

SMART

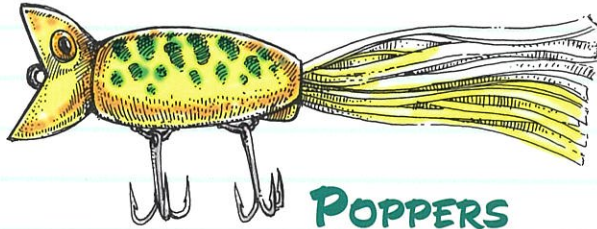
Angler's Notebook

by Carl Richardson
illustrated by Ted Walke

Topwater Lures

Here is a look at some common topwater lures. The sound and disturbance these lures make trigger predators to strike. Color, lure size and shape are secondary keys. Often the

best topwater baits look like forage fish. But crazy colors and unusual sizes also take fish. These lures don't just imitate fish. Frogs, insects and other animals are regularly eaten off the surface by predators. Who knows why fish take topwater baits—who cares? Fished at the right time and place they can be deadly—and lots of fun.



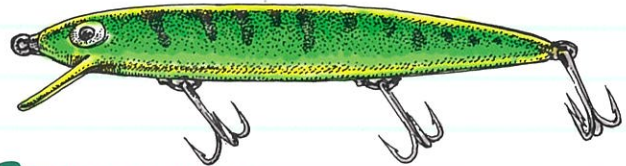
POPPERS

Also called chuggers. These lures have a cupped face and are twitched through the water on the retrieve. The cup makes a popping sound and splashes water on the surface each time it is twitched. This may fool fish into thinking the lure is a floundering baitfish or the sound of other predators busting on schools of baitfish.

Overhead view: retrieve



twitch—twitch—twitch



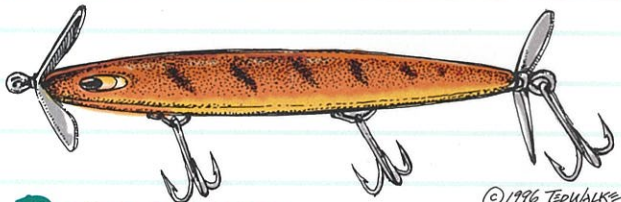
STICK BAITS

These long, minnow-shaped lures aren't really topwater lures. Often we fish them with a fast retrieve and they dive several feet. But if they are fished slowly, they stay on top. Because they are subtle and have a nice tight wiggle, this bait is effective when fish aren't aggressive. They are usually twitched, but can be deadly on a slow retrieve above or next to weed beds. Match the lure size and color to the available forage fish.

Overhead view: retrieve



steady



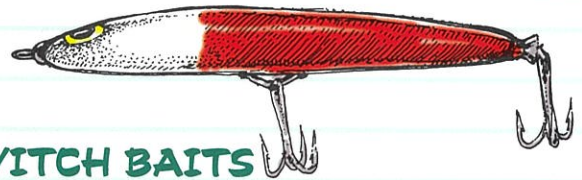
PROP BAITS

These baits have small propellers at both ends or at either end. As the lure is retrieved, these propellers rotate, making noise and splashing water. Like the popper, these lures simulate the sound of schooling baitfish on the surface. Prop baits are often fished with a steady retrieve, but they are also effective when twitched.

Overhead view: retrieve



steady



TWITCH BAITS

These offerings are more subtle than the other topwater lures. They look just like stick baits, but don't have a lip to make them wiggle or dive. These lures are made of hard plastic or soft plastic. Soft-plastic stick baits are rigged like rubber worms and have more action than hard-plastic ones. They are nearly always fished with a steady twitch. Bass anglers call this "walking the dog."

Overhead view:
retrieve



twitch—twitch—twitch

Topwater Tips

Longer rods (6 to 7 feet) help keep line off the water and reduce slack line. You will find you get more hookups when there is no slack line. You'll also have more hookups when you delay setting the hook. If you react too soon, you can pull the lure out of the fish's mouth.

