

THE GREAT LAKES SPORT FISHING NEWS

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MICHIGAN STEELHEAD & SALMON FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION



Volume 88

November/December 2024

No. 6



Versatile Baits

By Joe Bednar

Midwestoutdoors.com

I reflected on my ridiculously detailed fishing log with over 40 years of records on hundreds of gamefish a year. I began assessing which lures may provide the best odds of catching whatever nice gamefish a given lake or river offered, instead of approaches more focused on a single target species or two. I'd like to share a summary of that analysis here, particularly since fall is prime time for a variety of predators.

The Criteria

First, I should say that this is more focused towards the inland waters I fish, which are mostly smaller to mid-sized lakes and rivers without popular cold-water species like trout and salmon. So, this discussion is mainly on versatile approaches for nice largemouth and smallmouth bass, northern pike and walleyes, though still with a chance at other large predators that may be available, like muskies or catfish.

Next, this strategy is as much about what doesn't offer the best, most versatile chances, as what does. What I mean is, our very best way of catching a nice specimen of a target species is rarely the best way to catch the other

main predators available in a fishery. For example, my favorite approach for a quality-sized largemouth is often a plastic worm rigged weedless, worked in or near thick cover. While it's still possible to catch a smallmouth, pike, or technically even a walleye that way, it's rare enough that I'm almost eliminating my chances at those other fish.

One important criterion is the size range of baits that give the optimum chance at these inland-waters predators. Using too small a lure will bring lots of action, including from more fun, bonus panfish in the mix, like crappies. But while the odds for catching nice bass and walleyes can remain high, and of course the rare bonus pike or even a muskie, the chances for the last two species, and larger bass, tend to drop below what I find acceptable for the best shot at multiple predator species of good size.

Using too large a lure naturally also brings a similar trade-off. A 10-inch-body bait for big pike and muskies keeps pike and muskie odds high, while reducing nice bass and walleye chances below what provides the best odds.

My records suggest that baits about 4 to 6 inches long provide the optimum

"Baits"

Continued on page 5

Great Lakes Habitat Restoration: Partnering to Promote Fish Production

A new Regional Habitat Partnership between the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration will support fish habitat restoration priorities in the Great Lakes.

By Andrea Miehl, Jeff Tyson, Jill Wingfield, Great Lakes Fishery Commission; and Julie Simmons, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Degradation of coastal, nearshore, and riverine habitats has adversely affected fish communities and fisheries in the Great Lakes for more than a century. Now a partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (Commission) is advancing restoration goals for important habitat for Great Lakes fish. Working with NOAA Fisheries through a Regional Habitat Partnership funded at \$4.8 million by NOAA, the Commission, along with local partners, is leading implementation of high priority projects as identified by Lake Committees (<https://www.glfsc.org/joint-strategic-plan-committees.php>) across the Great Lakes basin.

The Lake Committees, which include representation by senior officials from state, provincial, and U.S.



Map of the six project sites selected during the prioritization process, with at least one site on each Great Lake. Note that the Salmon River site includes two projects. Credit: Andrea Miehl, GLFC.

intertribal fishery agencies, conducted an extensive process to identify habitat constraints on native fish production and to prioritize restoration efforts during the next decade in each of the Great Lakes. High-quality connected habitats are important for sustained fish production — by protecting and improving habitat, fish communities and their associated fisheries directly benefit. Fish habitat improvement techniques range from regional-scale actions that impact water quality

and sediment erosion, to local actions that improve connectivity (e.g., dam removal) or restore open-lake physical habitat (e.g., reef construction). Selecting appropriate strategies and locations for habitat protection and improvement is critical. Consequently, the development of priorities was an important step for progress toward protecting and improving fish habitat.

Prioritization Process

The prioritization process conducted by

the Lake Committees yielded a set of priority projects in each Great Lake. A subset of six of the priority projects—ranging from shovel-ready to conceptual—was included as part of the regional partnership. All six projects will directly contribute to fish production in areas identified by the Lake Committees as priorities. The six projects span the breadth of the Great Lakes

"Habit"

Continued on page 3

South Haven Steelheaders Salute to Veterans



The South Haven Steelheaders hosted their 12th annual Salute to Veterans event on August 31. From around the state sixty veterans from Operation Injured Soldier and the Battle Creek VA traveled to South Haven for a day of fishing on Lake Michigan.

After early morning coffee and donuts, the captains and crew of 25 Steelheaders boats welcomed

the veterans on board and headed out to the big lake where they caught an as-

"Salute"

Continued on page 3



Search groups for MSSFA

The Quality of Fishing Reflects the Quality of Living!

“Habit”
Continued from page 1

species such as state-listed species (lake sturgeon) and targeted species in formal restoration plans (walleye, brook trout, Atlantic salmon, cisco, lake trout).

Impairments addressed in these projects include degraded reef substrates, hydrologic barriers in tributaries, excessive in-stream bank erosion, and

lack of productive capacity. The projects include four projects being addressed in a first wave of activity (detailed below) and two additional projects which

will move forward in a second wave.

Additional Priority Projects Soon to be Addressed
In addition to the

four ongoing projects highlighted above, two additional projects are

“Habit”
Continued on page 3

with at least one project in each Great Lake, and will benefit a variety of fish

Project Spotlight:

Lake Superior: Nebagamon Creek Railroad Embankment and Culvert Removal Project

Location: Nebagamon Creek, Douglas County, Wisconsin.

Partners: GLFC, NOAA, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, Douglas County, and the Town of Brule.

Timeline: Construction began in summer 2023 and will complete by fall 2023, followed by post-restoration monitoring in 2023-2025.

Overview: Nebagamon Creek is a tributary to the Bois Brule River. The Nebagamon Creek restoration site is a collapsing culvert and abandoned railroad grade that impedes fish passage for all life stages of brook trout and other Lake Superior and resident salmonids in the Bois Brule River watershed. In its current condition, the site also poses a high-risk sediment threat to downstream spawning and rearing areas in Nebagamon Creek and the Bois Brule River. The project will remove the collapsed culvert and railroad embankment and will restore natural hydrologic conditions for fish passage and sediment transport in the project area.



The Nebagamon Creek Railroad Embankment and Culvert Removal Project site. The collapsed culvert, which impedes nearly all fish passage, is visible in the center-right of the photo. Credit: Jeff Tyson, GLFC.

Project Spotlight:

Lake Ontario: Salmon River Trestle Pool

Location: Salmon River, Oswego County, New York.

Partners: GLFC, NOAA, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, US Fish & Wildlife Service-New York Field Office, and the Finger Lakes Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Association.

Timeline: Construction began in summer 2023 and is anticipated to be completed by fall 2025, followed by post-restoration monitoring in 2025 and 2026.

Overview: The Salmon River is a key tributary to Lake Ontario for Atlantic salmon restoration. The trestle pool restoration site, which consists of an abandoned railroad trestle with associated abutments, backs up water during high flow events, inhibits sediment transport, increases upstream sedimentation, and induces streambank erosion in the downstream reaches. The area contains degraded riparian and stream conditions which contribute to unsuitable habitats for Atlantic salmon spawning and rearing. This project has removed the abandoned railroad central pier and left abutment to provide hydrologic reconnection to the floodplain and restore habitat heterogeneity, while reducing in-stream and bank erosion. In 2025, additional work will include installation of in-stream structures and toe-wood bank stabilization structures. This work is being guided under the Lower Salmon River Restoration and Recreation Enhancement Plan.



The Salmon River Trestle Pool Project site. The abandoned railroad central pier and left abutment are visible in the center-left of the photo. Credit: Jeff Tyson, GLFC.

Project Spotlight:

Lake Erie: Flat Rock/Huroc Dam Fish Passage Project

Location: Huron River, Wayne County, Michigan.

Partners: GLFC, NOAA, Huron-Clinton Metroparks, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Huron River Watershed Council, and the City of Flat Rock.

Timeline: The feasibility study is being conducted from spring 2023 to spring 2024.

Overview: The Flat Rock and Huroc dams are located on the Huron River, Michigan and are the first significant fish passage barriers upstream from Lake Erie. The two barriers restrict fish passage and limit production for multiple species of common concern including lake sturgeon, walleye, and white bass, and have downstream impacts to hydraulic connectivity and habitat. Additionally, multiple species of concern, including native mussels such as snuffbox, elktoe, purple wartyback, and the wavy-rayed lampmussel, as well as their host-fish species, logperch, smallmouth bass, eastern sand darter, and spotted sucker, are documented in this river system. This project is focused on developing a feasibility study that considers alternatives for the Flat Rock and Huroc dams that will benefit the community and surrounding natural habitats and enhance fish passage at the site. Goals include improved fish passage and reconnecting important tributary habitat to Great Lakes species while also minimizing the risk of invasive sea lamprey infestation.



The Flat Rock (left) and Huroc (right) dams in the Huron River, Michigan. Credit: Jeff Tyson, GLFC.

Project Spotlight:

Lake Huron: Inner Saginaw Bay Reef Restoration Project

Location: Saginaw Bay, Bay County, Michigan, with restoration sites in the vicinity of the Kawkawlin River outlet and/or near Spoils Island.

Partners: GLFC, NOAA, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, and Michigan Sea Grant.

Timeline: Stakeholder workshop scoping, feasibility work, and completion of design plans is expected in late 2023 or 2024, with construction planned in 2024-2025 after identification of the preferred restoration site and completion of final design plans.

Overview: Reef habitats in Saginaw Bay have been degraded by impacts from physical destruction, degradation from shoreline development, sedimentation, chemical contamination, and aquatic invasive species. This project will establish needed spawning habitat in inner Saginaw Bay for multiple species of common concern, including lake trout, lake whitefish, walleye, and cisco. Natural materials and established techniques will be used in the construction of the reef, and the reef will be located in proximity to appropriate thermal conditions for spawning and rearing of these species. In addition to enhancing production for important fish species that support fisheries, this project has the potential to be conducted in concert with other shoreline infrastructure work to reduce coastal flooding and erosion, reduce the frequency of navigational dredging, increase recreational access, and increase coastal resilience to climate change.



Inner Saginaw Bay Reef Restoration Project potential locations at Spoils Island (left) and the Kawkawlin River outlet (right). Source: Saginaw Bay Reef Feasibility Study, February 2022, ECT No.200654.

“Habit”
Continued from page 2

planned for the future. The first is reef restoration in northern Lake Michigan (near Charlevoix, Michigan – exact location to be determined). This project will identify restoration locations and guide restoration actions for reef rehabilitation in northern Lake Michigan, improving habitat for lake whitefish, lake trout, and cisco. The second is additional in-stream habitat restoration in the Salmon River, Lake Ontario (Oswego County, New York). This project will focus on restoration of natural erosion and sedimentation processes, and reconnection to the floodplain, in two reaches directly downstream of the Trestle Pool site to improve habitats for Atlantic salmon and other native species.

Strengthening Great Lakes Fisheries, Ecosystems, and Communities

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River basin include more than 10,000 miles of coastline that are home to more than 3,500 plant and animal species, some of which are found nowhere else on Earth. Yet, extensive human activity for more than a century has led to the loss of habitat for fish, negatively impacting fish production and fisheries in addition

to other negative impacts on the region’s rich and diverse ecosystems.

