

## Try A Deadly Technique For Northern Pike

Contributed by Wes Lavergne - Let's Talk Fishing  
Friday, 31 October 1997

Anyone who's ever tackled with a big northern pike can understand why anglers call them freshwater barracuda or water wolves. Their strikes can be downright vicious.

Most big pike hunters arm themselves with the same baits muskie fishermen use -- big crankbaits, jerkbaits and tandem spinnerbaits. But while these monster baits will catch the odd monster 20-pound-plus pike, they're just too big for the many 10-pound trophies out there.

That's why I use minnows. Time and time again, I've found that there's nothing like the real thing to bring in 10 to 20-plus pounders. My favourites are suckers or chubs from 6 to 12 inches. The exact size varies with they day -- whatever seems to get the most action.

But live-bait fishing with big minnows has its drawbacks. For one thing, it isn't always easy finding big minnows. And for another, a 10-inch minnow is strong enough to swim off, even when attached to your hook, and hide from any pike.

But the biggest problem with live-bait fishing is the way pike grab this presentation. For a lively, natural offering, you have to hook the minnow through the head. But big pike usually bite down on a minnow from the side, leaving the head outside of their mouth. They then swim off 10 feet or so, stop and quickly turn the minnow around so they're swallowing it head first. Then they swim off another 10 feet and swallow the whole meal.

When I first started to fish for pike with live-bait, I set the hook hard immediately when I saw my bobber move, only to get the head of my minnow back for my efforts. It didn't take me long to realize that I had to wait for the pike to get the minnow in its mouth, and the longer I waited, the better my my hook setting percentage. The only problem was that if the fish did swallow the hook, it made catch and release difficult.

Then I discovered the European solution -- dead bait. Dead bait has several advantages over the live variety. For starters, it's easier to find -- I've even bought smelts at the grocery store -- and it doesn't hide in the weeds. But most importantly, you don't have to worry about killing it, so you can hook it in the middle of the body. When the pike takes the minnow, you can set the hook almost immediately, and live release is much, much easier.

I use a quick-strike rig to improve hooking percentages with minimal damage to the fish. For this setup, attach a six-inch leader to your hook, and then tie on a "stinger" treblehook. The first hook goes in the snout of the minnow, as usual, Then imbed one of the trebles into the stomach of the minnow, so the other two trebles stay out for rmaximum hooking power.

Since I've discovered dead-bait fishing, I've had tremendous success with pike at all times of the year - even through the ice. My only problem now is the fish's nick-names. Somehow freshwater barracuda and water wolves don't seem right anymore, How about freshwater vultures?

Wes Lavergne is a member of the Let's Talk Fishing team with Pete Pokulok. The Let's Talk Fishing Team is well known for its annual seminar series, as well as being one of the most successful tournament teams in Canada with over 40 wins!

Note: If you want to experience some fantastic Southern Ontario Fishing with Wes and Pete, give them a call at (905) 666-4057, or (705) 799-9802 and book yourself a memorable trip. We have days open on a first come first served basis.