



The walleye capital of the world?

Michigan is worthy of the title.

The author has caught his share of walleyes this season. And it's not over yet.



I T'S HARD TO imagine better walleye fishing than Michigan anglers have enjoyed during the preceding six months. When I look back at my own fishing trips this year, I'm simply amazed how good the fishing has been.

On the Detroit River in mid-April, I enjoyed outstanding walleye action near downtown Detroit. A ½-ounce jig tipped with a 3-inch shiner minnow allowed me to take walleye almost at will.

Also in April, the Lake Erie walleyes were easy pickings for crankbaits trolled with planer boards. I trolled near Luna Pier with Rapala Husky Jerks, Reef Runners and Dave's Lures Nitro Shiners. All three lures worked great and we ended up taking numerous fish to eight pounds!

Come May, I found myself chasing Saginaw Bay walleyes near Quanicassee. Bottom bouncers armed with spinners and nightcrawlers took fish after fish. Crankbaits also produced steady action. Most of the walleye were 18-20 inches long with a few larger fish mixed in.

In June, I fished both Lake Erie and Saginaw Bay using Big Jon mini-disks and Wolverine Tackle Jr. Streak trolling spoons. On Lake Erie, we launched out of Toledo Beach and, on Saginaw Bay, we hit the water at Linwood. Limit catches of 2-4 pound fish proved easy pickings.

July found me chasing walleye on Saginaw Bay out of Au Gres. The bite up there was on crawler harnesses fished in combination with keel weights or Snap Weights. Fast limits of 15- to 18-inch fish proved to be the norm. Also in July I fished outside of the Charity Islands in Lake Huron. We didn't find lots of walleye, but the dozen or so we caught were all over five pounds!

August found me fishing on the Canadian side of Lake Erie. Most of the fish were suspended 20-40 feet below the surface. Our catch came on Jr. and Mini Streak spoons fished on downriggers and Walker Deeper Diver diving planers.

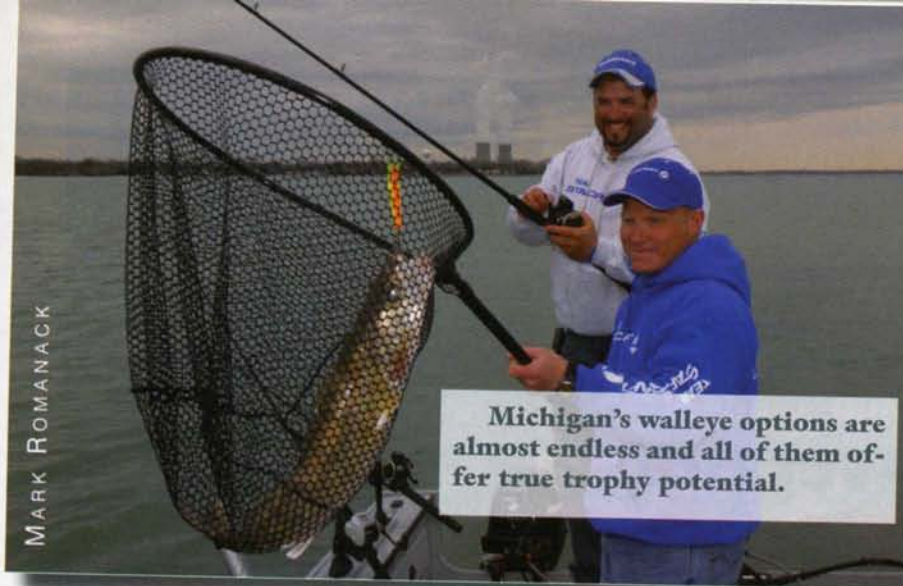
My point to all this is that walleye fishing in the Great Lakes region is without equal. Not only can anglers catch lots of walleye, but come fall there is also the chance at landing a true trophy-class fish.

Fall destinations

There are no shortage of places where Great Lakes anglers can catch trophy class walleye in October. Just a few places to consider include Lake Macatawa near Holland and Muskegon Lake.

Muskegon Lake is another well-known trophy walleye fishery. Like Macatawa, most of the trophy fish are taken in the channel that leads out into Lake Michigan.

On the east side of the state, Lake Erie is always a good bet for trophy walleye and the same can be said for Saginaw Bay. On Erie, big walleye are regularly taken at Luna Pier, Bolles Harbor and Toledo Beach. On Saginaw Bay, trophy walleye are taken near the mouth of the Saginaw



MARK ROMANACK

Michigan's walleye options are almost endless and all of them offer true trophy potential.

River, at AuGres and around the Charity Islands.

Looking north, both Little and Big Bay De Noc are prime fall walleye destinations. Of the two waters, Little Bay de Noc sees the most fishing pressure, but both have big walleye.

Trophy tactics

Catching a wall-hanger walleye is rarely an easy task, but a couple "go-to" presentations produce big fish with amazing regularity.

Crankbait trolling is hard to beat for targeting trophy walleye. In part, crankbaits work so well because they can be used to cover enormous amounts of water. Secondly, no other lure can be targeted to specific depths easier than a crankbait. Two simple factors control how deep a crankbait dives, including lead length

and line diameter. By monitoring these two variables, it's possible to predict the running depth of just about any crankbait within inches.

The book Precision Trolling, commonly referred to as the "Troller's Bible" provides the depth diving data for hundreds of popular crankbaits. This user guide is available at popular tackle shops or on line at www.precisionangling.com.

Over the years, I've found a key selection of crankbaits that routinely produce trophy walleye. That list includes the Salmo Hornet, Reef Runner Deep Diver, Rapala Husky Jerk, Dave's Lures Nitro Shiner, Storm Deep ThunderStick and the Smithwick Deep Super Rogue.

The second angling method that screams trophy walleye, is an old classic. Using a Lindy Rig baited with an oversized (4- to 5-inch) chub or sucker minnow appeals to big walleye who are seem-

ingly always looking for a mouthful.

Slowly dragging this rig along weed edges, drop offs, channels, sunken islands, points and other classic walleye haunts is as close to a sure bet as walleye fishing gets.

Summing it up

The Great Lakes State might well be called the Great Walleye State. Take it from one who has traveled far and wide to catch walleye. No other state offers such a wide variety of walleye fishing opportunities or the chance to catch bigger fish! ❖

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