The new Regional Habitat Partnership between NOAA and the Commission is working to address critical habitat needs in priority areas of the Great Lakes, thereby contributing to healthy Great Lakes ecosystems and fisheries.

“NOAA is proud to partner with the Great Lakes Fishery Commission on these important efforts to restore habitat and bring benefits to Great Lakes fisheries and communities,” said Carrie Selberg Robinson, director of the NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation.

“Habitat restoration efforts enacted through the partnership will further the Strategic Vision of the Commission and missions of project partners by restoring healthy Great Lakes ecosystems and sustainable fisheries and through the development of strategic alliances and partnerships,” said James McKane, the Commission’s chair.

McKane added, “Working together through the Regional Habitat Partnership, the Commission, NOAA, and other project partners endeavor to sustain the many benefits the Great Lakes provide to our environment and communities.”



“Salute”
Continued from page 1

sortment of salmon, lake trout, and steelhead.

The boats paraded back into the harbor at noon, escorted by the U.S. Coast Guard, Van Buren County Marine Patrol, and South Haven Fire Department. Hundreds of people on the pier waved to them, thanking them for their service, and the American Legion sounded a gun salute.

Veterans were proud to show off their catch to the crowds.

The event concluded with a luncheon at the South Haven Moose Lodge. This entire event would not have been possible without the support of our many sponsors and volunteers, including major sponsors Bob’s Processing, Dean’s Taxidermy, Big Blue Rentals, South Haven Moose Lodge, Village Caregiving, and Mike’s Towing of Bangor.



DW
Team Dreamweaver

DREAMWEAVER

ALWAYS ROOM FOR A SUPER SLIM

WWW.TEAMDREAMWEAVER.COM



DAM FISH

by Bob Jensen

A fish was swimming upriver. What did the fish say when it swam into a concrete obstruction in the river? **"Dam!"**

Okay, that was kind of corny, but the dams found on the rivers that intersect North America have a special place in the memories of many anglers. The area directly below dams on rivers of all sizes have provided outstanding fishing for several species of fish for a long time. As a youngster, I spent many afternoons in waders below dams on small rivers. My dam fishing mostly involved walleyes in the spring. The walleyes moved upstream to spawn until a dam stopped that movement. For a couple of weeks, lots of walleyes were gathered below the dam. Fishing was good, especially for the smaller males. After the spawn, the fish would move downstream and spread out. Not so many years ago, the area directly below the dam on many smaller rivers were popular gathering spots for early season anglers.

Many of us also have memories of fishing from a boat below a variety of dams on larger rivers in the fall and winter. There is a significant fall upriver run of walleyes and sauger on many larger rivers. They move close to the dam and stay there over the colder winter months. Dams are a part of many angler's history. Today though, many of the traditional gathering spots below dams aren't as popular as they once were.

Things change.

One change that explains why anglers aren't fishing below dams on small rivers as much is that the rivers have aged. Now, instead of walleyes being the primary gamefish, other species, particularly smallmouth bass, have become more abundant. And smallmouth don't seek out current to spawn as much as walleyes do, so we don't see them gathering below dams like walleyes.

Another reason dams are going to play an even lesser role in fishing is that good numbers of dams are being removed. And that's not necessarily a bad thing. Dams were built most-

ly between 1930 and 1970. They were constructed to provide flood control, recreation, and power. It didn't take long for the power companies to learn that the power generated from dams wasn't as efficient as hoped. Also, on some rivers, due to siltation above the dam, flood control below that dam wasn't so good. And when the dam altered the natural flow of the river, the watery habitat downstream was also altered and native fish species were negatively impacted. The folks who thought building dams was a good idea changed their minds. In the past several decades, almost 2,200

dams have been removed from rivers across North America.

The construction and removal of dams is, like many things, controversial. In their day, dams provided some needed services. They also created some social and environmental issues. For this fisherman and many others, the small dams found across the Upper Midwest provided some very nice memories. Due to the removal of a good number of these dams, we need to find other ways and places to create fishing memories. Fortunately, for most of us, that's not hard to do.





Only YOU Can Save The Buoys!

The Port Sheldon buoy and the South Haven buoy play a key role in boater safety and successful angler outings on Lake Michigan. The buoys provide real-time data on wave height and frequency, wind speed and direction, and water temperatures from the surface to 70 feet below. Originally deployed in 2014 through a grant from NOAA, these buoys have provided critical life-safety and fishery environment information, enabling us to be better at our sport and to be safer while fishing.

Anyone can access the information generated by the buoys at any time through a text or on the internet. The valuable data created is all free of charge to the public, but each one of these buoys cost nearly \$15,000 per year to operate. There is no longer any government funding for these buoys; all funds to continue their operation come from individuals, organizations, and local businesses passionate about Lake Michigan.

On one hand, the cost to maintain these buoys is significant. But on the other hand we have hundreds of teams and thousands of anglers on the Trail. That means the math is on our side! By working together we can cover at least a big chunk of that cost if not the whole thing! So I'm challenging you to step up and help! Just before we went to print I made a \$50 donation to each Buoy and I hope you'll follow suit.

There is an individual fundraiser for each buoy. They are being run by the South Haven and the Holland Steelheaders - people we know, people who fish the Trail, people we can trust! Donating is simple! In fact you can do it right now! Just use your phone and scan one or both of the codes below.



Support The South Haven Buoy



Access The Buoy:
<https://limno.io/station/45168/>
 OR
 Text 45168 to: (866) 218-9973



Support The Port Sheldon Buoy



Access The Buoy:
<https://limno.io/station/45029/>
 OR
 Text 45029 to: (866) 218-9973





Water | Environment | Scientists | Engineers



Images from Shutterstock.com



Dennis Eade, Executive Director
Michigan Steelhead & Salmon Fishermen's Association

The NRC Steelhead Task Group, charged with studying the potential causes of a drop in steelhead returning to the rivers last fall and winter, began drafting its findings and recommendations. I have participated in these meetings and fact-finding presentations and it's still my opinion that the cause is a river capacity issue and not overharvest. Catch rates and total catch are not indicative of a declining steelhead population. If the truth be known, the NRC is struggling to understand fish mortality dynamics and is being unduly influenced by Michigan Trout Unlimited's executive director Bryan Burroughs, who cherry picked the research data to create a narrative that we must protect steelhead from overharvest. Evidence of this lack of understanding can be substantiated in the article written by Dr. Dan O'Keefe (page 8) of Michigan State University's Sea Grant program. Found on page 8 of this magazine, or by scanning this QR code:



In actuality, these "skippers" (smaller trout) that the guides have complained about in the streams are a sign that the fishery is returning good numbers of steelhead. However, instead, the NRC commissioners approved an amendment to the fishing order at its last meeting to clarify that that following streams will have a one fish limit going forward. These rivers are as follows: Manistee River, Carp River (Marquette County), Pere Marquette River, Muskegon River, Betsie River, Whitefish River (Delta County), Rogue River (Kent County), and the North Branch White River (Oceana County). Hopefully, the task group's findings and recommendations will reflect the causes factually. I do worry that two of the three members

MSSFA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dennis Eade



charged with writing the final recommendations are members of Trout Unlimited so we may actually see regulations restricting steelhead harvest remain in effect or even be broadened to more streams statewide.

The Michigan Hydro Relicensing Coalition, of which MSSFA is a member, had its annual business meeting this past month and agreed on a program of work which includes:

"Current priority issues - Consumers' long-term hydropower planning and the potential purchase of the Tower-Kleber hydropower dams on the Black River (with a goal of removal) are the two highest priorities for the MHRC. Consumers' recent DOE \$20 million grant, possible \$770 million loan from Army Corps of Engineers for dam safety upgrades raises the question "how does this fit in with the long-term planning (this grant and potential loan seem to indicate keeping the dams in place)".

Action items: "Encourage the media to pose the question in a public forum. Contact USACE to inform it of ongoing water quality issues at six of the projects (Reach out to contacts within USACE, draft letter describing water quality issues, EGLE-EPA "impaired" waters).

Advocate for EGLE to take position on

FERC November 2023 interpretation of Michigan rules water quality standards. Represent MHRC concerns in Tower-Kleber "working group" for potential purchase.

Other MHRC activities (relicensing, implementation teams, ongoing issues) - stay the course and keep Oversight Committee informed of any change in status, emerging issues."

Pursuant to MSSFA's letter of support for a fishing license fee increase to Director Bowen, the director requested that Chief Claramunt respond to MSSFA. Chief Claramunt expressed his appreciation for MSSFA's letter of support for a fishing license fee increase to support, enhance, and protect our valuable fisheries in Michigan. We will now see if the Appropriations Committee in the House takes up the request for the license increase during Lane Duck, which is the preferred course of action or whether it will be delayed and sent to a committee in the new legislative term beginning in January of 2025.

The Lake Huron Citizen's Advisory Committee met last month and spent the majority of its time discussing the HB 5108 from the Commercial Fishing Perspective. The committee heard from Scott Everett, Fish Producers

Association executive who had some startling perspectives on how the current commercial fishers will be able to expand their operations and increase commercial fishing activity in Michigan. It was an awakening for many on the committee to how devastating the passage of HB5108 would be to sport fishing on the Great Lakes.

The Lake Michigan Citizen's Advisory Committee meeting was held on October 9th and covered the Predator Prey Ratio and prey update, the steelhead model, steelhead research data update and cleaning fish on the Great Lakes. The standard weight of 35-inch Chinook is decreasing as is the weight of age 3 females. Chinook dominates the harvest at 50% followed by lake trout, coho salmon, steelhead and brown trout. Age one and older alewife are decreasing and the predator/prey ratio has crept into the cautious range. So, alewife abundance is declining and we will have to monitor closely moving forward. It is estimated that 40 to 50% wild steelhead are in Lake Michigan. The proportion of wild steelhead increased with the survival of stocked fish decreasing. It appears wild steelhead are better able to survive post mussel period with clearer water and less overall prey. Tributary harvest of steelhead is

much higher than Lake Michigan. There are similar catches in the Muskegon and Manistee rivers as in the entire Lake Michigan fishery. Steelhead research suggests a shift in stream residency time with more age 1 steelhead leaving the river rather than age 2. Could it be related to out-migration time, growth and conditions in the nursery streams? A predator tag study is necessary and DNR will seek funding for this.

Stocking Plan for 2025 will remain the same even though there are signs that predator biomass is increasing and that alewife biomass is decreasing.

- Lake Trout 2,110,000
- Brown Trout 306,000
- Steelhead 660,000 yearlings plus up to 150,000 fall fingerlings
- Coho Salmon 1,570,000
- Chinook Salmon 1,000,000

Advisors reported that fishing has been better than ever this past season and when you could get onto the water it was good fishing. This was the sentiment of the Lake Huron Advisors as well on Lake Huron.

Overall, it's a great time to be a steelhead and salmon angler in Michigan. It is a testament to the impact advocacy can have on the growth and success of our sport fishing heritage.

