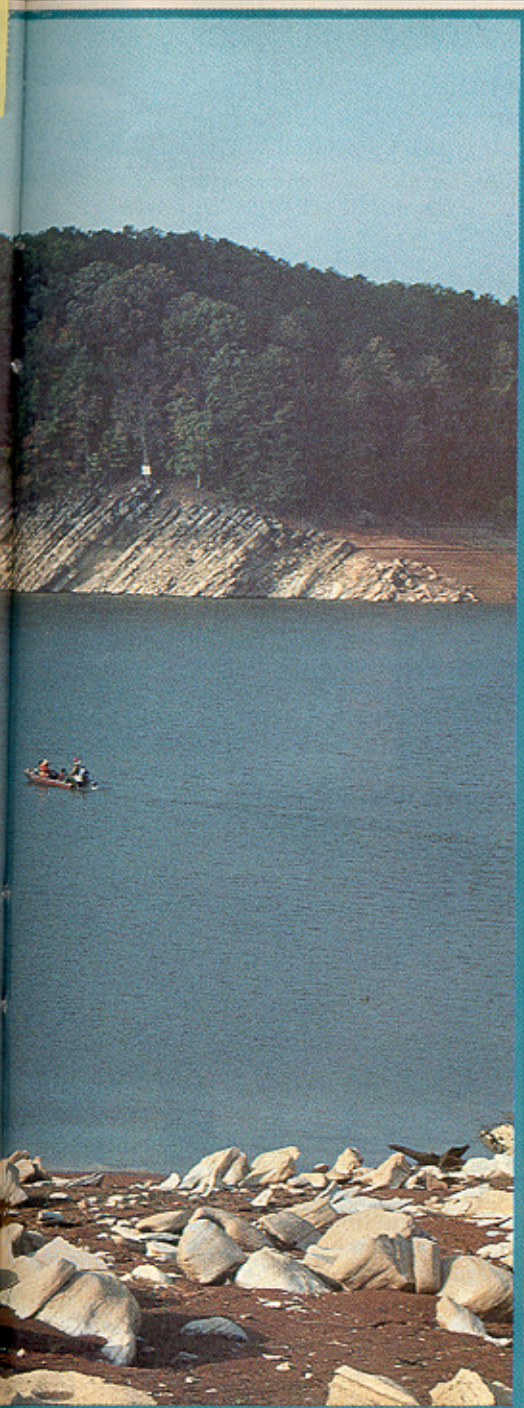




Catch More Bass With These Tips

Quite often fishermen have to learn the 'hard way' about changes in tactics during the fishing season.

by Buck Perry, Education Editor



Note the two shorelines. One is steep with shorter features, deep water and a cove nearby, while the opposite shore is flat and rocky. Would you know which shore to favor during various periods of the fishing season?

Shortly after the hunting, football and basketball seasons come to an end, fishermen begin to think about the coming fishing season. By far, the larger group limit their "getting ready" to straightening out their tackle boxes, purchasing lures claimed to be "THE latest thing" for the year, getting the boat cleaned, motor tuned, and planning fishing trips. A much smaller group may be thinking of how they can improve their performance during the coming season. But very few of them know what to do, or how to go about having better fishing success.

Getting things ready is not out of order, but our fishing success (yours and mine) this year and in the years to come will not be based on just how new or orderly our fishing gear is. Our success this year (and in the future) will be determined by just how much we know (how the fish lives and his reaction to a changing environment), AND what you and I must DO to put him on the stringer. In other words, **KNOWLEDGE IS THE KEY TO FISHING SUCCESS!**

What we must know, and what we must do, cannot be absorbed in an easy, quick manner. Wouldn't it be nice if it could be compressed into a small white pill, a single dose giving us the desired results?

I do not wish to be a killjoy, but all those "small white pills" sometimes proclaimed by tackle manufacturers and their representatives, may be just as effective as the sugar pills (placebos) prescribed by doctors to a lot of people. These "pills" (for a shortcut to success) may keep an individual happy, but in no way will they cure the patient.

In our past talks, I have tried to point out some of the things we must know, and what we must DO, if we desire to catch fish consistently whenever or wherever we might fish. The things I have tried to talk about were also directed toward your becoming a BETTER fisherman. I can't provide a shortcut to success, neither can anyone digest or learn it all in a short period of time. However, as you gain fishing knowledge, each season will be better than the last. Each of the "guidelines" I talk about is to improve your chances for greater fishing success and, if understood and put to use, will move you closer to SATIS-

FACTION, which in truth is the ultimate goal we are after.

Quite often a fisherman has to learn the hard way about changes in tactics during the season. This could be due partly to "teachers" waiting until a particular part of the season arrives before discussing it. This is giving it out in small doses, scattered over a year's time, and this is not good on some subjects.

