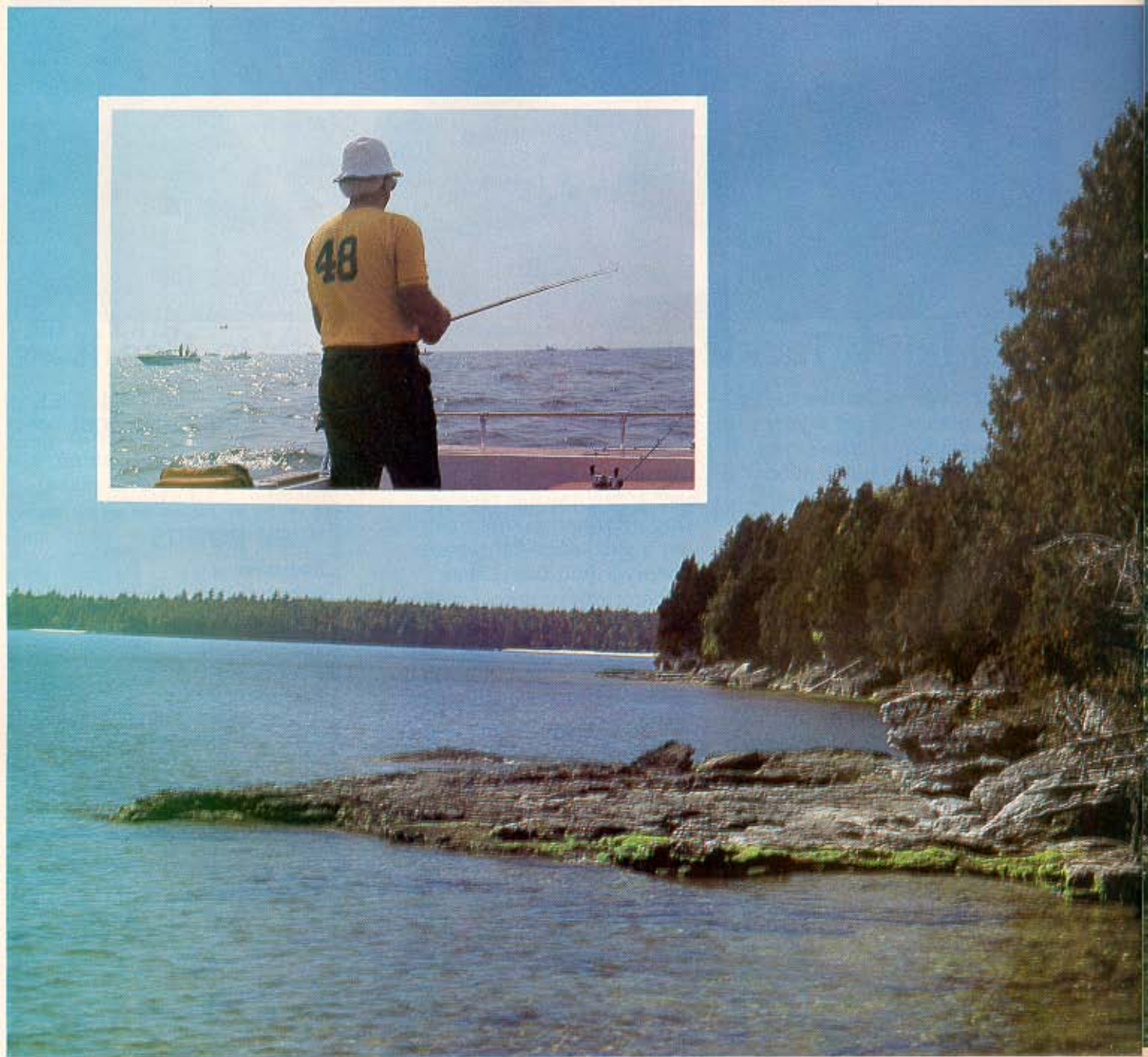
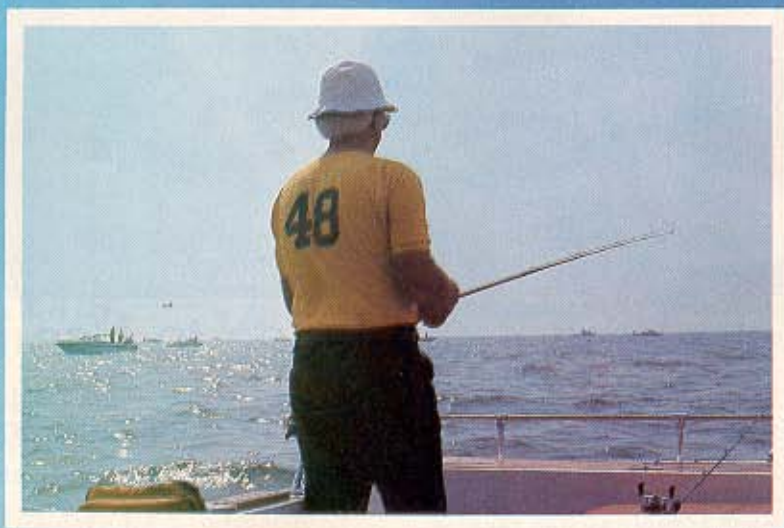




