



## Fish Where You Have The Best Chance To Catch A Fish

*In any fishing situation the interpretation of structure should get the greatest attention.*

by Buck Perry, Education Editor

It has been said, if you or I desire to become better fishermen, we should have "guidelines" to follow in finding our way. Rules, or "guides," would provide the "base" in our search for better solutions. Without guidelines it would be almost impossible to start finding answers, much less find a more satisfying way to go. We have accepted the fact that a fish can be caught at some time or other by most anyone most any place, on most anything, and by most any method. However, with all the variables in weather and water conditions, and with the reactions of the fish to these conditions, it would be wise for us to spend the greater part of our time (fishing) where we have the best chance to catch a fish.

In past talks, we established some guidelines as to where we might catch fish consistently in a body of water. Our basic guideline went something like this: "If you and I expect to catch fish consistently, we must use the features (structure, breaks, breaklines, deep water, etc.) found in a body of water as our 'guide' to where the fish might be."

In previous talks (articles), we have discussed basic guidelines as to water color, weather, movement of fish, speed of lures, season, lake types, etc., for the interpretation of a fishing situation. However, the interpretation of structure (breaks, breaklines) in any fishing situation should probably get the most attention. There is little doubt it is in the area of interpretation (of "structure") where we can get better.

We have covered what structure to look for in different type lakes and reservoirs (man-made lakes). It was pointed out that of all the features found, the "hump" or underwater island could be one of the most productive, and that all of them should be checked out. We stated humps are important due to the fact they are features that are well-defined, different from the surrounding area, and quite obvious to both fish and fishermen. They are important due to the fact, when fish move up on them they (the fish) are reluctant to move down the backside, thus producing a concentration of fish.

When looking at humps, or trying to

find answers, it is no different than other aspects of fishing. You and I should have some basic "rules of thumb" or "guidelines" about this particular feature.

One of the basic rules concerning humps would be to spend little time on one that's out on some big "flat." Let's look at a drawing to show more clearly what is meant.

Figure 1 is a top view of a situation found in a flatland type reservoir. There are three humps shown in the figure: A, B, C.

Hump "A" is located on a big "flat" that exists between the deep water

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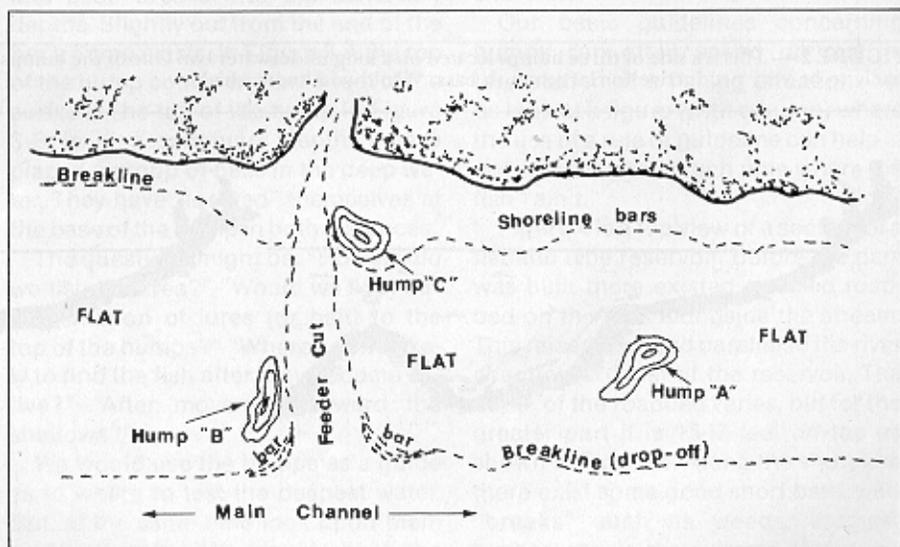


FIGURE 1 — Underwater humps and islands are important forms of structure that should be checked. They offer features that are well-defined, different from the surrounding area, and quite obvious to both fish and fishermen.

