

# Learn The Importance of Speed Control

## Good Questions Lead to Answers, But Right Lure Speed Must Be Found

by Buck Perry

In a past discussion of the most common "structure situations" found in reservoirs, it seems a responsive chord was struck among Fishing Facts readers; that is, if the questions that have come in are any indication. They were all worthy questions, and require some sort of response. Since there are too many questions to answer individually, perhaps the most appropriate thing to do would be to select a couple, with comments, which are representative of the greater portion.

The first one chosen asked: "Would you cover more fully how to cast a bar, a long bar, and especially one that has weeds on it?"

To fully cover a longer structure (bar) by casting, the boat should be moved to several positions as shown in Figure 1. Position one (1) has the boat positioned close to the shore, or just outside the weeding. This position would allow the fisherman, by fan-casting, to cover all of the shallow section within reach. From this position, he can check any weeding that may be present. As the casts swing around toward deeper water, the lure would be allowed to sink to the bottom before starting the retrieve. Different speeds of the retrieve should be checked in the depths being worked. After this section has been worked, the boat would be moved to position two (2) which would be about where the cast reached from the previous position.

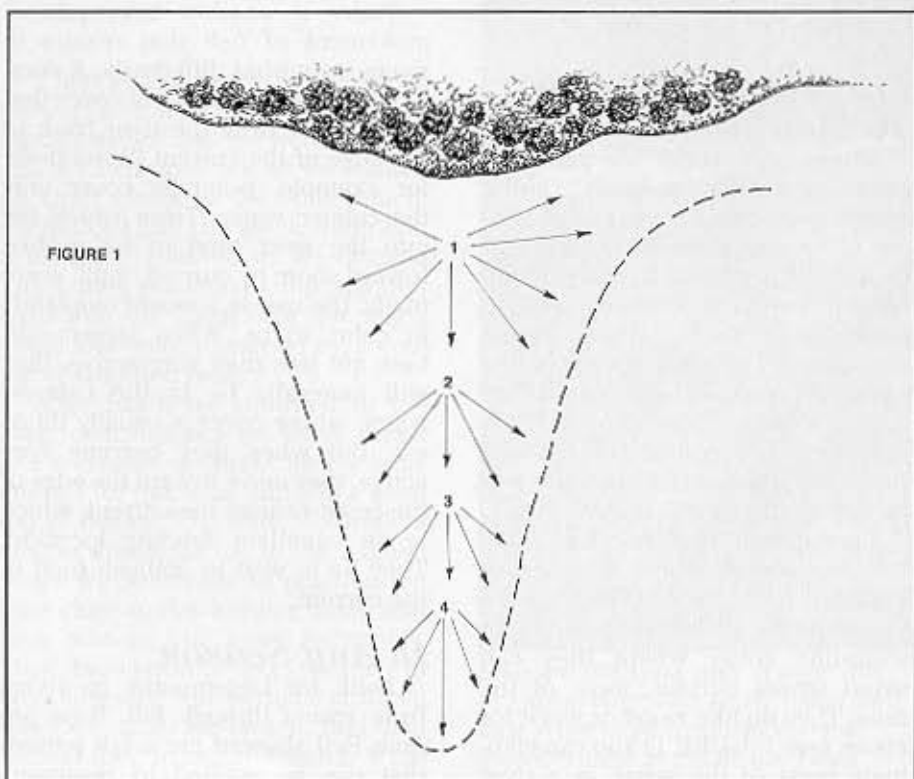
Continue to move the boat and follow the same casting procedure

until the last position is reached. The last position would put the fisherman within a reach of a deep breakline, and preferably the "drop-off".

It might be well to mention at this point, that in most cases a breakline (drop-off) at the end of the structure (bar) will occur at a shallower depth than the deep water sanctuary. In other words, the fish will drop off into a hole or channel before it

stops. There are only some isolated instances where the lake would be of the type that the deep water sanctuary of the fish would be found on the "structure" itself.

It is not likely that the sanctuary depth will ever be found directly off the end of the bar. It could be to the right or to the left, or so far out that it would be impossible to reach from any position on the bar. This is one



To fully cover a longer structure (bar) by casting, the boat should be moved to several positions as shown.

of the reasons the fisherman is directed to exercise patience at times for the fish to move up and into range. However, when fish are found at a breakline or a drop-off and the action stops after a few fish, it is wise to immediately go deeper off the breakline. In some instances, an additional fish can be had.

