

Controlled Depth Trolling

By Thomas Ebi

Mark Romanack's books "Precision Trolling" is a **must** have for trolling. This book gives you invaluable information on where to start with most any lure. How far back/out to run your lures for most every depth, tuning your lures, etc. Now from this book's information is where you'll need to learn how you run YOUR lures to what the precision trolling is telling you. Not everyone runs the same line diameter, speeds, direction .. i.e.: into the wind, with the wind or cross cutting the wind. Every lake has some type of current which is another factor that affects where your lure will be in the water column. So, where to begin after getting some of the bugs worked out on how to set lines, lures etc? let's take Michigan's waters of Lake Erie. For the most part, you'll not be in water deeper than 30ft.

Let's start with crawler harnesses. It doesn't matter if you make/buy yours from 1 ft long to 5 ft long. The weighting system is what's going to determine your depth along with your speed. Taking speed out of the picture for now. Get your boat set at 1.4 mph to start with. Put out a harness on a bottom bouncer (1oz average for every 10 feet of depth). Let out line on your line counter reel with your thumb lightly on the spool till you touch bottom. Right there your harness would be running approximately 4 to 5 ft off the bottom once the bouncer reaches the boat's speed/water drag against your line etc. touch bottom again, your harness would be 3ft off bottom. Touch again and your lure will be running just off bottom if not tagging the high spots on the bottom.

O.K. now you know that at (let's say 65 ft back/out in 30 ft of water/3oz weight) your lure is a couple feet off bottom. Divide that number into 4. 16ft, 32ft, 48ft and 65ft back you have the water column divided equally. With 4 lines out you can cover all of the water column easily. In a very short time you'll have the basic understanding to guess pretty darn good on where your lures are at. EXAMPLE: For me, 45 back at 1.4 m.p.h. GPS with a 1 oz inline averages 17 foot down. There are a lot of variables, but don't put too much into this. Once you get a bite, you'll know where the more active fish are. 3 bites and you WILL know RIGHT where the active fish are. Bring one rod on the other side of the boat to the same line out number that got those 3 bites. If that rod takes a fish, start bringing the other rods closer to that line out. But not all at the same line out, just closer. During the day, the fish will move in the water column, so keep other parts of the water column covered. The sunshine always gets the walleye active! And brings them up in the water column.

Once you start fine tuning your working program with line out and speed, you can start working to see if color of blade matters. Your depth of any lure will also be affected by doing slow "S" turns. If your baits get bit on the inside of a turn you need to slow down, if they get bit on the outside, you need to go a bit faster. (that is THE simple way to figure out what speed you need to be running). I'm leaving out all of the aspects of lures dropping/ rising in the water column doing the "S" turns just for the fact that this article is for folks trying to learn about trolling and the worries of where the lures are.

Once you get confidence in running weighted harnesses, you'll understand that every bait, ends up working out pretty much the same with this simple rule. Run one out till you touch bottom, divide the number on the line counter and you can split the water column so your covering all the depths to get started. Crankbaits have their own exceptions. Get your speed set, look at your depth, check the precision troll book for the lures you want to run, again divide the lineout off the graph and your set to divide the water column. Once you get a handle on your favorite baits to run, you'll have enough confidence to start working on the fine details that can make a great day even better. You should get some basics locked into your head on where to start every time out after a few times out.

Using GPS with plot trails, icons, waypoints just confirms what your doing is working. The GPS is your own personal log book. (that's another article). Make sure you lock in waypoints everytime you get a fish. This gives you a trolling pass/direction to REPEAT!