



# THE GREAT LAKES SPORT FISHING NEWS

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MICHIGAN STEELHEAD & SALMON FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Volume 69 September/October 2021 No. 5

## New State-Record Chinook Salmon Tops 47 Pounds!

Michigan DNR:  
Jay Wesley,  
Scott Heintzelman

Using a Moonshine raspberry carbon spoon lure this past weekend, an angler from Ortonville, Michigan, turned in a new state-record fish!

Luis Ricardo Hernandez Martinez was troll fishing with Capt. Bobby Sullivan of Icebreaker Charters near Ludington early Saturday morning, Aug. 7, when he caught a Chinook salmon weighing in at 47.86 pounds and measuring 47.5 inches.

"I never expected a catch like this would happen," Martinez said. "It's possible for anyone if I can do it! I would like to extend a great 'thank you' to Capt. Bobby, as it was he who made this catch possible for me."

Captain Sullivan added, "Luis did an amazing job, executing perfectly everything I asked him to do in order to bring this fish in."

This record breaks the previous state-record Chinook salmon – 46.06 pounds, 43.5 inches long – caught in 1978 by Ray

Essex, of Grand Rapids, out of the Grand River in Kent County.

The new state-record Chinook salmon was verified by Jay Wesley, Lake Michigan Basin coordinator with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, with Scott Heintzelman, the DNR's Central Lake Michigan Management Unit supervisor, also present.

Michigan's state-record fish are recognized by weight only. To qualify for a state record, fish must exceed the current listed state-record weight, and identification must be verified by a DNR fisheries biologist.

To view a current list of Michigan state fish records by species, visit [Michigan.gov/StateRecordFish](http://Michigan.gov/StateRecordFish).

For more on planning a fishing adventure, visit [Michigan.gov/Fishing](http://Michigan.gov/Fishing).



Posing with the new state-record Chinook salmon, caught Aug. 7, 2021, are Capt. Bobby Sullivan of Icebreaker Charters; Luis Ricardo Hernandez Martinez, of Ortonville, who caught the fish; Jay Wesley, Lake Michigan Basin coordinator with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources; and Scott Heintzelman, the DNR's Central Lake Michigan Management Unit supervisor. (NOTE: The scale pictured in this photo is from a local bait shop; the weight shown here is not the state-record weight. The official weight, 47.86 pounds, was measured on a certified scale by the DNR fisheries biologist.)



## Reflections on the Summer Fishing Season

By Denny Bobeldyk

One sunny June morning on Lake Michigan two old veteran fishermen struck up a conversation. No, it was not about the COVID-19 crisis. It was a question we have spoken about many times before and for many years. The question was "Is there really a June Swoon"? Some of you may wonder what is a June Swoon. In our minds a June Swoon is a period of time in which there is a lull or slow period. This to us is usually a month when salmon fishing really becomes slow. For some reason June is that month. Generally, May is a great month to catch fish.

The water warms up, fish become active, and after months of inactivity the fish begin to feed aggressively. Nice creels of fish are caught and everyone including the charter fisherman are happy. Salmon are beginning to filter north from the southern end of Lake Michigan and are included in many limits along with lake trout. So what do two old men talk about during a day of very slow fishing on the lake? Maybe they question why after all these years does salmon fishing become poor during the month of June. It seems like the silver fish just disappear during this month. In Wisconsin ports, the month

of June is a very good time to fish. Big kings are caught and many of them. Pictures of happy anglers are abundant on the internet. Then why does the eastern part of Lake Michigan dry up and the bite become non-existent? The first thing that comes up in our minds is a lack of baitfish in eastern Lake Michigan. Fish being hungry after a long winter are looking for baitfish to fill their bellies. Maybe the baitfish have moved into the western basin of Lake Michigan. Salmon probably are following the bait and head away from our waters. This makes for long days on the water

with very few fish to show for our efforts. 2021 was probably my worst June in my forty years of fishing on Lake Michigan. Most of my catch was an occasional salmon with a few lake trout. Many other fishermen I know did not catch many fish either. This is a trend which has been happening for a few years. But why? Is the bait gone or is there just not enough bait?

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Information on Regulations for 2022's Fishing Season.



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Mike Frisch with a big Midwest largemouth. This guy ate a very simple jig/Ocho Worm combination. Sometimes simple is best in fishing.

## SIMPLER FISHING

By Bob Jensen

Different people go about their fishing in different ways. Some anglers, when they catch a fish, like to try to figure out why that fish was where it was and why it was willing to eat that particular bait. They put a considerable amount of thought into their fishing, and that's good if that helps them enjoy their fishing experience more. Curious anglers often catch more fish, and they also often teach other people how to be more consistent fish-catchers.

Other anglers just want to go fishing. They're not interested in figuring out why fish do what they do, they just want to catch some fish. And there's nothing wrong with that either. However, if these folks were a little more interested in why they're catching fish the way they're catching them, they would probably catch more fish, but again, fishing is different things to different people.

Sometimes a simple approach to fishing is the most productive. I've been reminded of that many times over the years. I of-

ten think back to fishing trips that were memorable not just for the catching, but also how we caught them.

I recall a couple of years ago when we were on a large lake that had a very healthy walleye population. It was a lake like many lakes across walleye country. The walleyes were on rock humps in depths from six to ten feet. We employed a very simple rig. After anchoring just upwind of the hump, we tied a hook to our line and crimped a medium sized splitshot onto the line above the hook about eighteen inches. We added a leech, cast to the hump, and reeled back in slowly, giving the rig lots of stops along the way. Every five or ten minutes we'd catch a nice walleye. Pretty simple stuff. We did add one twist to the rig. The hook had to be a colored hook. Orange or chartreuse were the best colors. Color is a very big factor in much of our fishing.

There were other boats working similar humps close to us. They were backtrolling and front trolling with crankbaits and spinners and all sorts of other rigs. They didn't appear to be catching much though. That's because their baits were out of the fish zone much of the time. Our baits, due to our anchored position and slow presentation, were almost always in the fish zone. When your bait is in the fish zone, your chances



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"Simple"  
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Dennis Eade, Executive Director  
Michigan Steelhead & Salmon Fishermen's Association

The Michigan Legislative Sportsman Caucus Advisory Council big lake fishing outing was held on July 26th in Grand Haven, MI. Seventeen legislators participated in either the reception the evening before or the fishing trip and luncheon the next day. We hosted an equal number of Democrats and Republican legislators for the first time; that's a great improvement over past years. The lawmakers were accepting of our positions as we explained the importance of sportfishing to the economic wellbeing of Michigan's

economy. The tribal Consent Decree was discussed but only as it pertains to the need to keep gill nets from returning to the Great Lakes as they were in the early '80's. Commercial fishing statue was discussed as a means of preserving sport fishing species from commercial harvest. The weather was perfect and all the participants had a great day on the water. The Lake Huron Fishery Advisory Committee held its meeting on August 11th and seventy-six participants joined either in person or via Zoom. The majority of

the meeting centered on the status of the Saginaw Bay walleye and perch population. Dr. Fielder presented the findings of DNR committee and reported that there is a stable and abundant walleye fishery in Saginaw Bay. Two year and older fish are only down slightly over 2019 and catch rate of walleye was slightly above the target level. Younger walleye are driving the abundance (1.6 million new recruits). Perch are still in decline which means the liberalized regulation change for walleye on Saginaw Bay (8 fish at a minimum of 13") has not worked to reduce predation on perch. Perch harvest was down for both sport anglers and commercial netters. DNR biologists believe that the mussels are still having a profound effect on the perch population in Saginaw