The lure types used for the presentation on a structure situation such as this should allow depth and speed to be controlled (at the same time) in all areas. Two types of lures should be used, a fast steady swimming or bottom-bumping lure such as a Spoonplug, and a "jump-type" lure such as a jig should be used to check the depths at slower lure speeds. More will be said about the presentation of these lures.

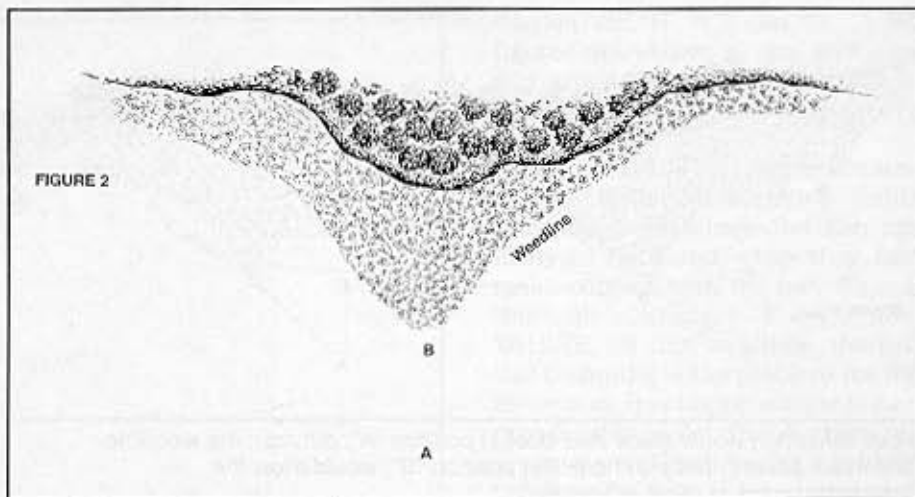
## Weedy Structure

Figure 2 shows a top-view of a bar that contains a weedline. Figure 3 is a cross-section of the same area. Each figure shows two locations for positioning the boat for casting. Position "A" represents the boat fairly far out from the weedline, while "B" represents the boat anchored near the weedline (shallows).

If the boat is anchored at position "A" to check out the shallows along the edge of the weedline, it would mean that a cast could cover only a small portion of the weedline, as the retrieve would immediately pull the lure away, and the balance of the retrieve would most likely be wasted effort. Position "A" would create quite a problem working different depths correctly along a tall weedline, and it would be practically impossible to work the deeper water. It may be possible to dangle a jump-type lure over the side of the boat and get some results; but overall, position "A" would not be the choice location.

If the boat is placed in position "B", casts can be made adjacent to the weedline and as the retrieve is made, the lure is in position the total length of the retrieve. From this position, different size lures can be used to thoroughly check the different depths all along the weedline; and when casts are made toward the deeper sections of the structure (Bar), this position will allow all sections and depths, all "breaks" and "breaklines" to be worked.

When the location of a productive



Top view of a bar that contains a weedline.

structure is known and the cast fails to produce, it is most likely due to the incorrect placement of the boat. This is especially true when the fish are caught on a trolling pass but not on a cast.

Figure 4 shows a similar situation. The structure is quite large with a weedline that is long and crooked. The weedline bends in and out with "fingers".

Most fishermen would place their boat in position "A", out from the weedline, and make casts in toward shore. The "expert" casters would have you believe that the lure must check every little crook, hole, and turn along the entire weedline. But unless the weedline was completely visible, very few casts would cover the water correctly from this position.

