



Ride The "Roads" To More Bass

by Buck Perry,
Education Editor

*To become a better fisherman, a
hit-or-miss approach is not the way to go.*

When we talked the last time, it was said the "interpretation" of a fishing situation is where we can always improve, and in turn be more successful. It was also pointed out a fisherman will "skip-over", or not listen to talk about some fishing situations, because he thinks they have no bearing on his style of fishing; or the discussion presents

conditions not found in his fishing waters. I hope we were in agreement that ANY situation talked about is important and none should be passed up—if we desire to become better fishermen.

Last time we stated that most fishermen do not have the opportunity to fish a variety of situations, and oftentimes find it difficult to visualize conditions different from their own.

We discussed how all situations could be worked out by applying a few fishing facts and some basic guidelines of the structure fisherman (Spoonplugger). We said with these facts and guidelines in mind we would have little trouble with different types of lakes; different weather and water conditions; different species; or different structure, breaks, breaklines, depths, etc. As an



Education Editor, Buck Perry, displays a trophy largemouth that pounced on a high speed, bottom bumping lure at the 18 ft. depth level. Oftentimes man-made structures offer some of the fastest fishing action.

example of how the guidelines work, we applied them to a reef found in a large glacier lake.

Since improvement in "interpretation" is so important for our growth as fishermen, let's talk about it some more. This time, let's consider how we would interpret a particular feature (structure, break, breaklines, deep water, etc.) in a *man-made lake* (reservoir). We will try to figure out the situation by applying some guidelines of the Spoonplugger.

As we have said before, a true structure fisherman is well aware a fish can be caught at some time or other, almost any place, by almost anyone, on almost anything, and by almost any method. BUT to become a better fisherman and consistently put more and bigger fish on the stringer, a hit-or-miss type interpretation, lure presentation, etc., is not the way to go. The way an experienced angler goes about it is to do his fishing where he has the best chance to catch a fish. This means he will use "structure" (a feature of the bottom) as his guide to where the fish may be found; and then use the "breaks" and "breaklines" on/or connected to it to pinpoint the fish. He then controls the depth and speed of his lures (or baits) on, and/or around these features to find, and catch, the fish.

Figure 1 is a top view of a section in a reservoir where a roadbed was covered when the man-made lake-filled. The water is fairly deep where the roadbed crosses the channel of a

former stream. In many sections of the country reservoirs have submerged roads. In some of the more recent lakes formed, especially in the eastern part of the nation, the whole lake may be interlaced with old roadbeds. Some are paved, while others are gravel and dirt.

At times these old roads can be the best features (structure) in the lake for the movements and migrations of the fish. Some of them may not cross a channel such as shown in Figure 1, but when the roadbed crosses a channel, be it the main river channel or feeder stream, we are looking at a potentially productive area.

Locating submerged roads in a lake isn't too difficult. Frequently we can observe the shoreline to see where a roadbed enters the water. A little observation of the direction it enters, and the adjacent or opposite shoreline will show where it runs under the water. It is quite easy to determine if it crosses some sort of channel. Many of the roadbeds still on dry land serve as launching ramps. Most all maps of reservoirs will show where the roads existed before the lake was created. Depth sounders and lures will find them, but these are primarily "tools" to "stay on" and test the roadbed once it has been located.

Oftentimes the old bridgework at the channel is removed, but in most cases the piers and abutments are still standing. The roadbed and the embankment may be clean; that is, free of debris, but in some instances

the roadbed is lined on both sides with brush, etc. [Figure 1] shows some clean areas and some with bushes.