Bay. Members of the committee were asked if there should be changes in regulations as to opening the forty-five days in the Spring for fishing on the river and the regulation on size and number of walleye available as daily harvest on Saginaw Bay. The committee voted to recommend keeping the forty-five-day closure on the river and the current bag limit regulations. The sentence in the written guide referencing the "8 fish at 13" in Saginaw Bay was discussed and the consensus was to remove it from the written guide. MSSFA had the rare opportunity to weigh in with two of the new Natural Resources Commissioners when I was contacted by Tom Baird, our 2019 Howard Tanner Award recipient and new-

ly appointed commissioner, for a Zoom meeting on June 24th with himself and Commissioner Dave Cozad from Bay City. They each wanted to get MSSFA's perspective on the fishery and three major concerns going into 2022. I was complimentary when it came to the performance of the MDNR given the COVID pandemic and the constraints the agency was under during 2020. I truly believe we have one of the best fish and wildlife agencies in the country here in Michigan and pointed to the number of past MDNR employees who have been recruited away by other states to fill key positions in their agencies. (Example: Todd Kalish who is now Deputy Director in Wisconsin and Nick Popoff who is responsible for the Sport Fish Restoration Program with the U.S.

Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in Maine.) When it comes to the three biggest fears, we have going into 2022 and beyond, I know we can debate this question for months but I chose to share our association's concern for achieving a successful renewed consent decree with the five tribes in Michigan as the most pressing concern and how important it is to agree on a 50-50 shared resource and keeping gill nets from returning in abundance to the waters of the Great Lakes. The second concern I shared was a growing trend that is spreading across the country, originating on the west coast, that hatcheries are becoming a threat to wild fish populations and should be shut down. (Check out YouTube's segment entitled "Artifishal") Michigan's DNR planted over five million trout and salmon last year. We need to continue support for the hatchery system in Michigan or we won't have a \$2.3 billion sportfishing industry going forward. The third concern I shared, which has always persisted in the background, is additional catch and release regulation on rivers and streams or "flies-only-water" popularized decades ago. It's part of an effort to keep the sportangler from traveling to excellent locales across the state and enjoying the opportunity to catch and keep sport fish. The commissioners said they would be mindful of these concerns but assured me there are no current actions being contemplated that would support them. It was a great way of opening the door to more dialog with them in the future.

MSSFA's Membership Service & Education Committee, comprised of Don Remington, Paul Zelenka, Joe Montella, Rich Chapman and Clint Pollock have announced a major fund raising and seminar event for February 19, 2022 from 9 AM until 4 PM. D&R Sports Center will be hosting the event at it newly remodeled showroom in Kalamazoo, MI. There will be hourly seminars on big lake salmon fishing, steelhead trout stream fishing, walleye fishing and panfishing. Big time raffles

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**BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS**

**Wednesday,  
October 20, 2021**  
via ZOOM  
7 PM

**Wednesday,  
December 15, 2021**  
via ZOOM  
7 PM



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# THE MICHIGAN STEELHEAD & SALMON FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION

*THE QUALITY OF FISHING REFLECTS THE QUALITY OF LIVING!*

MSSFA was organized in 1971 by a handful of individuals who knew that Michigan's newly formed trout and salmon fishery was something worth working to protect. They were a small group who wanted to not only protect their fishery, but learn how to catch their elusive prey and tell fishing stories.

MSSFA chapters have membership meetings with guest speakers to learn about all the aspects of sport fishing. MSSFA chapters also sponsor fishing clinics, seminars, sport-fishing shows, derbies and tournaments. And are active sponsors for fishing outings for kids, seniors, veterans and our handicapped.

For those who love to fish but have no means, MSSFA chapters sponsor a "Crews" program that allows a sign up as a crew member for a day of fishing.

With a common goal, and a close working partner with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, MSSFA helps to enhance the resource and sport fishing in our rivers, streams, inland lakes, and of course the mighty Great Lakes. MSSFA is a front-runner at all levels of the legislature and in courtrooms, and has spent countless hours working behind the scenes and attending hearings.

So why join the *Steelheaders*... Got kids, love fishing.. **JOIN NOW!** ...and become a member of he largest organized groups of fishermen in the Midwest. There are chapters throughout the entire state. You too can help protect and preserve this world-class sport fishery for you, your children and generations to come.

## THE GREAT LAKES SPORT FISHING NEWS (GLSFN)

The Great Lakes Sport Fishing News is owned and operated by The Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen's Association.

Better than forty years ago, The Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen's Association began to publish a magazine called the "Guide to Great Lakes Sport Fishing". Five years later the magazine became a monthly format called "The Great Lakes Steelheader". Today the newspaper is called "*The Great Lakes Sport Fishing News*".

This paper has no paid writers and has a grass roots style. Its writers are the every day fishermen who share their techniques and fishing adventures; and the paper has become well known for it's **January Special Edition** or "*Show Edition*" that is seen at all the spring expos and sport, boat and fishing shows throughout the Great Lakes.

Information in the paper covers the entire Great Lakes Basin region from Minnesota to New York including all five of the Great Lakes and their tributary streams.

Chapter members receive the paper as part of their membership. And because of the diversity of fishing in the Great Lakes, the information covers everything from river fishing, big lake fishing to inland lake fishing. The paper also offers a direct route for all new products and techniques on the market offered by our advertisers.

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The following Chapters accept online payments via Credit Card and/or PayPal.  
A PayPal account is not needed-use the option credit card. Note: some Chapters charge a small fee for processing.

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Metro-West (Livonia) [www.metroweststeelheaders.org](http://www.metroweststeelheaders.org) • South Haven [www.southhavensteelheaders.com](http://www.southhavensteelheaders.com)  
Southwestern( Saint Joseph) [www.swmisteelheaders.com](http://www.swmisteelheaders.com)



2021 Tentative Print Schedule		
Issue	Deadline	Print Date
1	12/11/20	01/04/21
2	02/12/21	03/03/21
3	04/13/21	05/03/21
4	06/14/21	07/02/21
5	08/13/21	09/01/21
6	10/08/21	10/29/21

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The *Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen’s Association (MSSFA)* is a multi-state, non-profit organization dedicated to educating the general public on improving, preserving and promoting sport fishing, the Great Lakes and their tributary streams and rivers. Commonly referred to as *The Michigan Steelheaders*, or simply *Steelheaders*. *MSSFA* represents sport fishing families in the Great Lakes region. *MSSFA* encourages the strictest observances of sport fishing laws and ethical fishing practices. [www.MSSFA.org](http://www.MSSFA.org)

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and giveaways throughout the day and tackle discounts available through D&R Sports Center. Save the date and join us as we recruit new entrants into the \$2.3 billion dollar Michigan sportsfishing market!

