



SPRING WALLEYE ON WA LAKES

BY RICHY HARROD | HARROD OUTDOORS



Walleye are probably my favorite fish to catch and, most definitely, the best eating of our freshwater fisheries. Late winter and early spring is a great time to go walleye fishing on Washington lakes.

The number of fish caught may not be as great as in the late spring and summer, but the average size is greater and the fish are in great condition. There are many techniques for catching walleye, but these methods have worked well for me from year to year.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

There really isn't one type of fishing rod that will fit all your fishing needs when targeting walleye because you'll want to try trolling and casting to see which yields the most fish. Trolling allows you to cover the most water to find elusive fish.

You are allowed to fish two rods in most walleye lakes, so with four to six rods in your boat, it's a good idea to have a mix of short and long

rods to spread out your fishing gear. A 7-foot to 7-foot, 6-inch moderate action, medium power graphic bait casting rod works very well for the front side of the boat. In the back corner of the boat, I like to run a 9-foot, 6-inch steelhead rod to get the trolling gear out as far as possible so not to interfere with the front rods. If you find concentrations of fish, I like casting jigs or blade baits with a 7-foot spinning rod with fast action and medium light or medium power.

Braided line is a must for me. All of my walleye rods are spooled with 20-pound, green colored braided line. Braided line doesn't stretch, so it allows you to feel the bite very well.

“EARLY SPRING IS A GREAT TIME TO FISH FOR WALLEYE ON WA LAKES.”
— RICHY HARROD

If you have never fished with braid, you have to learn not to set the hook as you would with monofilament. You can literally rip lips with braided line. Some of my friends prefer to top shot their spool with fluorocarbon to lower line visibility.

My kokanee and sockeye rods are top shot, but I've never worried about it while walleye fishing, and it doesn't seem to matter in my opinion.

TERMINAL GEAR

The selection of lures first depends on whether or not you're jigging or trolling, obviously, but more importantly on walleye forage. Walleye feed on small fish, particularly perch or crappie fry, leeches, crayfish, or insect larvae. Lures that match the forage color will improve your success.

Checking out the gut contents can help you determine what forage walleye are targeting. Tipping lures with nightcrawlers is preferred by most anglers, but live or artificial worms or leeches are preferred by others. Scents can be used as well, but I personally think nothing beats a big nightcrawler.

I troll almost exclusively with Mack's Lure Smile Blade® lures because of the large range of color options and because of the action the Smile Blade® provides.



Dark colors on cloudy days or early in the morning work well, while lighter colors work well in bright sunlight.

The new UV Glo® Burst, UV Copper, UV Lemon Lime and UV Purple Haze [Smile Blades®](#) have become my favorite colors.

In the winter or early spring, small profile lures, such as the [Smile Blade® Slow Death Rig](#) or [Smile Blade® Spindrift® Walleye](#) are perfect for slow trolling for lethargic fish. [Double Whammy® Pros](#), [Cha Cha® Crawlers](#) or the dependable [Wally Pop® Crawler](#) work well when the fish are more aggressive.



Regardless of my lure selection, I always run long leader lengths of at least 4-feet to keep the lure back from the bottom bouncers and to allow the Smile Blade® to move the lure more freely.

Walleye are gregarious and groups of fish will locate on bottom structure, so jigging can work very well, especially as summer comes. A lead head jig with twister tail plastics and tipped with a nightcrawler is very effective. However, my favorite jigging technique is to use a Sonic BaitFish™ rigged so that it behaves like a blade bait. Perch colors or silver and blue have worked well for me.

Plugs can be very effective for catching walleye, as well. Fish move into shallower water after the spawn and as the water warms. Plugs that imitate small fish work perfectly, especially when pulled at higher speeds (2 to 3 mph) along weed lines.

