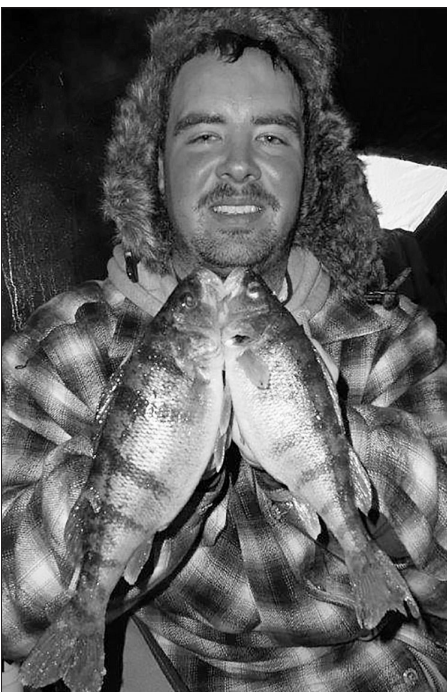


Special Trick Reveals Color Preference of Late-ice Perch



hook, this will also produce an aggressive strike.

We need to discover which motions and what level of vibration creates a strike or scares the fish. This is easily done with the underwater camera. If you do not own one, you need to get one. A camera (if water

clarity allows it) will teach you more in one day than a flasher will teach you in a year. Just ask anyone who owns a "current" underwater camera; the newer models have a very clear picture. The camera is a learning tool that requires very little transition from a flasher. In dark-stained water, you will still need a flasher, as the camera will not work well in only a few inches of visibility.

Fishing on the flat areas of the lake produce well for perch this time of year. And we do not want to fish the deepest water, but the deeper-averaged depths and along the bottom. If we can find a 2-foot difference in the bottom depth, this will hold hundreds of perch. Remember, we need to be fishing a lake that is known for perch, just as there are certain lakes that are known for good walleye fishing or those known to have multiple species in them. We like to use 2-pound mono for our line and tiny number 14 treble hooks or tiny single hooks when hooking our minnows.

Remember, color will also make a difference in your catch ratio for your hooks, spoon or jig head. **MWO**

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by John Andrew

We are working the mud flats. Yes—the mud flats in the area we are fishing is our best location and yours, if your lake is shallow and weedy.

At this time of year the perch are feeding heavily on tiny mayfly larvae and other aquatic insect larvae that are located at the deeper silt areas of the lake. These areas are not necessarily the deepest parts of the lake, but are areas connected to sandbars or the deepest areas of rock bars, or are connected to deep weedy bays.

These perch are very aggressive and are easily caught. We simply adjust to *their* needs.

Wow. What does that mean to us, the fisherman? Well, it's like this: We first have to locate the fish. We do this with our GPS coordinates from late fall, where we were catching them. Next, we use our underwater cameras. After locating the fish, we send down a multiple array of unbaited, colored hooks and try to catch the perch.

That's right. Non-live baited hooks. I do this in conjunction with an underwater camera, because I want to discover what color the perch will be attracted to, and which colors they swim away from. This method of trial and error works incredibly well. For example, we see fish repeatedly bite the lure or jig head before they even touch the live bait, which, this indicates to you, the fisherman, that you have discovered what color works best in the water clarity you are currently fishing.

This discovery will increase your catch ratio by 10 fold. This works, wherever you fish. Once we have discovered this perfect color, we then load our hooks with tiny 3/4-inch sized minnows, waxworms, mousers or wigglers—these live baits produce well. Working the bait aggressively can produce violent strikes, and then if we simply allow the minnow to swim without moving the

Illinois Walleye Waters No Big Secret if You Know Where to Look

by Herman Kunz

Now that another fishing season is on the horizon, the earliest time of the fishing season can be the best for the ever-loving walleyes. To Illinoisans, walleyes in here can seem scarce, but they can be plentiful. You must know where your best chances are to catch this delicious fish.

I do agree that Illinois doesn't have the great expanses of water of the likes of a Lake Erie in Ohio, or a Lake Oahe in South Dakota, or the reefs and bars of Big and Little Bays De Noc in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. But for now you should know that Illinois is just dotted with lakes that hold good to excellent populations of the delicious fish, *Stizostedion vitreum*. You know the fish better by its common name—the walleye. Many of these lakes are overlooked for walleyes.