When an experienced structure fisherman looks at a situation such as this, he does not sit around not knowing what to do about it. He doesn't wonder if this feature in the lake has potential as a good fishing spot. He doesn't speculate where he might find the fish. He doesn't worry about what lure the fish might hit, nor how he is going to present it. He doesn't give a second thought as to what he's going to do if he finds fish. *He's going to apply the knowledge (guidelines) he has, and if the fish are active and in this section of the lake, he has little doubt about who is going to put some of them in the boat.*

The structure fisherman doesn't wonder if this roadbed is a good place to fish, because his "guidelines" tell him the features of the lake bottom the fish use in their movements and migrations are different from the surrounding area and must extend from the deepest water in the area to the shallows and vice versa. His guideline has already told him the home of the fish, where the fish spends the greater part of its time, is some place in the deepest water in the area being fished—in this case the channel. He has to fish the area because there is no question about the submerged roadbed being a man-made structure with its "breaks" and "breaklines" (piers, abutments, bushes, embankments, etc.) providing a visible

continued



Frequently the roadbeds can be spotted easily by observing the shoreline where an old roadbed enters the water. Further observation as to the direction it enters, and the adjacent or opposite shoreline will show where it runs under water. Many roadbeds still on dry land serve as launching ramps.

Buck Talks Fishing, cont.

route all the way from the deepest water in the area to the shallows. If he finds no fish, he'll go look for something else. However, he will return at a later time to work it again, for his guideline says fish do not move constantly nor consistently.

He (the Spoonplugger) doesn't speculate where he might find the fish, because his guideline tells him they could be either in the shallows (close to shore), in the deep (channel), or someplace in between (roadbed). His guideline tells him how far the fish go (from the channel in this case) and how long they stay, is controlled by the weather and water conditions at the time of the movement. He knows this is changing all the time, so he can't predict where the fish might be. He has to find them.

The Spoonplugger doesn't worry about what the fish might hit (type lure or bait), nor how he presents it (casting or trolling). His knowledge tells him the lure types and style of presentation must allow him to do what he is trying to do at any particular time. His guideline says if he is to be successful, he must control the depth and speed of his lure (or bait) on, and/or around the features (structure, breaks, breaklines, etc.) the fish use in their movements and migrations. In fact, it tells him he must answer all successes and failures in terms of depth and speed control. His depth control means WHERE he controls his depth, WHEN he controls his depth, WHAT depth he controls, WHY he controls this depth, and HOW he controls this depth. His speed control means just how fast he moves the lure. It could be from zero to as fast as he can move it. His guideline also says his depth and speed control must be together, he can't sacrifice one to obtain the other.

If he finds the fish he will position himself and control his lures in such a fashion, to catch as many fish as possible in the shortest period of time. His guidelines tell him he has minutes instead of hours to make a fine catch, when he does find the fish.

The knowledgeable fisherman knows he should encounter no problems in presenting lures correctly on the clean parts of the roadbed no matter what style he might use in presenting them. He knows the "dirty" or trashy section will require more exact control of depth and speed.

The situation suggests that you should employ both casting and trolling, if you are to cover the area effectively.

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Buck Talks Fishing, cont.

tively and in the shortest period of time. You may find some sections of the roadbed can be worked more thoroughly by casting, while in others, trolling would be much better. Your observations of depths, seasons, weather and water conditions will have a part to play in your choice of methods at any given time.

However, the conditions in a situation such as this, can often be such that your presentation of lures could be limited to casting or limited to trolling. It could be there is a "no trolling" regulation on the body of water. The traffic and boats on and around the roadbed could foul up your effort

straight retrieve for the faster speed and a "jump type" lure (jig, plastic worm, etc) for the slower. Being primarily concerned with working on and/or close to the bottom and the debris as possible, means that when working the deeper water (more than 8-10 feet) the lures must be allowed to sink before the retrieve is started.

At times a slower or faster bottom-walking lure up the middle of the road is the thing. Then a lure just "tipping" the upper twigs and branches or one "ripping" through the brush on the sides of the embankment may be the answer. At other times a slow jump type lure on the roadbed or one sliding and slithering through the bushes on the side may do the trick.

