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JIGGING TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

By MACK'S LURE PRO STAFFER BRIAN GUSTKE



One of my favorite ways to catch walleyes is jigging. Can you get much simpler than a painted piece of lead on a hook? Whether I'm vertical jigging, or casting jigs it doesn't matter; there is nothing like the hand to hand combat with that big elusive walleye.

In today's ever changing fishing world there are probably hundreds of different styles, and shapes of jigs made by just as many different lure manufacturers, and we all have our favorites. When it's time for me to choose the type of jig I'm going use I consider the way I'm going to be fishing that jig. Am I going to be vertical jigging or casting jigs? Here are a few things I do when fishing jigs to help me put more fish in the boat.

When I vertical jig I prefer to use some type of stand up jig. Using a

stand up jig keeps your bait slightly off the bottom making it easier for walleyes to pick the bait up. You want to use a jig just light enough to allow you to remain in contact with the bottom. The use of a 6 to 6 1/2 foot rod with a medium light, fast-to-extra-fast tip is a perfect set up for vertical jigging. Spool up with 8 pound Fireline and you have a perfect set up for vertical jigging. I choose fireline crystal for this application for the extra feel, and the no stretch is great for sure hook sets. When vertical jigging I see lots of people tie a barrel swivel two feet above their jig to help prevent line twist. I believe when using fireline there is no need for a barrel swivel because you don't get the line twist, thus leaving you with less knots to worry about breaking when fighting that "Hog" walleye to the boat. It also helps you retain some of your favorite jigs when you get snagged up.

Your jigging cadence can mean the difference between getting a bite or not. After 6 to 8" lift, pause for 1-2 seconds and then a controlled drop to bottom. You want to just make contact with bottom and then lift again. If you let the jig drag on bottom for too long you begin to snag up. Sometimes you need to vary the speed of this lift and drop action, a

faster lift and then slowly lower to bottom. Many times I often only lower half way to bottom and then back up. This will give your presentation more of a swimming action. I will do this 2-4 times before dropping all the way to the bottom. You want to always be in control of your jig. When vertical jigging I see a lot of fishermen snap their jig up and then just let it free fall to the bottom. There are many times when you will get bit on the fall, and if you just let the jig free fall you will never detect these bites as the fish will spit the jig out before you ever know it was there.

Here in my home state of Wisconsin I see a lot of people vertical jigging in the spring of the year during the annual spring spawning runs. Here a great majority of the walleyes will make runs up the numerous rivers, such as the Wolf, Fox, Wisconsin, and Menominee rivers to spawn. During this time of year the use of a stinger hook when vertical jigging is a must. During the spawning season walleyes will and do feed, but their attention is focused on their duty of procreation. Once the females are on the way back down stream however it's a different story, and the feed bag is on. Granted, many times the big girls will just float and let the current

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take them back to their main lake haunts, but they are eating anything that gets in their way that resembles a meal. The males will hang out in the rivers for several weeks after the spawn and give fishermen some great action.

There are many different applications to cast or pitch jigs as many people call it. For pitching jigs I like to use a 6 1/2 or 7 foot rod, medium-light action with a fast tip. Again I spool up with eight pound fireline. When pitching jigs, I incorporate a 2' leader of fluorocarbon attached to a barrel swivel. My go-to jig is a round head 1/16 to 1/8 ounce jig. Pitch it out there and let it settle to the bottom and then slowly drag it on the bottom back to you. This works really well when fishing any hard bottom such as rocky reefs where you won't be picking up a lot of weeds.

Now when I am pitching into weed cover I do things slightly different. My jig of choice is still a round head 1/16 to 1/8 ounce jig. I will still use my 2' of fluorocarbon leader. Now in front of the jig about 2-3 inches I tie on a slip bobber stop, one or two small beads and then a .8 Mack's Lure smile blade. Now you say why the smile blade? While the smile blade serves a couple of different purposes here. Smile Blades will spin at speeds down to 1/4 mph. That being said it takes very little movement to get that blade spinning. So now you have an added attractant with that blade spinning and thumping in the heavy cover of weeds with only the slightest movement or your rod tip. Plus it will help to deflect the weeds away from your jig, allowing you to keep that jig in the strike zone longer making each cast more effective.

In 2010 watch for the Mack's Lure UV jig, which already incorporates a Smile Blade on the shank of the

hook, this will eliminate the need to make up your own Smile Blade jigs. Fish on!!

