

Choose Your Bobbers Well

by Linda Steiner

photos by Bob Steiner

Anglers may spend a lot of time deciding on rods, reels, lines and hooks but not much time on picking bobbers to present their bait. But, it's just as important to choose your bobbers well for best success.

Why use a bobber? One reason is to suspend bait mid-water, if that's where you expect the fish to be. A bobber is buoyed by air trapped within its construction. Using it keeps bait from sinking or swimming to the bottom.

The other use of a bobber is to signal that a fish has taken the bait. Fish may strike and run, daintily nibble or gobble bait or just sit there, according to their species and the water conditions, especially temperature. Different styles of bobbers have different ways of notifying anglers that something finny is on the line. And, some types of bobbers are just more fun.

Which bobber should you use? Let's consider size first. The rule is to match the bobber size to the bait size, and match the bait size to the size of fish you want to catch.

The correct size bobber should be buoyant enough to keep an active minnow from submerging it, defeating the bobber's purpose. It should also be small enough that the target fish can easily haul the bobber under the surface, without feeling so much resistance that it drops the bait. When using worms or other non-swimming bait, match the bobber size to the bait weight.

Fortunately, bobbers are inexpensive because choosing the right one can take trial and error. As a place to start, if you're going after crappies with live minnows that are a couple of inches in length as bait, try a bobber about 1 inch in diameter. Step up the size of the bobber to suspend bigger minnows for bass or pickerel and up again for even larger live bait to attract Northern Pike or Muskellunge. If you're suspending a couple of maggots on a little hook for Pumpkinseeds, you can use a smaller bobber.



Match the bobber size to the bait size, and match the bait size to the size of fish you want to catch.



Use a bobber to suspend bait mid-water or to signal that a fish has taken the bait.



The round two-color bobber is a longtime favorite. Most bobbers are brightly colored.

Too many anglers use bobbers that are too big. They have trouble casting small bobbers and baits with the gear they're using, and they think a big bobber, weighing more, will cast better. It will, but it sacrifices the advantages of using the correct size bobber. In addition, an outsized bobber's "ker-splash" may disturb fish.

One way to cast a small bobber is to go to a thinner diameter, suppler monofilament line, in lighter pound-test. Another way is to crimp a splitshot or two to the line between the bobber and the bait, to add casting weight. The splitshot will also keep the minnow from swimming above the proper depth.

A bobber doesn't have to totally submerge to tell the angler that he or she has a bite. It only has to communicate that the fish has the hook in its mouth. Even so, some anglers like to let their bobbers go completely under the water. When the fish is swimming away and down, there's less chance that the bait will be pulled out of its mouth when the hook is set. This should always be opposite of the direction of the bobber's motion.

Some fish take delicately and cautiously. For these fish, anglers need to see the bobber stop drifting or ride lower in the water to know that they have hit. Ice anglers use a tiny bobber that tells them a light-biting panfish is on the bait. A bigger bobber won't show the barely perceptible nibble of a wintertime Bluegill.

