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## **Ontario Fishing Tips Throughout the Seasons**

Imagine a place where nature is in its most natural state, where lakes teem with fish and the abundant scenery will leave you breathless. Picture for yourself crystal-clear water or the lone call of the majestic loon, while savouring the soft splash made as your lure breaks the tranquil silence surrounding you. This utopia is none other than Ontario - an accessible paradise that you can call your very own.

Ontario boasts more than 400,000 lakes, rivers and streams - enough water to quench the thirst of even the most ardent angler. From fly-rodding for trout to waging war with the mighty muskie, the possibilities for world-class fishing are endless. If your style of fishing is to wade a pristine stream or to troll the largest of lakes, we have the perfect spot to lure you in. Be the first to cast a line to fish that have yet to see an artificial bait. Re-discover your inner-child while staring at the massive pine trees that line the shore. Revel in the excitement and exhilaration as you lift the net under yet another formidable adversary, all the time wondering why you never made this pilgrimage before. Dreams can come true, and Ontario is just what you have been wishing for.

Ontario boasts the world's largest number of lakeside resorts and lodges; one of which will be sure to suit your needs and budget. Take a short drive from the bustling city to a hidden retreat, or board a plane for a fly-in getaway, either way you can be assured of professional service and a "shore lunch" to remember.

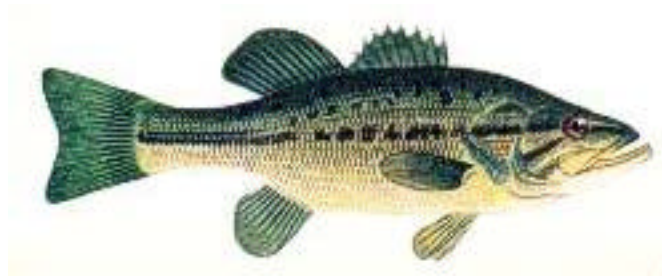
Once summer makes way for winter, a new realm of fishing is at your doorstep. Take part in the ritual of ice fishing, and discover the incredible way this activity can warm your soul on even the most cold of days. Whether you prefer to brave the elements or warm up in an outfitters hut, the results through the ice will amaze and delight you.

Have a look at the rest of this booklet and learn where the fish are and how to fish for them as the fishing season passes from spring to fall. Good luck and tight lines,

*T.J. Quesnel*

*Webmaster*

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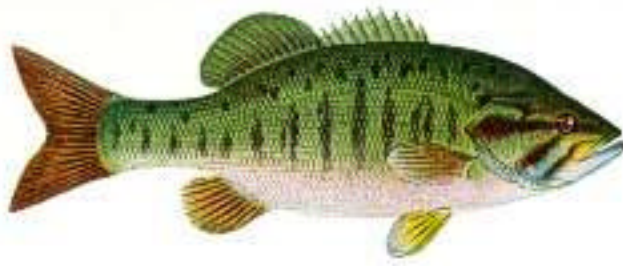


## Largemouth Bass

**Spring (Start of Season)** Once the bass season finally opens up, fish can be found relatively easy in a number of typical areas of the lake. Look for shallow, weedy back bays that the largemouth use to spawn in. These areas will hold most of the post-spawn fish well into the start of the season. If the bays contain a variety of weeds and pad beds, coupled with some wood, you just may have hit pay dirt. Early season baits that shine at this time of year are spinner baits, buzz baits, floating worms and texas-rigged plastic worms and lizards. Start the day off tight to shore for aggressive fish that will be roaming and fish tighter to cover as the day progresses.

**Summer** Hot days and big bass go hand in hand in Ontario, and searching out shade will be your number one priority. Old wooden docks, moored boats, undercut banks and lily pads hold enormous amounts of largemouth during the “dog days” of summer. Flipping a plastic worm or craw, or a “jig and pig” into these largemouth lairs will lead to big bucketmouths willing to play tug of war on your line. Keep in mind the incredible topwater bite that can be experience at dawn and dusk throughout the summer months. Finding a shallow, weedy flat and casting a Pop-R or a Zara Spook will bring guaranteed results.