In the few places this fish is targeted, the fishing pressure is high and boat traffic is always at a maximum when this species decides to make itself available. Places like the Illinois and Kankakee rivers, Lake Shabbona—which boasts walleyes up to 9 pounds—and Heidecke Lake are just a few.

If the largemouth bass don't watch out, the walleyes will take over the number one spot in the "happiness of pursuit" category the largemouths have held on to for years, panfish notwithstanding of course.

Obviously, walleyes don't have the tenacity and aggressive fighting tendencies the black bass are noted for. However, this

fish makes up for its lack of fight with its excellent "floating" abilities—in a deep fryer. Many fishermen just can't wait to go to their favorite out-of-state location for the walleyes, or its famous almost identical cousin, the sauger.

For those of you not willing to stand in line at the boat ramps at the aforementioned locations or to travel far and beyond to catch a meal of walleyes or saugers, here are a few of the better, though not regularly publicized, other locations in Illinois for these two species. A few of these locations do have open-water fishing year 'round for you cold-weather nuts.

Lake Carlyle, in south-central Illinois in Fayette and Bond counties with 24,580 acres, is the largest lake that maintains an available population of walleyes. But these fish here can be difficult to locate if you are unfamiliar with the lake. The good side is that you will have plenty of elbowroom to fish. The fish here average 1 1/2 pounds and higher. You can start trying to locate them by fishing around rock riprap, around islands and tailwaters using jigs with minnows and "crawlers."

Lake Shelbyville in Shelby County has 11,100 acres and is probably the most popular "non-fished-for-walleyes" walleye-specific lake. This lake produces walleyes averaging in the 2 1/2- to 4-pound range. Troll for them with "shad-looking" crankbaits around its drop-offs and flats. You may even catch a nice white bass or even a muskie while searching for walleyes.

The Fox Chain 'O' Lakes, and its 7,100 acres of water, is next. Fox and Pistakee in the southern part of the chain, and Channel and Catherine in the upper half, are the places to look for good walleye concentrations. Trolling crankbaits like Rapalas and Storm Thundersticks around drop-offs, sand and gravel bars and around bridges at Route 12 and Route 173 will catch you a good dinner. Jigs with minnows and "crawlers" for you "non-trollers" will also net you some success.

Clinton Lake is next, boasting 5,000 acres with lots of walleyes that run in a range of 3 pounds and up. Fish the usual

riprap and rocky points using live bait or trolling methods for success.

Lake Springfield is in Sangamon County with 4,200 acres and has fish up to 4 pounds. Try the usual walleye baits fished around flats, points and the hot water discharge ditch.

Kinkaid Lake is in Jackson County in southern Illinois, and is an overlooked and underused walleye lake that brags about fish that run in the 5-pound-plus range—this lake does not normally freeze over. Try fishing the main lake points and weed beds, and while you are at it, you should hold on tight to your fishing rod. Muskies over 40 inches cruise these waters and eat 5-pound walleyes for a snack!

These are several of the better, or should I say, larger walleye lakes Illinois has to offer. There are a few that I might have missed in the larger-lake ranks, but these mentioned are the most popular. If you care about numbers, Illinois has a total of about 34 walleye/sauger lakes within its boundaries, give or take a few. There are many lakes out there not mentioned that are also excellent walleye-producing lakes, averaging about 2,000 acres down to a mere 38 acres (Beck Lake in Cook County.)

Many smaller lakes are excellent for the small-boat fisherman or for one who fishes without a boat. Many of these smaller lakes are even "motor restricted (electric motor only)" or just "shore fishing only." Getting your hands on a 2016 copy of the Illinois Fishing Information Booklet will give you all of the details.

Remember that number, 34, is the amount of walleye waters Illinois has to offer you. Or better yet, think of this number range, 65,000-plus. That is the average number of acres available for the Illinois walleye fisherman, and doesn't even take into account the many miles of walleye-friendly rivers that ramble throughout the state.

So, when you say Illinois doesn't have a good walleye population, think again—65,000 acres is a gazillion pounds of walleyes. **MWO**

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