

OUTDOORSUPDATE

OF THE OUTDOORS:

For Better Fishing, I Suggest Using A Jig

BY GARY HOWEY
Hartington, Neb.

When it comes to choosing the correct tackle to buy and use, there are so many different types that fisherman use, at times, it can be down right confusing.

There are spinners, spinnerbaits, buzz baits, crankbaits, live bait rigs and the list goes on and on.

Over the years, I know I've thrown almost every imaginable type of bait and at one time or another caught fish on all of them.

If I would have to choose just one-bait that would catch all species of fish, I'd have to say, I'd choose a jig!

And the reason for this would be simple! A jig can be used year around, Spring, Summer, Fall and even in the Winter to catch "ALL" species of fish.

Pretty simple decision really, it works and it's my "Go To" bait, the bait I generally like to start fishing with.

If you look at a jig, it's not what you'd call really sophisticated bait, nothing more than a hook with a piece of lead attached to its shank.

Put simply, a jig is nothing more than a bait delivery system, it gets your bait into the fish catching zone.

What makes a jig so effective is that it can be fished in so many ways.

Listed below are a few of the ways a jig can be fished in the spring.

SPRING JIGGING METHODS

- Casting jigs tipped with minnows up along the shoreline is a great way to take walleye and sauger. Look for spots along the rocks where a slack water pocket is created, an area where the fish can lie out of the current.

- Use a jig tipped with a minnow and jig it vertically as you slowly work along the breaks for walleye and sauger. If the fish are biting short or dropping your bait, add a stinger hook to the back of your jig.

- For Smallmouth Bass try casting a



PHOTO: MISSOURI VALLEY GUIDE SERVICE

Joel Vasek of Geddes shows a walleye he took using a Hippies Bleeder Chain jig right after ice on Lake Francis Case this spring.

smaller jig and pig into those pockets in the weeds that lie along the shoreline. These could be spots where a beaver or muskrat came in and out of the water. These pockets in the weeds are ideal spots for Smallmouth to lie in wait for lunch to drop in.

- Largemouth Bass will be tucked in or alongside of beaver dams, downed timber and other natural pockets. Try pitching a larger jig & pig into these areas as in the spring these shallower water areas will be warmer and the bass will congregate there.

- To take Pike during the spring, try pitching a larger jig and pig combination up into the emerging vegetation and then retrieve it with a steady pumping action, allowing it to hop over the top of the weeds. It's a good idea when fishing for Northern Pike to add some type of a leader in front of the jig.

- Crappies and other panfish can be taken in the spring with a small jig tipped with a small minnow or Powerbait sus-

pended underneath a slip bobber. Cast the rig up close to downed brush or along a boat dock as these places attract panfish as they prepare to spawn.

By dressing up your jig with live bait, crawlers, leeches, minnows or some sort of plastic bait, it will give them a little action and added scent.

When I'm jigging, I try to use the lightest jig possible, which can be a 1/32nd ounce in calm shallow water or a 2/32nd ounce jig in deeper water or in heavy current.

There are micro jigs used for trout and panfish up to 1/32nd ounce and the 1/8th & 3/8th ounce jigs used for walleyes and bass. Then there are the really big boys, the several ounce or larger used for the big fish like the pike, lake trout and the salt-water species.

You'll want to fish with the lightest jig you're comfortable with, to some it's 1/8th while others prefer a heavier weight jig.

Like the many different weights that jigs come in, the colors you'll find jigs

available in is unlimited.

I have a simple rule for fishing jigs in shallow clear water. In clear water, I use a more of a natural color jig.

In deeper darker water, I'll go with a fluorescent jig, as fluorescents hold their color better at deeper depths.

If it's a bright day, I'll go with a light colored jig and on a dark day, I'll go with dark colored bait as it gives me a contrast against the sky and fish all feed up, so it's easier for them to zero in on the bait.

From one day to the next, it's hard to figure out what color will turn the fish on, so I like to use a multiple colored jig head, especially when I'm fishing for walleyes.

I'll use a combination fluorescent green, orange and chartreuse jig head or a Firetiger color a lot. This way, I feel that I have a better chance the bait I have down there has at least one color that will turn the fish on.

The key to using jigs productively is to fish them often and to fish them on a tight line, which means, don't allow any slack line.

If you have slack line when your line drops, a fish can inhale and suck your jig in, spitting it out so quickly you won't even know you had a pick up. This is why you need to fish with a tight line.

When I say keep a tight line, I mean that you shouldn't let your jig just fall to the bottom. Keep your line tight, following the jig down, which keeps you in contact with your bait and there's no slack line.