Finally, MSSFA is celebrating its 50th Anniversary this year and we have created two commemorative lures from Dreamweaver Lure Co. to mark the occasion.. Each chapter will receive 2 dozen lures, a dozen of the gold lures and a dozen of the white glow lures tipped in green and blue. They may be used for fund raising or as prizes as the chapters determine. Lures will be available through MSSFA as well. Be sure to take advantage of this opportunity to be part of the history of sport fishing in Michigan.



Picture of (From Left to Right starting in front row) Rep. Kevin Hertel, Rep. Jim Lilly, Senator Aric Nesbitt, Senator Curtis Hertel. Back Row (from left to right) Rep. John Cherry and Rep. Kevin Coleman with all the fish caught at the event.

MSSFA: It PAYS to belong! Here’s why:

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17	Cascade Capital Funding	4251 Cascade Rd. SE	Grand Rapids	MI	49546	Free appraisal up to \$300.00
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19	Dunham’s Sports	Statewide				10% Discount # 50050/3
20	Firestone - Metro 25	19268 Middlebelt	Livonia	MI	48152	\$20 off on \$200 or more on service <a href="http://www.metro25firestone.com">www.metro25firestone.com</a>
21	Fish with Jim Outfitters	<a href="http://www.fishwithjimoutfitters.com/">http://www.fishwithjimoutfitters.com/</a>	248-252-1277			Discount \$50.00 off the total trip price.
22	Glacier Corporation	1021 Fuller St.	Santa Ana	CA	92701	Aquarium Chillers for “salmon in classroom” \$625 + 60 (s&h) = \$685
23	Great Lakes Angler Magazine		<a href="http://www.glangler.com">www.glangler.com</a>			Discount 50% OFF 1 year subscription, members only! Use code MSSFA
24	Homestead Resort on Betsie River	2399 Dam Rd	Benzonia	MI	49616	10% In Season, 25% Off Season ( <a href="mailto:homestead@crystal-rentals.com">homestead@crystal-rentals.com</a> )
25	Insta-Launch Campground	20 Park Ave	Manistee	MI	49660	Member Discount
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27	Jim Waldron Pontaic, Buick, GMC	1146 S. State Rd	Davison	MI	48423	Contact Nick Russlolf for Sales, 10% off all parts not to exceed \$100.00
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30	Kamp Oil Inc	6467 Manistee St	Fredric	MI	49733	Citgo Sea & Snow 4-1 gal case 13.50/gal = 54/case, other disc avail.
31	Kamp Oil Inc	3650 Eastern Ave SE	Grand Rapids	MI	49508	Citgo Sea & Snow 4-1 gal case 13.50/gal = 54/case, other disc avail.
32	Beebe Oil Co (aka Kamp Oil)	4999 22 Mile Rd	Utica	MI	48317	Citgo Sea & Snow 4-1 gal case 13.50/gal = 54/case, other disc avail.
33	Lapeer Boat Service	3556 Fort Knox Dr	Lapeer	MI	48446	10% off parts and labor (810-245-6038)
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# RIVER FISHING MYTHS

By Jim Bedford

As fall approaches river anglers begin to anticipate the arrival of Great Lakes salmonids on their spawning runs. Anglers like to have an explanation for the habits of their quarry. When they find summer steelhead, brown trout, or smallmouth bass lurking in shallow riffles on a warm summer day, it must be because there is more dissolved oxygen in the water in the riffle. Virtually all Michigan steelhead spawn in the spring and their spawning riffles are a relatively short distance from the Great Lakes, so why do a portion of them run their natal or stocked rivers in the fall. It must be that they are following salmon to feed on their eggs. As it turns out, neither of the reasons for these behavioral traits is true. By learning the real reasons for why fish do things or perhaps eliminating false reasons we can

become more effective in catching them.

## RIFFLES

Most of the fish we seek with rod and reel are dependent on ample amounts of dissolved oxygen for respiration. The amount of oxygen that can be dissolved in water is relatively small and is usually measured in parts per million or milligrams per liter. The amount of oxygen that water can hold decreases as the water temperature increases. Thus, it is in the summer that dissolved oxygen (DO) levels may become critical for fish, especially trout, salmon and steelhead, survival.

Almost all of our trout streams and most of our higher quality warm water streams have a high degree of mixing and the DO levels remain near or at saturation throughout the creeks and rivers. So, even though much of the oxygen is diffused into the water from the air and riffles, with their

turbulence and shallow nature, are an important location for oxygen diffusion, there is NO difference between the deep pools and the riffles in the amount of DO present.

The prime reasons you should fish riffles hard are cover and to a lesser extent in the fall for many species, food. The choppy, turbulent water surfaces hides fish. You can count the spots on a summer steelhead or brown trout lying in four or five feet of clear water in a still pool but these fish can disappear in two feet of water with a riffled surface. Fish in riffles are usually actively feeding or, in the case of anadromous fish, active and ready to move upstream making them aggressive when a lure or fly enters their territory.

Even though the choppy surface of the riffles hides fish, the migrating trout and salmon will still be wary and a bit spooky in this shallow environment. A cautious upstream approach is a real key to catching trout, steelhead, and salmon in riffles. Your chances of catching these fish are exponentially better if they don't detect your presence.

Another key to successfully fishing riffles is to look for "soft spots". These are the lies where something breaks the current. They allow the fish to enjoy the benefits of the cover providing turbulent water surface without having to constantly battle strong current. Large rocks create three prime lies. The first, and probably best, is located just upstream of the boulder. The larger, dominant resident fish and the most active steelhead and salmon will rest there. The steelhead and salmon will be poised to continue their migration. Below the rock, fish will hold in the slots



Lynda Hayslette admires steelhead taken from a deep riffle



Bob Bryans admires a bright steelhead from the deep riffle in the background.

formed where the back eddy behind the rock intersects with the main flow.

## TEMPERATURE

All species of fish have preferred temperature ranges and will seek out water with the right temperature and be more active when they find it. During warm weather in early fall we are often advised to look for trout and salmon in the deep and deeply shaded holes of trout streams by other anglers and outdoor writers. But, as we just learned with DO in riffles, the water is well mixed in most of our rivers and streams and there is no time

for any thermal stratification to take place.

The possible exception can occur when new water enters a stream at or just above a deep, slow hole. If a spring flows in at the edge of the hole or enters from the substrate there can be a "local" cooler water area in the stream. The cooler water is denser and thus will sink to and be concentrated on the bottom of the pool. Conversely, if a warm water tributary joins the stream at or just above a pool its warmer water will temporarily stay near the surface of the water because of its lower density. In either case, fairly soon mixing will occur and there will be little or no temperature stratification in the next pool downstream.

Just like with DO the mixing that occurs in a stream negates the possibility of localized differences in temperature most of the time. But fishing deep, shaded pools during hot weather can be a good plan. Usually the weather will be moderate and migrating salmonids will use the depth and shaded water for cover. Of course, if the water temperature reaches or exceeds 70 degrees, it is probably time to look for a cooler stream.

## FOLLOWING SALMON

If you polled a large number of river anglers, guides, and outdoor writers and asked them if fall run steelhead were following salmon to feed on their eggs, the majority of them would probably say yes. One reason would be that we do not know why a portion of our Michigan strain steelhead run in the fall and most people, including an-

glers, like to know the reason why.....

