

Lake Erie Yellow Perch!

by Jerry Bush

Do you long for fishing that's simple, fruitful and relaxing? If so, Lake Erie has a perch fishery waiting for you! Jumbo yellow perch are abundant there in June and July. The Commission's 2004 Annual Lake Erie Boat Angler Survey confirmed that the yellow perch fishing was outstanding.

Regardless of where you launch your boat, there is a better-than-average chance that you'll find a large school of perch nearby. Individual schools may contain thousands of perch that range in size from 9 to 12 inches, with most keepers in the 10-inch range, and fish growing to lengths of 15 inches are not uncommon.

Basic requirements include a light-action rod and reel, some 4-pound-test line, a few hooks, some sinkers and a bait of your choosing.

Most proficient Lake Erie perch anglers attach a line spreader (sometimes called a "crappie rig") to their primary fishing lines. Secondary lines are then dangled from each wire arm at different lengths. A sinker of up to 2 ounces is then attached to an extension of the primary line about 3 to 6 inches lower than the lowest hook. Sinker weight requirements vary according to lake conditions. You need heavier weights as wave action increases. Use a bank sinker in calmer conditions and a pyramid sinker in rougher conditions because a pyramid sinker tends to hold the bottom better. Spreader rigs are available in tackle shops. You may want to study their design and fashion your own rigs.

Purchased or made at home, the result is a rig that lets you fish two hooks separated 4 to 6 inches horizontally and vertically. Anglers who use this setup routinely enjoy catching "doubles."



photo-Art Michaels

Anglers also use high-low rigs, and some people just like fishing a plain old single-hook rig.

Minnows are by far the most popular bait used. Some anglers promote lip-hooking the baitfish, and others swear they must be hooked through the back. I've rigged them both ways and I can't say that one technique is better than the other. Popular offerings also include salted minnows, nightcrawlers, red worms and grubs.

When perch are hungry, most anglers stretch bait supplies by cutting the bait and offering smaller pieces.

Drop the baited line over the gunwale and let it free-spool to the bottom. When the sinker touches the bottom, lightly raise the rod tip and slowly bounce the offering up and down a few inches. Then pause and repeat.

Erie resident Jim Paluh enjoys fishing for perch with his family, and to-

gether they practice a technique that lets them be quite proficient. "Lake Erie's perch action can be fast and furious," says Jim. "Perch generally move in packs, and certain boats enjoy most of the action until the school moves under another set of boats. When they move under our boat, we always try to keep at least one line [rigged with two hooks] in the water. We keep that line submerged, even if a fish bites, until we rig and drop another line. I believe this keeps a feeding frenzy active under the boat, which seems to hold the school under our vessel longer."

If you're seeking a simple, relaxing fishing experience that is certain to end with a tasty meal, give Lake Erie's jumbo perch a try, and remember—the action is hot in June and July. ☐