FISHING TECHNIQUES

Walleye are largely found near the bottom, so I use bottom bouncers or heal weights to keep my lures close to the bottom. In the late winter and early spring, you want to troll slowly at speeds of 0.4 to 0.6 mph. As the water warms, faster speeds up to 1.0 mph work better when walleye are chasing bait.

Walleye can be suspended at times, so don't be completely focused on the bottom. Spring storms create the "walleye chop" and fish can move into the shoreline or along rock walls to find baitfish. I have run bottom bounces on one rod and another rod off my downrigger to position my gear in the middle of the water column. Watch your electronics and position your gear where the fish are.

Rod position is important when trolling with bottom bouncers. The rod tip should be low near the water. Your main line should be at about a 45-degree angle into the water, so choose a bottom bouncer weight that will allow you to achieve the proper angle for your speed and water depth.

A hook set should be a sweep of the rod tip, parallel with the water surface. If you jerk the rod tip away from the water, you often will pull the gear away from the fish and you'll miss the hook set.

Jigging technique is important, as well. Lead head jigs should be dropped to the bottom, lifted slowly and dropped back to the bottom without putting slack in your line. I like to lift the jig about two feet before I drop it. Walleye will often hit the jig on the way down.

Jigging Sonic BaitFish™ is similar, except the lift from the bottom should be short and quick so that the lure will vibrate and flutter on the way down. The bite on a jig is often aggressive and, unlike a crawler carness, they often set the hook themselves.

Use a GPS to mark spots where you catch fish and troll back over those spots, or mark them with a small lbuoy and jig those spots. I find that my marked spots consistently produce fish year after year. I see lots of fishermen trolling all over the place and not focusing on any particular spot. My saying is "troll with purpose." if you want to catch more fish, fish spots where fish are!



I hope these tips and tricks help you put more fish in your boat. The most important aspect of any type of fishing is to let fish tell you what they want. Pay attention to the details. If you start catching fish on the outside rod when you turn, then consider speeding up your troll. Likewise, slow down if you catch them on the inside rod. Shorten your worms if you're missing bites. Constantly be a student and you'll become a better fisherman.

Give Richy a follow on Instagram and Facebook at [@HarrodOutdoors](#) and checkout his website for more - [HarrodOutdoors.com](#).



SONIC BAITFISH™ (SBF) TIPS & TECHNIQUES



THE DESIGN OF THE 1/10 OZ SONIC BAITFISH™

BY CAPT. PETE ROSKO

When I designed the [1/10 oz SBF](#), I had two primary types of actions in mind besides vertical jigging. They were swimming and "skittering". Swimming is self-explanatory. On the other hand, I do not think skittering is even a word. It could be a remote derivative of skittish, a real word. It means lively, nervous or easily frightened. Whatever interpretation is applied to it, skittering can produce strikes when all else fails.

Generally, when I'm casting to near-surface freshwater fish, like largemouth bass, trout and walleyes, my retrieve is slow and steady. The swimming, darting and vibrating action of the SBF is very effective because it imitates a real swimming and semi-frantic bait fish. However, I deviate from that action when largemouth bass turn negative to the swimming action. That's when skittering can dramatically change the day! Bass find it extremely difficult not to attack something that is attempting to escape from it. If I have a thousand bass photos, with a SBF hanging in its mouth, 75% were caught by skipping the SBF over the surface. I touched lightly on this subject in last month's Mack Attack.

The relatively thin design of the 1/10 oz SBF was formed for a frisbee-type action on the surface

