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BOATING BIG STURGEON

Like 0Tweet 0g+1 0**FishBlood&RiverMud**

Owatonna, MN

Participant

Posts: 1,317

October 22, 2014 at 9:03 am

#1466177

Since the season is over, i'll share what worked well for me this year....and it's quite simple:

Fish where the big fish are, and then wait them out.

THat may sound cliché but...that's what everyone says about every species. Fish where the fish ARE.

I very rarely will drop anchor and fish a spot because it "Looks" good, without first confirming that the area is holding big fish. Great thing about sturgeon in the St. Croix, is they're the biggest fish in the system, and so are their returns on your sonar. I scan an area and drop anchor directly on top of a huge mark. If you spend enough time looking at your sonar, you'll be able to tell when you are marking a BIG fish, versus a walleye, sheephead, smaller cats, etc... AFterall, if you're looking for the biggest sturgeon, you must realize that they're not in every area of every sturgeon hole...and when you do find them, they are significantly larger on your depth finder.

Now that you've found a few big fish on your depth finder, it's time to fish them. Here's where most people use a different tactic than myself; to each their own, but i'll share mine.

I drop anchor vertical...Like straight down. I attach a bungee to my anchor rope to allow the boat to swell up and down without lifting my anchor. The more the wind blows, the less vertical i run my anchor. Even using two bungees to absorb the force of the wind and waves. Yes, my boat will sway, rock, but it'll never budge the anchor. Anyone that knows me, knows i'm not wind shy and will fish sturgeon in 30-40mph wind, right in the wind blown areas...."Sturgeon don't care". This method that i'm about to explain allows me to fish the wind.

Now that my anchor is down, time to fish.

1oz to 2oz weights slipped onto my line. Swivel. 14-24" of leader and an 8/0 circle. Bait that hook with your favorite bait. Now, loft your line away from the boat slightly, like 5' and open the bail. The weight and bait will drop to the bottom (Don't allow it to free fall, do so at a steady rate) and your bait will not helicopter around your weight causing problems. Once the weight has hit the bottom, put your rod in the rod holder. Allow weight to settle into position, it should be exactly below your rod tip, and exactly on the bottom, with zero slack in your line. Rock the boat slightly, and let out line so while the boat rocks, the weight isn't lifting off the bottom. Rarely am i letting out more than 1-3' of line. No, my rod tips aren't bouncing 3', but as the boat sways the weights are dragged around the bottom...Perfect!!

Rods should be orientated in the rod holders so they bounce the least. Depending on the direction the waves hit your boat, your should see a fairly constant rocking action happening, and placed your rods in an area where the tips bounce the least. With bells on your rods, bouncing of the boat should not cause bells to sound. A tap on the rod butt should cause them to sound though.

Ok, so now you're fishing. Weight is either on the bottom, or dragging slightly above it. Bait, drifting 1-2' behind the weight. Current and boat drift keeping the two separated. 2-6 rods spread out around the boat depending on where and how many people you have. BTW, the ONLY reason i do this vertical method of fishing rather than casting out lines is two fold: 1) My line is ALWAYS taut, and i'm ready to detect a sturgeon bite. 2) I don't have to drop two anchors; which allow boat sway anyway, eventually causing slack lines, and then you just aren't fishing effeciently.

#1 pet peeve while sturgeon fishing is slack in your line. You just aren't fishing at this point.

Fishing vertical just flat out doesn't allow slack to happen. The drifting, rocking, bouncing, etc...Isn't deterring any sturgeon bites either. Can have quite a bit of boat sway, as long as your weight is at or near the bottom...Tap tap tap

Set the 40 minute timer and start watching your sonar.

If a sturgeon taps your bait in this setup, you WILL see it in your rod tip, assuming you've done a good job of keeping your line relatively taut all the time. Bells should sound only with a sturgeon 'hit.

When the hit happens, quickly reel until the rod either doubles over, or the bait is dropped. If the bait is dropped, immediately drop your weight back to the bottom. If rod doubles over...YOU've got a SHAKER! Pry that rod out of the rod holder and have some fun!

SHad caught every single fish over 48" for me this year. Also caught fish on sucker, and worms.

So, that's what i did 250 hours over the last 5 weekends...