## The Best Chance To Catch A Fish, cont.

(main river channel) and the shoreline shallows. There is no indication of any ridge, breaks, or breakline between the hump and the deep water (main river channel) and the shoreline shallows. There is no indication of any ridge, breaks, or breakline between the hump and the deep water (where the fish spend the greater part of their time — a "guideline"). In other words there is no visible linkage, or feature the fish could use in their migration toward the hump and shallows.

We would spend little time on this hump. This observation comes from one of our basic guidelines as to the movements of the fish. We must not forget the structure (breaks, breaklines) the fish use in their movements has not only immediate access to deep water, but those features **MUST GO ALL THE WAY** to the shallows. Another way we could say this is: the fish do not migrate across a flat void of signposts (structure, breaks, breaklines).

We would check this hump out

briefly, as we do not know all, or the exact conditions of the bottom. But, our "guidelines" would help in not spending too much time on a non-productive hump.

Hump "B" (Figure 1) is situated on/or connected to a feeder stream channel or "wash" that has cut through the flat. This "cut" has produced structure, breaks and breaklines that "go all the way." Note the structure (bars) at the channel, then the breaklines that go all the way to the shoreline features (shallows). Hump "B" should be *potentially* productive.

Hump "C" is located on a bar near the shoreline. This bar is tied directly to the features (structure, breaks, and breaklines) of the feeder stream cut. Hump "C" could be highly productive during a shallow movement of the fish.

To help in our interpretation of humps, let's look at another figure.

Figure 2 is a side view of a situation where again three humps are present. (Note: These are NOT the same humps that were shown in Figure 1). Humps "A" and "B" are located on a long bar. Hump "C" is located in the deepest water, or I should say, it is located in the

sanctuary depths (below 20 feet, average 30-35 feet if available).

The top of hump "A" comes within 3 feet of the surface — we say the hump is 3 feet deep. The second hump "B" is 16 feet deep, and the third "C" is 28 feet. Let's look at these three humps and see if we can establish additional rules or "guidelines." Let's view them in the light of our basic fish species for study, the largemouth bass, then make comments on other species.

Hump "A" comes within 3 feet of the surface, and it IS the shallows (less than 8-10 ft.). If it's related to structure, breaks, and deep water such as "C", in Figure 1, it should produce.

The top of the second hump "B" does not "go all the way" to the shallows. *It does not lead anywhere.* It's a "dead-end" at 15 feet. We could not consider this as a potentially good structure. It could be located in a position such as "B" in Figure 1 and still not be productive, as the fish when moving shallow would pass on by on the breaks and breaklines of the feeder cut. We must never forget the fish may not "go all the way" to the shallows due to weather and water conditions, but the path they

