

# Where to Fish and Why You Fish There

*(Fresh Water)*

By Ramon J Ross

**G**ENERALLY speaking, fish live and lurk around "edges." Legal limits are filled most often by people just like you who have studied this idea and are aware of how to use it.

Depending on time of day, the season, and on atmospheric conditions, it may be the edge of a weed bed, or a reef or a shoal, the edge of a drop-off, of an underwater crater or spring, or the edge of the water itself. In a stream, it may be the edge of a glide, of a fall or rapid, or the edge between fast- and slower moving chutes of water.

It is also true, generally, that fish inhabit shallow water in spring and autumn. In winter and summer they move to deeper areas. Here, perhaps, is the explanation for it: each species has a "favorite" water temperature. At least there is a temperature that appears most cordial to them, that stimulates many of their activities—even their spawning. At least they seek, as nearly as possible, to frequent water of this particular temperature. In much of the United States this preferred climate is relatively near the surface in spring and fall. It's relatively deep, if it exists at all, in winter and summer.



An angler must consider two factors, then, when deciding where to cast a lure. His consideration at both surface and subsurface edge must be balanced with the time, the date, and the season.

Here's an example. In August you visit a lake that is famous for good bass fishing. But from the luck you've had, it was no more than a press agent's dream. You fished hard all day without any action.

Last winter you read an article about largemouth bass living around weed beds. It said to fish for them there with surface plugs—and you did. Very skillfully I might add, too, since there were no strikers to interrupt your patient efforts.

That writer failed to state that during August dog days, bass are deep. The weed beds, if any, around which you find them will be in deep water. Except, perhaps, for periods at night and before dawn, you will find them at the edges of drop offs around sunken ledges offshore, and as we said, around deep weed beds.

Getting down to specific cases, and limiting this to daytime fishing for a moment, here are places to look for fish in impounded waters. There are exceptions, of course—perhaps more than any author can cope with—but pan fish are generally shallow-water species. They do run deep with summer and winter, but not to great extremes. It's a matter of exploring edges again, edges of weed beds for bluegills, snags and brush piles for crappies, and rocky reefs for rock bass. Yellow perch and walleyes alone wander into schools across sections of the lake bottom that have no distinguishing characteristics—or edges. But even these, in springtime, congregate along the edges of causeways, piers, abutments, and such similar structures where they hit on a wholesale scale.

Points of land are productive places to fish in lakes. But to know just how far off the point is again a matter of season. In most cases an underwater "spine" stretches out from the point. Fish will loiter along this spine in water nearest the temperature they prefer. That may be in one foot of water right along the shore or it may be so deep that angling there is no longer worth the trouble. You will be playing your cards well if you work these spines carefully.



In most of the artificial reservoirs across the land, vast sections have been cleared of woods before flooding began. Never fail to fish the stumpy areas remaining. These may be visible above or just under the surface, or you may have to rely on the type of map printed by many of the state fish and game departments. Some states even prepare underwater shelters from logs and brush for fish. Make it your business to know the locations of these— especially for the pan fish.

Except during the hottest days of summer, weed beds are worth your best efforts. Not the large and unbroken weed beds, but those with numerous channels and indentations. The edges and the insides of these should be fished thoroughly if pike, bass, or muskies inhabit the lake. And never pass up weed beds because they may be located far from shore. With only few exceptions, these are real hot spots, especially if deep water is nearby.

Irregular and broken shore lines are always likely places to fish. Except on rare occasions—and most of these at night—those attractive sand and gravel beaches are barren and will not reward you with much tree, snag, or other possible hide-out as you cast along a broken shore.



Streams and creeks have personalities, too. They have productive sections and they have dead spots, places you couldn't hook a fish in an entire season of diligent effort. Generally, the mouth of a stream is a good bet. During most seasons, and for one reason or another, fish will move around such a place. Mouths of streams that empty into the larger streams often contain an old resident or two—perhaps a brownie or a smallmouth. The inlet for a

lake rates plenty of attention.

The tails of rapids and riffles are always worth fishing. And so are the pockets downstream from large rocks, boulders, and other obstructions. Small backwaters and pools in mid-stream created by an irregular pattern of obstacles nearly always contain fish on the prowl for easy calories.

Work your lures carefully across the glides or "slick" areas where the water moves by rather quickly. Perhaps you will be able to detect a slight wrinkle in the water's surface. This may indicate a crevice or fault in the rock strata a foot or two upstream—maybe a likely spot for a bass, channel cat, or trout.

Undercut banks afford another particularly interesting and rewarding type of water. Any effort you spare in reaching them with your bait may cost you a bragging fish. An undercut bank with a fallen tree or log jam has even greater possibilities.

Backwaters and whirlpools should always be investigated. Fish lie in wait in these areas for the aquatic food slowly circulated before and around them. A fertile place is formed where an obstacle separates a part of the flow from the main current. The diverted flow is caused to make a complete circle. Fish will be found inside and long the edges.

Remember that fish always face into the current—but outside of that, you're dealing with the most unpredictable creatures on earth.