in addition to its swimming action on the troll or retrieve. When vertical jigging, the actions on the fall include darting, fluttering, flashing and vibration. The accompanying photo (right) shows a 1/10 oz SBF. The BF has been altered by me. (I have about ten different ways, thus far, that I can catch fish on every alteration. That's the beauty of the versatility of a SBF.) The alteration includes using the provided snap as an attachment for the hook and Indiana attractor blade. I would prefer to have the hook and spinner blade to be attached to a split ring instead for added strength. Then, attach a snap swivel to the nose of the SBF to minimize line twist. Always make sure the snap has a wide bend, similar to the one included in the package. This prevents the loss of lure action. The blade action creates extra flash and vibration in addition to helping the planning action of the SBF. The SBF will skip over the surface on its flattened side with a gurgling/darting sound similar to the all-time surface bass killer, the Fred Arbogast Jitterbug. Practice with your 6 - 6 1/2 foot spinning rod held vertically with a constant fast-twitching retrieve between 11 to 12 o'clock. By becoming proficient with this technique you will be rewarded with impressive strikes! Glow white, and glow chartreuse, are two of my productive finishes. **TIPS:** Cast to surfacing-feeding fish anywhere that occurs. Or, cast parallel to outside edges of shoreline vegetation or rip rap. Near-dusk can be a magical time with this skipping technique.

VERY IMPORTANT: The attractor blade, and hook eye, **MUST** be free-swinging to be effective. Binding of either adversely alters the SBF action. **FINAL TIP:** To enlarge the eye hole of the attractor blade, use a drill bit in reverse. This will prevent binding of the bit into the metal and will still enlarge the hole. Place the convex side down against a block of wood, or tree stump, before drilling. Better yet, use a bench press.

As always, be safe on the water and handle your catch & release

fish with loving care. Thank you for subscribing to the Mack Attack and join us next month for the May issue.



COOK YOUR CATCH TUNA CASSEROLE



Ingredients (5-7 servings)

- 1 (12 oz.) package egg noodles;
- 2 cups frozen green peas;
- 2 (10.75 oz.) can condensed cream of mushroom soup;
- 2 (6 oz.) cans tuna, drained;
- 1 onion, chopped;
- 10 slices American processed cheese;
- Ground black pepper to taste

Directions

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add noodles and frozen peas. Cook until noodles are al dente, drain well. Return noodles and peas to pot.
2. Mix soup, tuna fish, onions, processed cheese, and pepper into the pot. Stir constantly until all of the ingredients are well-mixed and the cheese has melted.
3. Drain on paper towels and serve.

GUEST COMMENTARY



TROLLING TIP: ALTER SPEEDS

BY DANNY COYNE, MACK'S LURE PRO STAFF

Most anglers are aware that paying attention to trolling speeds is critical in achieving a successful day of fishing. If we troll too slow, some of the gear we use won't work correctly. And if we troll too fast, our gear can actually repel fish rather than attract them. There are numerous factors to take into consideration when selecting your trolling speeds, such as the lure you're using, the species of fish you're targeting and the time of year, to name a few. The one trolling technique that remains consistent when targeting predator fish, such as rainbow and lake trout, is not to troll the same speed for the entire time in which you're fishing. We hear and read all the time that precise trolling speeds can be ideal, however this doesn't mean that you only troll that one speed consistently.

Predator fish like to chase their prey! When a bait fish is trying to escape a predator, it doesn't swim exactly at one rate, but rather they make quick bursts through the water. Think of casting a spoon or a crankbait and how we retrieve it. We don't just keep reeling the lure in at one speed — we jerk the line, speed our retrieve up and down to create more action to the lure. The same idea applies to trolling. Many anglers experience very good results when using planer boards and there's a reason why — when the planer board surges in and out of the water with the waves, it transfers

erratic burst like action to the lure, which encourages a striking reaction from the trout.

Introduce this trolling technique regardless if you are long lining or fishing off a downrigger. Find a consistent speed that is making your lures work the most effectively. Then, every couple of minutes, adjust your throttle to mimic a bait fish bursting through the water trying to escape from a predator.

When practicing this method, be sure to select lures that mimic a bait fish, such as plugs, spoons, [Wiggle Hoochies™](#) and a variety of bucktail flies. I can guarantee you that this will increase your hook up ratio and put more fish in your net.