"Baits" Continued from page 1

chance at any of these main predators in the same presentation. Granted, they're smallish for muskies, but I've caught quite a few muskies on 5- or 6-inch offerings, and oodles of the other gamefish mentioned, so this seems to be a decent size range for maximum versatility.

The 'Fab Four' For Four Predators

Granted it's just me voting, but hands down, I elect what are commonly called jerk baits or minnow baits from 4 to 6 inches, in both floating and suspending versions, as my most versatile baits for the noted main predators, all season long—and maybe as the very best lure choices in fall. All these predators often key on baitfish that look like these lures. There are too many favorites to discuss in detail, in mainstay colors including plenty of silver, goldfish and perch "looks" in the mix.

Personally, I like a natural rainbow trout or brown trout finish, especially in

clear water, and it doesn't seem to matter if the waters have trout. One possibly overlooked version in this family of baits is a natural fingerling, pike-looking jerk bait. Largemouths, smallmouths and walleyes seem to want to eat it before it's big enough to eat them, and pike and muskies just want to eliminate future competition.

My strong second place winner is crankbaits in the same size range and color options, so generally a similar bait that's more readily fished deeper. It's silly how many nice bass and pike I've caught on these, walleyes too where available. And muskies or even big catfish being a distinct possibility, too. Like the jerk bait family, countless great crankbaits from the same brands are available. It'd be impossible to pick a single favorite, but something in a chunky profile is tough to beat for lots of nice bass and pike; more slender models help tempt bonus walleyes if they are available.

Maybe not overlooked, but a specific version in this group would be a crawfish-looking crankbait. Granted, these are more

toward the smaller portion of the recommended, versatile size range, or even somewhat below it. But all predators eat crawfish, period. And the sheer number of larger gamefish—except muskies—that strike these lures is "striking," according to my records.

Spinnerbaits get my nod for a robust third place finish, most definitely for bass species, pike and bonus muskies. I've always found that intriguing since I've never seen a baitfish that looks anything like a spinnerbait, though it may be a flashy cluster of bait "look" that triggers the predatory response. Plus, they fish well in different situations including weed and wood cover, and at different depths, making it tough to place these only third. I do so only because I've caught

few walleyes on them, and I'm rating based on top picks for four main species at once.

Color combinations, including blades, are innumerable, but natural looks get my nod for multiple predators, most of the time, whereas if targeting strictly pike, I'd often lean toward bolder colors. With plastic trailers added, the overall spinnerbait profile in about a 1/2-ounce version is the versatile bait size recommended, with a taller, more substantial, flashy appeal that predators often destroy.

I have in-line spinners as a solid fourth place, depending on the situation. It seems that fewer people fish them in recent times, possibly increasing their appeal on pressured waters. A dressed spinner from 4 to 6 inches long, typically

a size 4 to 6, has produced countless largemouths, smallmouths and pike. Plus, bucktails are muskie mainstays. I have them fourth only because my few walleyes caught on them have strictly been in rivers so far, and most models aren't as flexible in terms of cover and depth as spinnerbaits are.

Spoons, jigs, live bait and soft plastic swimbaits in the desired size range get honorable mentions. All fishing is very situational; indeed, any of these can also be a top pick at times. But in a very wide range of places and conditions, the "Fab Four" discussed for multiple species have been so reliable that I rarely venture past them. Part of their success is also due to being well suited to covering water more efficiently than

most other baits, for sheer exposure to more predators.

Get better results from the time you spend fishing. Use information from the pros found in every issue of *MidWest Outdoors*, available by subscribing on our website: midwestoutdoors.com



Jerk Minnow - BigBiteBaits.com

Fall Fishing Means Epic Walleye Action

Walt Matan
Midwestoutdoors.com

Some of the best walleye fishing is coming this fall. In September, October, November and even December, the temperatures drop, the walleyes are hungry and there are fewer anglers and boaters on the water. It makes for a perfect storm of epic walleye action!

Different bodies of water have their own hot lure and technique. If you put that lure on or near the deep-water edge, that's where the active fish hang out. Whether I fish a river or lake, I always look for an edge to get an edge over the rest of the anglers out there.

Fall fishing starts with a little planning. Check out current and past fishing reports on social media for the lake you intend to fish and then scour a topographic map to determine sharp, deep-water drops. These

edges hold walleyes as well as other predators like muskies, pike, smallmouths and largemouth bass.

If there is a weed edge on this drop, so much the better. Deep-water weed edges predominate in clear water. I like to start off with an aggressive maneuver: a 1/2-ounce blade bait, ripped quickly. You can troll back and forth around .4 mph along this edge, raising, lowering and ripping the blade bait. Because of its design, it will fall fast and attract predators with vibration on the lift.

One thing for sure: When a walleye hits a blade, it smacks it! I've had more than one rod ripped out of my hand as I scrambled to grab it before it went over the side.

My blade of choice is a 1/2-ounce BFishN Tackle B3 Blade bait. It comes in hot colors like green glow tiger, glow pink and glow mud minnow, with

3D prism eyes, chip-proof paint, perfect balance and ultra-sharp Mustad treble hooks attached via split rings. It has an intense amount of vibration on the lift and is balanced to fall without the hooks hanging up upon itself.

To get the proper action and precise feel, I use a St. Croix Eyecon Snap Jig rod; it has a fast tip, enough power to rip a hookset and will give you a fun fight. It's perfect for ripping blades. I'll put 10-pound-test Pro green line on an Okuma Ceymar C-30 spinning reel and tie on a 3-foot length of 14-pound Trilene XT mono to a size #1 VMC crankbait snap. This particular snap is rounded and gives the blade plenty of natural action. You need a snap because the holes on the top of the blade are not perfectly smooth and might cut your line.

Why a mono leader? Trilene XT mono is stiff,



and it floats. This keeps the blade from tangling up on the line. Why 10-pound Power Pro Green braid? It is ultra-thin, so you can feel max vibration and know when the tiniest bit of weed snags up on the blade. Plus, this line is bright chartreuse, and you can see when your line jumps when a walleye swallows it up on the fall.

Snap jigging bucktail jigs and jig-n-plastic combos is another great way to pound on the walleyes in fall. Walleyes can be super aggressive, so finesse techniques are not necessary. I'll use a 1/4- to 5/8-ounce BFishN Tackle Bucktail jig or an H2O jig in the same weights with either a straight AuthentX 3.25-inch Paddletail or a 3.25-inch Pulse-R. These three offerings present slightly different actions. The Bucktail fishes fast—really fast. It doesn't seem like it would work as well as it does, but it does, because it produces violent reaction strikes from walleyes everywhere.

I'll use that same St. Croix Snap Jig rod, but I'll remove the VMC snap and tie it directly to my mono leader. Again, this leader keeps the bucktail from tangling and the rod provides the perfect action.

Motions vary from wrist snaps to full arm rips; you just need to figure out what they want on a given day. I like to aggressively snap and then let the jig fall on a tight line as I slowly move along the breakline at around .4 mph. This is a killer presentation to locate fish. Once I find them, I may put out one or two deadsticks set around a foot off bottom with jigs and live bait, while I snap the initial rod.

Jig-n-plastic offers a slightly different presentation. The AuthentX Paddletail is thin and solid. It has a small, high-speed vibrating tail that really calls walleye in. The Pulse-R has a larger, wider tail that is in constant motion. The body is bigger, has ribs and is much more flexible. Your job as a walleye angler is to figure out what the walleyes want. If you want to catch the largest fish this fall, put one on and snap your wrist.

If you enjoy walleye fishing, you'll find these techniques to put plenty of lake fall walleyes in your live well.

ULTIMATE FISHING SHOW DETROIT

January 9-12

The Largest Pure Fishing Show in North America – 7 Acres!

FISHING BOATS

FISHING TRIPS

FISHING TACKLE

ICE FISHING VILLAGE



Commemorative DARDEVLE
EPPINGER
First 250 People
on Thursday and Friday.

More seminars than any other show in the Midwest!

SHOW HOURS:
THURSDAY 1 pm – 8 pm
FRIDAY 12 pm – 8 pm
SATURDAY 10 am – 8 pm
SUNDAY 10 am – 5 pm



SUBURBAN COLLECTION SHOWPLACE
Grand River One Mile West of Novi Road

UltimateFishingShow.com





THE MICHIGAN STEELHEAD & SALMON FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION

THE QUALITY OF FISHING REFLECTS THE QUALITY OF LIVING!

MSSFA was incorporated in 1971 by a handful of individuals who knew that Michigan's newly formed trout and salmon fishery was something worth working to protect. They were a small group who wanted to not only protect their fishery, but learn how to catch their elusive prey and tell fishing stories.

MSSFA chapters have membership meetings with guest speakers to learn about all the aspects of sport fishing. MSSFA chapters also sponsor fishing clinics, seminars, sport-fishing shows, derbies and tournaments. And are active sponsors for fishing outings for kids, seniors, veterans and our handicapped.

For those who love to fish but have no means, MSSFA chapters sponsor a "Crews" program that allows a sign up as a crew member for a day of fishing.

With a common goal, and a close working partner with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, MSSFA helps to enhance the resource and sport fishing in our rivers, streams, inland lakes, and of course the mighty Great Lakes. MSSFA is a front-runner at all levels of the legislature and in courtrooms, and has spent countless hours working behind the scenes and attending hearings.

So why join the **Steelheaders**... Got kids, love fishing.. **JOIN NOW!** ...and become a member of the largest organized groups of fishermen in the Midwest. There are chapters throughout the entire state. You too can help protect and preserve this world-class sport fishery for you, your children and generations to come.

THE GREAT LAKES SPORT FISHING NEWS (GLSFN)

The Great Lakes Sport Fishing News is owned and operated by The Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen's Association.

Better than fifty years ago, The Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen's Association began to publish a magazine called the "Guide to Great Lakes Sport Fishing". Five years later the magazine became a monthly format called "The Great Lakes Steelheader". Today the newspaper is called "**The Great Lakes Sport Fishing News**".

This paper has no paid writers and has a grass roots style. Its writers are the every day fishermen who share their techniques and fishing adventures; and the paper has become well known for its **January Special Edition** or "**Show Edition**" that is seen at all the spring expos and sport, boat and fishing shows throughout the Great Lakes.

Information in the paper covers the entire Great Lakes Basin region from Minnesota to New York including all five of the Great Lakes and their tributary streams.

Chapter members receive the paper as part of their membership. And because of the diversity of fishing in the Great Lakes, the information covers everything from river fishing, big lake fishing to inland lake fishing. The paper also offers a direct route for all new products and techniques on the market offered by our advertisers.