Hard-to-find Spots Can Yield Big Results

The best way to become a better fisherman is to become better at interpreting features found in your fishing waters.

by Buck Perry, Education Editor



In the past it has been said, "A fisherman can always get better in his ability to interpret a fishing situation." Right off the bat, some fishermen will make a bad interpretation on what was meant by the statement. They seem to get the idea what was said meant the improvement in their ability to interpret a fishing situation and that this would come along automatically. It never seems to dawn upon them some effort on their part will be necessary to bring it about.

The correct meaning of the words would have them say, "The fisherman will never reach the point where he can't put a better interpretation on the things he runs up against when on the

water." In essence, the statement meant he will never get to the point where he can't become a better fisherman and be more successful (a reason why we feel there is no such thing as a fishing "expert").

Some have asked, "What do you mean by 'interpretation of a fishing situation'?" If the term "interpret" or "interpretation" was looked up in a dictionary, most likely we would come across words such as "see", "read", "decipher", "unravel", "understand", "explain", "make clear"; or, "explanation", "solution", "diagnosis", "answer", etc. What we would probably settle on is a simple "figure out."

To me, improvement in our interpre-

tations of the fishing situations we face are of the utmost importance. If we do not get better at it, we reach a plateau of success, no matter what equipment we may have, or our skill in using it. We also face the prospect we will not remain at a plateau (degree of success) for very long. Before we know it, we may start losing ground in our ability to catch a fish. In time we might be asking ourselves, "What happened?"

It may take years of experience and close observation before a fisherman is able to "tie together" all the various parts in an interpretation and come up with the one which eliminates most

continued



Education Editor, Buck Perry, with an excellent catch of walleye that would put a smile on the face of any avid walleye angler. These fish were located about a half mile from shore.

Buck Talks Fishing, cont.

false moves, and time spent testing unproductive water. When trying to figure out what is present, where the fish are, what they are doing, what type lures to use, where to use them, etc., a fisherman must take into consideration the kind of water (lake type), season, structure types, depths, movement pattern, lure presentation, etc. Connecting all the parts is not as difficult as it may seem, but it does call for some "elbow grease" (effort) on the part of the fisherman.

make all the parts fall into place."

The doubt, and the search for some one thing to latch onto as a guide to "size-up" a fishing situation is by no means new. What was done about this in the very beginning resulted in the Spoonpluggers becoming known as structure fishermen.

