work much, much better. More research, time on the water and homework is mandatory for us fishermen.

We do not use 10- and 12-foot long rods. This is not necessary for our application, since we only troll the shoreline areas. Now, there are certain reefs where these fall spawning fish are located deeper during their spawning rituals—then, and only then do we put boards on both sides of the boat.

We have recently discovered small coves, shallow bars between bays, and certain small current areas that are also magnets for these spawning baitfish. The big game fish are also there feeding on them. These fish are caught by being



This walleye was caught while fishing with the author.



This walleye was caught early November during the cisco spawn while fishing with the author.



These two walleye were caught row-trolling November 12 with the author.



These walleye were caught while row-trolling November 14 with the author.

stealthy, wading, casting and only using a light when needed.

Our line is all super line. We prefer six-pound-test Berkley FireLine in the smoke color. This ultra-thin line, no-stretch system paired with only a snap at the end connected to our bait is one of the critical concepts to our success.

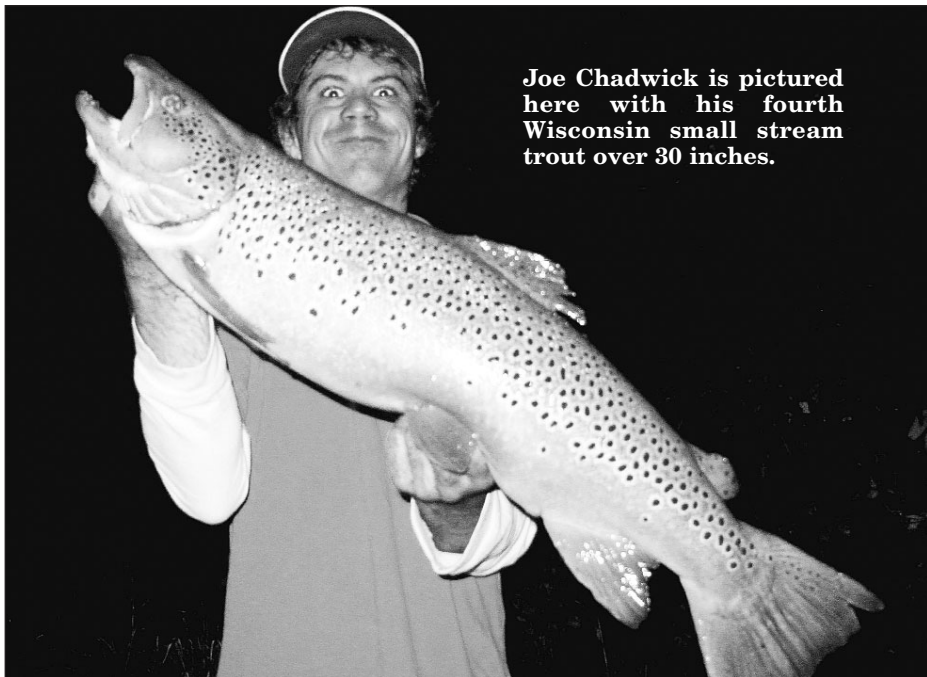
We never use fluorocarbon or monofilament line for a leader. As mentioned above, close quarter fishing is not only in the row-trolling boat but also the shallow water where it is rock infested, logs sticking out from shore, and driftwood under the surface. The hard fighting walleye knows where to go when hooked, swimming across all the afore mentioned obstructions; therefore, we need a strong, durable line. You can use a heavier line but this immediately reduces the action of our baits. Yes, on a rare occasion we

lose a trophy due to a break off, but rarely.

Sharing these techniques with my clients has been held in the smallest circle of people and now is becoming popular all over several states, and has been going on in Canada for decades.

The Great Lakes are one of the true last opportunities of giant game fish (for us in the States) and this method has been working there for years and years as well. Put this knowledge to work for you and get out on our waters and enjoy. Tighter lines!

“Jaws” Theme Song Needed!



Joe Chadwick is pictured here with his fourth Wisconsin small stream trout over 30 inches.

BY LEN HARRIS

About a week ago my mail carrier, Jim Gainor, gave me a tip on a big trout he had a follow on right here in Richland Center. I stored it in my memory for another day. That another day was this morning at first light.

Joe Chadwick accompanied me. He was tossing worms while I was spinning the area. He let me have the top of the hole. This is where the mailman had rolled a big trout. Joe picked the deeper run just in front of the bridge. It was a short outing.

Joe was yelling for me to come help within two minutes of getting to the Pine River right in town. I waded out quite a ways and waited for Joe to tire the fish out. This fish was big and hunkered down to the bottom. I was making fun of Joe for being so excited. I can remember picking on him and saying it was only some stupid carp anyway and he shouldn't get so worked up. It finally surfaced and then I got excited. I waded out further almost to the top of my waders because this trout was absolutely huge.

The battle went on for what seemed

forever. The trout was strong and any time it saw the net it made another powerful run. A couple walking by on the bridge stopped and I could hear them yelling and cheering. This only made Joe and I more nervous.

Finally the trout tired out and I netted it. It almost didn't fit in the net. Luckily I had my huge LDH net. The couple on the bridge applauded us and came down to admire the female brown.

She measured 31-5/8 inches. This makes four small stream trout over 30 inches that Joe has caught in his life. I got an assist again. Joe is having it mounted on the same driftwood as his last 30-inch small stream brown.

The picture has been out locally and it is amazing the myriad of responses. The majority of responses are positive. Most just say wow. There are a few jealous types who try to dismiss it as a WDNR released brooder or someone's pet that escaped from their pond. These responses are expected when an angler catches the BIGGEST Wisconsin small stream brown I have heard of or seen caught in my lifetime! Congratulation, Joe Chadwick!

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