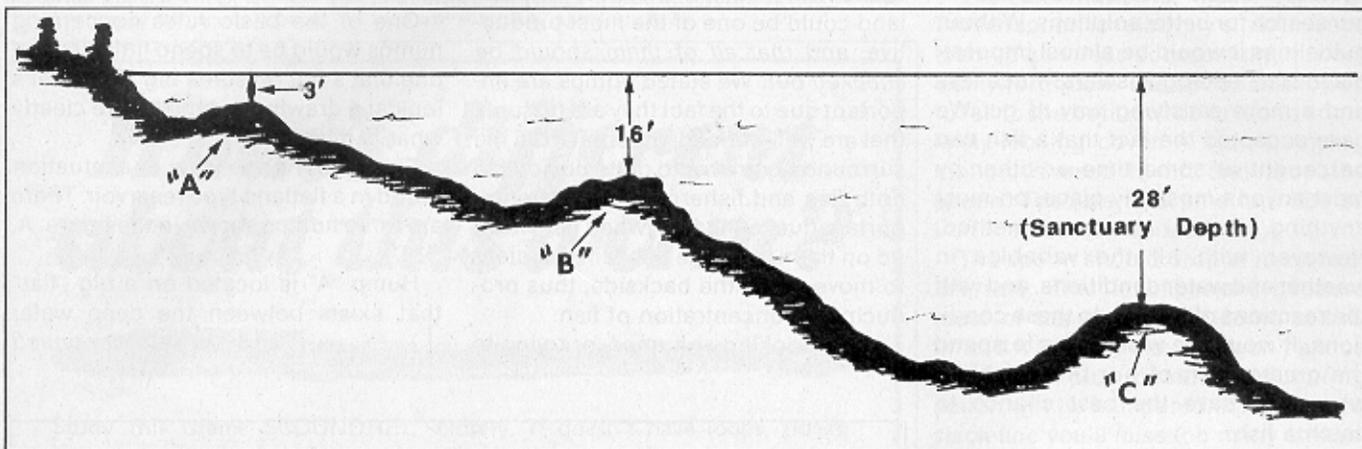
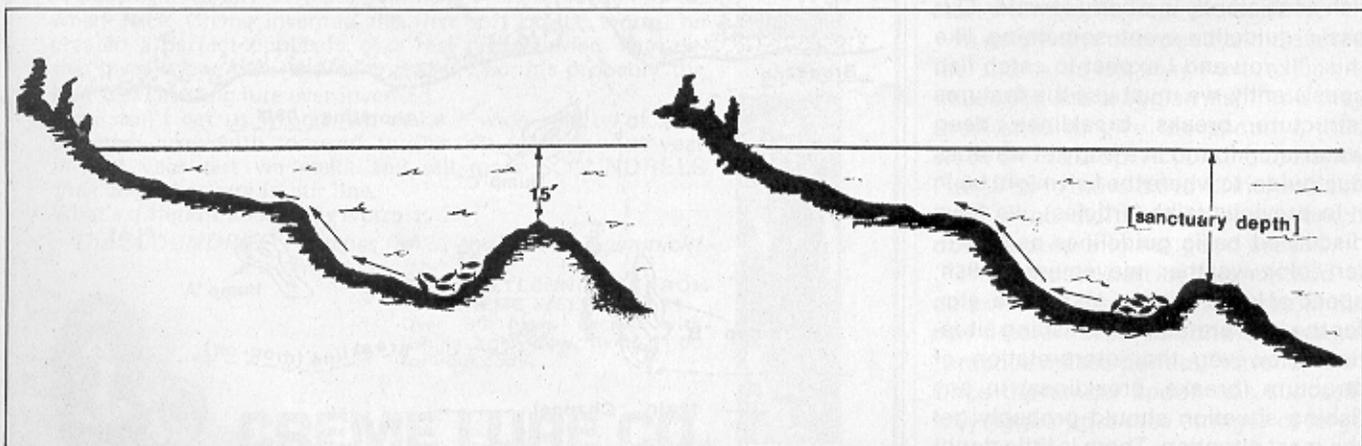
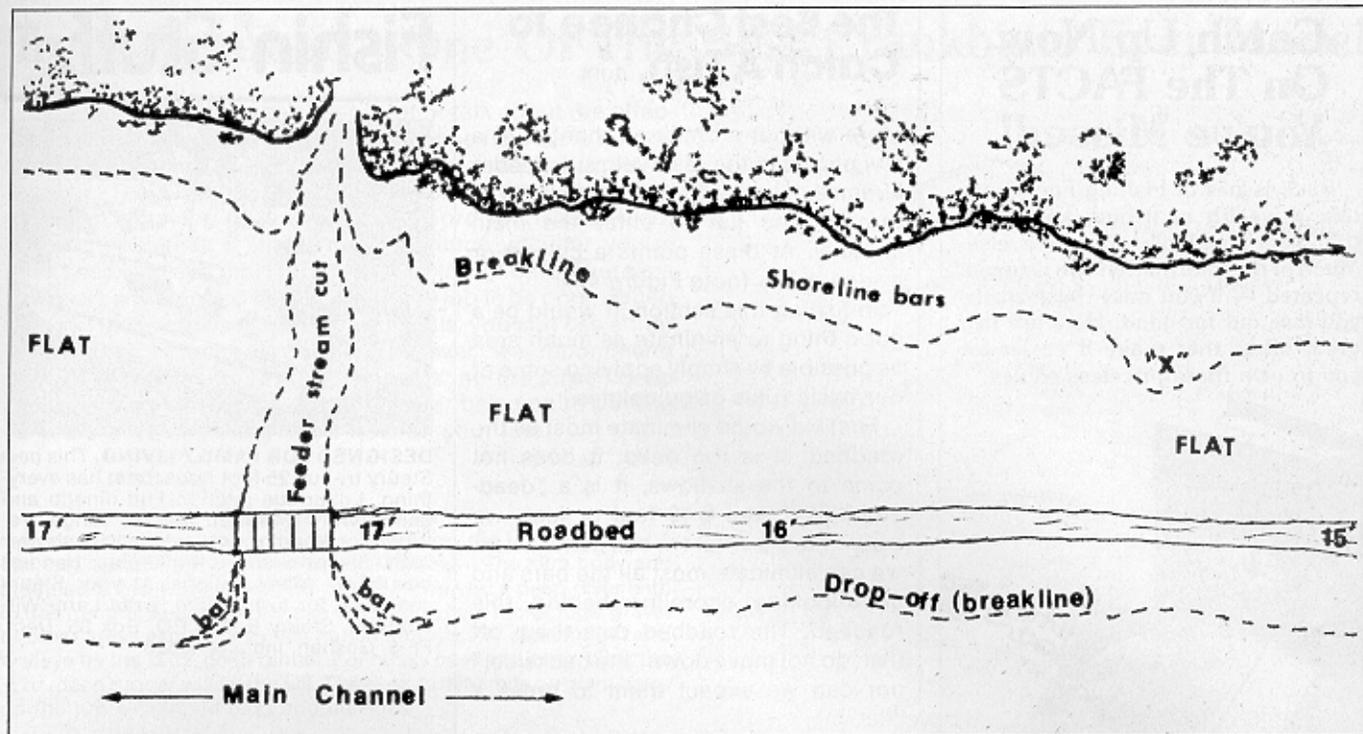