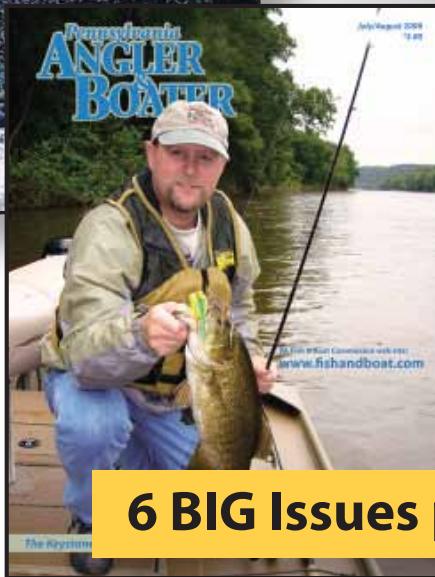
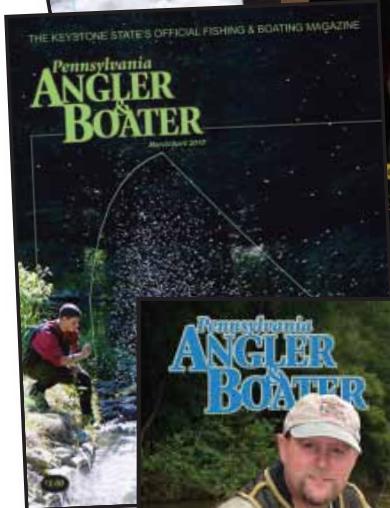
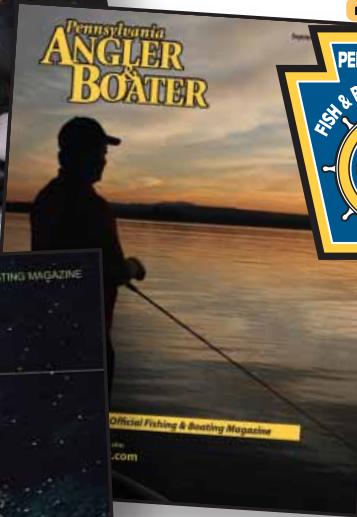
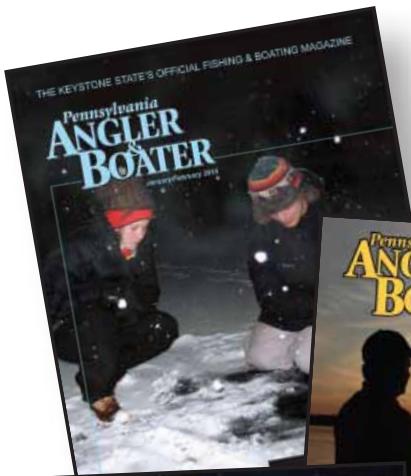
What style of bobber should you use? The round, two-color plastic bobber is a longtime favorite. Egg-shaped floats are popular, too. Molded foam bobbers won't crack like plastic ones, and some have a lead weight on the down side for stability and casting ease.

Featherweight bobbers that look like ping-pong balls are also an option. With these bobbers, the line is looped through a hole in a tab and passed around the bobber, making an easily adjustable connection. Then, there are bobbers with long, thin tips at both ends and a fat, buoyant middle. The line attaches to the bottom only of these buoy-like bobbers.

A different way to go after fish, such as pickerel, that grab the bait and "hang" there before swimming away is with a "pencil" float. These bobbers ride horizontal on the water until the pressure of the fish makes the "pencil" rise upright. When the "pencil" sinks or starts skittering across the surface, set the hook.

What color bobber is best? Most bobbers are brightly colored, in whole or part, in brilliant orange, red, yellow-green or another eye-popping shade. Some anglers like bobbers that are half-white or black or a dark hue, hiding the bobber from the fish. Clear plastic bobbers are nearly invisible to fish, but they're also hard for anglers to see. Lighted bobbers are useful for night fishing but expensive.

Then, there are the just-for-fun bobbers for kids and the young at heart featuring cartoon and favorite toy characters. Even the little "yellow duckie" bobber a friend gave me as a joke does its job—it suspends the bait, lets me know I have a hit and gives other anglers a laugh. ☐



Pennsylvania ANGLER & BOATER



Get the complete story and read what you've been missing!

Do you like what you're reading? Do you find *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater* online articles a valuable resource? If so, why not become a regular subscriber to *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater* and receive the entire magazine delivered to your doorstep. With each printed issue, we place only a small portion of our feature articles on our website. If you fish or boat in Pennsylvania, you shouldn't miss a single issue, or even a single article! It's been the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission's (PFBC) premier, award-winning magazine since 1931.

Print out this page and mail the form below with your payment to begin your subscription. Or you can subscribe online through

PFBC's Outdoor Shop. **CLICK HERE!**

6 BIG Issues per year!

Subscribe with this form today or online at www.fishandboat.com.

SUBSCRIBE TO *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater*

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail (optional) _____

SAVE UP TO 44% OFF THE COVER PRICE!

Payment must accompany orders. Use your credit card, check or money order made payable to the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission. Return this form with payment to: **PA&B Circulation, Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000.** Allow 45 days to receive the first issue.

One year (6 issues) **\$12** Three years (18 issues) **\$30**

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$

Credit Card Purchase: VISA Mastercard Discover AmerEx

Credit Card # _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Phone _____ E-mail (optional) _____

Since 1931, Pennsylvania's official fishing and boating magazine.

PAA&B-SUB-9-10