I have been referred to as the "Daddy of Structure Fishing." Probably this is true; for years ago, when I first started talking about the features found in a body of water as the key to fishing success, it came as a complete surprise to most of the fishermen of that day. When talking about "structure", "breaks", "breaklines", "deep water", etc., the

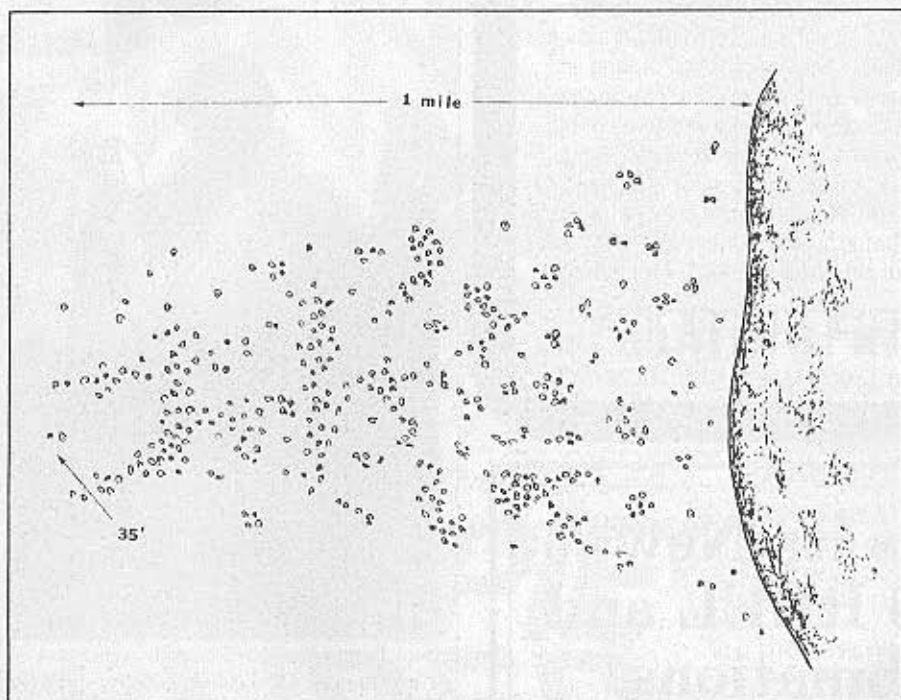


FIGURE 1 is a top view of a rocky reef in a large, natural glacial lake. Most of the lake bottom is smooth sand or clay, and has only a gentle slope toward deeper water. The depth where the rocks (reef) stop is approximately 35 ft. deep, and about one mile from the shoreline. The lake contains walleye and smallmouth bass.

The average structure fisherman (Spoonplugger) realizes it takes time, study, and effort to become a good fisherman. But, so what, he is catching fish like he never did before, and if he follows the structure fisherman's "guidelines", he will continue to get better at the game.

Quite often some fisherman will ask, "I realize there are many things involved in getting a fairly accurate interpretation of a fishing situation, but is there ONE particular area where I might concentrate my study and effort to become better? I can't seem to keep everything in mind. I look at the weather and that big body of water and each time it seems things are different. What I need is something I can concentrate on and hope that in time it will

fishermen looked at me as if I was talking some foreign language.

This talk about "features" should indicate what is considered to be the most important element to be mastered in becoming a better fisherman. Sure, we talk about weather and water conditions, species of fish, lure types, and their presentations, etc., but when it comes down to brass tacks, THE MOST IMPORTANT KEY TO SUCCESS IS THE INTERPRETATION OF THE FEATURES (STRUCTURE, BREAKS, BREAKLINES, DEEP WATER, ETC.) FOUND IN A BODY OF WATER. The Spoonplugger knows without proper interpretation of the features it would be impossible to make sense out of the other things involved; such as, how the fish move at certain weather and water

