

OF THE OUTDOORS | GARY HOWEY

# Spotting Fish Before They See You

BY GARY HOWEY

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If you're a fisherman that goes after all species of fish, you know that shallow water is a great place to take some excellent fish as long as you don't spook them out of it.

This is where fish, especially largemouth bass and bluegill found in ponds-small lakes and white bass in the larger reservoirs are easier to locate and if fished properly much easier to catch.

During the spawn, species such as largemouth bass and bluegill will spend time in the shallows to spawn while the white bass and other species of fish will move shallow to feed when the baitfish are stacked up in the shallow water along the shoreline.

The largemouth/smallmouth bass and bluegill are members of the sunfish family and will move shallow in preparation for the spawn. With the males arriving first in order to fan out a nest where the female will deposit her eggs.

Once the female is ready to spawn, she'll move up to the nest where the eggs will be deposited and fertilized. She'll then move off to recuperate while the male stays shallow to guard on the nest and the fingerlings once they hatch out.

Once the spawn is completed, water temperatures will start to rise, forcing fish to move to deeper water where they find more comfortable temperatures. This isn't the end of the shallow water fishing, as the fish will return to the shallows in the morning and in the early evening when water temperatures cool.

Since much of the aquatic life, the food source for the fish is located in shallow water, fish will have to move shallow to feed. This is when anglers probing the shallows water using sight-fishing methods can have excellent fishing.

Just what is sight fishing? It's generally a shallow water presentation where the angler sees the fish they'll be going after. Once the fish is located, with several bait presentations available, allowing the angler to catch the fish.

Seeing what's below the water's surface can be tough as the surface of the water always has a glare, which may be caused by ripples in the water, overcast skies and even the angle of the sun. The most important piece of equipment a sight fishermen needs is good sunglasses as they help him to locate the fish. Sunglasses worn by sight fishermen need to be polarized, allowing the anglers to cut the surface glare, giving them insight on what's cruising below the surface of the water.

Not only are they a must for locating the fish, they're also a big help when it comes to landing fish as you can see the fish, depend-



Doug Haas of Mitchell is pictured with a smallmouth bass taken while sight fishing on a lake near Webster.

ing on the water clarity long before it reaches the surface, allowing the angler to guide the fish towards the person doing the netting while allowing the netter to have the net in the right position when the fish reaches the surface.

When sight fishing shallow water, I'll cruise off shore out in the deeper water, or walk the shore line, keeping an eye on the shallows out ahead of me searching for fish cruising the area or hiding in the vegetation along the shoreline.

Over the years, I've used all brands of sunglasses, and after many years of fishing found that there're certain things required in sunglasses. Sunglasses used for fishing need to be polarized. Good polarized glasses help you to see what's below the

surface and keep your eyes from drying out and burning as sun on the water is magnified hundreds of times and can really raise havoc with your eyes.

I like sunglasses that have templates, as they keep the sun from coming in along the side of my glasses. What's even better are sunglasses that have polarized glass along the side of the templates, giving me better peripheral vision. A good sunglass retainer or holder is also a good bet as it allows the angler to remove their glasses, holding them around the neck, keeping them safe and out of the way.

I've found these items in the Flying Fishermen sunglasses www.flyingfisherman.com and have used them for years. I've been very impressed with the quality, options

and the many styles available to anglers and those that spend time enjoying other outdoor activities.

## Sight Fishing Methods

Spotting or locating the fish is the first step and once I spot them, I'll back off a little farther in order to keep from spooking them when I present my bait.

If it's panfish I'm after, I pitch a Lindy Little Nipper or small Fuzz-E Grub tipped with a small piece of worm or Berkley Gulp. You'll want to make sure that you cast beyond the fish so you won't spook them and then slowly bring it back towards the fish. Work the bait along the bottom, letting it come to rest on the bottom, then twitch it slightly, allowing it to rest there for a couple of seconds before bringing the bait back along the bottom. If a fish moves towards the bait, continue twitching it slightly until the fish either picks it up or loses interest.

This is what you might call a stealth approach as when using this method, you'll want to approach the fish cautiously, making sure your bait lands gently and doesn't splash down into the water as it doesn't take much to spook shallow water fish.

The method for sight fishing shallow water for bass is much the same as fishing for panfish except that you'd be using larger baits including: jigs, worms or spinner baits.

A jig and pig combination works well for bass in all water depths, but when using this combination in shallow water, especially when fishing for smallmouth bass, you're going to have to downsize the bait in order to place your lure in the water quietly and not spook the fish. Smaller jig combinations tipped with small Berkley Gulp, small spinner baits or Texas rigged Berkley Havoc worms or Lindy Munchies Thumper Ring-worm cast out beyond or off to the side of the fish and then retrieved towards the bass can be deadly.

As when fishing for panfish, if the bass moves towards your worm or jig, simply twitch it a few times, which will often times entice the bass to pick up the bait. When the bass picks up your bait, you're going to have to set the hook hard as fish hooked in shallow water has a lot of leverage and will quickly head into the slop and vegetation or go airborne trying to dislodge the bait, so you need to bury the hook deep in the fish's jaw or you'll lose it, so setting the hook hard is doubly important in shallow water.

You might want to give sight fishing a try and by using these methods listed above they'll help you to be more successful, as sight fishing is an excellent way to productively fish shallow water.

The use of polarized sunglasses is a big part of any fishing trip as they allow you to see below the surface of the water, allowing you to spot the fish before they spot you.

*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 go to www.outdoorsmenadventures.com.*

## Outdoors Briefs: East River Deer, Antelope Hunting Seasons Finalized

PIERRE — The Game, Fish and Parks Commission has finalized rules for the 2011 East River deer and antelope hunting seasons in South Dakota.