A Picture's Worth...

I am sure you have all heard the adage that a picture is worth a thousand words. However if you are like me, I have deleted many a picture from my camera because I thought they were worthless. So what is it that gives a picture its worth? In my opinion it needs to tell the story to whoever looks at it, even when the viewer was not there when the picture was taken. A worthwhile picture makes the viewer say, "Wow! I wish I had been there". If you were there at the time of the picture, you obviously want that picture to help you relive the experience, recapture the memory.

So how do you take a "wow" picture? Well one way to get that question answered is to read a short 3-part article written by hall of fame fisherman Stan Fagerstrom. Here is a link to part 1 of that article. <http://www.mackslure.com/stanarchive/print.asp>. My biggest mistake when taking a picture is, not paying more attention to the background. Thank goodness editing can sometimes help save the day.

We here Mack's Lure would all love to see your "wow" pictures of fish caught with our products. We will gladly add them to our Web site's photo gallery for everyone to enjoy. <http://www.mackslure.com/gallery.asp>. In 2011 we will choose from the best of these photos and select several to be in the next Mack's Lure catalog. Let's make at least one of those photos yours!

Cookin' Your Catch

Beer Batter, Pan-Fried Pike

Ingredients

- 2 lbs. Northern fillets
- 1 lb. bleached flour
- 1 lb. corn meal
- 4 tsp. salt
- 4 tsp. pepper
- 1 12 oz. can of beer
- 1 lb. lard or oil

Preheat lard or oil.

Combine flour, corn meal, salt, pepper, and beer to make batter. Then wash fillets under cold water, and pat dry with paper towel. Dip each fillet into the batter and carefully submerge in the hot oil. Using tongs, remove when golden brown.

Always use extreme caution when working around hot oil or lard in order to avoid severe burns.

The Mack's Lure Smile Blade®

**Now available
in 2.8 & 3.3 inch
sizes...**



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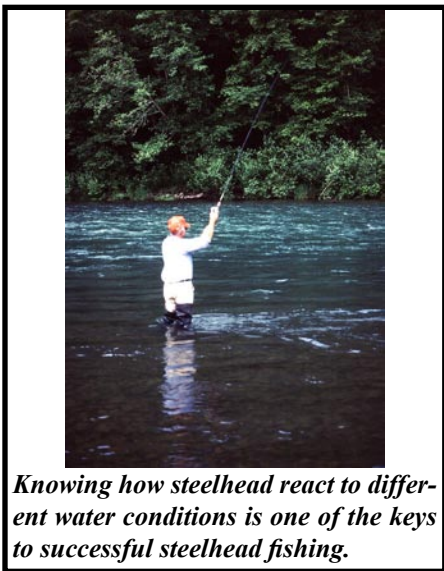
**By Hall-of-Fame Angler
Stan Fagerstrom**

Part 3 of 5

In my last column I wrote about steelhead fishing when the water is rising. This trip let's look at a totally different situation.

If water that's coming up and getting dirty is the worst time for winter steelhead fishing, what are the best water conditions? It's just the opposite and it's something you want to be aware of whenever you're after those hard fighting sea run rainbow.

“The ideal time for steelhead is when the water is dropping and clearing,” one of the Southwest Washington State region's top guides told me once. “I like at least three feet of visibility. That doesn't mean you can't have good fishing with less. What is really important is how many fish are around.”



Knowing how steelhead react to different water conditions is one of the keys to successful steelhead fishing.

That long time guide also made another point that even experienced steelheaders sometimes

forget. “How well you can expect to do when the water starts dropping,” he said, “depends on how long the freshet has lasted. If the rain has been heavy and the river has been high for an extended period, you can bet the fish moved right on through and into the tributaries. If that's the situation, you probably won't get many fish even though you're there when a stream starts to clear and drop.”

This same guide said the ideal situation is to have the river come up fast and drop just as quickly. That way if fish have moved in they will still be there when the water starts down. “Two days up and one day down is ideal,” he said.

Something else you need to keep in mind is that the lures you use can play a major role in steelhead fishing where water conditions are a factor. Certain Mack's Lure products are among them. I'll have more details on that before I wind up this series on steelhead fishing.

Unless I miss my guess you're going to see a lot more emphasis on both steelhead and salmon now that Bobby Loomis is in a leadership role with the Mack's Lure team. The guy knows his river fishing. Again--you'll be hearing more about that in future columns.