FIGURE 2 — This is a side view of three humps located on a long underwater bar. One of the humps is not likely to be very productive for largemouth bass. Would you know which?



FIGURES 3-A AND 3-B — The top of these humps should be checked only briefly for signs of scattered fish, especially if species other than bass are present. However, the sides and base of each hump should get the most attention.



**FIGURE 4**—A top view of a section of a flatland reservoir. Before the dam was built a raised roadbed existed on the flats alongside the stream. In attempting to fish this section, Education Editor Buck Perry tells you how to eliminate as much unproductive area as possible by simply applying some basic fishing guidelines.

take (structure, breaks, breaklines) does.

The third hump "C" is located in the sanctuary depths, and it is a well-defined feature and could be used by the fish to "locate" themselves in deep water.

With the above in mind, we can now set up another basic "guideline" for humps. If the hump goes to the shallows (8-10 feet or less, the shallower the better) etc., we should look upon it as having potential. If the top of the hump occurs at a depth between the shallows and the sanctuary depths, we should look upon it as a "dead-end" in most instances. If the hump occurs in the sanctuary depths, we should check it out thoroughly. To this basic guideline we should add: "for a hump to be considered productive, it should have connecting features (structure, breaks, breaklines) to the shallow water as well as to the deepest water in the area."

Another thought to keep in mind (but do not let it interfere with our basic guideline), is we might have scattered fish like the walleye, northern pike, white bass, trout, etc. in certain seasons and under certain weather and water conditions ON such humps as "B" or "C" (Figure 2), but we are not likely to find the largemouth bass.

The bass may be "relaxed" to a hump such as "B" and "C" (Figure 2) in deep water, as it is an outstanding feature.

However, in his positions, movements, migrations, we must figure the large-mouth bass will position himself, or use the features related to the shoreline. That is why in some deep clear lakes, some species may be found on deep sanctuary humps, but seldom, or never, the largemouth bass.

Let's look at a couple more figures to clarify this, and to further help in our interpretation of humps.

Figures 3-A and 3-B are side views of a section in a body of water. Both cross-sections have a good ridgelike bar extending out from the shoreline, and each breaks into the sanctuary depths. Slightly out from the end of the bar a hump exists. In Figure 3-A the top of the hump comes within 15 feet of the surface. The top of the hump in Figure 3-B is at a sanctuary depth. I have placed a group of bass in the deep water. They have "located" themselves at the base of the hump in both instances.

The questions might be: "How would we fish the area?" "Would we limit our presentation of lures (or bait) to the top of the humps?" "Where are we likely to find the fish after they become active?" "After movement toward the shallows?"