Steelhead are biologically designed to not need to ingest a single calorie on their spawning migration and that includes summer run steelhead from the ocean that may travel over 1,000 river miles and spend 8 months in freshwater. While they remain opportunistic they only rarely actively feed. It is also important to note that Michigan steelhead were running in the fall before coho and chinook salmon were stocked. These fish also don't tend to follow the salmon all the way to the spawning riffles but rather hold in the lower parts of the rivers where salmon eggs are scarce. There is no doubt that they will pick up a salmon egg or an angler's spawn bag that drifts close to them but they are very slow to swallow them, another indication that they are not following salmon to actively feed on their eggs. It is rare to find adult steelhead with more than one or two eggs in their stomachs. Skippers, or small, often immature steelhead are the exception in that they are more apt to actively feed and load up on the nutritious eggs.

Fishing the deeper stretches of our rivers and covering lots of water is almost always the best plan when fishing for fall running steelhead. Rain caused higher water levels seem to entice more steelhead to run in the fall, another fact that refutes the "following salmon" theory. I, for one, am okay with not knowing why our steelhead run in the fall. We should

"Myths"

Continued on page 7

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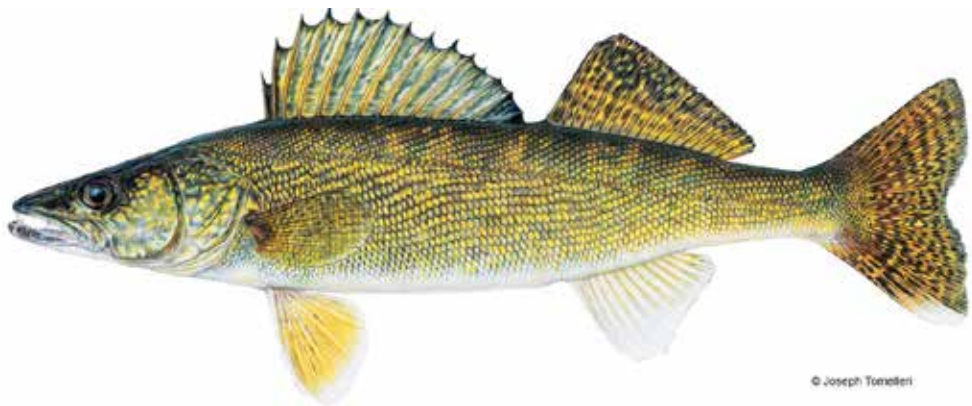
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**“Simple”**  
**Continued from page 2**  
for getting bit go way up. In this case, the walleyes wanted to get caught, they just didn’t want to work too hard to get caught. If we let the leech wiggle on the walleye’s nose for a few seconds, the leech was eaten. If it went by too fast, it didn’t get bit.  
As in most of our fishing, we employed some

technology on this trip. We relied on our sonar to find the best spots and the best “spot on the spot”. Without sonar, we wouldn’t have been nearly as successful. In fact, we probably wouldn’t have found the spots that we fished. The best spots were the smallest spots.  
Then again, there are times when, if you want to catch more and bigger fish, you’ll need more than a

hook and a splitshot. That’s the fun part of fishing: You can make it whatever you want it to be. Sometimes I like the simple stuff, sometimes I like the flashier stuff. What I really like is whatever’s working on that particular day on that particular body of water. The thing is, if you’re enjoying your time on the water, you’re fishing the right way.

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## “Myths” Continued from page 6

just be really glad they do as they are fantastic game fish!

### CLEARER WATER

Rain and high water often bring in the salmon and steelhead to our rivers. This can result in fairly dirty water from runoff and the stirring up silt in the rivers themselves. Often it is said that one should fish the shallow, near shore water because it is clearer. Well

the where to fish advice is good but not because the water is clearer. As we have learned above, the water in our rivers is well mixed and the turbidity will be quite uniform unless a tributary enters that is either clearer or more muddy and thus creates a short reach of different clarity near shore downstream from the juncture.

However, even though the turbidity is the same, there will be more visibility in the shallow, near bank runs because light doesn’t

have to penetrate as much water. You will often find greater numbers of both resident and migratory fish in the shallow near shore water because the current is less strong, the visibility is better, and the turbid water still offers protection. So, even though the actual concentration of the sediment in the water is the same, you will have a better chance of finding and catching fish by concentrating on the shallow runs when the river is running dirty.

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# Late Summer and Fall Fishing Ideas

By Bob Jensen

The nights are getting cooler and the early migrating birds are starting to group up as they prepare for the journey to their wintering grounds. These are reminders to me that autumn is on the way, and that's a reminder of a couple of late summer and fall fishing memories special. Those memories might provide what it takes to create future fall fishing memories.

The first memory takes place on a chain of lakes in Ontario. This was back in the 80's and the fishing world was an exciting place. We were learning a lot of new things about fish, and there were also a lot of new fishing products entering the fishing scene. This was when LCD (liquid crystal display) sonar units were first coming into the picture as a fishing tool. Flasher units had been our primary way of locating drop-offs and structure and other underwater things. The problem with the flasher unit was, if you looked away from the screen and a fish showed up, it would be gone by the time you looked back. You wouldn't know that you had just gone over a fish or several fish. They would only show up for a second or two. The LCD created a picture of what was happening and what had happened. It showed you what you didn't see un-

der the boat while you were watching where you were going. Very helpful.

At this point in time, most walleye anglers fished structure: Sunken islands, underwater humps, that sort of thing. Much of the time that worked out pretty well. On this day however, as we moved from one structure to another we had to cross some deep water. With the new LCD unit, we could see a line across the entire screen about twenty five feet below the surface over water a hundred feet deep. We saw what we assumed were baitfish just above the line, and we also saw what we assumed were bigger fish around the baitfish. A quick look in the LCD's owner's manual revealed that the line was the thermocline, the area in a column of water where the water temperature changed very quickly. The baitfish and walleyes were holding just above the thermocline. We tied on deep diving crankbaits similar to a Banana Shad. These ran just a little shallower than the thermocline and the walleyes were very willing to eat them. They were mostly larger walleyes, and we probably wouldn't have caught them without the LCD. A good late summer fishing memory and learning experience.

Another nice memory regarding catching walleyes at an, at the time, unusual depth: My Dad and I were fishing for walleyes on Leech Lake in north central Minnesota. We were fishing among a group of boats near a point on the main part of the lake. We were all fishing water eight



This fall South Dakota walleye came out of a flooded forest, an unusual place to catch walleyes, but on that lake on that day, that's where they were.

to ten feet deep with jigs. No one was catching much. The wind was blowing into the point. I got snagged. As I tried to get unsnagged, we drifted into shallower water. While I was getting my jig loose, Dad continued to cast. In the time it took me to get the jig loose, Dad caught two walleyes. We started casting to the shallows and learned that

the walleyes were in water two to three feet deep. We caught lots of them in the next couple of hours and were soon joined by other anglers who also got in on the catching. Since then I've caught lots of walleyes in the shallows across the Midwest, but at that time many years ago, walleyes weren't thought to be shallow water fish and not many

anglers fished for them shallow. They do now, especially when the wind is blowing into an area.

