

OF THE OUTDOORS:

Spring Is The Time To Snag Big Fish

BY GARY HOWEY
Hartington, Neb.



Gary Howey

Spring means, warmer weather, longer days and the time of the year when you'll have your best chance to take a big fish.

The reason for this isn't too hard to figure out as this is the time of the year when most species spawn, so the females are now full of eggs and at their heaviest.

A spring bite is not a real aggressive bite, but there're a lot of trophy fish to be taken this time of the year.

The walleyes and their smaller cousin, the sauger will spawn when water temperatures hit that mid forties while largemouth bass won't spawn until temps hit the mid sixties.

When water temps reach the mid forties, walleye and sauger will start to spawn along gravel and rocky areas in the shallower water.

As the shallow water starts to warm, the females will move shallow, followed "very" closely by the males.

There could be several males pursuing the ripe female, while bumping the side of the female, they'll emit their milt, fertilizing the eggs, completing the spawning process.

The female then moves

off into deeper water to recuperate, while the males hang around, keeping a sharp eye out for another receptive female

that might arrive.

Walleye and sauger are what we call random spawners, which means that once the eggs have been fertilized they're on their own as neither parent waits around for the fry to hatch.

The main thing needed in order for walleye and sauger to have a successful hatch is highly oxygenated moving water and once the walleye and sauger have spawned, the fertilized eggs are now at the mercy of Mother Nature.

If all goes well, and some predator doesn't gobble the eggs up, the fry will appear in about two weeks.

Bass, on the other hand, spawn differently than walleye and sauger. Like other members of the sunfish family, they build nests in the shallow water, usually in an area having a firm bottom made up of sand gravel, rock or mud.

Using their tail, the male

fans out a slight depression or nest, removing any silt or other debris.

This is why when you catch a male bass it's tail will be roughed up or worn off this time of the year.

Their nests are generally two to three feet in diameter and can be found nestled in between cattails and rushes or on the sunny side of a stump or other underwater debris.

As with other species of fish, the female moves up into the nest where the male bumps against her fertilizing the eggs being depositing into the nest.

At that time, the female will move off to either drop into deep water to rest or go onto the next nest to deposit the remainder of her eggs.

Male bass will hang near the nest, oxygenating the eggs by fanning them with its tail and chasing off any intruders, including other members of the sunfish family (Bluegill and Green Sunfish), as they become a prime predator on the bass nests this time of the year.

When the fry emerge, which is about two days with the right temperature, they'll hang around the nest with their father until they're about an inch long and able to navigate around the nest on their own.

This is when Mother

Nature pulls one of her meanest tricks, as the last thing the father will do before leaving the nest is to gobble up as many of its young as possible, chasing them out of the nest to be on their own.

I guess that this is the way that young bass are welcomed into the real world and to find out from this point on, they can't trust anyone, not even their own father.

Since bass nest in shallow water, an excellent way to fish for them in the spring is by sight fishing.

Under some conditions, wind action and glare make it hard to see the nests; this is where I rely on ONO's polarized sunglasses, which cuts the glare off the water, allowing me to see the bass and their nests.

After locating the nest, I'll pitch a jig and pig or plastic worm out from the nest and slowly work it into the nesting area.

Once the male spots the intruder, he'll charge the bait, often times just picking the intruder up and moving it out of the nest.

By using polarized glasses, I can see the bass pick up the bait long before I detect the bite, allowing me to set the hook before the fish spits the bait.

No matter what species of fish you're after this time

of the year, what we need to remember is to put those big spawners back as they are the future of fishing.

There's no problem with taking one for the wall, but as far as eating every fish we catch no matter what size it is, "not a good idea!"

It may seem as if the number of fish is endless, but the fact is that everything cycles and if we keep those big spawners at a time when numbers are low, somewhere down the road it's bound to hurt the numbers.

Take a picture and put it back as fishing in the future may depend on it.

Spring is the time of the year we've all been waiting for when you can finally get out on the water and this could be your opportunity to and catch that fish of a lifetime.

Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is a syndicated columnist whose articles appear in publications throughout the upper Midwest. For more information on the outdoors go to www.outdoorsmenadventures.com.

Dining & Entertainment

New York Strip Steak
12 Oz. USDA Choice
Includes Salad Bar,
Dessert Bar & Potato
\$12.99
Ends April 30th, 2010
Best Steak In Town!
JoDeans.com
Yankton • 605-665-9884
OPEN SEVEN DAYS A WEEK



SELL IT SOONER! with **CLASSIFIED ADS**

Ad deadline is Friday Noon for Tuesday's publication.
Payment must accompany ad.
Use this convenient form to submit your ad to us for publication.
(One word per blank.)

Select Publications:
(Per Week Charge)

Missouri Valley Shopper (\$8.35/15 words; 30¢/word after 15) _____
Reaches 22,000 homes

Combo into the Broadcaster/Plain Talk (\$4.55/15 words; 30¢/word after 15) + _____
Combination reaches 35,000 homes

Combo into the Norfolk Area Shopper (\$4.95/15 words; 15¢/word after) + _____
Combination reaches 68,000 homes

Ultimate 8 - 8 papers (\$43.70/15 words; \$1.50/word after 15) + _____
Broadcaster Press/Missouri Valley Shopper/Norfolk/Albion/Columbus/
Freemont/Penny Press/Plain Talk

Bold Face Type (\$3.00): _____ Photo (\$5.00): _____ + _____

Number of Weeks to Run Ad: x _____ + _____

TOTAL COST: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____

Check _____ Visa _____ MasterCard _____ Exp. Date: _____

Credit Card Number: _____

Signature: _____