We would use the humps as a guide as to where to test the deepest water. But, at the same time look upon them as "dead-ends." We would check the top of the humps briefly for scattered fish, especially if species other than

bass were present, but the sides and "base" of the hump would get our attention and effort for the bass (and other species). We would expect the migration to the shallows to move toward the "bar" which "goes all the way." (See figures.)

We have seen bass fishermen working a hump such as the one shown in Figure 3-A. Possibly they caught a fish from it at sometime or other. They now spend a lot of time working the top of the hump, never realizing the fish they caught came from the "base," and the rest of the active fish went toward the shoreline.

Our basic guidelines concerning humps can often speed up our interpretation of a fishing situation. Let us look at a figure (with a hump) where the use of a rule or guideline can help in not spending too much time where the fish "ain't."

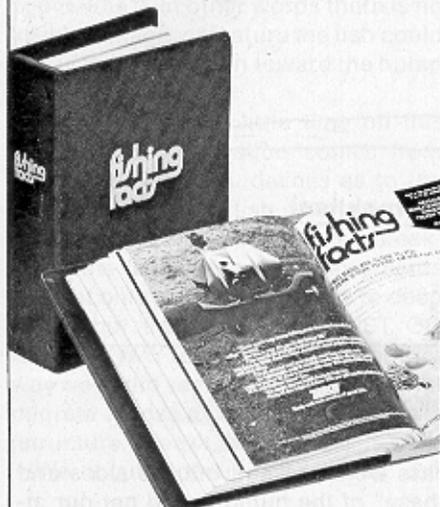
Figure 4 is a top view of a section of a flatland type reservoir. Before the dam was built there existed a raised roadbed on the flats alongside the stream. This raised roadbed paralleled the river channel for most of the reservoir. The depth of the roadbed varies, but for the greater part it is 15-17 feet on top as shown in Figure 4. Along the shoreline there exist some good short bars, with "breaks" such as weeds, stumps, bushes, etc. in the extreme shallows.

The roadbed may run for a mile or

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more without a break or change. At a few places in the reservoir, side feeder streams, channels, or "washes," cut through the flat to enter the main channel. At these points a culvert or bridge exists (note Figure 4).

In fishing this section, it would be a good thing to eliminate as much area as possible by simply applying some of our basic rules or guidelines.

First we would eliminate most all the roadbed; it is too deep, it does not come to the shallows, it is a "dead-end." (If it was 8-10 feet or less, we would have a different ball game.) Next we can eliminate most all the bars and good-looking shoreline behind this roadbed. The roadbed cuts them off (fish do not move down "the backside," nor can we expect them to cross a "flat").

In the total interpretation of this situation we again use our basic guideline. If we desire to be successful consistently, we must use structure as our guide as to where the fish might be, and then use the breaks and breaklines on/or connected to these structures to pinpoint the fish. In Figure 4 there exists two "bars" (structure) on each side of the feeder stream cut where it enters the main channel. These bars have breaks and breaklines that "go all the way."

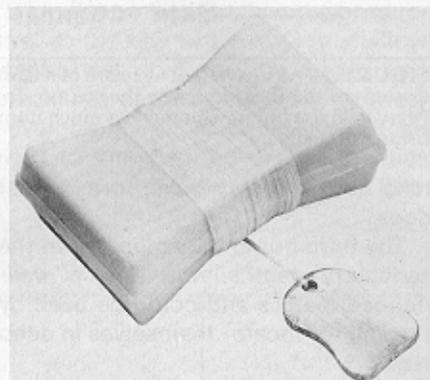
In fishing this area we could spend a lot of time on top of the roadbed and not be able to understand why it does not produce. After a long stable weather and water condition, we could "luck up" on fish at the shoreline bar marked "X" (Figure 4). We might then fish it for years after, and be puzzled why it does not produce again. We fail to realize the weather and water conditions have not been stable long enough to allow a migration to come this far from the feeder stream cut. We seem to forget how far fish go and how long they stay is dependent upon the weather and water conditions at the time (guidelines). It should be obvious as to the area where we should spend the greater part of our time.

If you and I expect to consistently catch fish, it is wise to have some basic rules or guidelines if we desire to do it in a reasonable length of time — regardless where we might fish. Just some rules concerning humps will go a long way toward concentrating our efforts where we have the best chance for success.

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