In spring 1968, fish managers across the state were concerned about the state of walleye fishing. Complaints they received suggested that “not everybody is using good fishing technique for catching walleyes.” Much like they do today in this issue’s annual Fishing Report insert, they got together and wrote an article in that year’s March/April issue of the Wisconsin Conservation Bulletin to offer their best advice on how and where to catch Wisconsin’s most revered game fish.

Collectively, they stressed that “whatever the variations are, if you can keep in mind the basic habits of the fish, you should have a good chance of success.” In individual accounts, they offered tips on lures, bait and the best times and places to find walleye.

Richard F. Harris, then-fish manager from Oshkosh, gave this advice for landing ol’ marble eyes.

The color of the bait is extremely important. The same kind of spoon in yellow and black many times will outfish 10-to-1 a spoon of red and white — or vice versa. I strongly urge those who wish to fish walleyes consistently and steadily not only to change bait but to change colors as well. You can prove this to yourself if you hit a good walleye fishing day. Catch two or three fish on a certain bait and then change to another color — the same bait and size — and note the results. Many times you will be surprised at the difference in your fishing.

Many walleye fishermen lose prize walleyes because they do not react to a strike with a good hook-setting movement. Whether trolling, drifting or spin casting, react to a snag on the bottom or a fish strike with a hard, hooking motion. This will serve you in good stead in keeping from getting snagged too often, and also hook the hard-mouth walleye when he strikes your slow-moving bait.

This is a period when the bottom is quite moss-covered and weedy, and it is difficult to scrape bottom without fouling up your bait. At this time you definitely can speed up so as not to touch bottom as regularly and still catch fish.

When is the best time to catch a large trophy walleye? Unquestionably, early in the season, as this is the time of the year when large fish have finished spawning and are eating ravenously. If you drop the right bait in front of a “momma” walleye early in the year when she is trying to recover from carrying a load of eggs, your chances of catching that trophy walleye from 20 to 30 inches is much better than later in the summer.

Unfortunately, some of the better walleye fishing comes during bad weather conditions. Most of the time that you tangle with big walleyes, you need to dress as though you were going duck hunting or ice fishing.

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