

# SPoonPLUGGING FOR PERCH IN LAKE MICHIGAN



## GENERAL

- Be forewarned: perch are delicious and addicting! Children enjoy perch fishing also, as there is usually some action and you are moving around a lot.
- Learn about Buck Perry, his life, and discoveries about fish and their behavior. Know your quarry!
- With larger gamefish, trolling Spoonplugs is best to check first. With perch, slower speeds (jump lures and live bait) usually work better.
- Lake Michigan is just a big natural lake with structure, breaks, and breaklines, and perch react like any other fish species to their environment. Use Spoonplugging knowledge to catch them.
- To target bigger perch, use speed and larger lures. Then find the best structures to fish (interpretation).
- Review the 8 areas of knowledge essential to successful fishing: Basic movements, Features, Weather and Water, Lake Types, Interpretation, Controls and Tools, Presentation, and Mental Attitude.
- Safety first, especially on Lake Michigan! Watch the weather and be cautious going out.
- No one is an expert----there is always more to learn.

## SRUCTURE SPECIFICS

- Structure is present in Lake Michigan, but it is larger and more gradual. A graph sounder seems to work best.
- Bars, reefs, humps, breaklines and sharper breaks can be found by those who look closely. Also, temperature breaklines, water color breaklines, and current breaklines can hold fish.
- Look for surface oil slicks, fish on the sounder, presence of birds, and groups of perch boats, all indicating fish are in the area. Check them all out.
- deeper inside turns near shore often seem to hold perch.

---Always look for other perch boats and check them out first. If they are not catching fish, you will have to search for your own fish. Save your spots on GPS.

### **BEHAVIOR SPECIFICS**

---Sometimes fish are seen on the sounder, but cannot be caught. You may have to wait until they become active or leave and come back later. If you know good perch are there, wait them out, as activity times come and go.

---If action stops, check shallower and deeper breaklines. They likely didn't stop biting, they just moved along or to a different breakline.

---Large tall schools of baitfish may be mixed species and not moving much. Look for perch related to them underneath or slightly deeper on the breakline. Check around all schools of baitfish. Perch are their predators!

---Perch are found mostly in 40 to 75 or more feet of water, but stable weather at times could bring them as shallow as 10-14 feet.

### **PRESENTATION SPECIFICS**

---Blade baits are excellent tools to get reflex strikes from perch when they are active. I use a ½ ounce in less than 35 feet, and a ¾ ounce if deeper. #4 treble hooks are a good size for bigger fish. Keep them sharp and add a small square of white cloth on each treble to give perch a target to strike at. Make sure the lure settles on a tight line so you can feel the fish hit. I have caught many good sized perch with the entire treble hook in their mouth.

---I like to use a baitcasting reel, stiff rod, and braided line for best control and feel when casting for perch. Lure weight and stiff rod allow for quick fish removal and return of the lure back to the bottom.

---Vertical jigging is done when the sounder indicates perch are under the boat. Lure vibration and puffs of silt call attention to the lure, advantages live bait does not have. Long and short jumps should be tried to check different speeds.

---Perch schools usually are moving and won't stay long in a spot. Casting out along the breakline allows one to stay in contact with the fish much longer than when just fishing vertically.

---If you get no hits on a jump lure at a spot, cut or live bait should be tried on a perch rig to check the slowest speed. Minnows are the most popular live bait, but perch belly or perch eyes can be used as cut bait. A good supply can be preserved when cleaning perch by sprinkling salt on the pieces and freezing in a plastic bag.

---Can't locate any perch? Put out 2 rods and troll the breaklines for salmon, looking for perch on the sounder. Anytime you see perch, throw a marker, pull in lines, and go back to anchor and cast the spot. Do this even if just a few fish are seen, as sometimes they are scattered or moving along quickly. Heavier jump lures allow you to fancast a large area quickly.

---5 to 15 minutes in one anchored spot with no results is usually long enough. Keep moving and looking.

---Most perch fishing is done from an anchored boat, but one can also drift or use a sea anchor. Dragging the anchor with the motor for short distances also allows one to cover more territory. With the depths being fished, from 100 to 200 feet of anchor rope will be needed.

---On structure that is more discernible like reefs, humps, rocks or sharper breaklines, and with stable weather conditions, traditional Spoonplugging presentation can work well. Trolling the #500 to #250 Spoonplugs on wire

will strain the water down to about 25 feet. In deeper water, the #100, #700, and #800 Spoonplugs on wire can be used with 3-way rigs to take smaller lures down to over 50 feet. JB-1 and JB-2 lures can be used in the same manner to go even deeper. I have caught Perch occasionally on Spoonplugs as large as a #700, but the smaller lures hook more fish.

---The above information is not limited to Lake Michigan, and could be applied to any large glacial lake.

For more information on Spoonplugging, study Buck Perrys' book "Spoonplugging, Your Guide to Lunker Catches".

Online resources include: buckperry.com, nsoa.info, spoonplugger.net, and <http://johnnyb-lures.com/>

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