

OF THE OUTDOORS:

For Better Fishing, I Suggest Using A Jig

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When it comes to choosing the correct tackle to buy and use, there are so many different types that fisherman use, at times, it can be down right confusing.

There are spinners, spinnerbaits, buzz baits, crankbaits, live bait rigs and the list goes on and on.

Over the years, I know I've thrown almost every imaginable type of bait and at one time or another caught fish on all of them.

If I would have to choose just one-bait that would catch all species of fish, I'd have to say, I'd choose a jig!

And the reason for this would be simple! A jig can be used year around, Spring, Summer, Fall and even in the Winter to catch "ALL" species of fish.

Pretty simple decision really, it works and it's my "Go To" bait, the bait I generally like to start fishing with.

If you look at a jig, it's not what you'd call really sophisticated bait, nothing more than a hook with a piece of lead attached to its shank.

Put simply, a jig is nothing more than a bait delivery system, it gets your bait into the fish catching zone.

What makes a jig so effective is that it can be fished in so many ways.

Listed below are a few of the ways a jig can be fished in the spring.

Spring Jigging Methods

- Casting jigs tipped with minnows up along the shoreline is a great way to take walleye and sauger. Look for spots along the rocks where a slack water pocket is created, an area where the fish can lie out of the current.

- Use a jig tipped with a minnow and jig it vertically as you slowly work along the breaks for walleye and sauger. If the fish are biting short or dropping your bait, add a stinger hook to the back of your jig.

- For Smallmouth Bass try casting a smaller jig and pig into those pockets in the weeds that lie along the shoreline. These could be spots where a beaver or muskrat came in and out of the water. These pockets in the weeds are ideal spots for Smallmouth to lie in wait for lunch to drop in.

- Largemouth Bass will be tucked in or alongside of beaver dams, downed timber and other natural pockets. Try pitching a larger jig & pig into these areas as in the spring these shallower water areas will be warmer and the bass will congregate there.

- To take Pike during the spring, try pitching a larger jig and pig combination up into the emerging vegetation and then retrieve it with a steady pumping action, allowing it to hop over the top of the weeds. It's a good idea when fishing for Northern Pike to add some type of a leader in front of the jig.

- Crappies and other panfish can be taken in the spring with a small jig tipped with a small minnow or Powerbait suspended underneath a slip bobber. Cast the rig up close to downed brush or along a boat dock as these places attract panfish as they pre-

pare to spawn.

By dressing up your jig with live bait, crawlers, leeches, minnows or some sort of plastic bait, it will give them a little action and added scent.

When I'm jigging, I try to use the lightest jig possible, which can be a 1/32nd ounce in calm shallow water or a 1/2 ounce jig in deeper water or in heavy current.

There are micro jigs used for trout and panfish up to 1/32nd ounce and the 1/8th & 3/8th ounce jigs used for walleyes and bass. Then there are the really big boys, the several ounce or larger used for the big fish like the pike, lake trout and the salt-water species.

You'll want to fish with the lightest jig you're comfortable with, to some it's 1/8th while others prefer a heavier weight jig.

Like the many different weights that jigs come in, the colors you'll find jigs available in is unlimited.

I have a simple rule for fishing jigs in shallow clear water. In clear water, I use a more of a natural color jig.

In deeper darker water, I'll go with a florescent jig, as fluorescents hold their color better at deeper depths.

If it's a bright day, I'll go with a light colored jig and on a dark day, I'll go with dark colored bait as it gives me a contrast against the sky and fish all feed up, so it's easier for them to zero in on the bait.

From one day to the next, it's hard to figure out what color will turn the fish on, so I like to use a multiple colored jig head, especially when I'm fishing for walleyes.

I'll use a combination fluorescent green, orange and chartreuse jig head or a Firetiger color a lot. This way, I feel that I have a better chance the bait I have down there has at least one color that will turn the fish on.

The key to using jigs productively is to fish them often

and to fish them on a tight line, which means, don't allow any slack line.

If you have slack line when your line drops, a fish can inhale and suck your jig in, spitting it out so quickly you won't even know you had a pick up. This is why you need to fish with a tight line.

When I say keep a tight line, I mean that you shouldn't let your jig just fall to the bottom. Keep your line tight, following the jig down, which keeps you in contact with your bait and there's no slack line.

Jigs are truly simple bait, nothing fancy, easy to use really remarkable bait that works in all conditions and the only way a person can

use a jig wrong is to "Not" use them.

When all else fails, tie on a jig, tip it with live bait or your favorite plastic bait, cast it out and then hold on, because it's going to catch fish no matter how you fish it!

Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is the president of Outdoorsmen Productions LLC


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