In the next few weeks, don't hesitate to try something in your fishing that might seem a bit odd. In

fact, never hesitate to try something a bit odd. You might learn that the fish sometimes like things that are a bit odd.

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## “Reflection” Continued from page 1

There is a lot of speculation even for fisheries biologists. I believe the salmon follow the bait and, in this case, the preferred waters are off Wisconsin. No bait means no fish. Alewife are 95% of the salmon’s diet and when they are not here the salmon are gone too.

The second thing we have to consider is water temperature. Salmon like preferred temperatures and my guess is the water probably is too cold over here. We had a lot of cold water well into the month of June. For some reason the temps in Wisconsin were warmer and probably sucked many of the fish over there. This lack of warm water hurts us badly over here. Charter fishermen resort to the ever-present lake trout bite to satisfy clients. We amateur fishermen burn a lot of fuel chasing fish that just are not there. To me we miss out on a lot of fish that have decided to inhabit another part of the lake. Additionally, there really aren’t thermocline setups on the lake any more. This causes fish to be scattered and out of their preferred temperature zones. Maybe that is why the silver fish are on the west side

of the lake.

As summer progresses into July and August the fishing gets better but not like in seasons past. Climate changes are causing the ecosystem to change. Thermoclines which used to be the secret sauce to finding feeding fish are fewer and blow days now dominate the fishing scene. In the 80’s and 90’s we used to get a dozen blow days a summer and now we see five times more blow days that keep anglers off the water and scatter the fish. Then there is the general decline in salmon numbers. Fewer kings are being caught although the size of them has increased with many record fish being caught the last few years. Along with water temps and a lack of baitfish, this makes fishing more challenging.

Another reason for this challenging summer fishing season is that fewer numbers of salmon are being planted. The salmon plants are not what they used to be. This is a much-discussed topic at many DNR meetings. Salmon plants will be discussed constantly by all fishermen, but the prevailing point of view is that we need to keep the predator to prey ratio in balance so the salmon fishery doesn’t col-

lapse. Sometimes blame is put on the plants for the fish not being here, but there are old timers who remember what happened back in the late ‘80’s when having too many salmon in the lake cause the fish to become stressed and led to an outbreak of bacterial kidney disease which decimated the salmon in the system for years.

Well, there you have it. My reflections on the so-called June Swoon and this summer’s challenging fishing season. But, let’s be grateful that we have this wonderful fishery here in our backyard. Though June was slow, fishing was better in July and August and bodes well for September as well. As I’m getting older, I’m so thankful I am still able to get out and fish for these amazing fish. God bless all of you and may you be safe and have success on the water for the rest of fishing season 2021!



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Author Roger Hinchcliff with a trophy Steelhead.

# Twig Picking for Steelhead

By Roger Hinchcliff,  
*Steelhead Manifesto*

When reading the title, it's intriguing and not discussed very much in the steelhead world. But with a bit of knowledge on this subject, it can pay huge dividends when locating steelhead. Especially in colder water temps, the fish have settled in for the winter and start behaving like a resident trout until mother nature calls them upriver for the upcoming Spring Spawn.

When it comes to wood in a river, a lot of it looks better than it is. Some downed trees are better than others. Finding these trees is key to finding more fish. All fish are attracted to structure, be it artificial or natural. Finding this structure can make all the difference when out on the water fishing.

Trees that have fallen into the river create some perfect holding water for steelhead in many cases. Not to mention this year's tree or log that produces may not be there next year after a good blow out of the river. A river is an ever-changing place.

I love laydown logs that happen to fall or get stuck in the perfect position with the stream's flow. These create current breaks and bubble lines for resting steelhead. They are like magnets, not to mention the current rolling under that log can make a hole by washout.

The fish can rest and wait for any food that

comes by; it's a perfect ambush spot for fish. In addition, the wood provides security for the fish, and they feel hidden and protected from predators above.

Steelhead anglers often overlook overhanging branches just above the water or barely in the water. If the water is right close to the shore, those fish absolutely will hold under vegetation for security or as a current mini-break.

Fishing is about angles; get yourself or the boat in the correct position and use that float rod to steer that offering right where it needs to be a pluck that fish out of there. I have seen this a lot on the river next to the shore, but anglers go right past it because it's close to the bank or lacks that classic bubble line.

Another trick in fishing is always to imagine what it looks like under there. You must visualize the cover underwater. I often get close to the cover and pull back on the float and let that bait swing underneath that cover. A lot of times, it's just too much for fish to resist not taking that bait.

### Gear and Tackle

The trick to success will be getting them out of the wood once the fish has been hooked. The right rod is key. A noodle rod will not do! It would help if you had a rod with a fast taper and power to get those fish out of there. I also use heavier leaders such as the 10-12 lb. test instead of the classic 6-8 lb. leaders.

I know a heavy leader is not ideal for line-shy fish, but it's well worth it by bumping up line size to get the fish out of the structure and fight them out in the open water. Trust me; it's much more fun that way. Make no mistake when twig picking, you will lose some fish. That's just a reality.

Losing tackle due to snags is another truth that can suck and get expensive but so worth it. Usually, there's one fish; there will be more holding there if the structure is large enough.

My favorite baits for this are a jig, bead, or spawn bag under afloat. A spawn bag or bead with a split shot (no float) thrown right in the cover can be the ticket too.

If throwing spinners or crankbaits, again get the right angle to deliver the lure correctly. If the log is a laydown, run your bait lengthways instead of short choppy casts. This way, you are covering all the cover and not just parts of it. Start your cast a few feet in front of the log for any fish holding at the end of the log or trees.

My advice will be to rig a few rods up, not just one float rod if you have room and storage on the boat. This way, the angler can cover all the likely spots and cover with many different offerings. Have you ever seen a professional bass angler go out with one

"Twig"  
Continued on page 13



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# ANGLING CURRENTS: Summer Multispecies Fishing

By St. Croix Rods

Mention late August or early September in fishing circles and the phrase dog days always seems to come up – usually in reference to tough or slow fishing conditions. Famed Minnesota fishing guide and angling ambassador, Tony Roach, rejects that line of thinking. “I just don’t find that to be the case,” he says. “In fact, just the opposite is true. In most bodies of water at this time of year, varieties of gamefish species are actually concentrated in big numbers in certain spots. You just have to start looking in different areas. And when you find them you can enjoy fast fishing for a wide range of species.”

Wisconsin-based angler, author, fishing influencer and founder of Ladies Midwest Meetup, Alicia Thompson, agrees. “There are just as many fish to catch at this time of year,” she says. “Anglers just need to realize that late-summer fish can be fussy, so they need to adapt their presentations and locations. What worked last month, last week, yesterday, or an hour ago may not work right now.”

Roach says offshore humps, deep weed lines, steep breaks and other mid-lake structures with access to deep water are all areas that hold big numbers of fish right now. An easy and effective way to cover water and catch the myriad species using these locations is by casting jig worms or Ned rigs.