East River deer season will run from Nov. 19-Dec. 4. It will re-open Dec. 31-Jan. 8 for antlerless deer hunting only.

About 28,000 licenses will be available. The lottery drawing application process will open in late July for residents only; the application deadline is Sept. 2. Nonresidents may apply for unsold licenses beginning in mid-October.

Antelope season in South Dakota will run from Oct. 1-16.

About 6,000 antelope licenses will be available. The application process for both resident and nonresident hunters will be open by mid-July with an Aug. 12 application deadline.

The Custer State Park antelope season will run from Oct. 11-19. There will be three resident-only "antelope" licenses available for inside the park. The application process for the lottery license drawing will open in mid-July with an Aug. 12 deadline.

## 2011 Waterfowl Hunting Seasons Proposed

PIERRE — The Game, Fish and Parks Commission has proposed minor changes to the main South Dakota waterfowl hunting seasons for 2011.

The only change for the duck season is a proposed increase in the daily limit on redhead ducks. The limit would increase from two daily to three daily. The possession limit on all species is twice the daily limit.

The duck season dates by zone would be: High Plains Oct. 8-Jan. 12; Low Plains North and Low Plains Middle Sept. 24-Dec. 6; and Low Plains South Oct. 8-Dec. 20.

For the 2011 goose hunting season, the only proposed change from the 2010 season would increase the bag limit for Canada geese from three daily and six in possession to four daily and eight in possession.

The Canada goose season dates by unit would be: Unit 1 Oct. 1-Dec. 18; Unit 2 Oct. 29-Feb. 10; and Unit 3 Jan. 7-15. The season for light geese and white-fronted geese would be Sept. 24-Dec. 18 statewide.

## Hunt SAFE Classes Offered In Bon Homme County

TYNDALL — The Hunt SAFE Classes for Bon Homme County have been set for 2011. The Tyndall Area Class will be held Aug. 16-18 from 6-9:30 p.m. at the Cavalier Corner on Main street Tyndall.

The Scotland Area Class will be held Aug. 4-5 from 6-9 p.m. and Aug. 6 from 8 a.m.-noon at the Community room of the Scotland School.

HuntSAFE courses are designed for persons age 12 through 15. Persons who are 11 may participate, but will not be issued a Hunter Safety certification card until their 12th birthday, unless the card is clearly marked that the card is not valid until the person's 12th birthday. Adults are also welcome and invited to attend.

For more info, contact Conservation Officer Todd Crownover at 605-589-4208.

## Change Proposed For Nonresident S.D. Fur Trapping

PIERRE — Nonresidents purchasing licenses to trap furbearing animals in South Dakota would be limited to a 28-day period under a proposed rule by the Game, Fish and Parks Commission.

The proposal would limit nonresidents to any 28-consecutive-day period from the first Saturday in December through March 15 to trap furbearing animals in South Dakota. Significantly, the commission would close the nonresident season March 15. Currently, nonresidents may trap most furbearing animals until April 30.

Additional information is available on the GFP website.

Those who wish to provide written comments on the proposal may do so until 5 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 3. Comments may be mailed to Game, Fish and Parks Commission, 523 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, SD, 57501, or e-mailed to wildinfo@state.sd.us.

Comments may also be presented in person at the public hearing in Watertown during the Game, Fish and Parks Commission's next meeting, which is scheduled for 2 p.m. CDT on Thursday, Aug. 4, at the Ramkota.

## Black Bears Causing Problems In Alaska Chicken Coops

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — Bears are increasingly getting into back yard chicken coops in the Anchorage area now that it is easier for residents to keep the birds.

The black bear raids are coming just as Southcentral Alaska moves into peak bear activity for the season, said Alaska Department of Fish and Game biologist Jessy Coltrane in a story Friday in the *Anchorage Daily News*.

In July alone, at least five black bears caught stealing poultry were shot. Coltrane suspects more such incidents go unreported.

"Chickens are one of our biggest attractants, aside from garbage and bird seed, and it's growing because the number of chickens is growing," Coltrane said.

Coltrane attributes the jump, in part, to a recent city ordinance that makes it easier to keep chickens within the municipality, from its northern boundary in Chugiak and Birchwood south to Girdwood.

"If people are going to have chickens in bear country, they're

going to have to take extra precautions," Coltrane said. "Chickens are an easy meal if you don't protect them."

Coltrane said the problem mostly stems from residents' ignorance about bear deterrence in Anchorage.

"I get, on average, a call a day about a bear getting into chickens," Coltrane said. "They're thinking I'm going to come do something about the bears. But what I really want is for them to secure their chickens."

She said people need to bear-proof their coops and put feed in a place where the bears can't get to it. Stringing up electric fences to keep bears out of coops also is a good if not foolproof idea, Coltrane said.

Bears are not an uncommon sight in the Eagle River neighborhood where John Will has kept chickens for about 20 years. It's nice to have fresh eggs to eat and

give to his neighbors.

Will said he's never had trouble until recently. He thought his 11 hens were safe in his fenced yard and chicken coop, which had electric fencing around it. But a black bear tore down the fence July 2, pushed into the yard and gobbled up six chickens.

Will said he locked up the five remaining birds in their coop. Then, four days later, the bear came back for a second helping. It tore a hole in the door and killed the remaining hens.

"He got 'em all. I'm out of the chicken and egg business," Will said.

The bear returned the next morning while Will was doing chores around the house.

"Here he comes, crawling out of that hole he made in the door, and then he challenged me," Will said. "I went to shoo him off, and he stood his ground right there, and huffed and puffed at me, and

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