

When the ice gets bad.

Well here we go again good ice rotten ice to go with the ever changing weather patterns. I spend more time watching weather patterns around the country so I know what my truck is heading into. Like the mail I must deliver. You have to keep up with it or pay the consequence. I've gone into several snow and ice storms already this year. But it's nice to know we have some alternatives to walking out on rotting ice.

I'm all for Indian, Buckeye and Alum icing saugeyes but when the ice looks rough it's time to head for the rivers. Being from the West side of Ohio I fish the Miami River for saugeyes and the Mad River and Buck Creek for Walleyes. If you're from the Central area all the rivers flowing through Columbus have Saugeyes swimming in them. I hear you there are thousands of miles of rivers where do you go. Indian Lake's tailwater to the Ohio River is a hundred miles or more as the crow flies. Every mile with fish.

Anyplace the flow of the water is broken up. Everyone knows about dams. I bet you pass a school of eyes every week. Big Dams, Wing Dams, and Roller Dams they all stop and hold fish. I have caught saugeyes at the dam on Madison Lake. The creek is only 30' across and flows all those miles before forming Deer Creek Lake. And the Dam at Deer Creek is famous for the Saugeyes caught below. Yes we are blessed with the waters that the Eyes swim through.

But have you tried the outside bends along the many curves our river makes. How about where bridge supports enter the water. Is there a hole below any rapids where you can cast a line? How about an oxbow? This is like a mini lake that shoots off the side of the main channel. These are all great spot for catching Eyes. OK you think, I know a few spots that fit the description near home. But we are talking a lot of walking and gear needs to be kept to a minimum. Walking is good for us and I need all I can get. And I really enjoy the peace associated with river fishing. Most of the time I never see another person.

Well you need very little tackle. And bait is an option. Food in the creeks and rivers are getting lower every day. Until this year my box was loaded with 2 styles of baits. But after I discuss the Search and Destroy and Mop Up part of my normal routine, I want to introduce a newer product that I'm starting to have quite a bit of success with . Sometimes it takes something new and different to catch big fish. I know I should always carry a camera with me when fishing but it seems like a bad luck charm. No I still get into quality fish but when the cameras at home or the batteries are dead. This is when I whack a really big one.

This is the case with the lure I'm going to introduce you to at the end of this article. You'd never think you'll hit two eyes over 25" fish in a river in Ohio in two different spots miles apart in one day on one lure. But it happened. The fish are still in the same water, waiting on me to change the batteries in my camera. But those who know me you'll have no problem believing it. Some have been with me when we get big fish from creeks that aren't 20 feet across.

First and foremost in your tackle box should be Reef Runner Cicada's and VIBE's in 3/16 and 1/4oz size. A couple of 3/8oz wouldn't hurt in case of fast water. There are two techniques that really drive them mad. First is your normal hopping routine. This is for aggressive fish. Cast anywhere from quartering upstream to almost directly downstream. Hold your rod at ten o'clock. A word on rods here. Seven footer is great but if you find a lot of trees then five footer is more in order. And do I need to mention braided line.

!4lb. test or over will get you out of most snags. Anyway do you have your rod at 10 o'clock. Pull back using plenty of wrist to 12 o'clock allow the bait to drop while reeling in slack. Repeat, Repeat Repeat. It's that easy. You can vary this by pulling harder, slower, longer, little hops and keep experimenting. If this fails then cast and slowly retrieve as you would a crankbait. This will pick those less aggressive fish.

If the fish don't react to this and aren't cooperating it's time to get out a jig n minnow or jig n plastic. Cast out and allow to tumble. When it stops count to five and lift just enough for it to go on its own again. You can do the same with a floating jig with an egg sinker one to two feet ahead. The idea is to move a little and allow the bait to wiggle in front of the enemy. Most time after sitting the eye will hit as soon as you move the bait before it gets away. Remember there's no such thing as too slow.

Now I'd like to tell you about third bait that's found its way into my walk around box. Mack's Lure has a new spinner called the Hummbait. Let's just say the Smile Blade isn't the only slow go mover in town. Even very slow current is enough to make the HummBait spin. Casting across river it bounces down spins and flashes just like a minnow shot out of the dam or rapids. I add a swivel and a 1/8oz. egg sinker two feet above the Hummbait to keep it near bottom and slowly crank it back just pausing every few seconds to entice a strike. I'd like to tell you I have several presentations for this lure but it's only been in my hands a short while. However it's been used long enough to catch several fish and quality fish at that. Those who like to troll spinners will want to take some of these and convert them into crawler harnesses this year. They'll be deadly at several events this year. I'm sure as the year goes by I'll have much more to say about this bait. Marc Colwell