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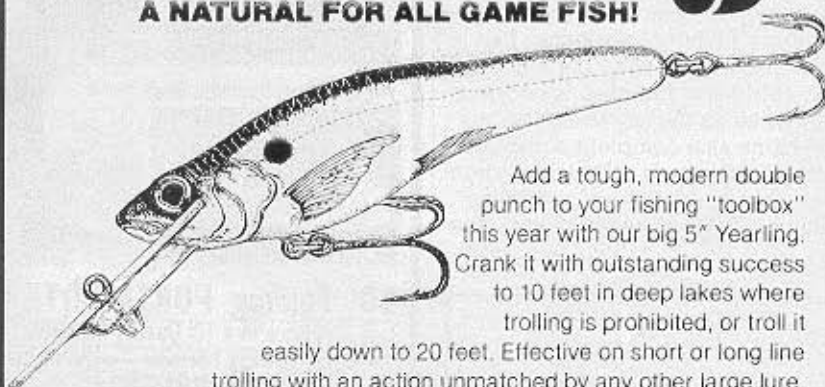
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Buck Talks Fishing, cont.

conditions, how they react to a seasonal change, where they are likely to be found, how active or how dormant they may be at any particular time; and how depth and speed control of our lures (or baits) come into play to take care of the changes in the environment and the different "moods" (active or dormant) of the fish.

Yes, there is little doubt in our minds that the best way to become a better fisherman is to become better at in-



Buck Perry (shown with smallmouth bass) — "A fisherman should fish as many different situations as possible. That is, fish different type lakes, and especially those containing more than one species of fish."

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terpreting the features (structures, breaks, breaklines, etc.) found in our fishing waters. By keeping our eyes open to the weather and water conditions, movements of fish, presentation of lures, etc., things will begin to dovetail, and in time a more complete interpretation will come about. The day will come when you will view a situation and come up with a fairly accurate estimate as to the fishing possibilities before you even get on the water.

When we classified lakes they were put into three groups: Highland, Lowland, and Flatland. These groups were broken down further into types. The major difference between the groups and types was the terrain, depths, and features of the bottom. This grouping was done so you and I would know what to expect when we run across the different types. We have emphasized in

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Buck Talks Fishing, cont.

the past that in becoming a better fisherman we should not confine our fishing to just one set of features (structure, breaks, breaklines, deep water, etc.). It was said a fisherman should fish as many different situations as possible. That is, fish different type lakes, and especially those containing more than one species of fish.

It is quite difficult for a fisherman to visualize water and fishing situations completely different from his own. Oftentimes this will cause a fisherman to "skip-over" any study material not

1. Why did we pick this particular feature to fish?

The Spoonplugger is well aware a fish can be caught at sometime or other, by most anyone, at most any place, on most anything, and by most any method. But, he knows if he desires to become a better fisherman and consistently put more and bigger fish on the stringer; a hit or miss type interpretation, lure presentation, etc., is not the way to go. The way the Spoonplugger plays the game is to use "structure" as his guide to where the fish may be found, and then use the "breaks" and "breaklines" on (or connected to) it to pinpoint the fish.

We picked this reef, because it is the only "structure-like" thing around (it is

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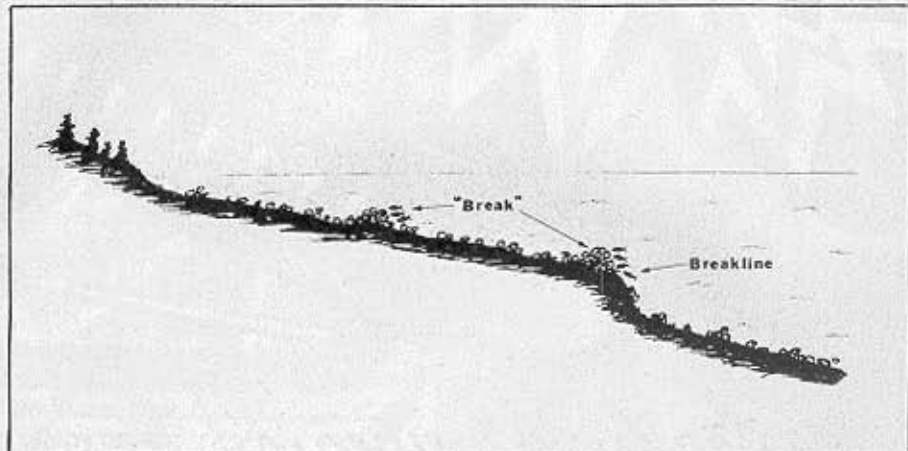