GARY'S FISHING CORNER



THE TROUT PLANKTON BLOOM

BY GARY MIRALLES, MACK'S LURE CONSULTANT

The weather is settling down and the fishing will be improving as the barometer settles down and the water temperatures get warmer. May has always been one of my favorite months to fish Shasta Lake (Calif.). The lake is always at its highest level in May. That means that there is 365 miles of beautiful miles of beautiful, tree-covered shoreline to witness as you fish the many areas of the lake.

One of the biggest advantages to fishing Shasta in May is that the trout are prevalent, active and on the surface. You can practically catch fish anywhere on the lake in this month. You can even catch trout trolling behind your house boat. Just

put your favorite Cripp lure™ on the surface about 300-feet behind the boat, set your RPMs at 1,200 and you'll catch plenty of fish. That being said, there is a very special event that takes place every May on Shasta Lake. It is the unique and exciting trout bite in plankton bloom and I have only found it to be present on one arm of the lake, the Pitt arm.

Why the Pitt, you ask? Good question. I don't have an exact or scientific reason, but I suspect it's because the Pitt River from the Lassen drainage runs through the fertile farmland and ranch lands of the Burney and Fall River basin. Many of the nutrients needed to create this massive bloom of plankton is flushed out every spring down into the Pitt River, then into the lake. Now, I'm not educated enough to explain the entire process, all I know is that every May, we get this massive bloom of plankton so thick that it's easily visible as you travel up the river through it.

The key to finding this bloom is water temperature. As you're traveling up river, the water temperature in the main body of the lake is usually in the low- to mid-sixties. As you approach the upper reaches of the Pitt arm, you'll see the water temperature drop drastically from the sixties into the fifties. This is important to notice because this is the proper temperature needed for the bloom. Once you begin to notice the temperature drop, look close for signs of the bloom. Usually, you will notice a lot of surface clutter, such as leaves, needles, stick and branches. I've even seen huge logs in this area floating on the surface.

Often times, you will see the fish feeding in these areas as they cruise the surface, inhaling massive quantities of plankton. Once you observe this scenario, look closely at the water for what looks like a massive wall of rolling mud. You can literally watch the fish swimming through this massive wall of nutrient-rich food as they inhale large quantities with every pass.

Once you've located the area to fish, move back a good three-hundred yards from the spot and begin your procedure of setting out your lines. You want to have all your lures in place when you reach the bloom.

Color, depth and distance are important. Since the plankton is kind of copper, orange and gold colors, I've found that similar colors work best. But remember, visibility is tough, so bright and fluorescent colors work well. Depth is important because the plankton are usually near the surface in the top 15-feet of water. In fact, plankton are light sensitive and tends to move with the sun and the shade of the surrounding mountain side.

My favorite lure combinations for this event are as follows:

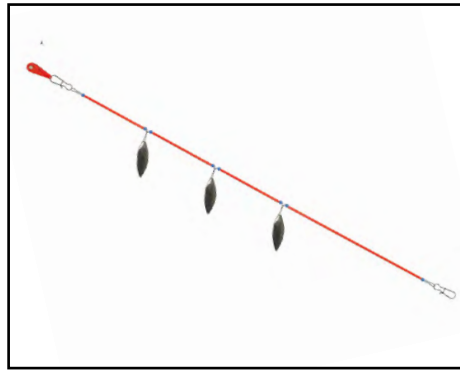
1. [Sling Blade™ 4"](#) Copper Orange trailing 3-feet back and tied directly to a [Hum Dinger®](#) Copper Orange.
2. [Sling Blade™ 4"](#) Orange Gold trailing 30-feet back and tied to a [Hum Dinger®](#) Red Gold Sand.

I set up these combos on my downriggers at five feet and the other at 8- to 10-feet, 150-foot back. I like to use [Cripplures](#) on the surface, set at about 200-foot back. I never run more than four rods.