“In late summer I use 3/16 or ¼-ounce jigs tipped with a 4” Senko-style worm or a finesse TRD-style Ned worm,” Roach says. “It’s a simple but very effective



way to catch everything that swims in late August or early September.” After marking a concentration of gamefish on his electronics, Roach positions his boat off the deep edge then casts up to the structure – the weed-line, ledge, rock pile, etc. – and works the jig back to the boat with a lift and fall cadence. “The key factor is allowing the bait to fall down through the vegetation, or in case of structure, onto the rocks or ledge, then let it fall off of it,” he says. “I fish this presentation on a slack line working the jig up and letting it fall, stair-stepping it down the break. The fun part is you never know what you’re going to catch on these mid-lake structures. It could be a bass, walleye, pike, or even

a big bluegill.”

Roach most often deploys a 6’6” to 7’ medium power, fast action spinning rod paired with 10-pound braid and a 10-to-12-pound fluorocarbon leader for these techniques. “Since most of the strikes come on the fall, I like using the braid for bite detection – a bright color can help because you can often see your line move when a fish picks up the jig – and the fluorocarbon leader, of course, has low visibility to the fish and is more resistant to abrasion from rocks, woods and shells,” he says. “You’re often pitching, not bomb casting with this technique, so you don’t need a lot of rod length, and a fast tip helps with casting accuracy and strike detec-

tion. A versatile 66MF or 70MF rod like those in St. Croix’s Triumph or Premier Series is ideal.”

When it comes to late-summer multispecies angling, Thompson says anglers shouldn’t be afraid to try new techniques and locations. “Of course you can read about and listen to what other anglers have to say – that can really shorten the learning curve – but I have learned so much throughout my years of fishing by simply getting on the water, following my intuition, and giving it my best,” she says. “Don’t commit to a single technique or even a handful of techniques solely because someone else suggested it’s how you should fish. The best anglers are constantly

experimenting through trial and error. It’s a great way to learn, gain confidence, and ultimately become a better angler.”

That said, Thompson is quick to share a couple techniques that multispecies anglers will want to experiment with at this time of year. “If you’re looking to put a bend in your rod during this late-summer timeframe and don’t care to target any one specific species, it’s hard to beat a dropshot rig,” says Thompson, who spends ample time fishing rivers, often from a kayak. Her other recommendation – although used primarily to target largemouth and smallmouth bass – is a topwater presentation.

“I have a lot of success with a dropshot rig through-

out the day in late summer for bass, walleye, and pike. These species are often bunched up together in key spots along weed edges and on deep structure. A vertical presentation like dropshotting allows you to present your bait accurately in these high-percentage spots. Instead of casting and hoping your bait passes inside a fish’s strike window, with dropshotting you can put it right in front of them and keep it there – often multiple fish at once. It’s an excellent presentation anytime fish are deep, packed tightly together, or in a neutral mood.”

Thompson prefers a shorter spinning rod for dropshotting from her kayak. “In my opinion, a shorter rod is ideal for most kayak fishing. Because you are closer to the surface of the water, I find the reduced length makes it easier to land fish. A 6’6” rod is about perfect for me in the kayak; it makes it easier to net fish and is still long enough to fight them around the front of the boat.” Thompson often pairs a St. Croix Premier or Triumph spinning rod with a 2500-size reel spooled with 10-pound braid and a 10-pound fluorocarbon leader. She prefers a cylinder-style dropshot weight at the bottom of the rig and ties a size 2 or 4 VMC spin-shot hook 12 to 18 inches above the weight. She encourages anglers to experiment with different baits when dropshotting based on the forage available where they’re fishing, but often opts to nose-hook a 3-to-4-inch soft plastic minnow-style bait in some form of silver, pearl or

**“Multispecies”  
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## Largest Fish Caught in Tournament Trail 333 History



Nate Wellman holds up a 39-pound salmon caught on Lake Michigan on Saturday, July 10, 2021 during the Tournament Trail Muskegon Open fishing tournament. (Photo provided by Nate Wellman)

By Rose White | [rwhite@mlive.com](mailto:rwhite@mlive.com)

MUSKEGON, MI – A crew of five fishermen hooked their biggest catch on Lake Michigan this weekend.

Nate Wellman, his son Jackson Cole, Josef Callender, Randy Hughes and Dominick Ferals landed a 39-pound salmon while competing in the Tournament Trail Muskegon Open fishing tournament on Saturday, July 10.

“You feel like it’s a stroke of luck, you feel like maybe you did something right. I’m still kind of in awe about it,” said Wellman, the boat’s captain.

About 10 minutes after setting lines in the water at the second run of the morning, Wellman said “the big ole sucker” was hooked by Callender.

The team wrestled the fish for about an hour, and it took two men to lift it in the boat. Wellman said they had no idea how big the catch was until seconds before netting the fish.

“Eyes lit up and high fives and hooting and hollering began. It was like it kept getting bigger,” he said. “It’s just a monster.”

Wellman, who has been chartering and guiding salmon fishers for over 20 years, has never seen a catch of this size.

“Bigger than a fish of a lifetime for about anybody,” he said.

Weighing in at 39.2 pounds, it was the heaviest fish in the history of the Tournament Trail, a 15-stop fishing circuit on Lake Michigan that started in 2003.

The Michigan chinook salmon record is 47.86 pounds. It was caught by Luis Martinez of Ortonville, Michigan on August 7, 2021 on Lake Michigan off of Ludington.

Wellman said this salmon follows a 27-pounder caught at the Tournament Trail Grand Haven Offshore Challenge in June.

“Maybe we’re on a streak,” he said.



“Multispecies”  
Continued from page 12

green pumpkin color. While dropshotting is a great late-summer multi-species technique throughout the day, Thompson says this time of year can produce some exciting topwater bites in the hours around sunrise and sunset – for bass, pike, and even musky. “In the rivers I fish, I like to use poppers like the STORM Rattlin’ Chug Bug and a walk-the-dog style lure like the Heddon Zara Spook,” says Thompson. “Casting into slack water areas, inside current breaks, over submerged rock, next to wood, and along weed edges with a consistent cadence usually gets the job done but be ready to switch up the cadence if you aren’t getting bit. When using a popper, for example, try a

pop-pop-pause right after casting near structure or a current break,” Thompson advises. “That first pause can be the ticket to getting a fish to strike. If a fish misses the lure the first time, keep going with the cadence that worked; chances are good it will strike again. These same topwater presentations work in lakes, especially on shallow grass flats or in deeper areas where weed growth tops out just below the surface.” Thompson says a 6’6” medium power, fast action Triumph or Premier is great for topwater presentations, too. “These versatile rods offer plenty of power to fight feisty river smallies in current and are exceedingly manageable in a kayak,” she says. “If you want to throw a larger-profile bait or target bigger fish around cover, you might

consider moving up to a medium-heavy model like a 70MHF. That’d be a great choice when fishing waters where a lot of pike or musky are present.” Forget what you’ve heard about the dog days of summer. Late August and early September is a great time to get out and put a bend in your rod – especially if you aren’t picky about what you’ll catch. So, take our pros’ tips and advice and adapt them to where you’re fishing right now.

