

Wood Walleye Today

BY JOHN ANDREW

We hear a lot about weeds and how they attract all species of freshwater fish at different times of the year. What about walleye? Yes, they too are very attracted to weeds and sometimes when we have a GPS coordinate where wood is mixed in with weeds—especially on a weed line that is dropping into deeper water—this location can be a summertime walleye gold mine right through July and August.

Underwater wood locations are not utilized as much as they should be. In fact, many, many anglers ignore cribs, underwater trees, brush, logs and wood in general. Why? Because when they fish weeds they always get their jig, crankbait or other hooks back in the boat. They simply clean off the weeds and cast back to the location or start their trolling pattern over. Yet wood is a very good fish attractor and always has been since the beginning of fishing. Many people even put small brush piles right off their docks so their grandchildren or they, themselves, can easily catch fish all summer long.

Finding wood structure that is on a flat section on the bottom of your favorite fishing flowage, about 12 to 18 feet deep will not only attract baitfish, panfish, muskie, and bass, but will also attract walleye—lots of walleye! Finding wood structure on top of and down the drop-off to deeper water will also attract walleye.

Let's say a large tree around 50 to 70 feet long drops into the water from a steep dropping shoreline where the depth starts at two and goes to 20 feet deep within 100 feet off the shore. Give this spot 15 days and you will have almost all the species of fish in that lake or river using this new structure.

Walleye can be caught using a variety of methods and techniques from anchoring and casting, drifting alongside while you present your offering, shore fishing, slip bobbers, jig fishing, split shot and a hook, crankbaits, vertical fishing and the list goes on. Wood and walleye go hand in hand (year 'round) and we are going to go over some proven methods, patterns, techniques and critical concepts that will help you become a better wood fisherman.

A favorite way to catch wood walleye is to use a light jig with a strong hook (not a thin wire hook) in conjunction with a super line. Vertically jig very slowly and gently right into the wood structure and be sure you make contact with the bottom. Then carefully work the offering up through the wood like you were ice fishing. Do not attach a mono or fluorocarbon leader. You want instant striking power and all the abrasion resistant qualities working in your favor. This is taught to all my clients when working wood structure on the flowages and, yes,



A nice group of walleye caught while out with the author.



More happy faces displaying their catch while fishing with the author.



Another fine bunch of walleye caught while out with the author.

it is hard to learn but extremely effective. Casting to or on top of the wood structure and counting the bait down to a specified depth and then beginning the retrieve is also very affective. These two described methods are the fastest way to fish submerged wood, when moving and searching for active fish from GPS location to location.

Slip bobbers are the second fastest method to catching wood walleye and this must be noted: they also snag less. Once the fish has been successfully hooked, some jig hooked fish get hung up when retrieving the fish through the wood. The jig head will lodge between branches or under a piece of wood preventing you from bringing the fish all the way through and up into the boat. A hook with no jig head attached is normally in the fish's mouth and only the line is exposed to slide through the wood snags. This is why no mono is used, not even on the slip bobbers.

Drifting alongside wood structure while presenting your bait or lure is also productive, although this pattern works for aggressive fish that are willing to leave the structure to venture out for their food. In the heat of the summer this usually only happens at twilight or at nighttime.

Anchoring can be a very productive way to produce by casting to the structure and retrieving, especially if you understand and/or know the shape of the underwater wood structure. Using an underwater camera will help in this situation, if the water is not too dark in color.

Using a wire or plastic brush guard on a jig or straight hook can also be extremely productive when presenting your bait into the wood in conjunction with a slow retrieve.

A known spawning location, where wood is also located, will at times help hold the walleye there for several days after the spawn is over, especially the male fish. There must be enough wood for their security and cover. This is a deadly springtime location. Deep wood in the fall is also a magnet, although harder to successfully fish since deep wood is not as forgiving and snags are common. But the walleye are there and are generally bigger in size.

DNR woodpiles are some of the best holding spots, especially the newer ones as they put a lot of effort and research into the location they place them. The old method of placing them on the ice and hoping they fall through and not drift away to the wrong location has been solved long ago by placing enough weight connected to the structure that they do indeed sink to the designated location. If you can obtain these locations on your favorite fishing waters you will be way ahead of the average fisherman.

Ice fishing on precise GPS wood locations is once again, a walleye gold mine.



More satisfied customers out on a guided fishing trip with the author.



Smiles of all ages with their catch of walleye while fishing with the author.

In some waters this may be shallower than others. Certain locations could be as deep as 45 to 65 feet.

Wood walleye are under-fished but you can reach a greater fish catching potential if you focus on these locations and GPS them for future or seasonal use.

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