

## Sight-fishing

What I'm about to share with you is a concept I use to catch fish when the bite is strong and when it gets tough. No rhyme or reason, no method of madness. Simplicity in it's purest form. Sometimes it works and sometimes I end the day thinking I was a fool for chasing ghosts and not targeting areas I should have, all depends on the results. Sounds ideal right? Well if nothing else it's a change from the norm and gets me moving, exploring and trying different things.

There's something awfully interesting about a splash in the water that sounds like a cinderblock being dropped from 4 stories up. Known to procure a holy schmoly or two when it happens, it's indescribable when you have the "cinderblock" reeling line off your spool. I call it sight-fishing, some probably call it common sense. The point is, a majority of the time, when something jumps out of the water it's usually trying to get away from something or trying to eat something. Both good signs for a smallie fisherman. When something breaks the surface and I'm in the vicinity my complicated brain interprets that as the fish trying to tell me he wants to have his picture taken with me. It is probably the easiest way to catch fish. I do it automatically when I'm fishing in my normal fashion but there have been a few occasions where all I've done is walked for hours looking for activity. Needless to say I've had some nice "on the water" photoshoots in doing so.

It's probably not the best approach for early spring, but the rest of the year it's as close to a guarantee as you get. Go back to the reason why a fish breaks the surface and you have an actively feeding fish that is telling you where he is. It almost takes the most fun part of fishing away, locating them! What remains is presenting the right bait in the right fashion and, here comes the boring part, catching it. Here are some specific's of what I look for in deciding the obvious, or just more common sense if you will. Minnows jumping, fish smacking the top and the wake of a big fish entering a shallower area get's me thinking of Jaws' with the fin encircling the boat before he takes a chomp or two. Before I go on now seems an appropriate time to bring up the presenting in the right fashion part. No matter what kind of activity I notice I always try to cast at least 5 feet beyond it for a couple of reasons. First being that something landing directly on top of a fish has a funny way of spooking them whether they're hungry or not. Second is to make sure I have a few seconds to adjust my retrieve so I can bring the bait directly through the area the fish is in and the portion of the water column I desire. When minnows break the surface it tends to dictate they're trying to avoid being eaten. I think of this as a good time to throw something that has a resemblance to a minnow, or better yet a real live one. The next is a fly-fishermans' dream, fish smacking the top for bugs and other assorted fish foodstuffs that happen to find their way into the water. My personal go-to for this occasion is a floating lizard but a close second is the storm topwater pictured in my March article. Both will produce well, simply a matter of personal preference. The hardest one of these is following the wake of something large. This least likely to produce scenario usually takes more than one cast and doesn't guarantee an actively feeding fish, just guarantee's something is moving around. More often times than not this is a carp or esox in which case I don't waste my time pursuing unless I have the right gear. However, if something leads me to believe this is a smallie, a shallow running crankbait cast in front of the direction the wake is moving is what has worked for me. I like silver or gold minnow floaters or some type of crawdad bait that doesn't sink too quickly. This is the most important time to have a bait that will attract the attention and trigger the strike, think flash and/or rattle.

Now for the humorous reality of this approach. I cannot recall how many hours I have spent mentally preparing myself for the fish of a lifetime only to experience the disappointment of a lifetime when I find a big brown scale on the end of my hook. For all those fun filled moments that add up to days spent chasing our good friend Mr. Carp, when you end up with Mr. B. Hawg Smallie on the end of your line making your drag scream some high pitch you thought only possible of a electronic musical instrument, your heartbeat will be enough to blow up an EKG machine and the circuit breaker it's hooked to. So for those who are clinically diagnosed as bi-polar or those who are faint of heart you may want to try something else, but for someone who wants the thrill of something exploding on the end of your line like it was just dropped from 4 stories up give it a try and you won't be disappointed!