

Who Needs a Boat? Try Shoreline and or Wading Instead!

Note from Fin-tech Tackle: Bob Santangelo is an active guide on the IL Kankakee River area. We received countless emails from Bob sharing his daily catch totals and countless pictures of big fish using our Title SHot Jig fishing from shore. We asked Bob if he would be interested in writing a article about his successful shoreline/bank fishing techniques/presentations to share with our customers who don't have a boat or would like to try bank fishing, without hesitation, he agree to do it. Thank you Bob!

Why is jig fishing, or any fishing for that matter, only associated with boating? Well I don't know but for those of you who think you cannot catch fish from the bank, from shore lines, or while wading in the water, you don't know what you are missing.

Try the following subtle tips, and they will translate into a huge disadvantage for the fish, resulting in more hook ups for you! Here is how you micro manage your fishing techniques to produce more fish without a boat.

I am a Fishing Guide and the Senior Product R&D Testing Engineer for a tackle manufacturer. Last season, I registered 1386 smallmouths in only a seven month season. Countless numbers of largemouths, walleyes, and Title SHot Jigs with plastics was the staple on the menu I offered to the fish each time I was on the water. You might be surprised to learn less than 2% of that time I was fishing from a boat.



8 lb Title Shot Jig Head 12X – Fin-tech

Normally I wade or bank fish on rivers, streams, creeks, and lakes.

This method has proven time and time again you can produce large fish and large numbers of fish, 53 smallmouths was my best one day outing of the season using a jig in this case without a boat. Now don't misunderstand me, I own a boat but I choose not to use it 98 percent of the time where I fish.

Learn to Read the Water

My best advice is look for the irregularities off the bank, shore line or in the water. In moving water, look for something out of place in the water that changes the normal look of the water flow, like structure, or

contour changes to the natural bank, and/or bottom. Even the direction of the way the water flows differently or creates a different current direction can be a key spot. I keep an eye out for wood, down trees, rock, boulders, rock bars, sand bars, and unnatural junk in the water. Here is where fish love to ambush prey. Remember to hit all sides of these areas, front, back, left, and right usually there is a hollow out area beside this structure from water flow where fish sit and wait.

Slow Down

My experience has shown me there is a great advantage to bank fishing.

Better yet, the combination of both shoreline fishing and wading accomplishes something many boat anglers will not do while they are zipping along with a trolling motor. That is to slow down ENOUGH to capitalize on the other fish that just need a little coaxing with some meticulous jigging or whatever bait the fish are biting on. My experience, especially in rivers, has been smaller fish will bite first before the larger ones in the group will. So I recommend when you catch a fish, hang around and fish that spot more methodically. You may get several more fish and the largest of the group to bite.

Wind can be the Indicator

If you don't know where to start, head to the windiest shoreline first. The baitfish will follow the food source that is blown there and big fish follow them.



Title Shot Monster X – Fin-tech

Establishing a Pattern

Another advantage of bank or wade fishing is after you land that first fish, don't move from that spot, hold your position. Establishing what the cadence of the lure was, where it was, what speed it was running, and repeating that process, establishing a pattern that will catch you more fish. Now you can move on to other sections and do it all over again and effectively catch more fish. Reworking a spot in a moving boat makes that near impossible without help of a GPS to repeat placing your bait through the same strike zone which may only be a three by three foot area.

Improve Your Sense of Feel

Feel is a required skill. You must be able to detect the strikes when they happen. Some clients cannot pick up using a jig and tube without missing the first 20 fish. Heck, I still miss fish sometimes! An extra

improvement that can help increase the sense of feeling is your equipment. Note, if you take a Title SHot Jig head, reel it over the bottom and can't identify what it is you're bumping against, on, or over, you need to make a change. I use a seven plus foot graphite St. Croix rod in combination with a superline like FireLine. I then attach a three foot piece of fluorocarbon leader. That truly gives me that added benefit of more feel, but the FireLine is really the key as far as improving your sense of feel so try it and see for yourself.

Being Grounded

For less experienced or anglers unfamiliar with jig fishing, standing on solid, stable ground, in or out of the water, gives you a better sense of feel than from a moving boat. For some, detecting line movement will be easier before you actually feel the fish pick up the lure if you're standing still. This will give you an added benefit.

Heavier Weighted Jigs

An alternative I found helpful with feel is to use a heavier weighted jig head. I most always use a 1/4 ounce size {which is really too heavy} as my standard preference. It's obvious if the fish are on a jig bite they are feeding closer to the bottom but remember always never applies in fishing! Again don't rule out swimming a jig or experimenting with the cadence of your lure presentation. This can and will make all the difference in the bite.

Stick Around a While

How many times have you seen in rivers, traditional bass fishermen with bass boats, using trolling motors, anchoring their boats? Not too many times! There must be some unwritten rule when using a trolling motor, you must keep covering a lot of water searching for actively feeding fish. Question - why would you leave fish to find fish? Well at some point it's critical you have to move on. But don't rush off when you catch one fish, slow down and reap the rewards.