**Fall** As the leaves change colour and the days get colder, the largemouth bass does an about turn and heads deeper in preparation of the coming cold winter. Begin your search by looking for water with a mixture of weed and rock in a depth between five and 15-feet deep. Largemouth love rock in the fall for the heat it attracts, while the green weed offers baitfish and necessary oxygen. Crankbaits, spinnerbaits and worms all work well during this transition zone, however, most top professionals will rely on a flipping jig with a pork chunk to entice these somewhat negative fish. Working your bait slow and methodically will help in attracting fish and making them bite.



## Smallmouth Bass

**Spring (Start of Season)** Smallmouth bass love rock and spend more than ninety percent of their time on this hard structure. Post-spawn smallies will remain close to shallow rocky areas of the lake until the temperature of the water warms considerably. Islands, points and shoals are the three preferred spots to begin your smallmouth search, starting each area up shallow and moving deeper until you connect with fish. Topwater plugs, crankbaits and jigs are the preferred baits early in the season and “matching the hatch” by using crayfish coloured is a sure-bet to entice fish into the boat.

**Summer** Summer fishing can often be a “hit and miss” attempt due to whereabouts of the fish during this time. Early morning and evening periods will usually find fish in shallow water aggressively feeding – this is where topwaters really excel and will lead to heart-stopping explosions on the surface. Daytime smallies will retreat to the safety of deeper water and will relate to depths from six to thirty-feet deep. The one thing they will relate to is structure, and having a dependable fish finder on board will become your underwater eyes. Look for humps, shelves and drop offs and work a jig over these underwater magnets. Due to the schooling nature of the smallmouth bass, once one is caught, there are sure to be more to come.

**Fall** The fall time means one thing to a bass angler – BIG smallies. Fish at this time of year gorge themselves on crayfish and minnows in anticipation of the cold winter months. Searching for these hungry fish is the key to catching them, and concentrating on some of the spots you had success on earlier in the season will help you unlock the location factor. Points, saddles and shoals will hold smallies at this time of the year, however, the school will be situated farther from shore and in deeper water in comparison to their summer counterparts. Begin your search by finding water in the 20-foot depth and continue working until you hit 35 feet. Most of your fall fish will relate to water this deep and once you catch some, the remainder of the lakes’ fish will be holding at this magical depth. Rattle traps, cranks and jigs are the artillery for the fall enthusiast, and using a marker buoy to stay with the school and at the optimum depth will increase your chances of connecting.



## **Musky (Maskinonge)**

**Spring (Start of Season)** Musky are a fierce and cunning predator, yet are not as hard to catch as most people think. The start of June signals the beginning of 'ski season in most parts of Ontario, and offers a tremendous shot at connecting with numbers of fish and quality fish too. Weedy bays and shorelines are attractive to post-spawn muskies and will find most fish in relatively shallow water. The key concept to remember is the presence of healthy green weeds in the areas you are targeting. These weed beds and clumps hold numerous varieties of panfish and offer cover to conceal the ambushing musky. Start the season off by throwing "bass size" baits in the form of spinnerbaits, bucktails and crankbaits. Baitfish at this time of year will be quite small, and using baits in the three to five-inch range will mimic this preferred quarry best. Work your baits fast in the spring and remember to perform a "figure-eight" with your lure at the end of every cast.

**Summer** The summer months will find the majestic musky away from the shallows and in much deeper water. Many of the larger fish will suspend over very deep water at this time of year, and the approach that will help cover water and find these fish quicker is trolling. Trolling may not be for everyone, but it will provide results for those anglers willing to stick with it and pay attention to detail. Summer musky trolling involves running baits through productive structure areas – namely off rocky points, over submerged humps and along sharp breaklines. Varying the depth you run your lures and experimenting with colours are a few of the variables that will increase your chances. Stick with baits in the six to ten-inch size and troll at increased speeds to trigger these fish. Running your lures on short lines directly in the prop wash of the motor can bring astonishing results, and works wonders on shallow fertile lakes that have an abundance of weed growth.