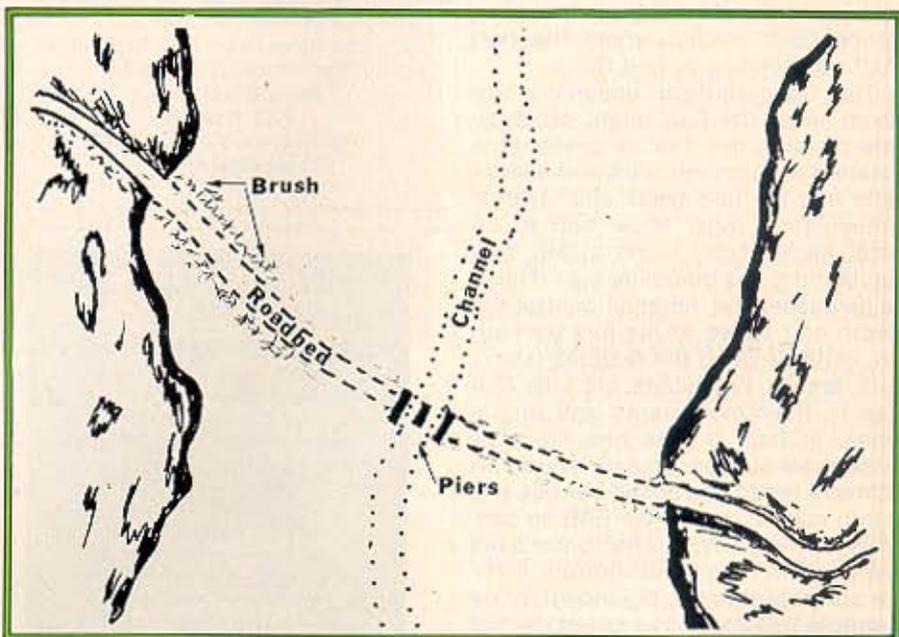
The important area, and where concentrated effort must be made, is where the roadbed crosses the chan-

nel. Our guideline tells us the fish spend the greater part of their time here. It tells us most activity periods are short rather than long, and that the majority of the fish movements will be in the immediate area of the channel.

All of the bridge area must be worked. The deep diving free-running, bottom-bumping lures are not passed up, but often this area is so deep or weather conditions so bad (cold front, etc.) a jump type lure (jig, soft plastic, etc.) "jigged" more directly under the boat and around the "breaks" (piers, abutments, etc.) will give the best control. You should not overlook the fact that during bad weather and especially during the colder season (late fall, winter, etc.) live or dead bait jigged deep, no matter what the

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Figure 1 (at right)
An important area where concentrated fishing effort should be made is where the old roadbed crosses a submerged river channel. In all likelihood, the fish spend the greater part of their time here.

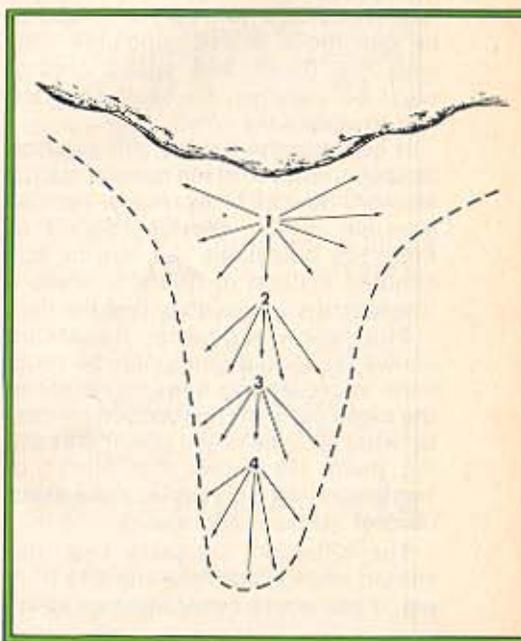


to keep lures in position on the troll. Weather and water conditions could be so cold, trolling would result in lures being worked too fast to be effective. It could be, you may have to eliminate trolling because the lures are continually hanging up on the debris. At the same time, boat traffic could be so heavy, the wind conditions so bad, or water so warm and deep, it would also be foolish to try to work the roadbed effectively by casting. Nevertheless, the Spoonplugger would apply his guidelines for either style to see if there are any fish to be caught at this particular time.

Casting a submerged roadbed shouldn't create much of a problem. It should be worked much like a long underwater bar. That is, the boat should be positioned first (on top of the road) close to the shoreline with a series of casts made in the shallows, and then toward deep water (fan casts). The boat is then positioned farther out and the casts repeated toward deeper water. This would continue until the channel is reached.