FIGURE 2 shows side view of a rocky reef. Note the greater pile of rocks and breakline (sudden change in depth) that occurs in this situation.

completely related to his own particular fishing waters. He might say, "Oh, that doesn't apply to me, he's talking about a lake condition I'll never encounter." (At times I am reluctant to bring up a specific fishing situation for this reason.) It's true, many of us are unable to experience the great number of different situations that exist; however, you and I should study and discuss them. A situation, or feature, talked about may be completely different from what we normally encounter, but it may hold the key to the problems of those we do.

Let us now look at a particular fishing situation and a specific feature. Our main aim is to interpret fully the fishing possibilities of this feature (structure, break, breakline, deep water, etc.). We will choose a situation (on purpose) not experienced by the majority.

Figure 1 is a top view of a rocky reef in a large glacier lake. Most of the lake bottom is smooth sand or clay, and has only a gentle slope toward deeper water. The depth where the rocks stop is approximately 35 feet deep, and about one mile from the shoreline. The lake contains walleye and smallmouth bass.

To interpret and fish this situation effectively, there are several things we should consider.

different from the surrounding area), and the "breaks" (rocks) create a visible path all the way from the deep water to the shallows, and vice versa.

2. Where are the fish likely to be?

Our guideline tells us the fish could be either in the shallows, the deep (35 feet or better) or someplace in-between, therefore we can't predict just where they might be.

3. What type presentation would be best for finding out what is here, or for locating the fish?

This situation presents a lot of water to be checked (shallows to deepest water in area — 35 feet at least). At this time we do not know where to concentrate our efforts, so the whole reef has to be worked. The lures used should be worked on and/or as close to the bottom as possible. All of this would indicate better depth and speed control and faster depth and speed control can be had by trolling rather than casting. This is especially true in the deeper section. If we tried to work this entire area by casting alone, it would be extremely difficult and a time-consuming job. The odds are that we would not

continued

Buck Talks Fishing, cont.

find the fish quickly, nor would we find out how the reef is made up.

4. In working the reef over, what spots would we look for that might indicate where to concentrate our efforts?

One of our basic guidelines says when fish move on structure toward the shallows, they either pause or stop at "breaks" in or on the structure. At first glance, this guideline would appear to be meaningless as the whole



Stanley Smith (Buck's son-in-law) knows his way around most bassin' waters, but it looks as though he's able to hold his own with walleye fishing as well. With a teacher like Buck Perry, who wouldn't become a top-flight angler in a hurry?

reef is just a jumble of "breaks" in the form of rocks sticking up out of the bottom. But, when we look at the feature in the total light of what "breaks" actually mean in a situation such as this, our guideline is still in order.

In most glacier lakes of this type, there will occur "breaklines" of some nature out from the shoreline. These "breaks" could have been created by the glacier originally. Or they could have been formed in the past by different water levels in the lake. If in the past a lower water level remained at one place for any length of time, an obvious breakline would have been formed (wind, rain, shoreline erosion).

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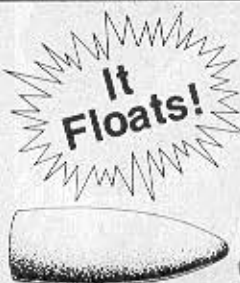
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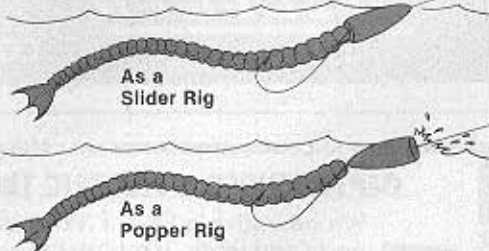
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Buck Talks Fishing, cont.

