

## Where To Start Lake Erie Walleye

By Thomas Ebi

In early April, the walleye bite on lake Erie can be fantastic! Water temperatures in the mid to higher 40's is the starting point of really big catches of walleye on lake Erie. The timing if water temperature and locations takes on attitude of "the hunt is on!!!" Running crankbaits and covering water to seek out where the big girls are gets my blood going. The walleye tend to be in predictable areas this time of year. The winds blows hard just like in fall and you have to be prepared for some nasty weather. The rewards can make every trip well worth it!

Crankbaits for the most part are THE bait of choice till the water reaches around 50 degrees, when I will start to also run harnesses. The size of the crankbait needed is only determined by the fish. You'll have to experiment with size first, color second while still covering the water column with the spread of your lines. Divide that water column into quarters! Run one bait high, one down near or at bottom and your other two lines covering the mid-depths (assuming your out on the water with another person...IT'S COLD...you should be with at least one other person for safety!!!).

Feast or famine will come to mind throughout the day... probably a few times... I've trolled for hours without a bite, then BAM and before you get that fish in you have another on! Hopefully you can remember where each rod was at.. inside, outside, depth back, all can be checked when taking the inline planerboard off . Were you making a turn? Inside or outside of your turn? This will help you tell if you should speed up or slow down to get the other rods running near that same speed.

Once you have a couple of fish boated, you can start to put something together as far as size of bait and speed. Start with colors and where in the water column those fish hit. NEVER forget that walleye on Lake Erie tend to come up higher in the water column when the sun comes out.. no matter the water temp! For a starting speed, I usually use 1.4mph GPS and do "S" turns once set with lines out in areas where I've marked large fish on my sonar. Set the drags very lightly on your line counter reels with the clickers "on". Even with tattletale flags, a properly set clicker drag will alarm you that something is happening before the flag will. The April seas on Lake Erie can make it hard to read your boards. Typically Ohio waters from Turtle island to the "A" "B" "C" "D" cans around the firing range are where you'll want to concentrate your efforts. That is if your going after the really big girls. If the water temps are nearer 50 deg's you can fish the Bass Islands area. The Bass Islands can afford a lot of cover from directional winds on many days. This will allow you to actually get out and fish where on just open water you wouldn't be able to fish.

Color of the right bait, WILL make a difference in your catch size and amount. At the end of every season, one bait and color will have been the BIG producer for said year. Guess what? It changes every year for me. Why should you be so special? That's part of fishing!! BUT! With a couple years of working at it, you will have a better idea of what to start with and where to look! This is where your GPS becomes invaluable! Use icons, waypoints to pin point locations that were productive! It really only takes two waypoints to give you a trolling path. Icons work also, but their North/West numbers are not as easy to access as waypoints. But icons are a very useful tool! Use them all!!!

If you can get out on the water with two other boats, you can cover extreme amounts of water and get dialed in on size and color of crankbait. Along with speed, location etc. This is one aspect that not many think about. Get plans with other boaters. Decide who is going to cover which areas. Stay in constant contact. This will end up putting more and bigger fish in your boat than anything else. I can't emphasize this enough. Work together. You'll learn more and have a lot more fun in the long run.

Everyone has to be in agreement of what's the plan of the day. If you can get two other boats to work with you, you'll end up with some really great friends and your best fishing years ever! Networking... this is what helps put all the pieces of the puzzle together. Everyone win's.