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“Twig”  
Continued from page 11

rod? It just helps you be more efficient and maximizes your chances at more fish. **Extra Benefits by Scouting** In my opinion, this style of steelhead fishing allows the angler to slow down and look and study the structure, which leads you to other fish-holding areas. Overall, you will become a better angler and learn your river a lot better. Summertime is a great overall time to scout for these likely holding spots. The water is usually much

lower and makes some of these honey holes more visible in the summer. Mark these spots on your fish-finder or drop a pin on your cell phone. By doing your homework early once Fall and Winter come, you are ready for them. Not to mention while out early-season scouting, you can always bring an extra rod fish for multiple species. It’s a win, win in helping you catch more fish. By understanding how vital structure such as wood is no matter what you’re fishing for. They all love structure and orient to it like a magnet. Steelhead are no different than any

other fish and will most certainly use this cover to their advantage. **Conclusion** Twig picking isn’t for everybody. It’s not as sexy as a swung fly in the middle of the run. Or the classic run and pools that most anglers are used to that hold steelhead. But make no mistake about it, this style of fishing is overlooked by many. The wood can be a jungle and have its struggles with lost tackle and fish. The Twig Jungle can be a dark place but full of silver bullets.



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## Event Calendar Disclaimer:

*Please visit your chapter website for the latest status on the activities listed.  
Many events are being postponed or canceled due to state restrictions.  
Call, text or email any additional questions or need for direction.*

### 2021 Battle Creek Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Event	Location
October	30	Kalamazoo River Salmon Slam	Allegan Dam
November	13	Kalamazoo Trout Quest	Allegan Dam
November	20	Kalamazoo River Memorial	Allegan Dam
November	27	St. Joe River Fall Steelhead	I-94 Boat Ram
December	4	St. River Chapter Challenge	Babes Lounge
December	11	Christmas Party	Kalamazoo Eagles

Meetings are held every 3rd Tuesday of the month. 6:00 pm Social, 7:00 pm Meeting  
Meeting Location: Travelers Cafe and Pub, 5225 Portage Rd. Exit 78 off I-94.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

River Tournament - Joe Foy at 269-303-1894 / Lake Tournament - Dan Foster at 269-370-3693  
battlecreeksteelheaders.com

### 2021 Grand Haven Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Event	Contact Info
December	2	Christmas Party	

Other Events TBD

For information on these events and other information on the Grand Haven Steelheaders  
contact GHS President and State Director Paul Zelenka at pbzfarms@gmail.com  
www.ghsteelheaders.com

### 2021 Grand Rapids Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Event	Information
September	14	Board of Directors Meeting	7:00pm STC
September	27	Membership Meeting	Social Hour 6:00pm, Meeting 7:00pm
October	1	Chapter Sponsored Buck Contest Begins	**
October	12	Board of Directors Meeting	7:00pm STC
October	24	Fall River Contest	STC
October	25	Membership Meeting	Social Hour 6:00pm, Meeting 7:00pm
November	6	Fishing Partners Manistee Contest	STC
November	9	Board of Directors Meeting	7:00pm STC
November	22	Membership Meeting	Social Hour 6:00pm, Meeting 7:00pm
December	6	Chapter Family Christmas Party	6:00pm - Diamond Hall **
December	14	Board of Directors Meeting	7:00pm STC

STC\* = Date subject to change

\*\* = Members and Family Only. (All other events open to the public)

### 2021 Great Lakes Bay Region Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Event	Location / Time
September	7	Board Meeting	VFW Hall 7:00pm
September	11	Frankfort/Manistee TBD	6:00am – 1:00pm
October	5	Board Meeting	VFW Hall 7:00pm
November	6	Big/Lil Man. Bear Creek	Daylight – 1:00pm
November	9	Board Meeting	VFW Hall 7:00pm
December	4	Big Man., Bear, Betsie, P.N.	Daylight – 1:00pm
December	7	Board Meeting	VFW Hall 7:00pm
December	11	Annual Christmas Banquet	Cocktails 5:00pm/Dinner 6:00pm K of C Garfield Rd. Auburn, MI

Membership meetings held at:  
3013 Bay City Road, Midland, MI 48642  
989-496-3410

Board meetings begin at 7:00pm

Please call the Port Chairman no later than Monday prior to the outing whether you plan on attending or not attending.

On the day of the outing, call in on Marine Radio, Channel 72.

Weigh-in follows each outing. Picnics follows weigh-in on Saturdays only.

Outings: All Steelheader members pay \$5.00. All non-Steelheaders pay \$10.00 to participate.

Children 16 and Under are free. Picnic is \$5.00 for everyone.

If interested in fishing with us please contact: Gary Decker at 989-859-7472  
Visit our web page www.steel-headers.com

### 2021 Metro West - Livonia Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Event	Chair / Location
September	7	General Membership Meeting	
September	11	Frankfort River/Kayak/SB	Phil Bustos/Keith Childs
September	18	Muskegon Kayak Salmon	Eric Braden
September	18	Manistee River & Pier Tournaments	Jordan Pontoni/Eric Braden
September	20	Captain/Crew/River Angler 2021 Calendar Mtg	Kelley/P. Bustos/Nabors/Zawacki
October	2	Manistee Lake/River (Steelhead) Tournaments	Dodge/Hutton/Sepulveda
October	5	General Membership Meeting	
November	2	General Membership Meeting	
November	6	Manistee River/Pier/Shore Tournaments w DS	Dave Zawacki/Eric Braden/Adam Trenz
November	20	PM River or Betsie River Tournament	Phil Bustos
December	7	CHRISTMAS PARTY - HAPPY HOLIDAYS	
December	11	Huron River Tournament	Hinchcliff/Brown

\*\* ALL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC\*\*

7:00 PM at The New Livonia Seniors Center at the Southeast Corner of Farmington Road and Five Mile Road  
WEB Site: Go to www.metroweststeelheaders.org

If you have questions, contact Henry Nabors - HHNabors@gmail.com or call 248-225 4964.

Contact: *President* Eric Braden, esbraden630@gmail.com, 419-344-2541  
*Membership Director* Henry Nabors 248-225-4964

### 2021 South Haven Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Event
September	16	Membership Meeting 7:00 pm
October	21	Membership Meeting 7:00 pm
November	3	Pro Am Tournament Committee Kick-off meeting
November	18	Membership Meeting 7:00 pm
November	27	SHS River Tournament Invitational (must be a member to participate)
December	11	SHS Holiday Party 2021
December		no regular meeting due to Holiday Party

Membership Meetings Held at 7 pm at: South Haven Moose Lodge, 1025 East Wells Street, South Haven, MI 49040  
For more information email: psrident@southhavensteelheaders.com

### 2021 Southwest MI Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Event	Information
Due to uncertainty of public meetings as a result of CV19 please check online for the latest information. www.swmisteelheaders.com www.facebook.com/southwestmichigansteelheaders			
September	9	Membership Meeting	Check online for latest information (see above)
October	14	Membership Meeting	Check online for latest information (see above)
November	11	Membership Meeting	Check online for latest information (see above)
December	4	Winter Challenge Tournament	St. Joseph River

Membership Meetings Held at:  
St. Joseph-Benton Harbor Elks 541, 601 Riverview Drive, Benton Harbor MI 49022  
**Board Meeting 5:30 - 6:30 PM, Social 6:00 - 7:00 PM, Meeting 7:00 - 8:30 PM**  
Contact: Jim Marohn 269-208-2784

### 2021 TCAS Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month      Date      Event

All events are TBD

TCAS meets the first Wednesday of each month except July (Cherry Festival) and December (Christmas Party)  
Meetings begin at 7 pm at the Traverse City Senior Center, 801 Front St., next door to the Maritime Academy.