<p>Executive Director Dennis Eade 616-298-8842 deneade@charter.net</p>	<p>Grand Haven Paul Zelenka, President and State Director 616-638-3273 pbzfarms@gmail.com Website: www.ghsteelheaders.com facebook.com/ghsteelheader</p>	<p>Great Lakes Bay Region Mark Trudell, President 989-839-4920 brandon_tacey@yahoo.com John Letts, State Director 989-798-2493 maintenance@stjohn23.net facebook.com/Great Lakes Bay Region Steelheaders Website: http://steel-headers.com</p>	<p>Metro-West - Livonia Bob Schulz, President 248-915-0043 bobschulz7@gmail.com Mark Platt, State Director 248-881-4890 mcplatt4565@gmail.com MetroWest Steelheaders PO BOX 531927 Livonia MI 48153-1927 Website: www.metroweststeelheaders.org facebook.com/Metro West Steelheaders</p>	<p>Southwest Michigan Ryan McCartney, President 574-274-6382 mccartneyryan@sbcglobal.net Joe Montella, State Director 616-283-4296 joe-monte@comcast.net Website: www.swmisteelheaders.com facebook.com/Southwestern Steelheaders</p>	<p>Thumb Chapter Dan Nichols, President 810-488-6767 nicholsdant@gmail.com Scott Stanke, State Director 989-553-0972 scottystanke@gmail.com Website: thumbsteelheaders.org facebook.com/Thumb Chapter Michigan Steelheaders</p>
<p>Membership Deb Shephard 269-655-4704 mssfamembership@charter.net</p>	<p>Grand Rapids John Plekker, President 616-813-5500 Rebecca Goettl, State Director 231-349-3679 Rgoettlcm@gmail.com Search on facebook: Grand Rapids Steelheaders Official Page Email: fishgrsteelhead@gmail.com New address: P.O. Box 140198 Grand Rapids, MI 49514</p>	<p>Holland Brad Stephenson, President 330-495-9555 brad.stephenson32@gmail.com Alex Fergus, State Director 616-610-2410 afergus63@gmail.com Website: www.hollandsteelheaders.org facebook.com/Holland Steelheaders</p>	<p>South Haven Rich Chapman, President president@southhavensteelheaders.com Rachel Ridley, State Director ridleyrachel@gmail.com 269-206-2135 Website: www.southhavensteelheaders.com facebook.com/South Haven Steelheaders</p>	<p>Thunder Bay Dan Bouchard, President 989-255-7350 Cell dan-bouchard@hotmail.com Ed Retherford, State Director 989-657-2681 retherfe@gmail.com</p>	<p>White River Clint Pollock, President 231-893-0210 aftereyes2@gmail.com Terry Clark, State Director 231-730-6628 dadshideout03@yahoo.com</p>



Scan QR code or type www.mssfafa.org in your web browser.



Sign up ONLINE...

mssfafa.org

Click on the BECOME A MEMBER NOW! button

MSSFA State and Chapter Dues (Yearly)

<input type="checkbox"/> Battle Creek \$45.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Holland \$45.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Thunder Bay \$40.00 (Alpena)
<input type="checkbox"/> Grand Haven \$40.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Metro West \$40.00 (Livonia)	<input type="checkbox"/> White River \$40.00 (Whitehall)
<input type="checkbox"/> Grand Rapids \$45.00	<input type="checkbox"/> South Haven \$40.00	<input type="checkbox"/> At Large Membership \$35.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Great Lakes Bay Region \$40.00 (Midland)	<input type="checkbox"/> Southwestern \$45.00 (St. Joe)	<input type="checkbox"/> Junior Membership \$5.00
	<input type="checkbox"/> Thumb \$40.00 (Harbor Beach)	

For questions email: mssfamembership@charter.net

MSSFA ~ PO Box 423 ~ Paw Paw, MI 49079

The following Chapters accept online payments via Credit Card and/or PayPal. A PayPal account is not needed-use the option credit card. Note: some Chapters charge a small fee for processing.
Battle Creek www.battlecreeksteelheaders.com/membership • **Holland** www.hollandsteelheaders.org
Metro-West (Livonia) www.metroweststeelheaders.org • **Southwestern(Saint Joseph)** www.swmisteelheaders.com
South Haven PayPal Link: <https://www.paypal.com/ncp/payment/2GKMZWTWRTFZG>



New Analysis Shows No Evidence Of Decline In Steelhead Natural Reproduction

By Daniel O'Keefe,
Michigan Sea Grant,
Michigan State
University Extension

"There is no evidence for declining natural reproduction of steelhead in Lake Michigan tributaries. The number of naturally spawned steelhead that survive to Age-1 in Lake Michigan has shown no significant trend over the past twenty years. While numbers of any fish population do naturally fluctuate from year to year, there has been no declining trend in wild steelhead recruitment.

Spring returns of steelhead to the Little Manistee River weir have also seen no significant trend, either positive or negative, over the past twenty years. In looking at Age-0 steelhead abundance, there is no significant trend at the long-term monitoring site on the Little Manistee River, either. The same is true for Platte River, Bear Creek, Pere Marquette River, and Silver Creek sites included in the DNR's Status and Trends Program.

There has been a significant increase in production of natural steelhead at the Bigelow Creek site, which is encouraging. It suggests that continued work to improve instream habitat, limit nonpoint source pollution, and improve fish passage can pay dividends when it comes to steelhead production."

Introduction

Making sense of trends in fish populations can be a challenging task. Fish numbers naturally fluctuate from one year to the next based on weather, water levels, the abundance of predators, and a host of other factors. For example, over time invasive species led to massive ecosystem changes in the Great Lakes, and this had a dramatic impact on most fish species.

In Lake Michigan, steelhead numbers declined during the establishment and expansion of zebra and quagga mussels (collectively known as Dreissenid mussels). Michigan Department of Natural Resources biologists have shown that lakewide steelhead numbers dropped by roughly 50% from 2003 to 2004, but steelhead numbers in Lake Michigan have been relatively stable since 2004 as the lake's ecosystem has adjusted to a new "post-Dreissenid" reality.

Of course, those trends reflect all of the steelhead in Lake Michigan including those stocked in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Indiana. Michigan river anglers are most

concerned with steelhead that return to Michigan streams during their spawning run. Fishing on some Michigan rivers depends mostly on fish stocked in Michigan, while other rivers depend mostly on steelhead that naturally reproduce. Many rivers receive runs of both stocked and wild steelhead.

Some anglers have voiced concern that natural reproduction of steelhead may be declining. Fortunately, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources has some long-term data sets available to shed light on possible trends in naturally reproduced steelhead in Michigan streams, and in Lake Michigan as a whole. The explanation below may get a bit technical, but it is necessary to understand how to determine which trends are likely to be meaningful and why.

How do we know which trends are real and which ones are not?

Fish populations experience a lot of natural variability. Much of this is due to normal variations in the environment. Fisheries biologists go through extensive training to learn how to analyze and interpret data, which includes considering alternative explanations. Oftentimes, looking at the numbers is only the first step. It is also critical to have firsthand experience on the water, watching how natural systems and fish populations respond to different environmental factors over time.

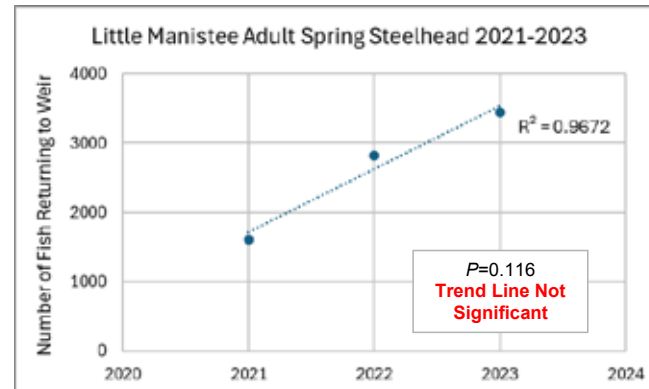
So, let's look at some actual data and one of the analytical tools used to determine if trends are real or due to random chance. This tool is called "linear regression" and is also used in many other fields of study to determine if there is a relationship between two variables.

In this case, we will see if there is a relationship between the year and the number of steelhead returning to the Little Manistee River weir. The weir is a structure that temporarily blocks the migration of steelhead, allowing the DNR to collect eggs and milt to spawn the next generation of steelhead to be reared in hatcheries. The Little Manistee River itself is not stocked with fish, though. All of the steelhead used for egg take are naturally spawned. As such, the number of steelhead returning to the Little Manistee weir provides one long-term data set on a naturally reproducing steelhead population.

Looking at spring weir return data from 2021-

2023, it seems like populations are increasing at first glance:

The line of best fit slopes upward, with the



number of returning adult spring steelhead increasing from 1,611 in 2021 to 3,441 in 2023. The R-squared value of 0.9672 from the linear regression tells us that 96.72% of the variation in steelhead numbers is due to year. You might say "Eureka! Steelhead populations are booming!" Not so fast. The data in this example were misinterpreted because one critical analytical step was not taken.

The first step in this type of analysis is to determine if the slope of the line is significantly different from zero. The term "significance" has a very specific meaning in the context of statistical analysis and interpretation of scientific data. If you find that your result is significant then you can start talking about what you found and what it might mean. If your result is not significant then you have nothing. With no significant result, it is inappropriate to draw conclusions or guess at what might be causing the trend. After all, no significant result means that there is no evidence that a trend exists.

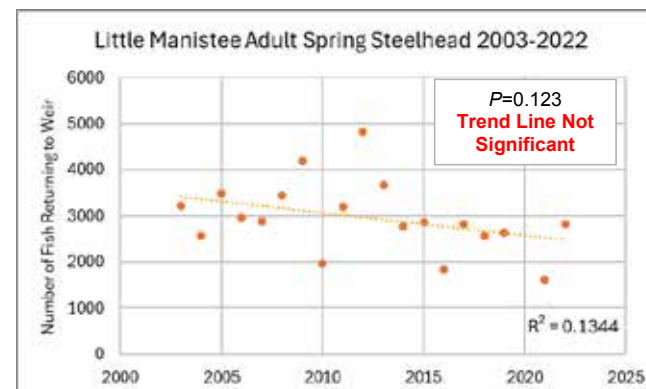
In the graph above, we see what looks like a very strong positive relationship. However, the first step in this analysis should have been to run a statistical test to determine if that nice ascending dotted blue line was significantly different than a flat line showing no relationship. To do this, we use an F-test and calculate a P-value. If P is less than 0.05, then we can say with 95% confidence that we have a real relationship between the two variables. For the graph above, $P=0.116$. The result is not significant, the blue dotted line should not be shown, and the R-squared value indicating 96.72% of variation explained by year is invalid (see this explanation for more on interpretation of regression results).

Of course, if you have paid attention to weir data and conditions on Michigan rivers for several years,

you probably looked at that graph and cried foul immediately. Using that graph to assert that steelhead populations are booming would be

highly disingenuous. That is why there are committed professional scientists working with one another to collect, analyze, and interpret data before making informed recommendations to fisheries managers and other decision-makers.

Now let's take a look the same steelhead weir return data, but from a longer period of time. The graph below appears to show declining numbers of adult spring steelhead returning to the Little Manistee weir over the past two decades of the post-Dreissenid period.



So, we must go through the same process outlined above. First, and most importantly, does the P-value indicate significance? No it does not ($P=0.123$, which is greater than the 0.050 cutoff for a significant result). The downward sloping orange dotted line is not statistically different than a flat line, and the R-squared value should not be included because the (rather unimpressive) 13.44% of variation it explains is not significant.

So, there has been no significant declining trend in adult spring steelhead returning to the Little Manistee weir during the post-Dreissenid period – which is good news. The choice of beginning and end years can sometimes have an impact on the slope and significance of a trend line, but in this case it does not matter if we begin at 2003 or 2004, or end at 2022, 2023, or 2024. Any way you cut it, the trend is not significant.

