

# Try blade baits on tentative autumn walleyes

**They are not eager to feed until water gets slightly colder**



Ted Peck

These four walleyes and a sauger (middle) were caught on blade baits in Lake Koshkonong earlier this month.



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serious flotilla of watercraft has foregathered recently from the tip of Blackhawk Island up to the VFW flats upstream from Lake Koshkonong almost every day for the past couple of weeks.

Every now and then a fish comes over the gunnel of one of these boats. Most often the fish is a white bass. But every now and then a string gets stretched by a coveted walleye.

Does one airborne walleye every 20 minutes in a fleet of 20 boats constitute

hot action? I don't think so. But fish activity will soon increase dramatically when the weather starts to turn obnoxious and water temperatures drop another five degrees.

Walleyes don't get truly serious about upstream migration in the fall until the water temperature falls to 46 degrees. We're not quite there yet.

Until the water cools just a little more, you might have better luck goading fish to strap on the feedbag with a striking presentation rather than a feeding one.

A fathead or rosy red minnow on a ¼-ounce gold or orange jighead or livebait crawled along the bottom with a Lindy rig using a 3/8-ounce walking sinker and a 24-30-inch leader will be a solid presentation option in another week or so.

For the short haul, you might want to think outside the standard tackle box and fish with plastic tails or hair jigs on a much lighter jighead. In that case, cast a lure like the No. 5 ShadRap in blue/white pattern—or show 'em the blade.

Finding consistent success on walleyes using blade baits like the Dude or Echotail begins with a leap of faith. The concept that a hunk of metal might be more appealing to a walleye than a live, wriggly minnow just doesn't seem logical.

This reasoning is sound if fish are chowing down in an active feeding presentation. This isn't happening. At least not yet.

But put a trigger bait like a blade in front of those opaque eyeballs and a walleye might not realize it has made a fatal mistake until it's too late.

This is especially true right now with a large percentage of the Rock's walleye biomass hovering right around the 15-inch legal mark.

These fish come from the banner 2013 class. In a recent fish survey on the Rock and Koshkonong, DNR fisheries biologist Laura Stremick-Thompson cranked up an amazing 104 walleyes per mile. Many of these were 13-15 inches long, indicating membership in the Class of '13.

There is a world of difference between 15-inch walleyes and fish just a couple of inches longer. Many fish just shy of the 15-inch keeper threshold aren't yet convinced that a hook is a bad thing, opening their mouths with an astounding lack of discretion.

This is especially true when investigating a blade bait with flash and vibration telling those marble eyes they might be seeing the best treat of all time.

Blades allow a number of different presentation options from vertical jigging to swimming to rip jigging. Several different points to attach a snap to the top of the lure enhance the dance you can initiate with a rod tip.

Blade baits are most effective when fished with superbraid line like FireLine, a sensitive

graphite rod and a snap— not a snap-swivel.

The best way to realize the walleye-catching potential of blade baits is to leave all your other gear, including the minnow bucket, at home.

Blades catch walleyes yearround. Sometimes they offer the best presentation option.

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