### 2021 Thumb Chapter Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Time	Event	Location / Information
September	16	7:30pm	Regular Meeting	Ubly Foxhunters
October	21	7:30pm	Regular Meeting - Election of Board/Officers	Ubly Foxhunters
November			TBD	
December			TBD	

Contact Scott Stanke at 989-553-0972 for inquiries.

### 2021 Thunderbay Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Time	Information
September	13	7:00 pm	Monthly Meeting
October	4	7:00 pm	Monthly Meeting
November	1	7:00 pm	Monthly Meeting
December	6	7:00 pm	Monthly Meeting

Contact Dan Bouchard at dan-bouchard@hotmail.com for inquiries.

### 2021 White River Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month      Date      Time      Event information      Location

All events are TBD

**Note: Meeting dates and times are subject to change – Any questions or to verify dates/times please call Clint Pollock at (231) 893-0210 or Terry Clark at (231) 893-6805.**





## Prime Time for Smallmouth Bass Fishing in Rivers

By Brandon Butler

If he could only catch one more fish in his life, Brandon Butler would want it to be a smallmouth bass on the river. Brandon knows now is the prime time to target these river smallies and he is sharing his advice.

Pound for pound, smallmouths fight harder than any other fish I've ever tangled with, and they live in some of the prettiest waters to explore. Across the Midwest, smallmouth action is on fire.

Smallmouths become active earlier in the year than most other gamefish, especially in lakes. The pre-spawn period generally

kicks in during late February when water temperatures push into the upper 40s. So, the spawn in lakes is over by now, but in some rivers, it's still going strong.

Fishing for native smallmouths in midwestern rivers doesn't get the attention it deserves. Pick up a few fishing publications, especially any fly-fishing publication, and you'll see a lot of articles written about river fishing for trout. Most of those articles will be about fly fishing. Smallmouths are just as fun, if not more so, to pursue with a fly.

If fly fishing isn't your thing, you can still use a traditional spinning rod to present a fly. The float-and-fly method of taking small-

mouth bass has become a popular tactic. The method is as simple as it sounds: Float a fly under a bobber. Depending on the current in the river, you may need to add a split shot or two.

The process isn't too exciting, but the results often are. Locate a promising stretch of river with some deep water. Adjust your float for the proper depth, understanding you may have to readjust your depth to make sure you're getting down close to the bottom. Cast, then drift. The chop on the water will bounce your float, giving life to your fly. Add in a few twitches sporadically.

Strikes are often subtle. Pay close attention to

your float. There is a good chance you will see strikes without feeling them. Smallies will come up for the fly, but you have to be in the strike zone. Experiment with depth. Start high and work low, making numerous passes through a promising run before abandoning hope and moving on. The action may not be fast, but stay alert. Spring is when the pigs come out to play.

Smallmouths bed in shallows and on gravel flats, while generally associating with some sort

of structure, such as fallen logs and boulders. Females will spawn out and move off their beds to recuperate in deeper water, leaving the smaller but more aggressive males to guard the nests. Any flies floated near enough to the nest to pose potential danger have a good chance of being annihilated.

The float and fly method is just one way to catch smallmouths. Spinnerbaits, stickbaits, soft plastics and jigs all catch tons of smallmouths. Any erratically fished bait imitating an in-

jured fish should produce, as do typical topwater lures like Jitterbugs and Spooks fished close to cover.

Many smallmouth rivers are perfect for wade fishing. You should always wear closed-toed shoes or boots to protect your feet from any metal or glass that may have found its way into the water. If you're fishing waters big enough to float, there aren't many pastimes more rewarding than gliding down a river in a canoe or kayak and fishing for smallmouth bass.

## Small-Lake Walleyes: The Heat is On

By Mark Martin

The heat of summer can be a tricky time for anglers to catch walleyes, especially those in small, shallow lakes. However, Mark Martin says you can catch them this time of year, and lots of them, if you just look in the right places.

### The Highs and Lows

A walleye has the highest temperature tolerance range of most any fish. They can survive in water temperatures so cold that it freezes, to temperatures tickling the 100-degree mark. But, they are also one of the first species to succumb to a sudden drop in oxygen levels.

And, where you'll often find fish this time of year in small lakes and reservoirs can depend on where in the water column you find the most oxygenated water.

### I Can See It!

Did you know that you can see low oxygen levels on a high-quality sonar? I have the sensitivity on my Lowrance sonars set higher than most anglers. I not only want to see fish, but baitfish, plumes of phytoplankton and zooplankton and even water density.

### Why the Latter?

Water with little to no oxygen is very dense; so much so that you can see it on the screen. Ever go over a deep hole in a small lake—say, 35 feet—and notice the bottom 5 to 10

feet show up very cloudy on your sonar? Well, this is very dense water, with a lot of silt and other debris wafting about, and more than likely has little to no oxygen in it.

Fish will not be belied up to bottom in these areas. They may, however, suspend directly above the dense water, or can be found amongst the oxygen-giving weeds in shallower water.

### Cover Me;

### My Lure's Going In!

Covering as much water as possible to locate fish is crucial this time of year. One of the best ways to do this is by trolling.

In small bodies of water, I like to troll with shallow-diving crankbaits, as well with 'crawler harnesses.

Some of my all-time go-to lures when trolling in small lakes are in the Rapala Scatter Rap family. Scatter Raps have a unique bill that not only have the lure running with the perfect Rapala rhythm, but also adds a sudden shudder to the left or right, enticing more strikes over a bait running at a constant waggle.

If the lake I'm fishing has a defined weed edge, I'll concentrate pulling Scatter Raps along the outside edges. In water 10 feet and under, I'll use the Scatter Rap Minnow, Scatter Rap Jointed and Scatter Rap Shad (regular or Glass). If the water's depth is in the low teens, I'll use the Scatter Rap Husky

Jerk and Scatter Rap Tail Dancer. And 10-pound-test Berkley Trilene XT monofilament is perfect for pulling crankbaits of any kind, with the lure attached to it via a Berkley Snap.

Another must-try for me is a Northland Rainbow Spinner Harness, with size 3 blade. I'll either use a whole, live nightcrawler on this rig, or a Berkley GULP nightcrawler—the latter is best if pesky panfish are poking at your live 'crawler and stealing it.

A 'crawler harness is a great choice in very weedy lakes, as you can get the bait running just over the weed tops without snagging up. A small split-shot pinched on about three feet ahead of the hooks will not only keep the harness running just under the surface, but will catch any weeds your line may get pulled through, keeping the rig spinning free. Again, 10-pound-test monofilament is a good choice for trolling harnesses, but this time I'll use a Berkley ball-bearing snap swivel to connect the harness to the main line.

And no matter where I'm trolling, I almost always use in-line planer boards to get my lures out from the boat's path, with Church Tackle's TX-12 a great device for smaller baits. But, even smaller planer boards have a lot of water resistance to them; thus, I recommend using rod holders instead of holding rods in your hand.

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