Now that you're set, just troll 2 mph through the middle of the bloom while navigating your boat to avoid larger surface clutter. You will hook up one or two fish every time you pass through the bloom. The average size fish range from 18- to 25-inches with an 18-inch rainbow weighing two and a half pounds.

The bloom is only 200- to 300-feet in distance, so make fast, quick turns and head right back through again. Also, remember the plankton are light-sensitive, so you need to be up there before the sun gets above your head, which is normally around 10 a.m.

NEW PRODUCT RELEASE



MACK'S LURE RELEASES BALL TROLL DOWNRIGGER ATTRACTOR

WENATCHEE, Wash. - Mack's Lure, Inc., manufacturer of popular downrigger trolling products such as the [Shuttle Hawk](#) and [Ultra Release](#), has released the [Ball Troll](#).

"We are happy to provide a product which is used as a trick of the trade for many fishing guides," Mack's Lure President Bob Schmidt said. "The Ball Troll provides lots of flash and action without the drag of the attractor being in-line when you reel in the catch."

The Ball Troll, which has been field-tested fishing for trout, kokanee, salmon and many more species throughout the country, is a long rotational flasher, designed to snap to your downrigger ball.

The 26-inch troll is made of large nickel, willowleaf blades and high UV beads, which will attract fish from further away by combining a tremendous amount of flash and

vibration, bringing fish right up to your gear. The high UV blue beads and red tubing, combined with the premium willowleaf blades, is proven to attract more fish.

The Ball Troll also includes an Ultra Release, a simple, ultra-light downrigger release, which includes a tension screw adjustment to fit the thickness of your line and can be set light enough to release even on the smallest fish.

The Ball Troll is now available at [MacksLure.com](#) or ask for it at your local bait and tackle shop.



SCENTFLASH DECALS ARE NOW SOLD SEPARATELY

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW](#)

VIEW THE BALL TROLL ON PAGE 32 OF THE MACK'S LURE CATALOG



For more information, contact Mack's Lure at (509) 667-9202 or media@mackslure.com. More information can also be found at [MacksLure.com](#). Images are available upon request.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Have a question? We'd love to answer it for you! Shoot us an email at media@mackslure.com with your question and you may see it featured in an upcoming issue of the Mack Attack Magazine!

Q: I'm fishing for trout. How do I know which size of hook to use?

A: That's a great question! The number one thing you can do is to talk with your local bait and tackle shop as to the area of which you are fishing. Talking with the locals who fish those waters can provide a plethora of information, as well.

There are a lot of great lures that Mack's Lure has to offer in regards to trout fishing, too. If you were trolling for 15- to 20-inch rainbows, the preferred sized Wedding Ring® to use is a No. 4 while trolling at 1.8- to 2.0-mph.

Trout like a faster trolling speed and a flashy presentation; that's why our Wedding Ring® spinners work really well.

Try using a Double D™ Ddoger with a 24- to 36-inch leader behind the dodger and see the results. Another alternative to use is the Wedding Ring® UV Spinner. All fish can see objects in the water that are emitted from the sun's UV rays. This spinner looks exactly like a Wedding Ring® Classic Original Series, but all of the components are high UV, which can be seen on sunny or cloudy days.

If you're looking for a lure with two hooks, our Ringmaster® Series is a Wedding Ring® with two hooks in a No. 4 size, as well.

Best of luck!

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To submit your catch, send us an email at media@mackslure.com or tag us on social media using #MacksLure.

HOT DEAL OF THE MONTH



PHOTO OF THE MONTH

The Northwest Outdoorsmen's Richy Harrod shows off a Rufus Woods triploid caught on a Mack's Lure Smile Blade spinner. Richy and Mack's Lure's Bob Loomis had a day.



PHOTO CREDIT: HARROD OUTDOORS

VIDEO OF THE MONTH

The Mack's Lure team joined Northwest Fishing Reports TV to fish the Lower Columbia River for walleye using Smile Blade spinners. Tips galore for walleye fishing.