I've noticed this year and kind of accepted the fact, that these Big fish, are not spread out, but can be quite concentrated at times. More than once has 40 yards been the difference from not only catching fish, but catching big fish. Once you are marking them big fish, make sure you're not drifting past them and your anchor IS holding. The also will move/migrate. I set my timer for 40 minutes on my bird once baits are set, i only renew that timer after landing a fish, or if i'm waiting out some big arcs. If after 40 minutes the big arcs have left, and i have zero bites; i'll pull anchor and scan the surrounding area and drop anchor again on another big arc. One, Two, Maybe Three more times of that and i'm off to the next major holding area to find the big arcs; returning at a different time to see if previously marked areas are ready to bite.

So, sometimes a small move, can be a great move.

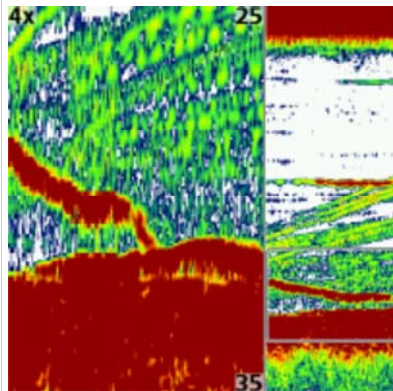


Now, as for watching the sonar. I'll attach some photos of my Bird. Few things i'll point out;

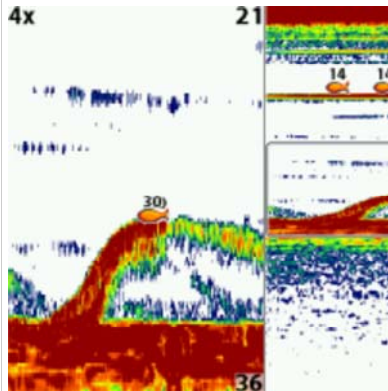
- 1) A big fish on a sonar is identified by the THICKNESS of the return, not the length.
- 2) A big fish that has it's noze to the ground and tail up, is about to slam your bait 😊
- 3) These sturgeon sure do spend a heck of a lot of time suspended!!!! I'm tempted to start leaving 1 line suspended.

Pretty long read, but it'll give you something to think about until next year's hopefully much longer season!!

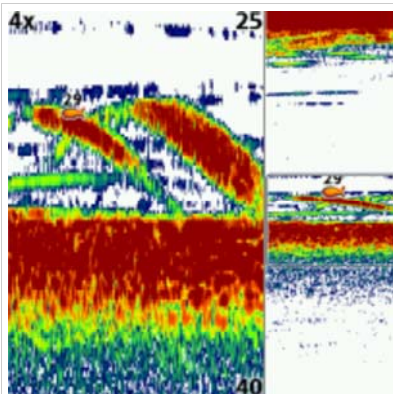
Attachments:



S02045.png



S02028.png



S02038.png



IMG958988.jpg



Steve Root

*Participant*South St.

Paul, MN

Posts: 3,363

October 22, 2014 at 9:38 am

#1466195



Thanks for taking the time to write this up, good read! That's a very different approach than I would have imagined; however all my Sturgeon experience has been on the Rainy. There's no way to anchor vertically on that river unless you have a 400 pound anchor. I remember one year it took 6 or 8 ounces of sinker to hold bottom with your bait!

Can't wait to try some of these idea out.



dfresh

Participant Fridley,
MN
Posts: 2,774

October 22, 2014 at 10:10 am

#1466215

Nice write up! I learned a couple tricks to try next season. Hopefully with my upgraded sonar, I can use some of those tips as well.



James Holst
Minnesota

Keymaster SE

Posts: 16,605

October 22, 2014 at 10:14 am

#1466217

This is a very, very informative article. I know I picked up a number of tricks and tips to try.

Thank you FB&RM!



Brian Klawitter
Lakeland, MN

Keymaster

Posts: 45,162

October 22, 2014 at 10:41 am

#1466233

There is more then one way to skin a sturgeon so to speak. 😊

I've marked this to bump it to the top for next spring...or whenever the season opens.

Thanks for sharing Andy!





Fisherpaul

Participant

Posts: 118

October 22, 2014 at 10:47 am

#1466236

Thanks from me too Andy! Great read!



FishBlood&RiverMud

Owatonna, MN

Participant

Posts: 1,317

October 22, 2014 at 12:36 pm

#1466277

Steve Root wrote:

however all my Sturgeon experience has been on the Rainy. There's no way to anchor vertically on that river unless you have a 400 pound anchor. I remember one year it took 6 or 8 ounces of sinker to hold bottom with your bait!

Can't wait to try some of these idea out.

Definitely an article geared toward the croix.