It should be noted that weir return data should be interpreted with some caution. The weir does not operate on a year-round basis so the number of adults counted at the weir is not a complete count of steelhead returning to the Little Manistee River. Each year, the DNR allows some steelhead to pass upstream before lowering the weir to allow for those fish to naturally reproduce upstream. The number of steelhead that pass before the weir is lowered is unknown and could vary considerably from year to year. Also, although no steelhead are stocked in the Little Manistee, many steelhead stocked into other streams wind up straying into the



Little Manistee. Although weir return data are not ideal for investigating trends, the bottom line is that weir returns do not provide any significant evidence of a decline anyway. If there had been a significant trend, then we might start asking about what factors are influencing that trend and what management actions might be appropriate. However, there is no trend in spring returns of adult steelhead returning to the Little Manistee River over the past two decades.

Has steelhead natural reproduction been declining throughout the Lake Michigan basin?
Weir returns provide one source of data for a single river, but this may not be reflective of other Michigan streams that feed into Lake Michigan. To address overall trends in natural reproduction in Michigan streams, we can look at the number of naturally spawned recruits. These

'wild recruits' are steelhead that were naturally reproduced in Michigan streams AND survived their smolting and out-migration to Lake Michigan.

Since streams in other states bordering Lake Michigan (WI, IL, and IN) do not support much natural reproduction of steelhead, we can assume that virtually all of the wild steelhead recruits in Lake Michigan originated in Michigan streams. It is also important to note that these are Age-1 recruits – steelhead that spent approximately one year in a river environment before smolting, migrating downstream, and successfully transitioning to life in Lake Michigan.

The graph below shows

a dotted blue line that slopes upwards, which would suggest an increasing trend over time. However, once again this result is not significant ($P=0.247$). The upward-sloping line is statistically no different from a flat line. Even though it is tempting to conclude that there is an increasing trend, this particular graph covering the past 20 years does not show a significant result and should not be interpreted as such. Of course, the good news is that it certainly does not offer any indication of decline, either.

Have naturally reproduced steelhead been declining in specific Lake Michigan tributaries?

When looking at the production of natural steelhead in all Michigan tributaries of Lake Michigan taken as a whole, we see no evidence of decline over the past two decades. But have there been declines in individual streams?

The DNR Status and Trends Program involves several 1,000-foot sections of river that are surveyed using electrofishing on a regular (if not annual) basis. It is a statewide program, which includes sites on seven tributaries of Lake Michigan that support natural reproduction

"Analysis"

Continued on page 10

2025 Tentative Print Schedule		
Issue	Deadline	Print Date
1	12/11/24	01/03/25
2	02/14/25	03/03/25
3	04/11/25	05/02/25
4	06/13/25	07/01/25
5	08/15/25	08/29/25
6	10/11/25	11/04/25



SPORTSMAN'S LODGE
Brethren Bungalows
231-477-5588

Convenient Location next to Manistee, Little Manistee and Bear Creek

4544 Amick Street
Brethren, Michigan 49619
Phone: 231-477-5588

Website:
www.brethrenbungalows.com

MSSFA Board of Directors Meetings 2024
Via TEAMS - 6:00pm
Wed. December 18

*Join a Chapter,
Join the Fun!*

For more information, contact your Chapter Membership Director or mssfamembership@charter.net

mssfa.org
We'll *HOOK YOU UP* with the latest news!

GREAT LAKES SPORT FISHING NEWS

MSSFA, *Publisher* Bonnie Eade, *Accountant*
Tel: 616-298-8842
Stafford Printing, *Printing* Greenville, MI Cell: 616-928-8970
bonnie.glsfn@charter.net

Dennis Eade, *Managing Editor* Laura Kleinheksel, *Layout*
Tel: 616-298-8842 Cel: 616-836-0037
deneade@charter.net
laura.glsfn@charter.net

The Great Lakes Sport Fishing News (GLSFN) is the official publication of the Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen's Association (MSSFA). Subscription to th GLSFN is through membership in MSSFA. The GLSFN publishes six issues per year. Permission for reprint from this publication is normally permitted, unless otherwise stipulated by the article, and proper credit is given to the author and the publication. The GLSFN or MSSFA does not necessarily agree or support the contents of articles within this publication. The views expressed are those of the author(s) of the articles.

MICHIGAN STEELHEAD AND SALMON FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Business Office Dennis Eade, *Executive Director*
P.O. Box 8034 Don Remington, *Vice President*
Holland, MI 49422 Gerry Sickon, *Secretary*
Tel: 616-298-8842 Alex Fergus, *Treasurer*
e-mail: deneade@charter.net

The Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen's Association (MSSFA) is a multi-state, non-profit organization dedicated to educating the general public on improving, preserving and promoting sport fishing, the Great Lakes and their tributary streams and rivers. Commonly referred to as *The Michigan Steelheaders*, or simply *Steelheaders*. MSSFA represents sport fishing families in the Great Lakes region. MSSFA encourages the strictest observances of sport fishing laws and ethical fishing practices. www.MSSFA.org

Fishing The Lake Michigan Waters Off Manistee, Michigan For Salmon and Trout

Freddie B Fishing Charters

Capt. Fred Bolton

USCG Licensed State DNR Inspected Cell: 248.670.2479
Email: FreddieB@acegroup.cc
www.FreddieBFishingCharters.com

MSSFA State Board of Directors, Officers and Committee Chairs

Dennis Eade	Executive Director Lake Michigan Citizens Advisory Fishery Committee Lake Huron Citizens Advisory Fishery Committee	deneade@charter.net
Don Remington	Vice President	remingtondonald014@gmail.com
Gerry Sickon	Secretary Lake Erie Citizens Advisory Fishery Committee	gsickon@ford.com
Alex Fergus	Treasurer	afergus63@gmail.com
Roger Hinchcliff	Streams Committee	RHinchcliff@mortgageone.biz
Deb Shephard	Membership Coordinator	mssfamembership@charter.net

MSSFA: It PAYS to belong! Here's why:

1	AI & Bob's Sports	510 68th St	Grand Rapids	MI	49548	10% Discount with AI & Bob's Card or Steelheaders
2	All Auto Care	1234 Ball Ave. NE	Grand Rapids	MI	49505	Member Rates
3	Ann's Custom Canvas	4414 Remembrance Rd	Walker	MI	49544	10% Discount, not valid on specials. Mention steelheaders before ordering
4	Auto Owners Insurance	303 E. Monroe	Durand	MI	48429	Rowe Agent Group #486
5	Batteries Plus	2061 N-139 Suite B	Benton Harbor	MI	49022	10% & Member Discount 269-925-7374 www.batteriesplus.com
6	Batteries Plus	3082 44th Street	Grandville	MI	49418	10% & Member Discount
7	Batteries Plus	386 Bay Park Dr, Suite B	Holland	MI	49424	10% & Member Discount 616-396-9914 www.batteriesplus.com
8	Batteries Plus	5228 S. Westnedge Ave	Kalamazoo	MI	49002	10% & Member Discount 269-553-2355 www.batteriesplus.com
9	Batteries Plus	3031 28th Street SE	Kentwood	MI	49512	10% & Member Discount 616-575-0500 www.batteriesplus.com
10	Batteries Plus	5839 Hrvey Street, Suite 6	Norton Shores	MI	49444	10% & Member Discount 231-747-9168 www.batteriesplus.com
11	Big Papa Sportfishing	50642 Oregon Ave.	Novi	MI	48374	10% except on equipment
12	Black Dog Outfitters	4444 14 Mile Rd	Rockford	MI	49341	10% Discount on fly tying materials, hooks & lines. www.blackdog-outfitters.com
13	BoatU.S.					\$15 Annual Membership Dues - Use Membership # GA83723B
14	Bob's Outdoors	Statewide	www.bobsoutdoors.com			10% Discount (www.bobsoutdoors.com)
15	Brenner's Service	4765 W River Dr	Comstock Park	MI	46321	5% exclusions may apply. 616-784-9872 dawnbrenner@hotmail.com
16	Dayton, Rick R, DDS	169 Louis Campau Promenade Ste 2A	Grand Rapids	MI	49503	20% off all services (616)458-2545
17	Cascade Capital Funding	4251 Cascade Rd. SE	Grand Rapids	MI	49546	Free appraisal up to \$300.00
18	Dockside Marine, Inc	4320 State Rd	Glennie	MI	48737	15% Off Parts & Accessories (Excludes Electronics)
19	Dunham's Sports	Statewide				10% Discount # 50050/3
20	Firestone - Metro 25	19268 Middlebelt	Livonia	MI	48152	\$20 off on \$200 or more on service www.metro25firestone.com
21	Fish with Jim Outfitters	http://www.fishwithjimoutfitters.com/	248-252-1277			Discount \$50.00 off the total trip price.
22	Glacier Corporation	1021 Fuller St.	Santa Ana	CA	92701	Aquarium Chillers for "salmon in classroom" \$625 + 60 (s&h) = \$685
23	Great Lakes Angler Magazine		www.glangler.com			Discount 50% OFF 1 year subscription, members only! Use code MSSFA
24	Homestead Resort on Betsie River	2399 Dam Rd	Benzonia	MI	49616	10% In Season, 25% Off Season (homestead@crystal-rentals.com)
25	Insta-Launch Campground	20 Park Ave	Manistee	MI	49660	Member Discount
26	Insurance Shop/Fremont Ins.	824 Water St.	East Jordan	MI	49727	10% Discount off insurance for MSSFA Group Members
27	Jim Waldron Pontiac, Buick, GMC	1146 S. State Rd	Davison	MI	48423	Contact Nick Russloll for Sales, 10% off all parts not to exceed \$100.00
28	J Smith Custom Tackle	1136 E Hughes Lake Road	Rose City	MI	48654	15% - 20% off depending on rod. Customrodsbyjsmith.com 989-685-2819
29	K & M Marine	14990 Telegraph Rd	Redford	MI	48239	10% off merchandise except sale items (www.kandmmarine.com)
30	Kamp Oil Inc	6467 Manistee St	Fredric	MI	49733	Citgo Sea & Snow 4-1 gal case 13.50/gal = 54/case, other disc avail.
31	Kamp Oil Inc	3650 Eastern Ave SE	Grand Rapids	MI	49508	Citgo Sea & Snow 4-1 gal case 13.50/gal = 54/case, other disc avail.
32	Beebe Oil Co (aka Kamp Oil)	4999 22 Mile Rd	Utica	MI	48317	Citgo Sea & Snow 4-1 gal case 13.50/gal = 54/case, other disc avail.
33	Lapeer Boat Service	3556 Fort Knox Dr	Lapeer	MI	48446	10% off parts and labor (810-245-6038)
34	Liberty Tax Service	544 E. 8th St.	Holland	MI	49423	\$20.00 Discount on tax service
35	Logan's Run Muskegon River Cottage Rental	1648 Gardner St.	Newaygo	MI	49337	10% Discount www.logansrun.us 616-485-4501
36	Mark's Sport Shop	11530 Mason Dr	Grant	MI	49327	Member Discount
37	MUCC	2101 Wood Street	Lansing	MI	48912	\$18.00 Membership Dues
38	Patriot Custom Fishing Rods	35919 6th Ave.	Gobles	MI	49055	10% Discount 269-628-5227
39	Richfield RV	Statewide				10% Discount
40	River Raisin Marina & Campground	2502 E. Elm Avenue	Monroe	MI	48161	Buy 1 get 1 free - call 313-575-4367 (www.riverraisinmarina.com)
41	RX Optical	Statewide				Plan 308
42	Salmon Trout Steelheader		www.salmontroutsteelheader.com			Discount 50% OFF 1 year subscription, members only! Use code MSSFA
43	Sun Coast Marine	1172 68th Street	South Haven	MI		Member discount
44	The Angling Outpost	2480 Duck Lane Rd	Whitehall	MI	49461	www.anglingoutpost.com 5% use coupon "steelheader" for online purchases
45	Traxstech Corp	14754 N Oakley	Chesaping	MI		989-845-5969 10%
46	Van's Sport Center	1855 Alpine Ave.	Walker	MI	49544	10% Discount
47	Warrior Lures	5915 Lillian La	Traverse City	MI	49684	10% Discount on all product ordered (www.warriorlures.com)
48	West Marine		Bay City	MI		10%
49	West Michigan Propeller	847 Ionia Ave. NW	Grand Rapids	MI	49503	10% Discount
50	* Your Business Here!					