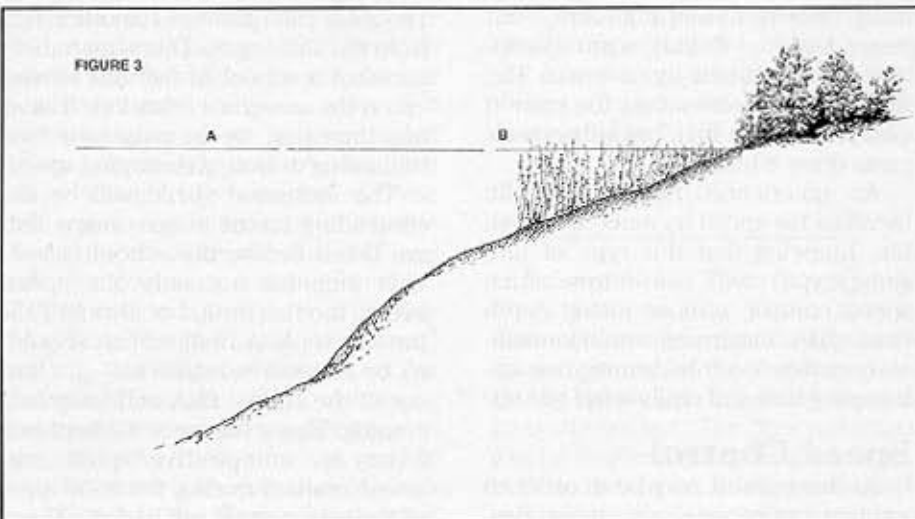
Position "B" would be the pre-

ferred location, for the simple reason that the area could be checked more easily and effectively. The exact weedline could be established (with floating markers if need be), and casting would require no special skill, since only the tips of the "fingers" would be worked to establish if any fish are along the weedline. If no active fish are found on the "tips", it is not likely any would be found in the "pockets."

When casting any portion of a body of water, the fisherman is often not aware of the importance of speed control (how fast the lure moves through the water) and will not vary his speed to find the one most effective.

Often overlooked and not taken into consideration is just how MANY fish can be caught out of a school,

A cross section of the same bar and weedline shown in Figure 2.



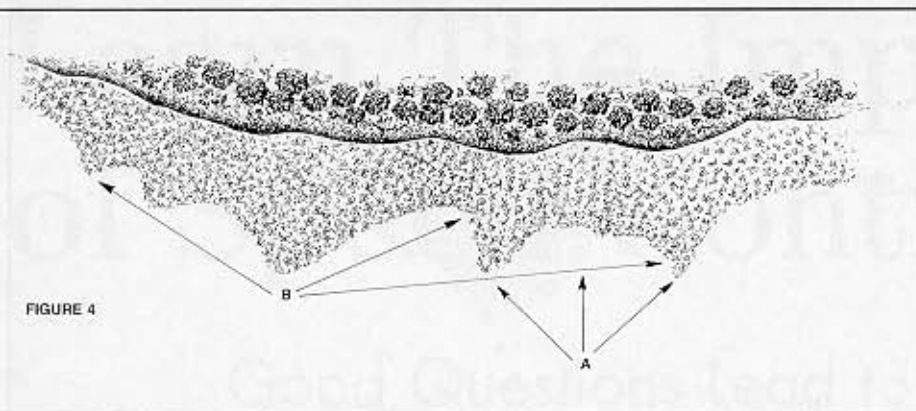


FIGURE 4  
Most fishermen would place their boat in position "A", out from the weedline, and make casts in toward shore. But position "B" would allow the area to be checked more efficiently.

once it is found. So when considering speed control, we are talking about the thing that makes a fish take, and also what will determine just how many fish in the school can be taken.

Let us work a structure that we know is potentially productive. We first check the shallow water with a free-swimming, bottom-bumping lure. We start with a normal retrieve speed. By the third cast we have increased our speed slightly and bang!—a good fish takes. The next cast produces another fish.

This indicates that a movement has occurred, and it is at this time that speed control comes into its own. It is at this point that lure speed is increased still further, and continues to increase until retrieve speed is about as fast as the reel can be worked. Without an increase in retrieve speed, it is not likely many fish of the school would be caught.

Let's suppose that we did not begin our casts with a free-swimming, bottom-bumping lure, but instead started fishing with a jump-type lure such as a jig or worm. The first cast produces a fish; the second cast produces a fish, but subsequent casts draw a blank.

An experienced fisherman would increase his speed as much as possible. Knowing that this type of lure (jump-type) will not allow much speed control without losing depth control, the fisherman would immediately switch to a free-running bottom-bumping lure and really wind her up.

## Speed Control

At this point it may be in order to explain why we call these jigs,

spoons, weighted worms, etc., jump-type lures. It is done for the simple reason these lures should be "jumped" a short distance, then allowed to return back to the bottom. You will note that we did not say "dragged" a short distance and allowed to come to a stop. Neither did we say that the retrieve should be slow and steady with the lure sliding along the bottom. If you desire the best for these lures, they should be jumped. Better speed control can be obtained with a free-swimming, bottom-bumping lure than with a "jump-type". This is especially true after the water warms up. However, at certain water temperatures and certain weather conditions, when fish are rather deep and inactive and non-chasing, the jump-type lure may, at times, have effective speed control.