Here's what i do different on the Rainy due to current:

1) Bungee on anchor, but closer to 45 degree anchor point rather than vertical; i also use a drift sock to reduce boat sway since it affects my way of fishing more to sway when the current is stronger....Yes, i can run a drift sock on the Rainy and hold anchor simply by adding the bungee to my anchor line.

2) Just enough weight and line is closer to 45 degree angle behind the boat.

a) I don't cast out. I drop the line vertical and let it drift back in the current until it hits bottom. With weight on the bottom and rod in rod holder, reel up until weight is suspended. Then open bail until bait hits bottom. Basically at this point the water resistance on the line is pretty much barely allowing your weight to rest on the bottom. Neutrally boyant, but on the bottom. Theres a reason for this..

b) Every 5 minutes, open your bail. If line immediately goes slack, then your on the bottom and your line is free of debris. It is just as you left it...Good. If you open you bail and line comes out – your weight drops a foot or so; then you've collected debris and your lure was suspended because of the increases water resistance from the debris.

c) WWhen fishing in debris (Which can be tested in item B above) i usually am cleaning my gear off every 15 minutes or more depending on item B above. The more line i need to let out due to increased line resistance, the more frequently i'm cleaning my rig.

I believe this helps on the Rainy because if you use too much weight, and the boat sways, the weight will get pulled closer to the boat, and then when the boat sways back the other direction, your weight will stay put, but your line will bow between the weight and the rod....OR your leader length will increase from your weight to your bait...Neight is good at

all...Basically if you run a long leader in heavy current, your bait flutters about. COncersly, if there is bow in your line from the weight to the rod, a sturgeon has to take at least that much line for you to feel the bite. Good luck with that.

SO that's what i do up there to be sure my line is tight, boat is swaying the least it can, and having the rod in the rod holder allows me to drink beer and laugh at everyone who's getting their butts kicked from their first sturgeon!!!

I by no means have figured out these fish. They still continue to prove me stupid from time to time. But these are some of the tactics i use to help catch them when they want to be caught.

**boone**

Woodbury, MN

Participant

Posts: 515

October 22, 2014 at 12:38 pm

#1466278

FBRM,

I've been following you posts this past sturgeon season and found them very informative and interesting. I think the best thing I learned from you was to simply start reeling when you get a bite. I always use to try to slowly lift rod out of the holder before reeling to set the hook. My hook-up percentage was pretty good this season... much better than past years. What surprised me on a couple of sturgeon was how slack the line went a couple of times. I thought for sure I had missed them and when I was reeling up to put new bait on, surprise, they were there. I have no where near the number of sturgeon you caught, but I actually did as well with crawlers as shad this year, even late in the season.

From BK I learned to not be afraid to fish deeper. I seasons past I would rarely fish deeper than 35 feet. 45 – 50 feet of water just use to seem so deep to me that I'd never fish it but that's the depth I caught nearly all my sturgeon and channel cats this year.

Now I'm hoping for a good walleye night bite on the Mississippi this fall.

Thanks

**FishBlood&RiverMud**

Owatonna, MN

Participant

Posts: 1,317

October 22, 2014 at 12:52 pm

#1466283

boone wrote:

FBRM,

What surprised me on a couple of sturgeon was how slack the line went a couple of times. I thought for sure I had missed them and when I was reeling up to put new bait on, surprise, they were there.

I think they're picking up the bait and then suspending. Many times for me this year too. Just gotta keep reeling. I swear several times this year the rod hasn't doubled over until the fish was half way to the surface.

I wouldn't put a ton of weight in my statement about shad and fish over 48"...Shad was what i primarily used, so it makes sense my catch rates reflected that.

Glad you guys got something out of this.

I certainly don't mind sharing tactics or spots for a catch and release species.... Often told someone i don't know to drop anchor right next to me because they were biting. However, let me know your going to harvest a sturgeon – and i'll never let you know where to find em. Just how I am.



Brian Klawitter

Lakeland, MN

Keymaster

Posts: 45,162

October 22, 2014 at 1:12 pm

#1466287

However, let me know your going to harvest a sturgeon – and i'll never let you know where to find em. Just how I am.

I think there are a number of us that say “Just how I am” more so when it comes to Sturgeon.

I declined trips for LS (even though the chance of catching a 60" is small) to people that indicate they are going to keep on. It's just too young of a fishery in my mind.



yummysuskie

ParticipantA

River.

Posts: 50

October 22, 2014 at 2:27 pm

#1466312

good read, i employ many of the same tactics myself, basically started doing it this year, and on the windiest day i also caught my biggest, really the only think i do different is anchor.