“Analysis” Continued from page 8

of steelhead. The density of Age-0 steelhead tells us how many young fish are present in nursery habitats where steelhead grow for approximately one year before leaving the stream for Lake Michigan.

The series of graphs below shows the number of Age-0 steelhead per acre at four of the seven sites. At first glance and without proper interpretation, the graphs appear to give the impression of declining steelhead reproduction. However, when we check for significance we find that none of the trend lines are meaningful.

These graphs provide a good example of how data can be misrepresented to give the impression of a downward trend when none

seven Lake Michigan tributaries sampled regularly by DNR for Age-0 steelhead. Furthermore, the years depicted on each of the graphs are not consistent. While data are not available for all years on all streams, the graphs do not include the most recent data available from the Michigan DNR’s Stream Fish Population Viewer, which includes data up to 2022 for some streams. Beginning years are also inconsistent on the graphs, which include some years prior to the lakewide steelhead population decline due to Dreissenid mussels around 2004.

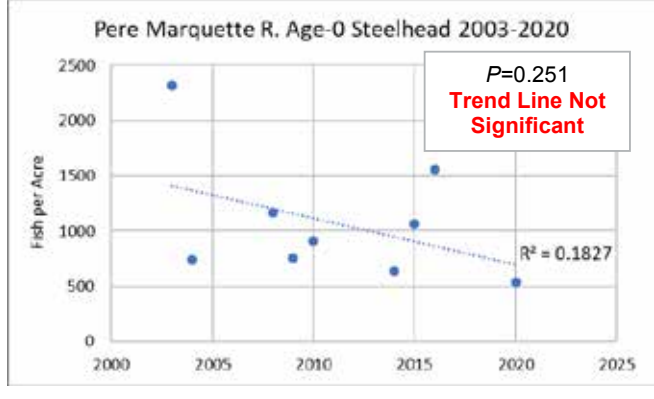
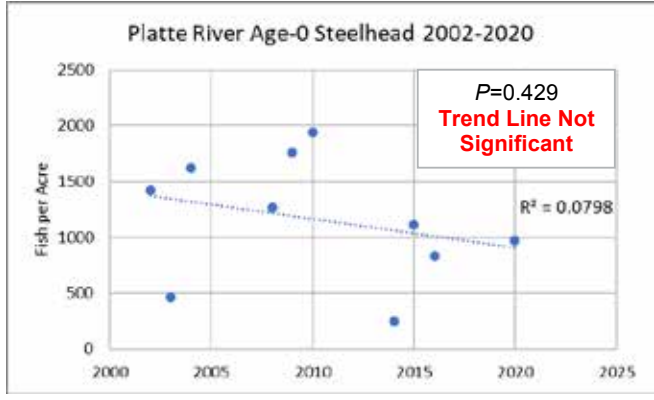
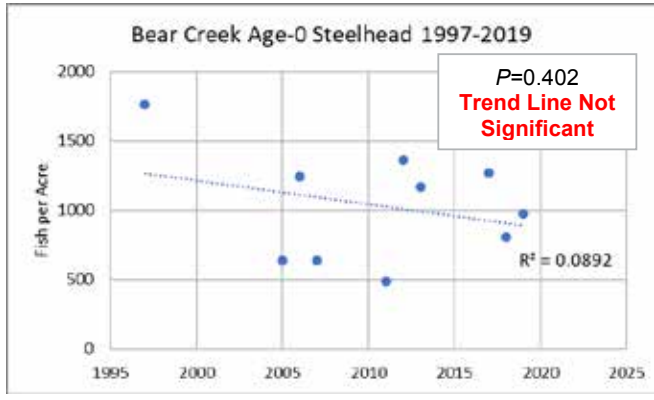
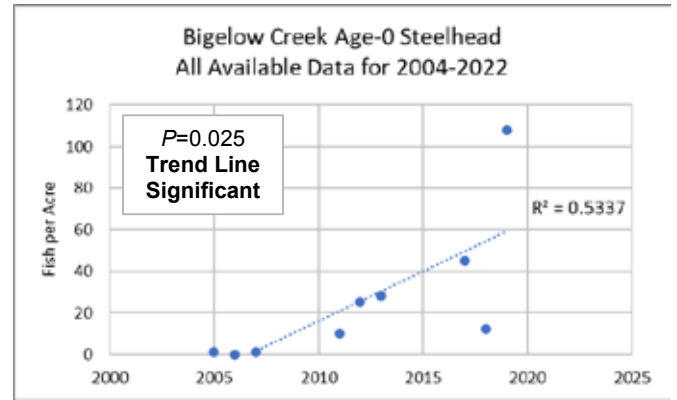
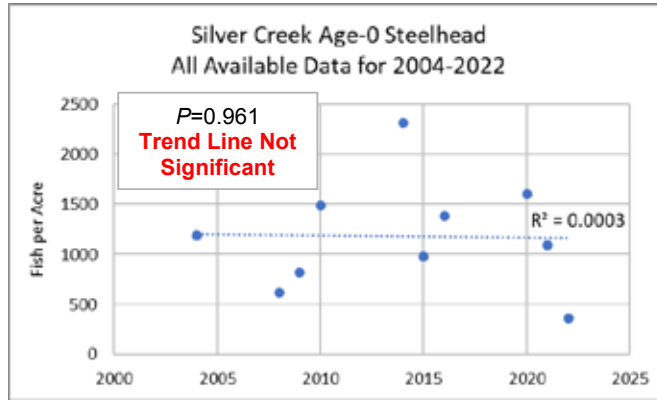
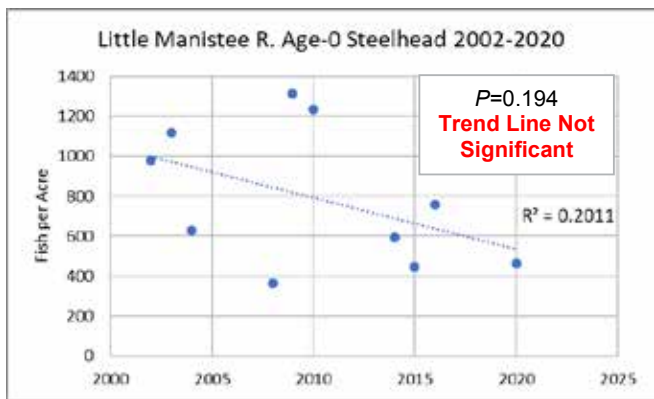
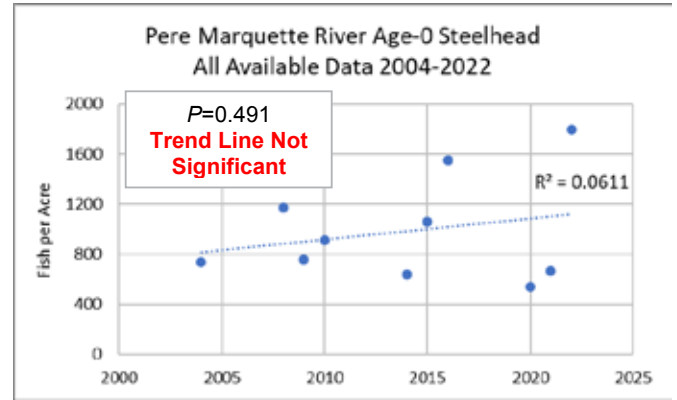
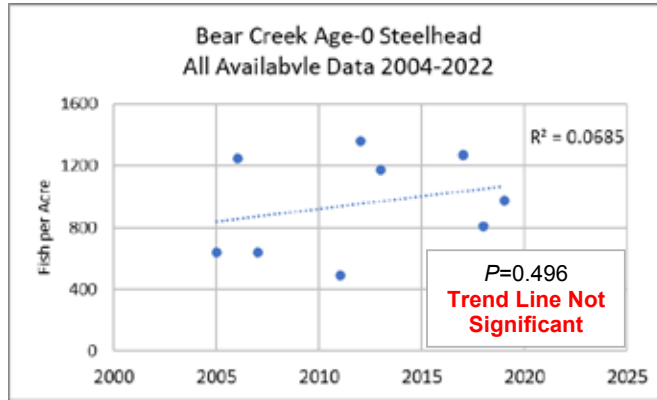
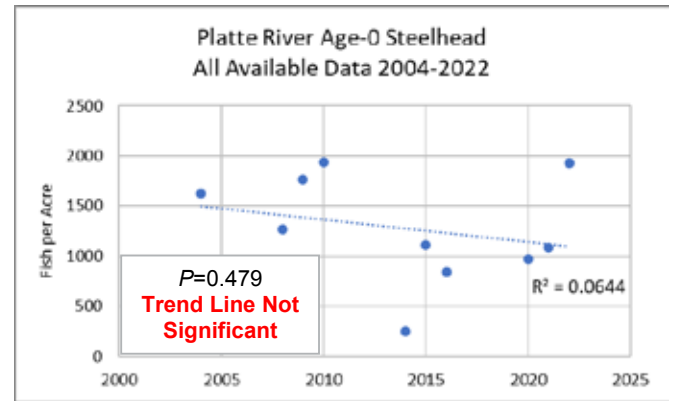
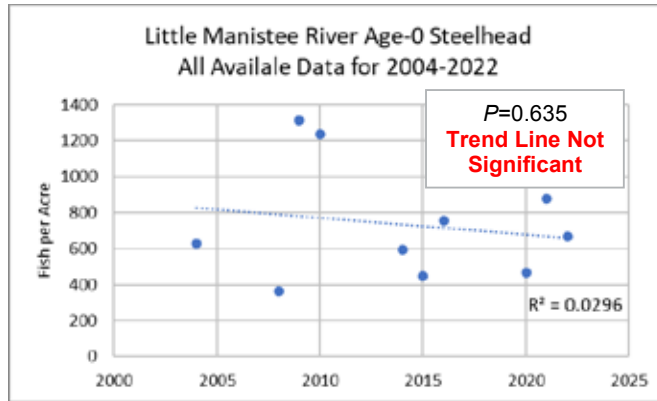
If we re-analyze the data for these four streams, include the most recent data available, limit our analysis to all data available for each stream beginning in 2004, and include the three additional streams not pictured above then we see a

sloping, and flat lines in Age-0 steelhead production over the past twenty years. At first glance, it would

data should also be interpreted with some caution. Each site is only a 1,000-foot long section of stream.

river showed a significant trend. In Bigelow Creek, for example, the increase we saw might have been

tivity of the entire creek. Even so, the overall picture from these six sites where long-term data are available



be easy to interpret this to mean that steelhead reproduction is increasing in some streams and decreasing in others. However, it is important to remember that the first step is to look at the P-value and determine if any of these trends are significant.

