

Deep-In-The-Summer Smallmouth Bass

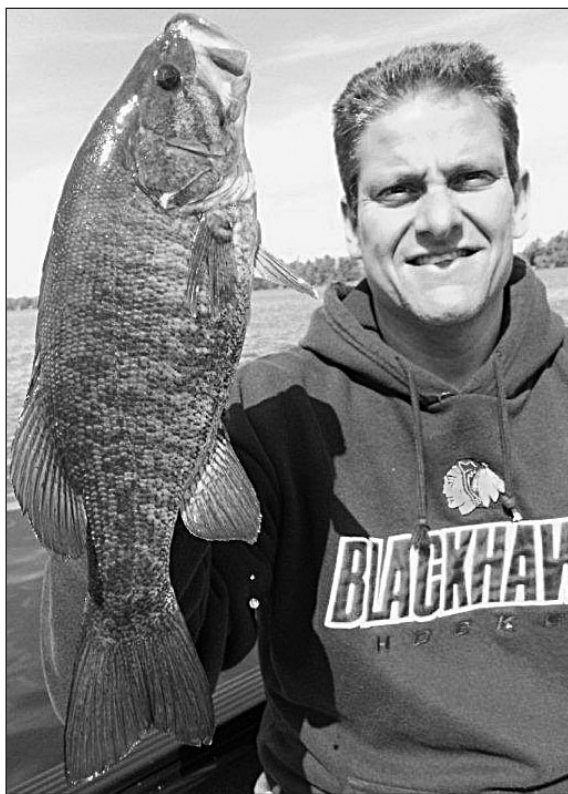
BY JOHN ANDREW

Numbers of smallmouth bass and big smallmouth bass are frequently caught in lakes while fishing down deep during the heat of the summer months. We will go over three specific locations and three techniques so you too can produce these bronze back warriors, NOW! This article is geared towards lake fishing.

First, we are going after suspended smallmouth bass. These fish are at times deeper than the structure they are relating to, but the fish are not on the bottom and therefore are easily seen on most fish locators. Locating them can be done by looking off the sides of rock bars, rock humps, sand bars, a long bar connected to a point that extends out into the lake, necked down areas of a lake such as between an island and the shoreline, the narrow section of a lake that holds deeper water or perhaps close to the drop off from an extending shallow flat that is connected to the shoreline. Remember, deep is relative to the lake you are fishing. Some lakes' deep could be 30 to 40 feet and other lakes' deep could mean 15 to 25 feet.

Long line trolling with or without a planner board, using a floating stick bait with an inline sinker is a top choice for catching deep suspended smallmouth bass. How far the bait is placed behind the planner board depends on how deep you are marking the fish with the sonar. We use a rubber core sinker. This weight is easy to install or remove from your line. Putting the weight from two to six feet in front of the stick bait has always worked for my clients. Using a small snap clip from the bait tied to our line is important. The color pattern of the stick bait (Rapalas, Thunder Sticks, Smith Wicks or others) will vary due to the available forage in the lake you are fishing. You will need to use some trial and error.

If there is no trolling in your lake, drift troll with the wind by turning the boat sideways and moving with the wind. We add to the action of the stick bait by lifting and dropping the rod tip with a short snapping motion and use a lighter weight if necessary. We let out line from 50 to 100 feet or more depending how deep we are marking the bass with our sonar and depending how slow or fast we are drifting. I get a lot of questions about line. For my clients—clear water or stained—I use all Berkley FireLine, six-pound-test in the smoke color. I know, you ask, why not fluorocarbon? Our number of catches is high in clear or stained water, and the instant



Vince Santoro of Chicago with a 22-inch smallmouth bass. Photo by year 'round guide John Andrew.

hooking power is unmatched, in my opinion.

Second, we are fishing on the bottom, working the slopes and drop offs of rock piles, deep humps, saddles between humps, deep flats connected to or adjacent to spawning locations and right on the edge of a flat right before it drops into a main lake basin area. These are prime deep-water locations for deep jigging. The weight of your jig will again depend on how deep you are fishing, how windy it is, how heavy the line is that you are using and weather you are using monofilament line, fluorocarbon line or a braided line.

We like a lighter jig with a skirt and rubber trailer. The slower rate of fall with the lighter jig head, I feel, triggers more strikes. The football jig can also be ideal in this situation, there are times when dragging a light jig on the bottom is just too much of a temptation for the smallmouth bass to pass up. Pausing the jig to a stop from time to time while dragging it along is our best technique. Using live bait on a walleye jig head of your choice is possibly the best combination when all else fails when using a jig. We like the three- to four-inch chub or sucker minnows.

The drop shot rig is also deadly in deep water; although this technique takes more time to work, since a slow presentation is required for the best results, for us.

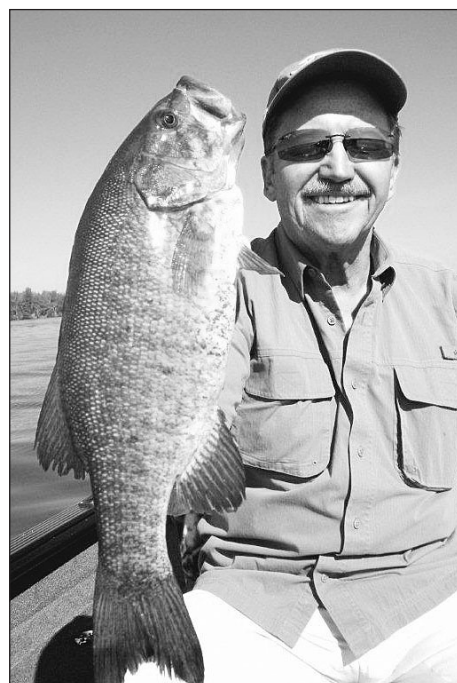
Third, we use a straight pre-rigged plastic worm and we fish this bait along deep grass beds and on lakes that have



Eric Bishop of Rockford, Ill., displays this 20-inch smallmouth bass. Photo by year 'round guide John Andrew.

deep vegetation. We also use this bait for the suspended bass and along the bottom for the deep bass. This bait is tied directly to the line with a small swivel three feet above the worm and a couple of split shot in front of the swivel to take the bait down to the fish.