As a structure fisherman (Spoon-plugger) I try to set myself up some guidelines from a SEASONAL point of view. With seasonal guidelines, I am not likely to forget or have something I can't handle slip up on me with a change in the season.

As a case in point, let's talk about the seasonal movements of bass in a reservoir (man-made lake). To set this up, you may ask questions something like this: "When you were talking about the early season movement of bass into the channels and shallows of the bays and coves, I'd like to know just where I might find the fish? How long do they stay, and how shallow do they move when they go into the coves? Where am I likely to find the fish most of the time? In which coves do I concentrate my efforts?" etc., etc.

Those who have heard me talk (or have read our study material) about the seasonal movements of bass in reservoirs, should know our guidelines say that during the colder periods (late fall, winter, early spring) we should work the steeper, deeper, shorter features (structure, breaks, breaklines) NEAR the deepest water in the area (the main channel in most reservoirs). Then as we approach the pre-spawn season, we should begin to check the bays and coves that have some sort of channel. The closer we get to the spawning period, we spend more and more time on the channels and shallows of the bays and coves (feeder streams and "washes"). After spawning we leave the steep shorelines and coves, and concentrate our efforts on the longer, flatter features.

If you read carefully the questions that were asked earlier, you'll see they were all directed toward a particular time of the season (pre-spawn—spawn). This is fine, but I want to discuss this to get us a SEASONAL type guideline. I want this guideline to eliminate a lot of water; one that will

continued

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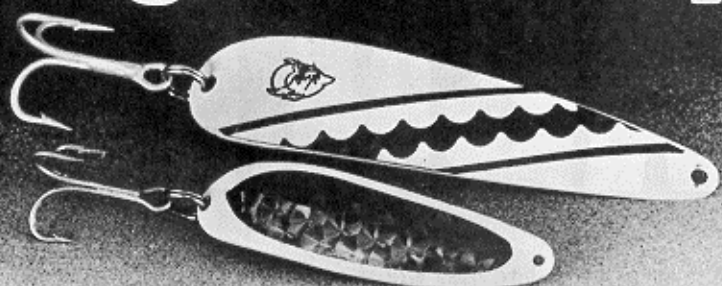
and coves related to a good productive warm weather structure. This means *the steeper shorelines, and the coves, should be as close as possible to the longer, flatter features used by the fish during the summer.*

These warmer weather features could be along the same shoreline as the steep shore and the cove; or, they could be across the main channel (on the opposite shoreline). In narrow, crooked reservoirs, the best summer feature is likely to be on the *opposite* shoreline, whereas in large wide-open type reservoirs the best steeper shoreline and coves should be on the same shoreline.

Let's look at a few figures.

Figure 1 is a top view of a turn or bend in a narrow (not wide) reservoir. The steeper, deeper shoreline is on the "outside" of the turn. The longer, flatter summer feature (bar) is on the "inside" of the bend. The "cove" (and feeder channel) is related to the steeper shoreline. This figure represents seasonal features—all working a

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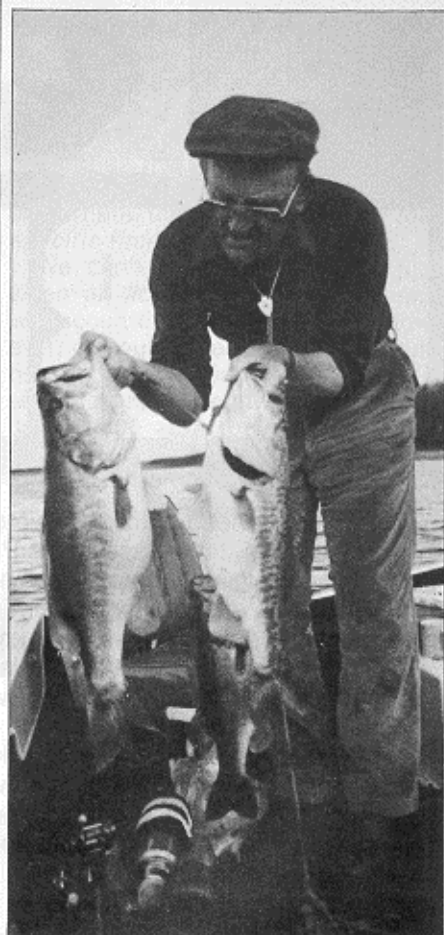
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"Fishermen should expect the fish to make a change from the colder pre-spawn and spawning season features (in a lake) to the long, warm weather features and vice versa." —Buck Perry

deeper shoreline or a cove, a long distance from any productive warm weather bottom features (structure, breaks, breaklines).