Most of them are not. There is no significant trend for Little Manistee River, Platte River, Bear Creek, Pere Marquette River, or Silver Creek since 2004. In fact, none of these streams exhibited significant declines when earlier years were included, either.

The situation looks better for Bigelow Creek, where work to improve fish passage and habitat quality began in 2016. Before 2008, Age-0 steelhead density was extremely low in Bigelow Creek, but the most recent data point shows 108 fish per acre in 2019. What is more, this trend line is actually significant (P=0.025). Since P is less than 0.05, we can say with 95% certainty that there is a real increasing trend for Age-0 steelhead in Bigelow Creek.

The DNR’s Status and Trends Program includes electrofishing data from six tributaries of Lake Michigan where steelhead reproduce naturally. This new analysis shows that no significant trends exist over the past two decades of the post- Dreissenid era for five of the six streams. One of the streams actually showed a significant increase in Age-0 steelhead production.

As with weir data, the Status & Trends Program

If trends were significant for a site, it would not necessarily mean that the entire

localized to one 1,000-foot section instead of indicating an increase in produc-

“Analysis” Continued on page 13

exists. In each instance, the P-value is greater than 0.05, indicating that the blue dotted lines are not significantly different than a flat line drawn through the same points. The R-squared values are also extremely low, showing that very little of the variation in young steelhead abundance for each stream is explained by the line.

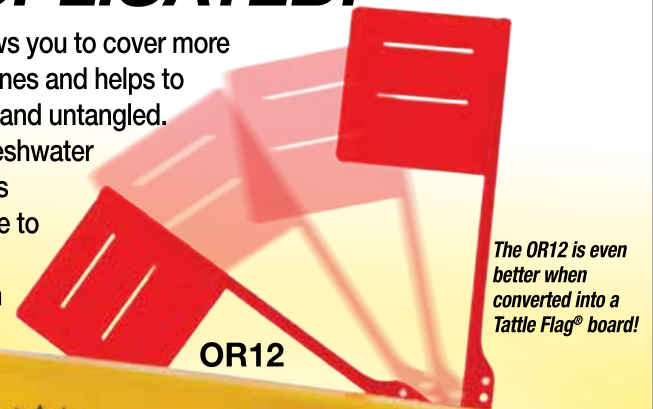
These four graphs also represent only four of the

more complete picture. The graphs ahead keep the time periods as consistent as possible to allow for similar interpretation for the post-Dreissenid period on all streams with available data (as opposed to only four streams with different time periods for each, as shown here).

When we limit our analysis to the post-Dreissenid period beginning in 2004, we see a mix of upward-sloping, downward-

OFTEN IMITATED NEVER DUPLICATED!

The OR12 planer board allows you to cover more water when fishing multiple lines and helps to keep your lines spread apart and untangled. Ideal for walleye and most freshwater fish, the OR12 Planer board is carefully ballasted to continue to run flawlessly in rough water conditions. Get more lines on the water with the OR12 this year.



The OR12 is even better when converted into a Tattle Flag® board!

OR12 shown with the Tattle Flag® kit attached (sold separately)

EZ Crankbait Tuner OR40

This unique crankbait tuning tool features a long and short jaw design that includes an adjustable spring tension setting making it possible to tune any crankbait from magnum sized muskie baits right down to panfish sized lures.



Your Leader In Trolling Technology
www.offshoretackle.com



Jim Fee with a winter steelhead on the Niagara River in New York. Photo credit: Joe Cermele

Noodle Rods and Egg Patterns: A Primer for Winter Steelhead Fishing Around the Great Lakes

New to chasing cold season chromers on Great Lakes tributary streams? Check out these tips before hitting the water

By Joe Cermele
www.outdoorlife.com

Winter steelhead fishing along the Great Lakes can be some of the most fun you'll ever have. It can also be some of the most difficult and miserable fishing you'll ever experience. I've had it both ways, and I've been lucky enough to chase them in tributaries across their entire range from New York to Michigan. On one hand, the cool thing about Great Lakes steelhead is that they are accessible to everyone. But targeting them—especially in the winter—can be daunting for the uninitiated. Not only do you have to brave the cold, but you also have to be prepared to fight a fish that has far more power and stamina than your average resident stream trout.

To even get to that point, though, you have to first figure out what they want to eat, which, as you'll learn, is both simple and kind of complex. There are many nuances to steelhead fishing that will be learned over time, but if you're brand

new to steelheading, you'll be ahead of the game with a little primer on how to gear up and what to tie on the end of your line.

Metal Work

Where you're fishing for steelhead and how you prefer to catch them naturally factors into rod-and-reel selection. There are, however, some common threads when it comes to tackle. Steelhead are incredibly strong, and they will change direction in a blink. It's during those quick direction changes that you most often lose the fish. They introduce slack into the line, and it happens so quickly that it's difficult to compensate by reeling in fast enough. But a good steelhead rod will compensate for you.

If you're fishing from shore, you want a rod with extra length and a slower action near the tip—what's often referred to as “soft action.” Spinning rods designed specifically for steelhead can measure as long as 12 feet and have slow noodly tips, hence the

nickname “noodle rods.” If you're a fly angler, opt for a 10- to 11-foot rod in the 6- to 8-weight class instead of the standard 9-footer. With both rod styles, the extra length and give in the tip will help maintain better pressure during quick turns. Though additional length is less critical when fishing vertically from a boat, a rod with a slower action is still beneficial for surviving the fight.

Another common thread runs through the rigging process. During the winter, steelhead tend to be stacked right on the bottom in deeper holes and runs with slower current, so it's critical that your offering gets down fast. One of the most commonly used rigs features a pencil lead that slides freely on the main line ahead of a barrel swivel that acts as a stopper. A 2- to sometimes 4-foot fluorocarbon leader in the 6- to 10-pound range gets tied off to the opposite side of the swivel, and your egg or fly goes on the end of the leader. Thin, cylindrical pencil leads are designed to tick along the bot-

tom without getting hung up. I've chased steelhead in Michigan and seen this same rig used on fly rods, though split shots are more commonly used for getting flies down faster. The need for ample lead that will drop into the zone quickly is what spawned the nickname “chuck-n-duck” fishing. It's not the sexiest way to fish, but if you dial in what those winter steelhead want to eat, it's certainly the most effective.

Make Lure Selection (Over) Easy

Entire books have been written about what flies and lures to throw for steelhead, but it doesn't have to be that complicated. The fact is that no matter where you're targeting winter steelhead along the Great Lakes, fish eggs are going to be one of their primary food sources. In many areas, steelhead are sharing spawning tributaries with salmon, but even long after the salmon are gone, steelhead will slurp salmon eggs. They'll also feed on their own eggs during the winter, as well

as the eggs of lake trout and suckers that often cohabitate their streams and rivers. The bottom line? When you have no idea what to use, tie on an egg.

Eggs, of course, come in all shapes and sizes. You might use a ball of natural eggs cured in brine and held together with a piece of mesh netting material. You could also use an egg fly made of yarn, or one of the many synthetic soft-plastic eggs on the market. In recent years, anglers have gravitated toward using plastic beads to represent eggs. These are pegged on the line with a toothpick or rubber stopper a few inches above the hook, and when the fish takes the bead, the hook slides up, catching the fish on the inside or outside of the mouth.

The most difficult part of fishing any kind of egg pattern—whether cured and dyed or entirely synthetic—is choosing a color. But one thing I've learned over the years is that you don't choose the color. You let the steelhead decide. You do, however, have to start

somewhere, and the best place if the water is clear is with muted, natural tones, like pastel pink, orange, tan, or yellow. If the water is off color, start with more vibrantly colored eggs that bright orange, chartreuse, or neon yellow.

There will be days when it takes several changes to dial in the right color, which is why carrying a healthy variety is smart. There are so many types of egg flies, dye colors for natural eggs, and bead colors that it can get rather overwhelming. But unless someone clues you into a color that's been on fire wherever you're fishing, always carry at least a few oddball colors like blue, purple, and green. It makes no difference that there's nothing remotely natural about them, and I've experienced many days on Great Lakes steelhead rivers where Cookie Monster blue was the only color they'd slurp.



2024 Battle Creek Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Event	Location
November	9	Kalamazoo River Trout Quest	Allegan Dam
November	16	Kalamazoo River Memorial	Allegan Dam
November	30	St. Joe River Fall Steelhead	I-94 Boat Ramp
December	7	St. Joe River Chapter Challenge	On the River Tavern
December	14	Christmas Party	Kalamazoo Eagles

Meetings are held every 3rd Tuesday of the month. 6:00 pm Social, 7:00 pm Meeting
Meeting Location: Travelers Cafe and Pub, 5225 Portage Rd. Exit 78 off I-94.
FOR MORE INFORMATION:
River Tournament - Joe Foy at 269-303-1894 / Lake Tournament - Dan Foster at 269-370-3693
battlecreeksteelheaders.com

2024 Grand Haven Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Event	Contact Info
TBD		Christmas Party	

Other Events TBD
 For information on these events and other information on the Grand Haven Steelheaders contact GHS President and State Director Paul Zelenka at pbzfarm@gmail.com
 www.ghsteelheaders.com

2024 Grand Rapids Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Event	Information
November	3	Fishing Partners Manistee Contest	
November	25	Chapter Meeting	
December	6	Christmas Party	Watch for details**

**** Fishing Outings are subject to change based on weather conditions****

Events open to the public
 Meeting Location - Elks #48, 917 Bridge St NW, Grand Rapids
 Time: 6:00pm-7pm Social Hour with food and beverage followed by Speaker
 Board Meetings will take place after the regular Member Meeting
 Email Grand Rapids Steelheaders: fishgrsteelhead@gmail.com
**** Fishing Outings are subject to change based on weather conditions****

New address:
 P.O. Box 140198
 Grand Rapids, MI 49514

2024 Great Lakes Bay Region Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Event
December	14	Banquet V.F.W. Midland

Membership meetings are the first Tuesday every month (no meeting in August)
 Meetings held at: 3013 Bay City Road, Midland, MI 48642 Phone: 989-496-3410

Board meetings begin at 7:00pm. **Please call the Port Chairman no later than Monday prior to the outing whether you plan on attending or not attending.** On the day of the outing, call in on Marine Radio, Channel 72.