Don't overlook the importance of having a good pair of polarized glasses for your steelheading. I've had more than one guide tell me they attempt to impress their clients with how important it is for them to be able to see into the water. I recall one guide who told me he put polarized glasses right up there with his rod and reel in importance.

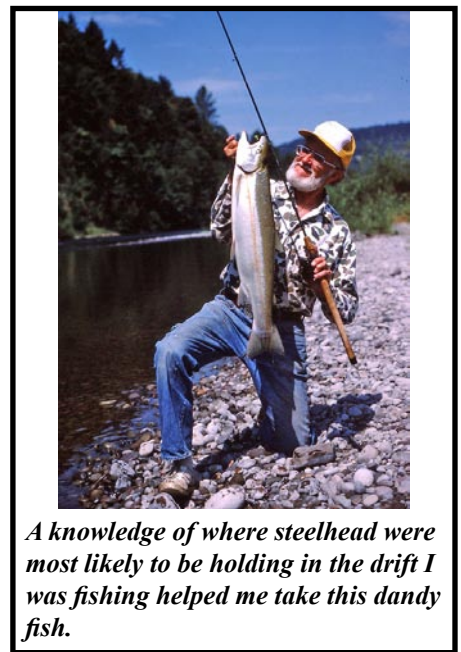
Southwest Washington, the area where I hung my fishing hat most of my adult life, is smack in the middle of some of the Pacific Northwest's finest steelhead fishing. It's not hard

to find to find guides there who are on the water almost daily.

I remember one such man who ran a store and guide service not far from the Cowlitz River dams. He had established a deserved reputation as a cracking good steelhead catcher.

“When you set out to figure a river,” this guide told me, “always pay special attention to where the boulders and rocks are located. But don't, as many fishermen do, fish only behind such cover. Though few realize it, you'll actually catch more fish in front of a boulder than behind it.”

What happens, he said, is that water piles up in front of a big boulder and creates a dead spot. Fish can rest there and often do. This guide also advised newcomers to steelheading to always note what the current is doing because fish change locations in a river as the current varies. “Fish don't quit biting,” he said, “they just move. If you're going to catch very many you have to move with them.”



A knowledge of where steelhead were most likely to be holding in the drift I was fishing helped me take this dandy fish.

I've detailed how a veteran guide operated in high water. Now let's talk about how another expert tack-

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les a low water situation. “The first requirement for low, clear water,” another guide told me, “is to use light tackle. I often go as light as 6-pound test line. My sinkers are ¼-ounce or less.

“I look for slow water alongside fast water. If there’s a bit of a drop off, that’s all the better. Always remember steelhead usually hold in water where they have the least resistance from the current.”

This same expert also had sound advice for the steelheader once he does find an area that he knows has fish. This is especially important when the water is low and clear. “Steelhead have birds feeding on them when they are young and on their way to the sea,” he said, “then there are seals and sea lions trying to eat them when they return as adults. No wonder they get spooky.

“You simply can’t run a drift boat or a jet sled through a hole with the motor roaring and expect to begin catching fish. Make a racket and it will take at least 45 minutes for the fish to calm down enough so they will bite. When you hook a fish the first time through a hole, you know your approach has been as quiet as it should be.”

Careful fishing is a requirement whether you’re fishing from bank or boat. I recall once going out with a fish biologist who loved steelhead fishing as much as I did. When the river was low and clear he always sneaked up to a drift, sometimes on hands and knees, to see if he could spot where fish were holding before he made his first cast.

In my next column I’ll share some additional thoughts on successful steelhead fishing.

-To Be Continued-

Question of the Month

Have a question? We’d love to answer it! Contact us at bob@mackslure.com if you have a question you would like to see featured!

Q: How does the Mack’s Lure forum work and what is it about?

A: The first step to get started is to register. This is only required to prevent potential spam. After you register you are welcome to join in on any of the forum topics, post your questions, upload fish photos or help others with your fishing news and tips. The Mack’s Lure staff and Pro Staff are readily available with a wealth of great fishing Tips & Rigging Techniques to help you become a more successful fisherman. Check the forum out today – you will be glad you did!

Photo of the Month



*Mack’s Lure Guide Staff Willie Ross. Columbia River 1/21/2010
The Dalles, Or slow trolling smile blades, one scale showed 13.2# the
other 14#. I think I need a new weighing device.*

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Photos, stories and comments are welcomed and encouraged. Please forward all content materials to bob@mackslure.com.



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