**Fall** Fall time is the one season that musky addicts dream of. Big fish gorge on baitfish to put on extra weight for the winter months, and are relatively easy to catch at this point in the year. Big sturdy jerkbaits are the number one choice for fall musky as they offer a large profile in the water at a slower speed that excels in the cold water. Use jerkbaits that are at least eight-inches-long for these monster fish, and do not be afraid to upgrade that bait to one in the 12-inch range. Healthy green weedlines in water from six to 12-feet will hold the majority of fish that a caster can reach, as deeper water will call for large trolling baits to be dragged through the area. Stick with natural coloured baits at this time of the year, and keep those hooks needle sharp to ensure their effectiveness. Stout tackle is necessary at this time of the year, and the use of wire leaders will be paramount to your success on landing these top predators.

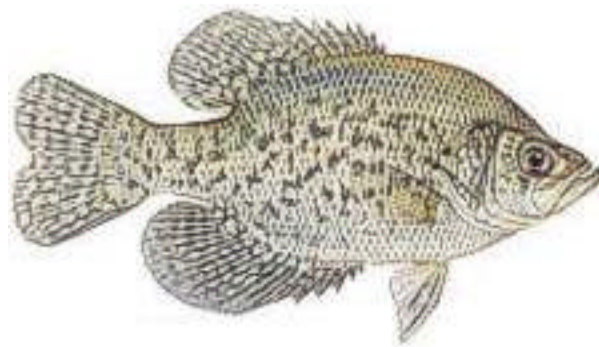


## Walleye

**Spring (Start of the Season)** For many anglers, fishing for walleye is a rite of spring. Fish are plentiful at this time of year and are more than willing to bite a variety of offerings. Fishing river areas in the spring is a prime choice as this is where fish will have spawned and many of these fish will stay in the general vicinity for some time. Live-bait rigs or minnow imitating crankbaits are two top choices, as is the ever-popular jig and minnow. Concentrate on low-light periods for these light-sensitive fish, and do not be afraid to venture out into the dark for some fast action. This is one time of the year when shore anglers can reap the rewards, and rivers are a top spot to start. Cover water to find the fish, and, once found, a change to slower presentation to work the area more thoroughly is all that is needed.

**Summer** Those walleye anglers in the know are aware that green weeds are the key to summer success. Walleye relate to these oxygen-rich plants for the cover they provide and the ambush points they can relate to in order to prey on baitfish. During the dog days of summer, a top approach is to fish the thick weed beds that you encounter on your lake during the hottest and brightest days. Drifting with the wind or using an electric motor will enable you to dunk jigs into any holes and pockets that you may come across. A bucktail jig is the preferred lure for its action it provides and its superb weedlessness. Tipping your jig with a nightcrawler or a minnow may up your odds dramatically. Remember – work your jig slowly and methodically and feel for that light tap or thud to signify the hit of a walleye.

**Fall** Fall time is an anglers best chance at catching monster walleye. As the water cools, fish begin to put on the feedbag and can be located in typical areas throughout a body of water. Head to rivermouths, points, and humps on the main lake to find concentrations of big females and aggressive males. For the more adventurous, trolling and casting minnow baits during the twilight hours is a sure way to bag a bunch. Choose long, slender baits with rattles intact to score on these hungry fall fish. Trolling presentations are best presented slow in these cold-water situations and the application of scent is a triggering device that will definitely up your odds.



## Crappie

**Spring (Start of Season)** Crappie are a rite of spring for many anglers, and for good reason – they are scrappy on light line, are relatively easy to catch and they taste delicious in the pan. Look for shallow cover for pre and post-spawn fish. Things to keep an eye out for are old wooden docks, cane beds, stumps and trees and thick weed beds. Suspending a small micro tube jig under a float is your best bet to entice these fish, and tipping your jig with a small piece of worm or minnow can bring better results if the fish are extremely finicky. A tip to keep in mind – a crappie's eyes are on the top of its head so a short length of line between float and bait will keep the lure in the fish's strike zone.