Underwater Sound

Here is something interesting with boating. There are trolling motors, depthfinders, flashers, electric graphs, aerators, all translating into sound. Sound travels five times faster under the water than in air and I have heard it first hand. Believe me it spooks the fish. Having earned the distinction as a master diver certified by the best diving organization in the world, PADI (Professional Association of Diving Instructors), I have spent a considerable amount of time under water. This is an extreme advantage for you if you are on the bank or standing in the water. Be quiet, you will catch more fish.

Above Water Sound & Vibration

While we're on the subject, what about sound travel above the water? Have you ever walked up to a bank and spooked a decent size fish? The vibration of your body weight transmits through the ground as far off as some 40-50 feet from the shore line. I have found it to be true and quite obvious, you can simply manage your movement with a more sense of stealth. I literally step lighter when drawing nearer to the bank. I may even cast forty yards before I even reach the bank just to cover the zones closest to the bank first so I don't spook the fish there hunting prey.

Consider Two Presentations

Here is a helpful hint I think increases my hook up ratios - carry two rods, yes even while wading. Either a spinning rod and a fly rod or two spinning rods. How many times have you been distracted and missed a fish picking up your bait? I take out that second rod and fire in another presentation and am ready to set the hook. I would guess a minimum of 50% of the time I reconnect up with that same fish. It's definitely a plus having two fishing rods rigged and ready to go!

Water Level Fish Location

Here is a comment you may find surprising pertaining to rivers, creeks and streams. Fish will position themselves based on where the water level is. Whether you believe this or not, especially in current conditions, the water level in rivers tell me where to find the fish. Where I come from, that's how you succeed in catching more fish. By knowing where the fish are in relation to water level. I monitor websites for water levels and it is the deciding factor the night before where I'm going to fish.

Know the Waters you Fish

Do your homework. That's a key factor. Only a few people and they're associates of mine know this water as well as I do in the bodies of water I fish in. This is how you eliminate 90% of the non-productive water. For some reason, normal fish hold to a spot, so it's your job to find out what the reason is! That translates into knowing where every medium or large rock is; every large bolder; every wood log; brush pile, pile of unmoveable junk; every drop off; and where every substantial bottom contour change is located.

Work the Night Shift Light Shy Fish

My final suggestion to not rule out is to work the night shift. First take a look at the picture posted with this article of the eight plus pound largemouth. I have a proven theory you may want to consider. The largest fish only get large because of their aging instincts and they're experience to make the correlation between fishing pressures and between sunrise and sunset hours. So many large fish primarily feed at night, which is particularly true with big smallmouths. I have found them to be light shy and actively feeding only at night. Of course there are exceptions to everything. Yet most of my 18 plus inch smallmouths were taken in low light or in the cover of darkness. Of course everything is relative; in some bodies of water, the oxygen levels drop at night due to the lack of sunlight and fish aren't as active. In my area, I walk through waist deep water, in a large river, in current, at 3AM in the morning. You may think I'm insane, but case in point, I never see one person on the water at this time in the morning. As long as you know where you're going, and you're familiar with your surroundings, you need to go where the fish are, to catch them! Yet this particular night, catching an eight pound bass from the bank was not a fluke by any means. Admittedly, eight pounds was unusually big, however I have caught 16, seven plus pound largemouths this year, countless six plus pound largemouths, and so many five pound large mouths I've lost track. I've also caught big catfish and walleyes, all in low light or at night, all of which are documented with photographs so no fish stories here folks. Years ago, another guide turned me on to my first night experience with 5 inch wooden jitter bugs for smallmouths and I have been experimenting with them ever since.

Don't Rule Out the Weather

Other than lightening and thunder preventing me from being on the

water, bad weather days can be very productive fish days. Like night fishing, many anglers rule out bad weather because let's face it, it's bad. However, I have caught a large quantity of big fish, on rainy, windy, cloudy, gloomy days and have had a ball catching a lot of fish from the bank. So remember to give it a try!

CPR

Catch, Photograph, and Release. The greatest gift any angler can give to this sport is to release those fish he catches, particularly the large trophy size ones. With a little luck, some other angler can have a memory of a lifetime he can share with family and friends forever! Instead of keeping the fish, I now carry a tape measure and camera. Then I record the length, the girth, and take a picture to document the fish's actual detailed colors. Then if you choose, you could have an accurate replica created. Besides, unlike natural skin mounts, replica colors never fade, they look more life like, and will last forever.

Last, we cannot keep taking from the resources without giving something back. Anglers should take the time to volunteer for water way clean-ups, help your local DNR in their stocking programs, and bank restorations. Do something to help improve the fishing habitat. If fishing does not attract tourism in your area and generate revenue for your state's economy, then chances are your state's fishery budget is shrinking every year. So bring the kids, get them involved, and lend a helping hand. If you have any questions or would like any further information you can contact Bob at: krvguideservice@sbcglobal.net.

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