

# Weedy Perch

BY JOHN ANDREW

We all focus on crappie during the late ice season, although the perch are very active and will be spawning in a few short weeks from now, before the crappie. These tasty fish are feeding heavily now and in some lakes they are located very, very shallow. Mostly they will be in the weeds or on the flats, in between the weed beds.

How shallow or deep the perch will be located depends on the water color of the lake you are fishing. Remember, we are not talking about the backwaters of the Mississippi River. This article is for lake fishing throughout Illinois, Wisconsin and surrounding states.

Very dark water will place these fish extremely shallow from three to seven feet in certain conditions, and in semi-clear (foggy) colored water they may be from five to 14 feet. Remember, this will be on a shallow, weedy lake. On some deep, clear lakes they may be as deep as 40 to 60 feet—not only on Lake Michigan but other deep, clear impoundments throughout Wisconsin and neighboring states.

Small minnows work well this time of year, but due to their aggressiveness, the perch are hitting almost any bait we put down. We like fishing on sunny days the best. This will vary for each fisherman, but for us, the more sunshine the better. However, we do catch perch during all conditions. The weeds are providing the most oxygen this time of year on the shallow, weedy lakes. These are lakes under 18 feet deep and as deep as 30 feet. On a few of the bigger weedy lakes, we concentrate on the channels between the larger weed beds. The narrower the channel between the weeds, the better we do.

Many, many people have asked me, how do I find these weed beds, creek or river channels, humps, bars, flats, brush piles, ledges, drop offs, sunken logs from the logging days a century ago, lakes



Working the weeds for this client produced these quality perch.



The narrow channels between the weed beds produced these jumbo perch.

and/or locations I always write about, regardless of the specie? Well, it's simple. We locate all these spots during open



Father and daughter caught these perch on minnows in shallow weeds.



This father and son caught these perch while using minnows.

water periods and GPS them, so when we return during ice-up, we locate our spots with the GPS and drill a few wholes. We then we put down the underwater camera (which I have been using since 1992) and find what we are looking for and set up for winter fishing.

The perch seem to like the brightness of daytime for their best feeding opportunities. For us, very little, if any, are caught during the dark. We also have noticed over the years that the perch are feeding heavily on their own young-of-the-year hatch or their spawn; so when we use spikes or wax worms, we like using tiny orange and yellow jig heads, teardrops or tiny spoons. When a school of perch moves under your location, the bite can last for several minutes or for

only for three or four minutes. Locating a school of perch that is stationary can be a bonanza. This usually occurs in deeper water along structure.

We also like using Berkley FireLine in the lightest test available, mostly in the smoke color with Berkley fluorocarbon as a leader in the one- or two-pound test. Also a good tip: when not using a camera, we like using a miniature Thill slip float as a strike indicator instead of a spring tip. Why, you ask? Well, it's easier to look into the whole at a bobber rather than staring at a spring tip. Do not misunderstand my intentions; spring tips work, and work very, very well. I like teaching my clients to use the tiny bobber just as the fly fishermen use their strike indicator located eight to 15 feet above their fly

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Spikes, small orange and yellow jigs produced these big perch along the bottom of the weed line.

(with a piece of yarn). This will indicate the strike as the yarn twitches, and the same goes for the bobber.

Do some homework on the IDNR website or the WDNR website and check for creel census surveys, stocking reports and state deposited woodpiles. These are all available to us fishermen. Maps of all our lakes can be easily printed once we find what we are looking for.

The perch are getting ready to spawn in just a few short weeks. Knowing where they are feeding now will fill your freezer, within the legal limit of course. As winter wears on this year—and it's going to be another long one as forecasted to be—these weedy lakes are going to see a rush of shallow fishing, since the oxygen levels drop off in the deeper sections and the bite goes heavily into the weeds.

This is also similar to a lot of flowages this time of year. Most flowages are fairly shallow except for a few areas. The bite will drop off as late winter progresses due to lack of oxygen. We then fish the current areas (please be very careful



The shallow flats before the weed line is where these jumbo perch came from for this happy client.



Working with wax worms and guide John Andrew, fishing at the bottom of the weeds produced these perch.

when fishing current areas) of these flowages during late winter for the best O<sub>2</sub> levels and where most aggressive fish are.

We now understand that for these conditions (shallow and weedy) during late ice, the perch are easy prey for us fishermen. Please practice C.P.R. (catch, photo and release).

Look for an article on the deep, clear lakes for perch fishing to be published in an upcoming issue of the *MidWest*

*Outdoor Magazine.*

Now let's go get 'em!  
God bless!

The author, John Andrew, owner/operator of "The Anglers Choice Guide Service.com" is a two-time World Record holder and a resident and a fulltime, year 'round tour guide for fishing and hunting in the state of Wisconsin, specializing in Vilas, Oneida and Iron counties. He can be reached at 715-892-3020.

# Our Readers Write



Don Dettman (right) and Bill Dettman proudly display a nice nine-pound, 28-1/2-inch long, 18-inch girth walleye, caught on the Wisconsin River.

## Meeting Information

### Wisconsin

2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month  
Greendale American Legion  
6351 W. Grange Avenue.  
Greendale, WI 53129  
414-421-3371

The post is located close to downtown Greendale and the Southridge Shopping Mall.

### Illinois

Last Wednesday of each month  
Gurnee American Legion  
749 Milwaukee Ave.  
Gurnee, IL 60031  
847-244-9282

2 miles east of Gurnee Mills on Grand Ave. (Rt. 132)  
Near the intersection of Milwaukee Ave. (Rt. 21)

Guests are always welcomed at our meetings  
Guest Fee is only \$5.00  
Meetings begin at 7:00 PM sharp

Visit our web site at:  
[walleyesunlimitedusa.org](http://walleyesunlimitedusa.org)

Contact us if you have questions at:  
[info@walleyesunlimitedusa.org](mailto:info@walleyesunlimitedusa.org)

### 2014 Club Officers

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## Upcoming Meetings Dates

March 12<sup>th</sup> - Greendale, WI  
March 26<sup>th</sup> - Gurnee, IL

For our monthly speaker line-up visit our site at:  
<http://www.walleyesunlimitedusa.org>

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