Jigs are truly simple bait, nothing fancy, easy to use really remarkable bait that works in all conditions and the only way a person can use a jig wrong is to "Not" use them.

When all else fails, tie on a jig, tip it with live bait or your favorite plastic bait, cast it out and then hold on, because it's going to catch fish no matter how you fish it!

Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is the president of Outdoorsmen Productions LLC and the producer/host of the award winning Outdoorsmen Adventures television series. For more information on the outdoors, outdoor articles and outdoor videos and to watch Outdoorsmen Adventures on-line, go to www.outdoorsmenadventures.com and



Gary Howey

TROPHY SPOTLIGHT



Devron Leonard, Lincoln, Neb., caught this 3-pound Smallmouth Bass on April 4.



Jay Fountain of Sioux Falls caught this 19-pound Northern Pike on April 3.



Warren Stocking of Yankton caught this 7-pound Walleye on March 21.



Marv Cline caught this 5-pound Walleye on March 21.



Tanner Eining caught this 10.5-pound Walleye on March 18.



Myron Ptack of Vermillion caught this 7.15-pound Northern Pike on March 29.

PHOTOS: CAPTAIN NORM'S

Fourth Of July
Camping Spots
In State Parks
Open Soon

PIERRE — Campers making Fourth of July plans can begin making camping reservations on April 3 for a Friday, July 2, arrival. Reservations can be made by calling 800-710-2267 or by going online to www.campsd.com. A three-day stay is required at all parks except Custer State Park for holiday weekends.

"Fourth of July weekend is always a busy time in the parks," said Doug Hofer, state parks director. "Campsites are reserved well in advance, so campers will need to plan ahead and make reservations as soon as possible to get their favorite camping spots."

Reservations for campsites and camping cabins in South Dakota state parks can be made within 90 days of arrival dates. Reservations for group lodges statewide and all campsites at Custer State Park are currently being accepted.

The telephone reservation center is open 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily (CDT). Online reservations can be made 24 hours a day. Reservations open at 7 a.m. on the first day of the 90-day window, both online and at the call center.

There is a \$7.70 per site non-refundable reservation fee (not applicable to South Dakota residents). Camping fees must be paid when reservations are made and can be paid with credit cards, money orders or personal checks. Daily or annual park entrance licenses are required for all vehicles entering the parks. Entrance fees are in addition to camping fees.

For more detailed information on making reservations or to view the 90-day window calendar, visit www.sdparcs.info or contact the Division of Parks and Recreation office at 605-773-3391 or email parkinfo@state.sd.us.

At Crappie Houses, Simple Rules Apply For Anglers

BY DAVID CASSTEVENS

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LAKE EDDLEMAN, Texas — Sipping light beer and smoking a menthol cigarette, the woman wearing a blue NASCAR cap inside Peanut's Crappie House pulled her line from the murky depths of Lake Eddleman.

Not a bite. Nary a nibble. "They're down there," Debbie "Peanut" Reynolds assured.

Catfish, Bass, White and black crappie galore. Hercules, half-napping, looked up and barked as if in full agreement.

Three other mutts lay along the plank floor or sprawled on a dilapidated plaid sofa. On television the uniformed crew of the USS Enterprise faced another intergalactic crisis on a rerun of "Star Trek: The Next Generation."

Reynolds, 49, inspected her hot pink tube jig.

"I love sci-fi," she said, nodding at the screen. Best of all she loves fishing and the ebb and flow of her uncomplicated life.

Peanut's Crappie House sits near the end of a winding, potholed dirt road, about 100 miles northwest of Fort Worth, Texas.

The sheet-metal structure, an enclosed dock, isn't much to look at, but from the comfort of her

favorite swivel chair the owner can fish all day, watch TV, talk to her pets ("Beethoven, be-have!") and welcome anglers of all ages as they renew their springtime pursuit of crappie, the most popular panfish in Texas.

"It's sad. There aren't many places like this left," Reynolds said. Her business, open every day, and similar operations are slowly disappearing from the landscape. Rocky Creek Marina operates a crappie house on Lake Benbrook. Lake Weatherford Marina has one too.

"I'm told that as these places get old they aren't replaced," said Phylis McQuern, an employee at Lake Weatherford Marina. "Droughts and storms have taken a toll. There are very few to go to, now."

Lake levels have taken their toll as well, said Tom Hungerford, an assistant biologist with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in Fort Worth.

"The water level fluctuations over the last five years probably have made business pretty tough for those (crappie house) folks," he said.

'Best Eatn' Fish'

Reynolds, an Amarillo, Texas, native, spent many years in Phoenix and held various jobs while living there. She managed a grocery store.

