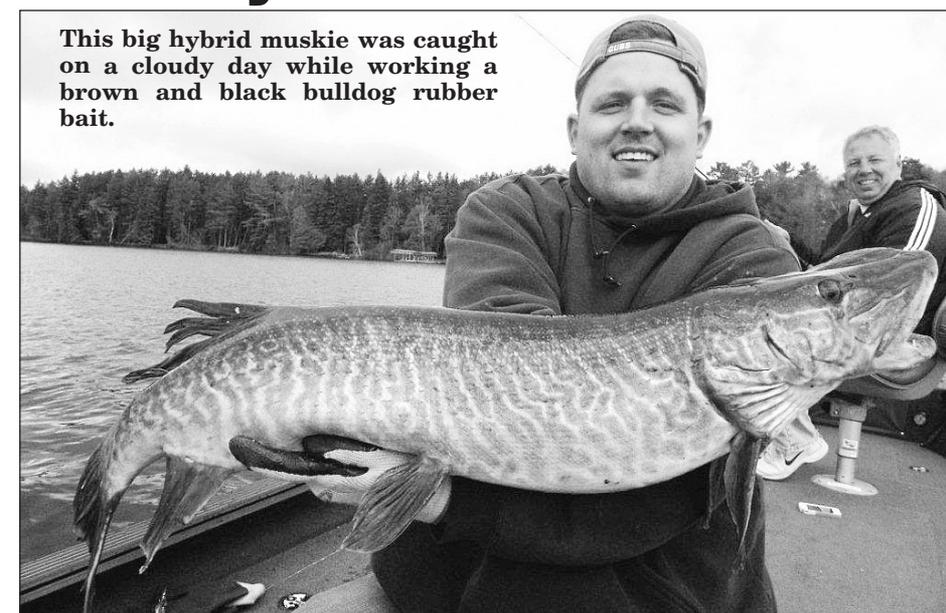


# Today's Muskie

This big hybrid muskie was caught on a cloudy day while working a brown and black bulldog rubber bait.



BY JOHN ANDREW

As July continues to bring the warm weather into the northern Illinois and northern Wisconsin, the muskie bite continues to heat up. We are still using smaller bulldogs and the medium-sized bucktails, and the medium-sized top-water baits are also producing very well.

We are working the smaller plastics as the water continues to warm, but there will always be the exception, especially on the shallow water environments. These shallow lakes with fast weed growth are progressing much quicker for warmer water and midsummer muskie patterns. Right now we are working the outside edges of the weed beds. This has been our number one area for most strikes.

Casting the medium-sized plastic baits in a variety of colors and working them at a medium speed during the retrieve is creating the best results for us. The method of our retrieve is also a critical concept to the strike-to-follow ratio. What does that mean? Well, it's like this: we have developed a certain technique to our retrieve. Instead of just pulling the rubber bait back to the boat, we are using a certain cadence of pulls that really excites the muskie and results in many more strikes. You also can develop a certain method of retrieve and you will see a big difference in fish boated compared to the followers to the side of the boat.

Today, there are several versions of plastic baits with several different companies making them. The color of the baits can make a big difference on your level of success. Each individual water environment has its own unique levels of clarity and this helps to determine what color we start with.

The bait that the muskie are eating also dictates what color we use. The

perch colors, the sucker colors, as well as the chromes, gold and black and even straight white or all black work extremely well. Your angle of retrieve, as well as how you work the bait, is also extremely important. Make no mistake about it; if the muskie you are fishing have never seen a plastic or rubber bait being worked in front of them, they're most likely going to strike with a vengeance. This is why we choose carefully on color selection since some lakes are being pounded hard by anglers casting plastics.

As trolling comes into play next year for northern Wisconsin, many more quality-sized muskie will be reaching the net. Other good muskie lakes in Illinois, like Kinkaid, Evergreen and several other good lakes, trolling has been going on for years and casting is still very productive.

Casting the smaller bucktails right now is also working. Color choice also makes a difference in the amount of muskie caught, as well as the speed of your retrieve and the intermittent variation of pulls and pauses during the retrieve. The technique of your retrieve is an absolute key factor to the amount of fish caught. This is the big advantage of casting compared to trolling.

How many times during a trolling excursion have you taken a rod and started pulling back and forward and then all of a sudden a strike occurs? This happens a lot. Adding a variation to your retrieve is extremely important. Developing your own personal technique when bringing the bait back to the boat is the difference from getting follows to getting a strike and landing the fish. Any muskie pro will share this advice with you.

The top-water baits we are using are also in certain color patterns. For example, instead of a bright orange belly, we prefer a very dark-colored orange. Or instead of just black and white, we like a



Purposely using light equipment to entice the strike, this muskie was caught on a clear water lake in shallow water.



This July muskie fought very hard and was released. It was the second muskie of the day.



During the light rain and using a top-water bait, this muskie was boated and released in the early morning hours in July.



On a warm July day, fishing the weeds produced this muskie on a brown and black rubber bulldog.

Good luck and let's go get 'em.

The author, John Andrew, owner/operator of "The Angler's Choice Guide Service.com" is a two-time World Record Holder, and a two-time Outstanding Angler Achievement Award Winner. He is also a full-time, year 'round tour guide for fishing and hunting in his home state of Wisconsin, specializing in Vilas, Oneida and Iron counties. He can be reached at 715-892-3020 or 1-715-686-2012.

brown and black or a creamy colored white, as well as multiple other color patterns. This does make a positive difference. Once again, the cadence of your retrieve truly will increase you strikes. Casting top-water baits, even when its choppy, still provides some incredibly violent strikes. We like shallow fishing with top-waters when its windy, in shallow rocks or weeds—it works.

## The Angler's Choice Guide Service.com

Create The Complete Vilas, Iron & Oneida Counties Northern Wisconsin Vacation with John Andrew

715-892-3020 – 715-686-2012  
johnandrew@centurytel.net

### Service includes:

All equipment including all rods, reels, hooks, fish cleaning and packing. Fully equipped 2014 Lund 20'10" Pro Guide Series boat, 2014 125 hp Mercury XPS Optimax tiller motor, dual Minn Kota trolling motors, Lowrance HDS Touchscreen depth finders with structure scan & broadband sounder.

Full Day (up to 9 hrs.) \$265  
Half Day (up to 6 hrs.) \$185  
(BAIT EXTRA)

Welcome: Serious Anglers, Couples, and Children for fishing

Shore Lunch - \$15 per person  
Box Lunch - \$10 per person



No fish... no pay! Guaranteed!

Walleye  
Bass  
Crappie  
Trout  
Panfish  
Northern Pike  
Musky (not guaranteed)

**John Andrew**  
• Licensed & insured  
• 40 years fishing experience  
• 2 documented Fresh Water World Records  
• Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame  
• 3 Outstanding Angler Achievement Awards  
• Fishing Lake Superior & Lake Michigan