Let us assume that on our first cast to the deep section of a "structure situation", we connect with a good fish on a steady, free swimming, bottom-bumping lure such as a Spoonplug. The next cast produces another fish from the same spot. This is an indication that a school of fish has moved up on the structure situation. It is at this time that we increase our free swimming or bottom-bumping speed.

The increased speed will be the controlling factor in how many fish are taken before the school is lost. This includes not only the speed before the fish took, but also AFTER the fish took. A hooked fish shouldn't be messed around with—get him out of the school fast, and keep him coming. These fish must be kept in a frenzy or competitive spirit, and speed control during the total time of the action must not be lost. There

is usually only a very short time to make "hay" and the speed control will determine just how much hay we can make (This is the time it is good to have a "fishing buddy" along to help the cause).

In a casting situation such as this, some anglers fail to allow the lure to sink all the way to the bottom before starting the retrieve. Watch the line, it will tell you when the lure is on the bottom.

After the action stops, the deep structure should be checked with a jump-type lure before leaving the area. The fish may have become "spooked", or the majority dropped into deeper water. The fish may not chase a fast working lure, but may strike a jump-type if it's put right in his face.

Now, let us assume that in working the deep part of the structure, we did not start with a fast free-swimming or bottom-bumping lure, but instead started with a jump-type. We make our cast and let the lure sink to the bottom; take up the slack line, and then give a short twitch of the rod tip to make the lure jump a short distance. We let the lure settle back, and continue to twitch and jump it until the full retrieve is made. In order to increase speed with this lure, we would move the rod faster and give a longer twitch or jump before allowing it to settle back. It might be necessary to increase the lure weight to speed up this action.

Maximum speed control on a jump-type lure would have to be when the water warms or fish have moved up and contact is made. This can be partly accomplished by placing the rod tip next to the water and finishing up the movement with the rod tip over the head. This long, fast pull will move the lure rapidly for four or five feet. But, here again, we should switch to a free-swimming, bottom-bumping lure to obtain and keep the necessary speed, when fish contact is made.

One of the great faults of the average worm fisherman is that he does not strike the fish soon enough. This will hold true with most any type jump lure. It would be great if we could become aware of the exact moment a fish takes the lure, but with slack line and the amount in the water, this is rather difficult. But, if the fisherman keeps his slack line to a minimum and keeps his eyes on