**Summer** After the spawn, the crappie will seek out deeper water and the schools of fish that occurred during the spring will disperse throughout the lake. Summer fish will now relate to structure in water from six to 20 feet deep. The one variable to keep an eye out for is healthy green weed beds and feeding shelves on the lake bottom. Schools of baitfish will also congregate hungry crappie, so keeping an eye on your fishfinder will often be the trick to locating fish. There are a number of lures that work well during the summer, namely small, deep-diving crankbaits, micro jigs on slip float setups, and small spoons that can be vertically jigged. Once you catch a fish, throwing out a marker buoy will help you stay in the area that is holding fish.

**Fall** Crappie movements in the fall are much like in the summer. Fish will continue to hold deep, yet they will begin to suspend off of prime structure areas in the general vicinity of baitfish schools. Summer presentations are your best lure options, but the general rule in the fall is to fish slower. Tossing a crankbait while barely turning the reel handle or jigging a spoon with 10 to 20 second pauses in between will entice these semi-active fish to hit. Cloudy, windy days seem to bring fish higher up in the water column, while sunny, bright days will push the finicky crappie deeper.



## Northern Pike

**Spring (Start of Season)** Spring pike fishing is an exciting way to open up the fishing season. Hard fights, big splashes and huge fish can lead to some exciting days spent on the water. Shallow water is the key component to search out when looking for spring pike in any lake system. Fish will be fresh off the spawn and they will have an appetite, so here's what to feed them. The top three lure choices for spring pike are big, flashy spinnerbaits, noisy buzzbaits and sparkling spoons. Cast these baits into prime shallow areas and be prepared to hang on tight. Some areas to keep in mind are shallow, sandy back bays, reed beds and the edges of lily pads and slop. Speed will be a triggering mechanism, so keep those baits moving fast and erratically.

**Summer** A large percentage of pike will relate to shallow water in the summer, but they will seek the shade and comfort that weed and pad beds provide. As they are an ambush predator, pike will set up on the edges of weedlines and tight into weed beds and wait for their prey to swim by. Cast adjacent to these fish-holding structures and work your bait quickly and thoroughly alongside any prime areas you come across. Some fish may also seek deeper water during the hot summer months, but these fish will also be keying in on green weed for the benefits it provides. A new lure to add to your arsenal during the summer months is a large minnowbait. These lures mimic the prey that the pike are feeding on, and are tops when it comes to triggering a hungry pike. Try either the suspending or the regular models to see which works best in your body of water.

**Fall** Fall time is trolling time for big northern pike, and this is your best way to access these fish as they prepare for the fast-approaching winter months. Fish will be deeper during the fall and can also be found suspended over very deep water. If you can find baitfish in the fall, then you will undoubtedly find yourself in northern pike territory. Pike follow the schools of baitfish around like clockwork, and anglers in the know will use this to their advantage. The rule of thumb during these cooler months is large crankbaits and spoons trolled relatively fast behind the boat. Matching the colour of your lure to the species of prey that they are feeding on will up your odds dramatically. Mimicking the baitfish by matching size, action and colour will stack the odds in your favour to hook that giant of a lifetime.



## Lake Trout

**Spring (Start of Season)** For those bodies of water that hold lake trout, the spring time is the one chance you have to hook up with fish without using downriggers or sophisticated equipment. Early in the year, lakera can be found high in the water column, allowing anglers to flat line their baits for superb action. Minnowbaits and spoons are the two top choices for catching these fish, but they must be trolled with a considerable amount of line behind the boat. Since the fish are high in the water column, they can also be spooky, so a quiet approach with long leads will help to trick these wonderful fish. White and silver are sure bets to fool lake trout, as they will match precisely the baitfish that the fish will be feeding on.

**Summer** “Down deep” is the summer phrase for lake trout anglers, as the fish sulk to the bottom in search of cooler temperatures and baitfish. Now is the time to dig out the downriggers and troll the depths for success. Keeping your bait as close to bottom will often be the key, as will working areas of different depths and structure make-up to find out where the fish are hiding. Lake trout will often show up on fishfinders as large marking directly on or near the bottom. Putting a big spoon or crankbait as close as possible to these fish will trigger them to hit.