Figure 2 is a top view of a shoreline section in a big, wide reservoir. In this case the seasonal features are located on the same shoreline; and, "related" to each other.

Figure 3 is a top view of a section in a flatland type reservoir. In most "flatlanders" the main channel will meander down through the flat "bottom land" and come close to the shoreline in several places. This in turn will produce seasonal features close together in a given area. (Note there are 2 bars to check.)

These three examples (figures) represent a "guideline" for the structure, breaks, breaklines and deep water we should be fishing in a reservoir from a seasonal viewpoint.

Your next question may be, "When should I expect the fish to change from the colder pre-spawn and spawning season features to the long warm weather features and vice versa?"

I doubt if anyone can say "just when." It will change, as the weather and water conditions will be different each year. However, we do have a seasonal guideline. It says we should expect a structure change after spawning activities, and the water has warmed to greater depths. The switch back to the steeper, shorter features will occur shortly after the first heavy frost.

It could be you did not "get" what I just said about the seasonal guideline for structure, breaks, breaklines and deep water for bass in a reservoir. This may be due to the fact you do not fish for bass in man-made lakes, but spend all your fishing life in "natural" lakes. The guideline for the relationship between the seasonal features should be applied to all waters you might fish. In all waters, your thinking should be that the fish will have short movements and migrations from the deeper sanctuary depths during the colder season. Then, as the warmer weather and spawning season approaches, the movements start and continue toward the shallower spawning areas "related" to the deeper sanctuary depths (channels, holes, slots, etc.). After spawning, the movements will be toward and along the longer, flatter features (bars, breaks, breaklines) going ALL THE WAY from the sanctuary depths to the shallows.

There are other "seasonal" guidelines you and I can talk about which will help us be at the right place at the right time, fishing in the right manner as the seasons change. Having greater success this year (or the next) may not come about if we spend too much time where there are no fish.

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reduce the seasonal **FEATURES** (structure, breaks, breaklines, deep water, etc.) we must consider, down to a small area. By doing it this way, I am hoping you will not get lost as to where you should be spending your time as the season changes.

Now to your questions about the fish moving toward or into the coves. During the cold, early, pre-spawn period we really can't say where the fish will be in the cove. "Where they are" will be controlled by the weather and water conditions AT THAT TIME. If conditions are good (stable over a period of time) some fish could be found scattered along the shallow shoreline features. If conditions were marginal they could be grouped somewhere along the breaks and breaklines of the cove channels. If a bad cold front passes through, it could shove them out of the cove and feeder stream channel, all the way back to the main channel. And, it could be quite a spell (days) before they start moving back toward the cove.

A thing to keep in mind about the early movements into the coves is, the fish may stay "grouped" and move along the channel all the way to the "head" of the cove without scattering to the shallows along the way.

What all this means is, we have to check out a cove or bay thoroughly to see where the fish may be at that specific time.

We can't predict in advance just when an activity period (movement) will occur, or how long it lasts. However, our guideline says there should be only one movement a day, and it should occur during the middle of the day—(10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.). Our guidelines also say our speed control for the presentation of lures should be slow (but we have to check it out). And we may find (due to the cold water and the metabolism of the fish) a smaller lure is better than a large one (if we can control our depth and speed), and this is especially so if the bass is a smallmouth.

The fisherman often has problems deciding which deeper-steep-shorter features (structure) to work in the coldest weather. He also has questions about the coves and bays he should be working in the early season, pre-spawn and spawning periods.

Our guideline (for the best area where we have the best chance to catch a fish) says to spend little time in a bay (or cove) that does not have some sort of channel. It also says, we should pick the steeper shorelines

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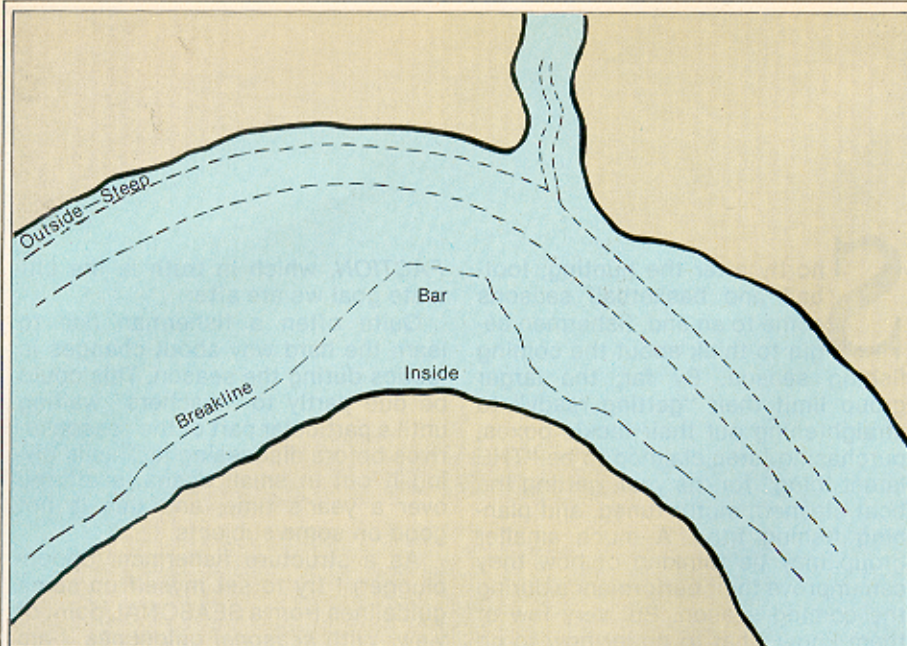