Most reefs have bigger piles of rocks in certain areas than in others. These greater "breaks" are obvious "pausing" or "stopping" places for the fish.

To more clearly show what is meant, let us look at another view of a reef.

Figure 2 is a side view of a rocky reef. Note the greater pile of rocks and the breakline that occurs in this situation. The "breaks" in this view are obvious to us as well as the fish.

There are two questions at this point, as to the best spots to concentrate our efforts. 1. "Where are the bigger piles of rocks on the reef?" 2. "Where on the breakline would I expect to find the fish?"

At this point, we do not know just where the bigger piles of rock are located. They could be most anywhere on the reef. They could be on the sides or in the middle. They could be close to shore or any distance out on the reef.

As far as the "breakline", the whole thing (total length) would have to be worked to find the "contact point" (where the fish move up). In most instances, the fish will be found at some type "break" (a change) on a breakline. This *FISHING FACT* makes it easy to find where to concentrate our efforts on a breakline. In **Figure 2** a bigger pile of rocks has been placed on the breakline. Instead of a bigger pile of rocks, it could be a projection, a bush, sunken boat, sharper break or depth change.

If we had a depth sounder we could go look the reef over for breaklines and bigger piles of rocks. Or, we can use lures (regardless of a depth sounder) that run at different depths and completely "map" the bottom on the troll. Different size Spoonplugs would allow this to be done easily and effectively. When our bottom-bumping lures locate a breakline (or pile of rocks) it indicates a spot where we would concentrate our efforts (when fish move on structure, they pause or stop at a "break" — guideline).

The whole reef should be mapped. This would require wire line on the troll in the deeper section. By mapping all the breaklines and bigger piles of rock (breaks) that exist, we are taking care of the weather and water conditions. It gives us the spots to concentrate our efforts at a later date when conditions will be different ("how far they go and how long they stay is controlled by the weather and water conditions" ... another guideline).

5. Should we expect fish to be in the shallows next to the shoreline very often?

In a situation such as this, it would have to be a long period of stable

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Buck Talks Fishing, cont.

weather for the fish to move to the shallow shoreline features (most of the time the movements are confined to the deeper water). Even during spawning season their stay in the shallowest water would be for a short time period. Since this is a glacier lake, we shouldn't expect the fish to make the long trip (one mile) to shallow water very often. Most lakes this far north seldom experience long enough periods of stable weather for this to happen. The distance, at times, between the major "breaks" and "break-lines" doesn't help the situation either, for frequent shallow movements.

6. If we find and catch a fish while trolling, should we stop and cast?

In all instances it is wise to stop and cast when a fish is caught on the troll. This gives better coverage of the area, and doesn't waste time. The activity period of the fish may be of short duration (normally in minutes rather than hours) and more fish can be caught casting. Repeated trolling passes eat up time and some passes may be "off the mark" — if any distance from the shoreline and floating markers have not been placed correctly.

There are times when casting is not possible nor advisable. The water may be too deep, too rough, or the exact spot not pinpointed.

7. How can I find the best spots on future trips?

About the only way we can quickly relocate a spot in a situation such as this, is to get good shoreline sightings. In this case, we may be able to get only one sighting on the shoreline (at the reef). If we have a depth sounder we can proceed out along our sighting until the depth, breakline, or rock pile shows up. If we do not have a depth sounder, we can proceed out to where we thought it was, and relocate it with lures on the troll. If we plan to fish the area for several days, a marker can be left on the spot. We shouldn't make the marker too conspicuous, as it may be gone the next time we go out, or some guy who doesn't have the outdoor manners of a Spoonplugger is sitting on our spot.

It may be wise to discuss and interpret additional situations in the future. After all, being able to interpret our fishing waters is where we can always get better, and it is not likely we can talk about this subject too much.

Let's hope none of us will "skip-over" now, or in the future, things we might talk about which appear not to apply to our favorite fishing hole or our fishing style. Learning to become a better fisherman doesn't change with residence.

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