



# Summer's Deep Water Bluegills and PUMPKINSEEDS

*by Vic Attardo  
photos by the author*

If you look for them where you found them in April, May and June, they're not going to be there. They won't be on their shallow beds, not many of them anyway, and they won't be hanging close to shoreline vegetation, like cattails and arrowheads, unless in rare conditions when there's nothing else available.

When it comes to hot summer months, the Bluegills and Pumpkinseeds that were easy to catch when they occupied the margins of a lake have moved out to deeper water and can be as tough to locate, and sometimes tough to catch. While you may have to remove the prefix "easy" from this fishing, if you scan the right places, you don't have to use the antecedent "hard."

There's a rule you can apply to summer Bluegill and Pumpkinseed fishing, and it has to do with the structure of the lake or pond. If either body has wide, shallow margins exposed to the dog day's sun as well as substantially deeper water, especially with good weed growth, the panfish will be in those deeper places.

\*Conneaut Lake, Crawford County, is one that fits this rule. There may be better panfish action somewhere in the northwest's second rung, though I doubt it, but there are no prettier waters to catch fish in that region. Conneaut Lake is a natural glacier lake with typical depths of 20 to 25 feet, and the waters are clear. From this clarity and depth, come Bluegills and Pumpkinseeds that are as vibrant as an aurora. On a sunny day, these fish sparkle with heavenly colors, and it takes a little luck from heaven to locate and catch them.

In summer, Conneaut Lake grows deep weeds, and that's where the panfish will be found. To entice them, use a vertical presentation—some form of drop shotting with jigs, soft plastics and bait.

One proven method uses ice-size jigs on a vertical line with an enticement of nightcrawler specks or mealworms. The jigs are rigged two to the main line, with one tiny jig about a foot off the bottom and another several feet above. The bottom is anchored with a dippy sinker or several splitshots. The height of the weeds means a great deal in the placement of the top jig, and it's good to have the upper jig at the tip of the weeds. When Conneaut Lake's weeds are as thick as sawdust beneath a beaver tree, this rig will catch panfish that are hanging low and high.

Tactically, the unwieldy rig is flipped from the side of the boat to 10 to 15 feet out. The boat is held steady to achieve a vertical or near vertical line. The sinker is left on the bottom while the angler wriggles the rod to supply action to the jigs. The piece of nightcrawler or mealworm is placed atop a thin, soft plastic, the latter providing color and attraction. The new microplastics are great for this technique. In this case, don't worry that the smidgen of bait negates the plastic's action. The plastic's main function is a color attractor.

If no strike occurs, reel in a bit, so the rig sits near another clump of weeds. If a hook gets caught in the grass, lift vertically. When the snag pulls free, let it settle back to a vertical position. Strikes will often occur after the pull and release.

I've used this drop shot style method to catch Bluegills and Pumpkinseeds in many deep, weedy lakes, and it certainly works in lots of Pennsylvania waters.

Another way to pursue deep-water panfish is with a bladed jig such as a Road Runner or spinner-frame jig like a Beetle Spin. These are best used where the weeds are thinner and lower or along weed lines.



*Bluegill*

Gouldsboro Lake, Monroe and Wayne counties, was emptied some years ago for dam repair. When the impoundment was refilled and reopened in 2008, the weeds grew up but did not canopy the surface. There were thick waves with distinct edges once I took advantage of this situation.

Casting from a public dock and also rowing in a flat bottom boat, I looked for two shades of water—a darker green indicating the presence of weeds and a much lighter green indicating a bare bottom or shallower water.

Not a particularly deep lake, Gouldsboro Lake's Bluegills were using the weeds to get out of the sun. For a good part of the day, they hid in the grass. At feeding time, they occupied the break line between the two.

Making long casts either from the dock or boat, I targeted the edge of the dark water with a chartreuse Road Runner or a black/yellow Beetle Spin. Both baits can be retrieved at moderate speeds with a falling and rising retrieve, keeping a tight line through both movements. Sometimes, I let the baits go several feet down. While other times, I keep the descent to just a foot or so—allowing the blades to helicopter in the fall. I've also used this technique in farm ponds and many other Pennsylvania lakes.

Over the deeper water and heavy weeds of Marsh Creek Lake, Chester County, I drifted and row-trolled  $\frac{1}{8}$ - and  $\frac{1}{16}$ -ounce jigs and soft plastics beneath a bobber line. The trick is to kick the speed up with a swift pull of the oars for a few strokes, in effect raising the jig behind the float, then, gliding on the oars allowing the jig to pendulum swing back under the float. The action drives panfish wild.

Another great deep-water presentation is the trolling of a worm harness with a chunk of nightcrawler. Worm

*A pond in Snyder County*





*Pumpkinseed*

harnesses are well-known among Walleye anglers, but don't have a large following with panfish anglers. Having a spinner blade, beads and other attractors on the leader line of a worm harness makes them incredibly effective for Bluegills and Pumpkinseeds.

Using a small electric stern motor, I've had great success slow trolling around \*Duck Harbor Pond, Wayne County, with a single-hook worm harness. True to summer form, the better Bluegills and Pumpkinseeds thrive in the substantial drop-off out from the straight north shore and on the deeper weed edge in the upper part of the lake. But, get back into the shallows where the harness hangs up, and you will not find the Bluegills. Understand that vibrant colors on the harness blades are a calling card for panfish, and the harness should be trolled far enough back so that boat movement does not affect the bite.

When it comes to spring fishing, Bluegills and Pumpkinseeds are bound to be in the shallows. But, except for late and second-time spawners, panfish will occupy the deeper, weedier spots in the summer. Find them and try these techniques, and your day should go well. ☐



*Gouldsboro Lake, Monroe and Wayne counties*

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*\*This water is currently part of Pennsylvania's Best Fishing Waters Bluegill & Pumpkinseed program ([www.PaBestFishing.com](http://www.PaBestFishing.com)).*