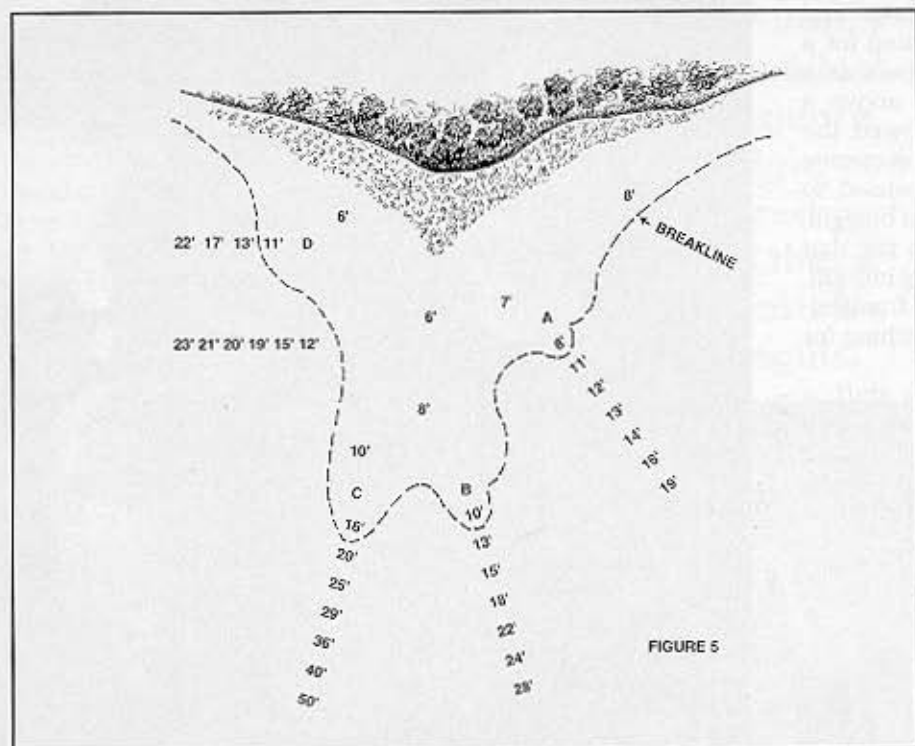


FIGURE 5

the line to see any unusual movement, he may hook the fish before the lure is spit out.

Some have the idea they must let the fish run with the lure before striking. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Fish "inhale" a lure so fast the movement can hardly be followed with the eye. He can exhale it just about as fast. If a fish moves off with the lure, then in some way he is unable to get rid of it, and unless he is solidly hooked, the fisherman is taking a chance of losing a fish. In other words, the strike is made the instant there is an indication a fish has taken the lure. By waiting, the odds of getting him on the stringer is slim.

Whether casting into the shallows or towards deep water, regardless of what type lure is being used, speed control must be kept in mind. Not only from the standpoint of making fish take the lure, but after contact is made, so the fisherman will be able to catch MORE fish. After all, catching fish is the name of the game, so why reduce chances by refusing to observe the advantages of speed control while casting?

The second question selected had this to say: "Some of the big, wide irregular shaped bars I fish have different size 'points' sticking out at different places. I've read where you refer to these points or extrusions as

"fingers". My question is how can a fisherman know which finger the fish will come up on? He might not have ever fished the structure before or has never found fish on a particular point (finger)."

In trying to clear up the second question to determine which finger might be best on a particular structure situation, we must venture into the ability to interpret structure. Since many may not be prepared at this stage to grasp or make a full interpretation, perhaps the best answer at this time would be to interpret a sample.

When fish move or migrate, they come from the deepest water in the area; and the bottom features (structure situation) they use MUST extend all the way from the deep water to the shallows and vice versa. The fish must be able to see their intended route immediately upon moving from deep water. In the context of these statements, let's look at a sample structure situation the fish will use during movements and migrations.

Figure 5 is a top view of a wide sweeping bar ("structure situation") with a "breakline" (an area on the bottom where there is a sudden or more rapid increase or decrease in depth). The breakline is rather crooked and has several extrusions or "fingers". The "fingers" have been

labeled "A", "B", "C", and "D". Depth figures are shown at the breakline and around the bar. The depths in the deeper water off each finger are also shown.

The breakline represents the area on the structure situation (wide sweeping bar) where the fish are likely to be found when they first make contact with the bar. We call this the "Contact Point". Just WHERE, on this breakline, the fish will be found, is the problem for the fisherman. It is important the fisherman be able to determine where the "contact point" will be, for it is likely this is as far from the deep water as the fish will venture.

In figure 5, finger "A" has a three (3) foot break (8 to 11 ft.). The depth figures show the bottom is rather shallow and flat off this finger (depth increases slowly).

Finger "B" is closer to deep water, and it "breaks" deeper (10 to 13 ft.). But here again the increase in depth off this finger is not fast, but slightly more than Finger "A".

Finger "C" has a four (4) foot break (16 to 20 ft.). It breaks off at a deeper depth (16 ft.) And into a more rapid increase in depth, we label this a "sharper break" (see depth figures).

Finger "D" on the left side of this big bar is not well defined, and the depth figures shown on the left side would indicate a rather large flat area with a smaller increase in depth running out from the breakline.

With the information available, Finger "C" would be the logical choice for the fish to make contact with this big, wide sweeping bar. The reason for this choice is due to the fact a Spoonplugger Guideline about such a structure situation says this: "The 'Contact Point' to a structure situation is at the 'break' that breaks the deepest into the deepest water." Finger "C" breaks at 16 feet into the deepest water in the area (50 ft.).

Good Fishing!

Editors Note: There are Fishing Facts readers who would like to direct questions to Buck Perry or to an accomplished Spoonplugger. — Buck's personal Email address is buck@twave.net. The Spoonpluggers can be reached with questions on the bulletin board at <http://www.americaoutdoors.com/spoonplugger>.