She drove a taxi and a city bus. After her parents died, she moved to Young County 21 years ago and, on a whim, bought the crappie house from Cloyce Shadwick.

Cloyce and wife Lu now run C & L's Bait and Tackle, which is just down the road a bit. Both are partial to crappie.

"Best eatn' fish there are," Cloyce Shadwick declared.

Reynolds enjoys the delicate flavor of the white, flaky fish, too. "You can deep-try crappie. Bake crappie. Broil it. . . I put crappie in a nice pot of tater soup." The crappie house owner spoke in a measured cadence, like Benjamin Buford "Bubba" Blue reciting all the ways to prepare shrimp in the movie "Forrest Gump."

Under ideal conditions, Reynolds said, a person who drops

a line in the 30-foot waters of her fishing house can hook a couple of dozen of the schooling fish in 90 minutes.

"If you can't catch them in here," she said, "then the fish just aren't biting."

In Texas, crappie are subject to a 10-inch minimum and a per-person daily bag of 25. White crappie weighing 41 pounds have been caught in Texas waters, according to the wildlife department.

On Feb. 3, Reynolds said, she and her customers caught 85 "keepers."

She watched a local supermarket butcher reel in a yellow cat using a lightweight rod. The fish weighed 13 pounds, 10 ounces.

It was like pulling a refrigerator up with a string," Reynolds said of the 20-minute battle of wills.

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OUTDOOR
REPORTSnowmobile Trails In
S.D. Close After
Extraordinary Season

PIERRE — Only a few times since the South Dakota snowmobile program started in the 1970s have excellent snow conditions east of the Missouri River stolen the headlines. This year was one of them.

"It was a phenomenal season for snowmobile trails in eastern South Dakota," said Ryan Raynor, state Game, Fish and Parks Department snowmobile trails coordinator. "East River snowmobile clubs had their hands full when it came to grooming. Once a trail base was established, it was a matter of keeping up with all the new snow and drifting."

Trails officially closed March 15 on the eastern trail system, although grooming stopped at the end of February because of spring-like conditions.

The Black Hills trail system had a good year as well, peaking with significant snowfall over Christmas and New Year's holidays.

The Black Hills trails officially closed Wednesday, March 31, but grooming was halted most of the month because of warm temperatures and poor trail conditions.

S.D., Wyoming Youth
Hunting
Championships May 8

PIERRE — South Dakota and Wyoming are teaming up to present youth hunting championships for each state this spring in Wyoming.

The Youth Hunter Education Challenge will be held May 8 in Upton, WY. Young hunters do not need to qualify in a regional or district tournament to compete in the event. All South Dakota and Wyoming youth 18 and younger who have passed a hunter education course are eligible to showcase their hunting skills and probably learn more in the process.

This is the third year the challenge has been hosted at the Upton club, and the second year of South Dakota participation.

The challenge tests youngsters in sporting clays-style trap shooting, .22-caliber firearms, muzzle-loader firearms, archery, wildlife identification, orienteering, and hunter safety.

The event is sponsored by South Dakota Game, Fish and 14 and younger — are eligible to advance to the international competition July 26-30 at a top-notch shooting complex near Mansfield, Penn.

The event is sponsored by South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks, Wyoming Game and Fish, Upton Gun Club, Wyoming friends of the NRA, and various local businesses.

While youth from both South Dakota and Wyoming will participate in the event, they will not be competing against each other. A winner will be crowned for each state.

To participate, youngsters must submit copies of their hunter education cards, birth certificates and photos, and pay a \$10 entry fee. Entry forms are available through the Wyoming Game and Fish Web site at <http://gf.state.wy.us/downloads/pdf/education/2010%20YHE%20C.pdf>

Entries forms must be submitted by April 30.

Crimestoppers Seeks
Information On
Antelope Shootings

LINCOLN, Neb. — Nebraska Wildlife Crimestoppers is offering a reward for information about antelope that were shot and left lying in Kimball County.

There have been four incidents in recent months in which a total of seven antelope were found shot and lying within a few miles of each other. The most recent included two antelope found March 30 about 14 miles south of Dix near the Nebraska-Colorado border.

Conservation officer Scott Brandt of Gering said the most recent antelope found, a buck and a doe, were lying near a road, about 20 yards apart. They were gut-shot with a large-caliber rifle. In the three earlier incidents, the antelope were shot in the neck with a small-caliber rifle.

The reward of up to \$1,000 is for information that leads to a conviction in the case.

To report any information on the antelope, or any game law violation, call Nebraska Wildlife Crimestoppers toll-free at (800) 742-7627. Callers may remain anonymous.