**Fall** Fall is a movement time for lake trout and they will begin to suspend more readily and occasionally move higher up in the water column. River mouths and break walls can also hold fish at this time of year, and shore anglers may be able to take part in the action during early morning or late evening hours. Downrigging will still be your best bet, however, dragging lures at different depths will be the key to finding fish. Run a bait shallow, mid-depth and deep and see which one connects with fish. Paying attention to this “magic depth” will help you to limit out when others might not.



## Perch

**Spring (Start of Season)** Jumbo perch are a sought after game fish for many anglers, mainly for their scrappy tenacity and wonderful table fare. Spring is the best time to find numbers, and size, of big perch in shallow water feeding up after a long winter. Shallow, weedy back bays, docks and marinas and stump fields will usually hold fish. Early season presentations consist of tiny spinners, small crankbaits and micro jigs suspended under floats. The livebait angler can also get in the game by using small minnows or worms either in conjunction with a float, or on a plain, long-shanked hook and split shot. Perch like to school up in the spring, so once you find some, you are bound to catch a bunch. They also like to school up in the same year classes – find the big perch and there should be a ton of his “brothers and sisters” around.

**Summer** For the summer angler looking for perch, the usual docks and shoreline cover will consistently hold fish. This is not to say that you will find the biggest perch in these shallow spots, as jumbo perch prefer to head to deeper water during the “dog days” of summer. Look for the first major breakline out from productive shoreline areas, and any large weedbeds that fall within this area. Stumbling upon prime perch habitat like this is the answer to the puzzle. Keep in mind that really big perch have tremendous appetites – large baits may be the answer if all you are attracting is smaller fish with your downsized presentations.

**Fall** Fall is the time when perch will flood the shallows in preparation of winter’s arrival. Similar to spring, they will stage on shallow points, weedy back bays and around man-made structures such as bridge pilings and docks. Walking the shoreline of your favourite lake is a sure-fire method to connect with these hungry fish, and the use of an ultra-light outfit and small spinners or jigs will help you clean up. Wearing polarized fishing glasses will help you spot roaming fish, and keeping an eye out for surface action may give the perch’s location away. Minnows seem to be more productive in the fall months as the preferred live bait for perch, but experimentation is always the key. The application of scent to your lures will come in handy as the cold water slowly zaps away the perch’s activity levels.



## Rainbow Trout

**Spring (Start of Season)** Rivers, streams and creeks run wild with rainbows during the spring as they make their yearly spawning migration. Spring steelheading truly is a sign of spring, and fishing can be fun and easy at this time of year. Arm yourself with a long, noodle rod, load up your reel with six-pound test line, and bait up your hooks with spawn sacks in order to get in on the game. Rainbows can be found in many typical areas of a stream – deep pools, rapids and log jams or undercut banks. If the water is clear, your best approach is to scale down your presentation size as the fish will be much more finicky. Scale up during muddy or high water periods. Polarized glasses are a must when stream fishing as they help you locate fish hidden below the water's depth, and also structure areas that are likely to hold steelies.

**Summer** Big lake fishing is the name of the game when it comes to catching rainbows during the summer. Ontario's Great Lakes are the playing field for anglers in search of trout to test their skills with. Downrigging is the only way to go during the summer, as you will need to present your lure at the appropriate depth for the fish and will need the necessary tackle to fight and land these fierce fighters. Spoons are the number one choice for rainbow hunters and the colour to use can often be an art form. The use of different coloured prism tape will add to your spoons effectiveness and will help cover the different variables you may encounter. Fishfinders play a major part in trout fishing during the summer as they help anglers locate the schools of baitfish that the trout are feeding on, and help in locating rainbows and determining the depth to run your lures.

**Fall** Fall signifies a "fake spawn" in the rainbow trout, and many fish will once again migrate the many tributary streams that Ontario offers. Fishing the same way you did in the spring will enable you to catch fish, although you may hook into the odd bonus salmon while out on the water. Another tried and tested tactic is fishing from piers and in harbour mouths come fall. Intercepting these fish before or after they reach the rivers can bring tremendous days on the water. Try throwing spoons, spinners and crankbaits to these acrobatic trout, or bottom bounce with spawn sacks or minnows for those fish interested in the real thing. Make sure that your reel is full to the brim with line as these fish can make long runs and take plenty of line with them.