

Arlington Anglers

Keep it Simple for Smallmouth



Bob Diebold
Arlington Anglers Fishing Club

Just like a lot of sports or professions, it pays to keep your smallmouth tactics simple and not "over think" the situation. Don't fish "dead" water, match the forage, watch the water temperature, and fish for the ones that are active.

At our Arlington Anglers July meeting, Charter Captain Ralph Steiger laid out his tried and true tactics for putting Lake Michigan smallmouth bass consistently into the boat.

In the late winter/early spring when Lake Michigan is still cold, the smallmouth get active early near the warm water discharges. The warmer temperatures/breaks attract bait and game fish. The best quality sized SM are found in the 47-51 degree water. It's also common to catch cohos and brown trout in that same warm water.

During this early spring period you can try fishing along steel walls warmed by the sun. Make short 15-20 yard casts parallel to the walls while making bottom contact. You can also fish in or at harbor mouths where the water is always warmer. When the water is cold, the SM eat 3-4" shad, alewives, and smelt.

Guess what? Use small gray, silver, or natural colored grubs (like the 5 inch Kalin grub in holographic crystal color or a 4 inch Powerbait twister tail in white). Leave the chartreuse or other wild colors at home. Ralph suggests using 8lb. Fluorocarbon on a nice 7 foot rod for easy and long casts. Use 1/4 or 3/8 oz. lead head jigs to make short hops along the bottom. If the SM are aggressive you can use jerk or body bait lures. Vary your retrieve until you determine the SM mood. Try a real fast retrieve and then a real slow/stop/slow retrieve. Use the natural shad, blue/

silver, gray colored lures. As the water warms past 52 degrees, all of a sudden your spring lures will no longer produce.

Ralph highly recommends using Erie Darter plastic lures manufactured by Poor-Boy that closely resemble our favorite invasive species, the GOBIES. The SM love Gobies that are found darting around on the lake bottom and rocks. Use 1/4 oz. lead head jigs (paint them brown) with a 3/0 hook. Use colors that mimic the Gobies like green melon, green pumpkin, sand with white belly, etc.

When the SM get ready to spawn, they start to lose interest in feeding on your lures. Try rattling jerk baits or crank baits with bright colors to get the fish agitated. Another technique for the early summer is drop-shotting. Use a stand-off hooks and smaller, subtle minnow- like baits only 4-5 inches off the bottom.

When the water gets above 60-62 degrees, SM fishing slows greatly. Consider switching Lake Michigan efforts over to salmon or jumbo perch. In the fall October timeframe, SM will get active again for a few weeks when the surface temperature below 60 degrees.

Captain Ralph fishes the south end of Lake Michigan year round, going for the species that is currently "hot." He runs trips for smallmouth bass, salmon, perch, and giant brown trout. He trailers his 21' Crestliner and pulls out of the harbor closest to the fish, from downtown Chicago over to Michigan City. Ralph can be reached at 219-688-3593 or ralphish00@aol.com.

As a reminder, our regular August 18th 7:00 PM meeting will be a Pic-

nic/Cook Out at the Harper College Reservoir (not at Dick's!). The club will provide brats, burgers, and beverages. Please plan to bring a dish to pass, along with your family. Come early to fish or socialize. The cost is \$5 per adult, kids are free.

Dates to remember:; Aug 18 - Club Picnic/Cookout at Harper College Reservoir; Aug 25 • Outing at Chain of Lakes; Sept 15 - Meeting with Speaker; Oct 8-11 - Outing at Clinton Lake Camp Quest.

Come to one of our meetings to find out more about our club, activities and outings.

Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of every month from 7:00 to 9:00 PM. We meet at Dick's Sports Store (Flr.1-NW) near Woodfield Shopping Center in Schaumburg, IL, .5 miles north of Higgins, on Martingale Road. Door prizes, speaker, raffles, fishing reports: Give it a try!

For further information call our President Tom Curtin at 847-639-7858 or visit our website at <http://arlingtonanglers.com>