FishBlood&RiverMud

Participant





Owatonna, MN

Posts: 1,317

October 27, 2014 at 1:35 pm

#1467562

yummymuskie wrote:

good read, i employ many of the same tactics myself, basically started doing it this year, and on the windiest day i also caught my biggest, really the only think i do different is anchor.

It wasn't windy that day!!!!

LOL.

Was fun watching you guys get worked! Heck of a evening!

**Ralph Wiggum**

MN

Participant Maple Grove,

Posts: 6,499

October 30, 2014 at 10:31 am

#1468522

Great read. What are you using for an anchor (maybe I missed that)? I'm guessing heavy.

**FishBlood&RiverMud**

Owatonna, MN

Participant

Posts: 1,317

October 30, 2014 at 10:49 am

#1468532

I just use a 30# anchor. Nothing too excessive.

I have also used the waterspike with this method too. But that requires more rope and thus greater swaying (Unless you're in current and can use a drift sock)

**Brian Klawitter**

Lakeland, MN

Keymaster

Posts: 45,162

October 30, 2014 at 11:20 am

#1468540

Water Spike here.

..and there are many places on the Croix it just won't hold. Shale bottom areas mostly.

I've had 100 feet of rope out with the spike in sand and have been wind blown well off my "spot".



cougareye

Hudson, WI

Participant

Posts: 3,751

October 30, 2014 at 11:31 am

#1468547

FBRM,

Thanks for posting this article. I need to upgrade several of my tactics and I like the vertical presentation idea. One question though, with 4-6 rods out, do you get tangled much once a fish is on? Or is this where fast acting fishing partners come in?

ET



FishBlood&RiverMud

Owatonna, MN

Participant

Posts: 1,317

October 30, 2014 at 11:48 am

#1468549

cougareye wrote:

FBRM,

Thanks for posting this article. I need to upgrade several of my tactics and I like the vertical presentation idea. One question though, with 4-6 rods out, do you get tangled much once a fish is on? Or is this where fast acting fishing partners come in?

ET

Haha.

If it's just me, then it's only two or three rods, but I run heavier rods and horse in anything under 4' long. Anything over 4' long and I'm trying to reel in other rods while maintaining control of a double over rod.

I mostly hate pulling anchor, so no wimpy rods allowed in my boat.



Channel cats, while your sleeping are the absolute worst for tangling vertical lines. Little b**tards can make a guy mad when a 20" cat eats two of your lines and tangles into the third! Of course that only happens when I hear a bell go off and just don't want to open my eyes @3am lol.

Having a fishing partner sure helps getting lines up.



FishBlood&RiverMud

Owatonna, MN

Participant

Posts: 1,317

October 30, 2014 at 11:55 am

#1468551

Brian Klawitter wrote:

Water Spike here.

..and there are many places on the Croix it just won't hold. Shale bottom areas mostly.

I've had 100 feet of rope out with the spike in sand and have been wind blown well off my "spot".

Here's what I used to do with my waterspike...

Tie a 10# anchor 15' from your waterspike, and then run line from the 10# to your boat cleat.

To deploy, slowly drop waterspike to the bottom, once you feel like it hit bottom, slowly let out more line until your 10# hits bottom, raise it off the bottom slightly and drift or back up until your waterspike holds, then drop your 10# to the bottom, let out some rope and tie to cleat.

The 10# anchor 15' from the waterspike acts like 30' of chain... It keeps the angle of pull on your waterspike in a downward position. The 10# also lifts off the bottom when a big wave lifts your bow, acting like a cushion or bungee.

Anyway, that only works if you are on a bottom content that allows the waterspike to hold.

Need less rope out too.

When I used to run a rear anchor, I'd pull the front one tight until the 10# was off the bottom... That's zero movement anchoring



Brian Klawitter

Lakeland, MN

Keymaster

Posts: 45,162

October 30, 2014 at 12:15 pm

#1468558



I'm just going to get a 50' Power Pole.



FishBlood&RiverMud

Owatonna, MN

Participant

Posts: 1,317

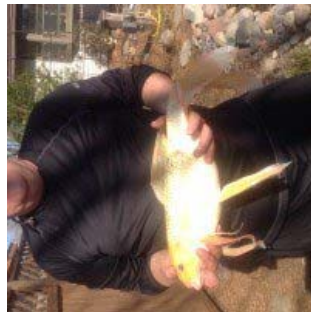
October 30, 2014 at 1:55 pm

#1468600

Or 50' sea legs 😊

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