At least two type lures should be used at each boat position to check out the depths and speeds. A free-running, bottom-bumping lure (Spoonplug) would be used on a

Figure 2 (at right)
Casting a submerged roadbed shouldn't create much of a problem. It should be worked much like a long underwater bar. First the boat should be positioned (on top of the road) close to the shoreline, with a series of casts made in the shallows, and then toward deeper water. The boat is then repositioned farther out and the casts repeated.



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species, is the way to go.

The Spoonplugger has no qualms about motor trolling and he knows it is a must at times and is an excellent way to check out a submerged roadbed. He has learned, the hard way, it takes more skill to become a good troller than it does to become a good



"A fisherman can't predict in advance how active the fish might be. At times they may be grouped and active far up the center of the roadbed. At other times they are found scattered along the brush on the sides."—Buck Perry

caster. [The place to learn casting is in a person's back yard.] Different size lures on the troll will test the area in a fraction of the time required by any other method.

The trolling passes should be made parallel to the roadbed, and in BOTH directions; that is, from the shoreline to the channel and vice versa. Enough passes should be made so all sections of the roadbed are tested, This

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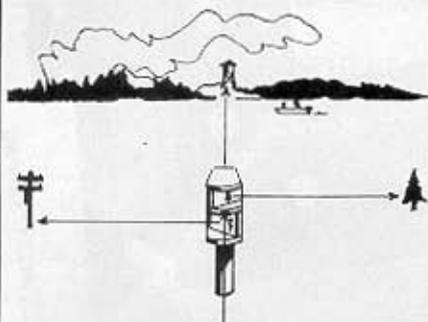
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Buck Talks Fishing, cont.

means both sides (embankments, etc.) and the middle. Several trolling passes on each section are called for, as different speeds must be checked as well as the different depths. Different size swimming, diving lures will allow you to do this swiftly and effectively.

On trolling passes **TOWARD** the shoreline, the boat often has to be stopped in the shallows and the "pass" completed by retrieving the lure. At times a sharp turn, with the rod tip held low may test enough of the roadbed. However, to be on the safe side, stop the boat in the shallows (on the roadbed) and retrieve the lure.

When working the area at the channel, the trolling passes should be made in all directions, but primarily parallel to the submerged river channel, as this is the best way to check the depths around the "breaks" (piers, abutments, etc.) and the channel itself. The passes in the channel area need not be long, but they should be long enough to be sure the total width of the roadbed (embankment, bars, etc.) has been covered.

A wire trolling rig may have to be used in the channel area as well as on the deeper sections of the roadbed, in order to reach the deepest fish-holding areas.

As stated earlier, a fisherman can't predict in advance (before he checks it out) how active the fish are, or where they might be. At one time they may be grouped and active far up the center of the roadbed. At another time they are found scattered along the brush on the sides. The next time, they may be deep and dormant at a pier, and it takes a lure in front of their nose at zero speed to get them to take.

A great many of us are exposed to fishing waters containing a submerged roadbed. And until checked out, we must consider it a prime feature the fish use in their movements and migrations. While we recognize this fact, we know there are unproductive submerged roadbeds also. At this time we would say to limit your testing to only those that cross some major river or stream channel. However, this may not be an interpretation good enough for those of us who fish reservoirs chock-full of old roadbeds. Next time maybe we should talk about such a reservoir so that you and I do not spend too much time on a roadbed, or part of one, where we have little chance to catch a fish.

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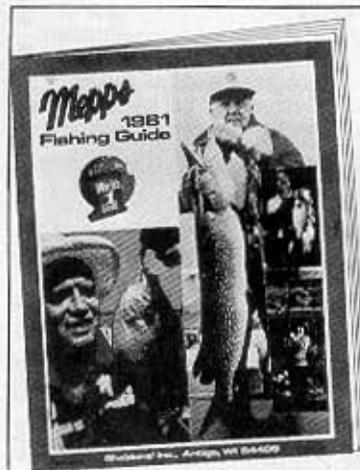
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