The straight worm, six to nine inches in length, is very important for catching smallmouth bass and I place it in its own category. Pre-scented worms work the best for us. Not having a bend or curl in the worm is the critical concept to this



Trig Soleberg of Minocqua, Wis., caught this 21-inch smallmouth bass. Photo by year 'round guide John Andrew.

bait's success.

Slow trolling, drift trolling, or casting out and dragging this bait on the bottom in deep water is deadly. The bass simply pound this bait into submission. Resembling a small eel or leech is what I determine this offering to be to the fish. Keep this rigged and ready to present to the bass at all times—it works.

These fish are not just caught during the springtime, they are hitting as hard as ever right now, in August.

Schleis, Seidl Win Cabela's Masters Walleye Circuit's Lake Winnebago Qualifier

Wisconsinites Mark Schleis and Randy Seidl put together two solid baskets to top the field of 268 anglers from 10 states and one Canadian province at the Cabela's Masters Walleye Circuit's Lake Winnebago tournament.

"It feels awesome; this is great," said Seidl, of Appleton. After a great start of 18.28 pounds putting them in 12th place on day one, a 21.41-pound day two basket gave them a 39.69-pound total weight. The win earned them the \$18,300 first-place cash purse, plus \$1,000 Ranger Cup award, \$500 Berkley Baits Berkley Tackle Package, and U2 Pro Formula contingency for a \$19,860 payday.

"Randy concentrated on Winnebago while I eliminated water on the upper lakes," added Schleis, of Denmark, who explained that the team trolled live night-crawlers and Berkley Gulp! Alive! Crawlers on harness rigs with hammered gold hatchet-style blades at 1.4 mph over a mud bottom in 14 feet of water on the north end of the Winnebago, at the end of sand fingers extending into the lake. He noted that when the wind picked up, they switched to Berkley Flicker Shad crankbaits.

The Wisconsin team of Gordon Schwarz and Brett Wilkins finished second with 38.67 pounds, good for \$7,500 plus a \$1,000 Cabela's gift card from the Cabela's Angler Cash Program and \$500 Lowrance Electronics HDS/Elite DSI contingency. In all, the top 26 teams shared more than \$69,650 in cash, plus thousands more in sponsor bonuses and \$5,350 in Big Fish Pot winnings. Plus, the top three Premier (early-bird) teams received two pairs of Okuma Dead Eye rod-and-reel combos valued at \$1,000.

Set for June 29 to July 1, the tournament offered two days of competition on the Winnebago chain's world-class walleye fishery, with one day reserved in case of bad weather. A total of 1,170 walleye weighing 3,153.91 pounds crossed the Cabela's MWC scale in the catch-and-release event. Big fish was a 7.34-pound monster brought in by David Kolb of Rockford, Mich., and Jason Kopf of Avon Lake, Ohio—worth \$1,350 from the Big-Fish Pot.

Weigh-ins were held on the shores of

Lake Winnebago at Millers Bay in Menominee Park in downtown Oshkosh. The large crowd of walleye fans in attendance was treated to a steady stream of walleye crossing the Cabela's MWC stage, along with tips and tricks from the anglers on how their fish were caught. Plus, children 12 and under enjoyed a Youth and Family Fishing Clinic, held immediately after the day one weigh-in. The Cabela's MWC, National Professional Anglers Association, Pure Fishing and Zippo Outdoor Brands presented the clinic, which awarded the first 50 youths free rod and reel combos, and offered fishing lessons with the anglers. One lucky family also won a Zippo Family Camping Pack valued at more than \$100.

Walleye were winners as well. The Cabela's MWC donated \$15 per boat, for a total of \$2,100, to the Lighthouse Anglers fishing club for its efforts to protect and enhance the fishery. In turn, the group supplied an army of volunteers to assist with tournament operations and release tournament-caught walleye. Since 1984, the Circuit and its sister trail, the Cabela's North American Bass Circuit, have donated more than \$300,000 to fisheries-enhancement projects in states where its tournaments are held.

This was the sixth of nine Cabela's MWC qualifying tournaments in 2012. Open to diehard anglers regardless of club or sponsor affiliation, the remaining schedule includes Lake Oahe at Pierre, S.D., July 28-29; the St. Mary's River at Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., August 24-26; and Cass Lake, Minn., out of Stony Point Resort, September 14-16.

The Cabela's MWC is open to all anglers regardless of club or sponsor affiliation. Registration costs \$650 per tournament per two-person team, and remains open through the Sunday prior to each event. Payouts are based on the number of teams fishing each event. Overall in 2011, the Circuit paid back more than 120 percent of entry fees in cash payouts, team of the year awards, sponsor contingencies and winnings in the no-entry-fee Cabela's MWC World Walleye Championship.

To register or for details, call 877-893-7947; visit masterswalleyecircuit.com, or email events@masterswalleyecircuit.com.

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