FIGURE 1—Top view of a turn or bend in a narrow (not wide) reservoir.

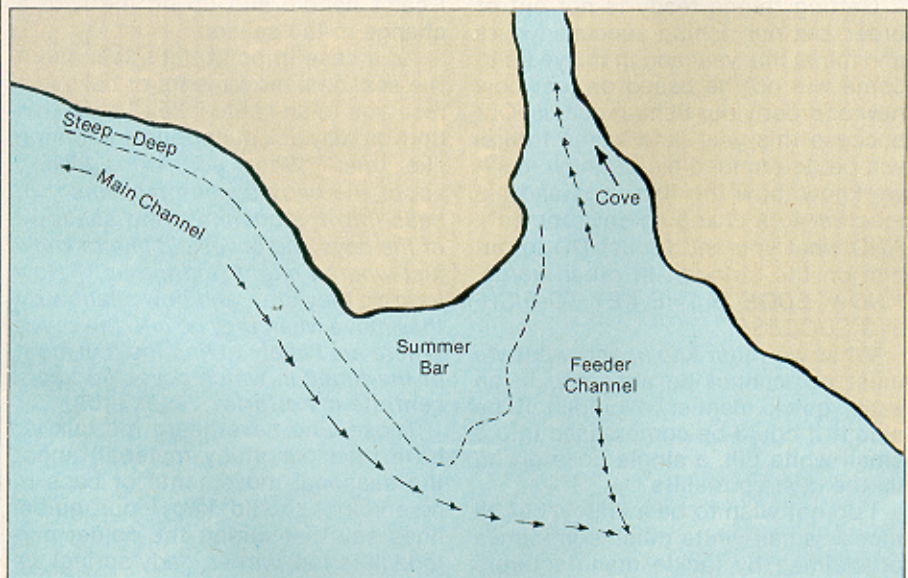


FIGURE 2—Top view of a shoreline section in a big, wide reservoir.

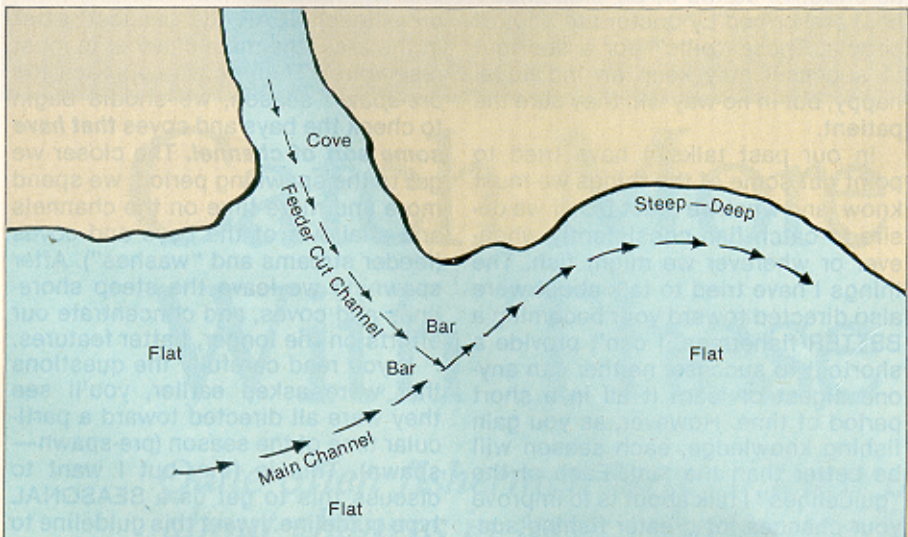


FIGURE 3—Top view of a section in a flatland type reservoir. In most flatland lakes the main channel will meander down thru the flat "bottom land" and come close to the shoreline in several places.