Weigh-in follows each outing. Picnics follows weigh-in on Saturdays only.
 Outings: All Steelheader members pay \$5.00. All non-Steelheaders pay \$10.00 to participate.
 Children 16 and Under are free. Picnic is \$5.00 for everyone.

If interested in fishing with us please contact: Mark Trudell (989) 839-4920
 Visit our web page www.steel-headers.com

2024 Holland Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Event
November	5	Board Meeting
December	3	Board Meeting
December	5	Membership

Board meetings held at: TBD Locations
 General Membership: Bayshore Yacht Club at the Yacht Basin Marina
 Doors open at 6 pm., Dinner at 7 pm, speaker to follow

For event information, go to hollandsteelheaders.org, or call Jimmy Van Brocklin 616-240-7017
 or email Brad Stephenson at brad.stephenson32@gmail.com

2024 Metro West - Livonia Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Event	Chair / Location
November	2	Manistee River/Pier/Shore Tournaments w DS	Zawacki/Braden/Trenz
November	12	General Membership Meeting - 2nd Tues.	Election Day Room at Senior Center #5
November	30	Ohio Walleye Tournament	Dave Zawacki
December	3	CHRISTMAS PARTY - HAPPY HOLIDAYS	
December	7	PM River Tournament	Marc Traver / Adam Trenz
December	14	Huron River Tournament	Roger Hinchcliff

**** ALL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC****
 7:00 PM at The New Livonia Seniors Center at the Southeast Corner of Farmington Road and Five Mile Road
 WEB Site: Go to www.metroweststeelheaders.org
 If you have questions, contact **MetroWest Steelheaders, PO BOX 531927, Livonia MI 48153-1927**

Contact: *President* Bob Schulz, bobschulz7@gmail.com, 248-915-0043
Membership Director Henry Nabors 248-225-4964

2024 South Haven Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Event
Note: SH Steelheaders (SHS) Chapter Events in BOLD * = Not Confirmed		
November	23	South Haven Steelheaders River Tournament
December		South Haven Steelheaders Holiday Party 2024

2024 South Haven Steelheaders Membership & Board Meeting Dates
 NO JANUARY MEMBERSHIP MEETING
 FEB 15th - 3rd Thursday, Guest speaker - TBD
 MAR 21st - 3rd Thursday (week after GR Ultimate Sports Show, 3/7-10) - Best Chance Fishing Seminar
 APRIL 18th - 3rd Thursday - Southern Lake Michigan Fisheries Workshop - Dr. Dan O'Keefe presenting
 MAY 16th - 3rd Thursday *prior to SHS Pro/Am - Membership meeting.
 JUNE 20th - 3rd Thursday
 JULY 18th - 3rd Thursday
 AUG 8th - 2nd Thursday - *Prior to the Annual Fish Boil
 SEP 19th - 3rd Thursday - Regular & Board meeting to prioritize & set next year's events. ID event chairs.
 OCT 17th - 3rd Thursday - Regular and Board meeting to finalize next year's events and set calendar
 NOV 7th - 1st Thursday - Regular and Board Meeting to finalize budget and calendar
 December - No meeting in lieu of Holiday Party
 The 2025 Pro Am Tournament Committee Kick-off meeting is the 1st Wednesday of November (11/6/24)

Note: All Board and membership meetings are generally held the third Thursday of each month except for special circumstances such as Pro Am Captain's Meeting set up in May, Fish Boil organizational meeting in August and prior to Deer Season in November.
Meeting Location: South Haven American Legion Post 49, 129 Michigan Avenue, South Haven, MI 49090
 Board Meetings start at 5:45pm and membership meetings at 7:00pm.
 For more information email: president@southhavensteelheaders.com

2024 Southwest MI Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Event	Information
Membership meetings and board meeting are held the second Thursday of each month but please confirm online for the most updated information. www.swmsteelheaders.com www.facebook.com/southwestmichigansteelheaders			
December	7	Winter Challenge River Fishing Tournament	

Membership Meetings Held at:
 St. Joseph-Benton Harbor Elks 541, 601 Riverview Drive, Benton Harbor MI 49022
Board Meeting 5:30 - 6:30 PM, Social 6:00 - 7:00 PM, Meeting 7:00 - 8:30 PM
 Contact: Ryan McCartney (574) 274-6382

2024 Thumb Chapter Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Time	Event	Location / Information
Contact Scott Stanke at 989-553-0972 for inquiries.				

2024 Thunderbay Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Time	Information
December	2	7:00pm	Monthly Meeting

Contact Dan Bouchard at dan-bouchard@hotmail.com for inquiries.

2024 White River Steelheader's Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Time	Event information
Note: All meetings will be held at 6:30 pm at the VFW, any changes in location will be decided a couple of days before the meeting. - Any questions or to verify dates/times please call Clint Pollock at (231) 893-0210 or Terry Clark at (231) 893-6805.			
November	7	6:30pm	Meeting at the VFW
December	5	6:30pm	Meeting at the VFW



**SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN'S
 PREMIER FISHING TACKLE
 DESTINATION
 CONVENIENTLY LOCATED ON THE
 ST. JOSEPH RIVER**

- Large selection of rods and reels
- Lures and tackle for the big lake, rivers and inland lakes
- Great prices and great selection
- Live bait, fishing licenses & much more

Shop Online at: www.tacklehaven.com
 (269) 925-0341
 (269) 281-1951
sales@tacklehaven.com
 741 Riverview Drive
 Benton Harbor, MI 49022

Join a Chapter, Join the Fun!

**For more information,
 contact your Chapter Membership Director
 or mssfamembership@charter.net**

mssfa.org

We'll *HOOK YOU UP* with the latest news!

The Long and Short of Fall Bass

“Analysis” Continued from page 8

either. The same is true for Platte River, Bear Creek, Pere Marquette River, and Silver Creek sites included in the DNR’s Status and Trends Program.

There has been a significant increase in production of natural steelhead at the Bigelow Creek site, which is encouraging. It suggests that continued work to improve instream habitat, limit nonpoint source pollution, and improve fish passage can pay dividends when it comes to steelhead production.



The Big Picture

There is no evidence for declining natural reproduction of steelhead in Lake Michigan tributaries. The number of naturally spawned steelhead that survive to Age-1 in Lake Michigan has shown no significant trend over the past twenty years.

While numbers of any fish population do naturally fluctuate from year to year, there has been no declining trend in wild steelhead recruitment.

Spring returns of steelhead to the Little Manistee River weir have also seen no significant trend, either positive or negative, over the past twenty years. In looking at Age-0 steelhead abundance, there is no significant trend at the long-term monitoring site on the Little Manistee River,

Tom Luba
midwestoutdoors.com

While both largemouths and smallmouths are bass, they tend to make different fall pilgrimages. One’s movement is fairly short, and the other’s, much longer.

A lot of river largemouths live near deeper weed edges after spring. When fall arrives, many will move back into the shallows—maybe even back near their spring locations. Now is the time for another frog attack, near wood, weeds and other cover.

As the water cools, I look for areas that contain green weeds and are a bit deeper. Green weeds are key as they hold pretty much the whole food chain, from baitfish up to predators. One thing about weeds is that they recede from the top down. Colder water may kill off the tops, but there may still be green

weeds near the base, and they may stay green all fall.

Early on, I use a mobile bait, like a shallow crankbait, in brown or baitfish patterns. Spinnerbaits are still worth their weight in bass. Single Colorado blades produce more vibration. Twin willow blades turn on the flash. Variations of white and also black are good starters. I prefer nickel/silver most of the time, but keep a bronze or gold blade with a black skirt handy, especially if the water is a little off color. A little blue in the skirt or blade is also good.

Spinnerbaits with Colorado blades work great for probing areas in fall. Reeling the bait tight to weed clumps and then letting it helicopter down toward the bottom can produce strikes, especially if the fish are not chasing. One other tip: Consider using a different blade setup. For fish that regularly see Colorado and willow blades, a switch

can be the necessary magic. Trio Tackle (TrioTackle.com) has a bait that fits the bill, featuring two smaller willow blades up top and a single blade closer to the body. Sometimes, the changeup can really score.

As the water cools into November, note the water temperature. The fish will gradually move deeper. A Texas-rigged Senko can draw attention if you need to slow down. As it gets colder, deep-diving suspending baits, like the Rapala Husky Jerk or deep Shad Rap RS, fished along the deeper breakline can coax the fish to try one.

Once the fish are deeper, I turn to bass jigs with Berkley MaxScent Power Chunks or Creature Hawgs to mine the drops. A crawfish or baitfish color tube will also produce. A lot of the time, you’ll find largemouths holding close to the same areas as in summer—just deeper. Remember the green weeds.



I really enjoy river smallmouths as a fall foe when they winter in deeper holes. Whether they are native species, or fish leaving a summer feeder stream, they’ll look for water in the 20-foot depth range for winter. This can mean a fairly long journey, especially if they’re leaving a shallow feeder stream.

They’re mobile now and will probably stop at numerous areas that draw baitfish as they travel. Deep-diving crankbaits will cover ground and help you find fish quicker. Areas with 4 to 6 feet of water, with riprap or wood, are always good targets. They may be here today and gone tomorrow, though. A lot of times, new fish move in as other ones move out.

I like crankbaits that get down to ten feet or better. Also, if one brand stops producing over time, they may be agreeable to a different brand. I’ve no idea why, but it pays to carry a few alternatives. Brown craw, firetiger and red craw have all worked, color-wise.

When the water temp hits 48 degrees, I’ll switch to plastics. Green Pumpkin, Peanut Butter & Jelly and craw colors are tube staples, with 2 1/2- to 3 1/2-inch tubes normal sizes. Keep a louder color, like bubblegum or chartreuse, in your box. Plastics like a 4-inch Centipede (Zoom), and flukes on a lightweight (1/16-ounce) jig drifted along bottom can tempt the fish. Start looking deeper, too.

Smallmouths should be close to wintering areas by mid-October. Try Senkos (4- to 5-inch) and 3/8-ounce swing jigs tipped with a Green Pumpkin Berkley Power Bait MaxScent Creature Hawg. Reel slowly across bottom, as that keeps it out of the snags, and bass can locate and pounce before it moves away. Swing jigs offer a world of possibilities, in sizes from 1/8- to 1 1/4-ounce available. I mold my own, using Do-it Molds to cover the size range. You can also vary the hook sizes when you do your own, to customize as needed.

As you fish, note where, how and on what bait and retrieve you catch fish from one spot to another, because they will probably follow the same pattern year after year. But don’t be surprised if one area that worked last year doesn’t this time. You could be between groups. Or they just aren’t using that location. That’s fishing.

The Original Michigan Sportsman’s Show!

OUTDOORAMA

SUBURBAN COLLECTION SHOWPLACE
Novi, Michigan—Detroit Market
FEB 20-23

MICHIGAN OUT OF DOORS TELEVISION

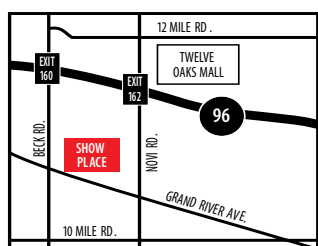
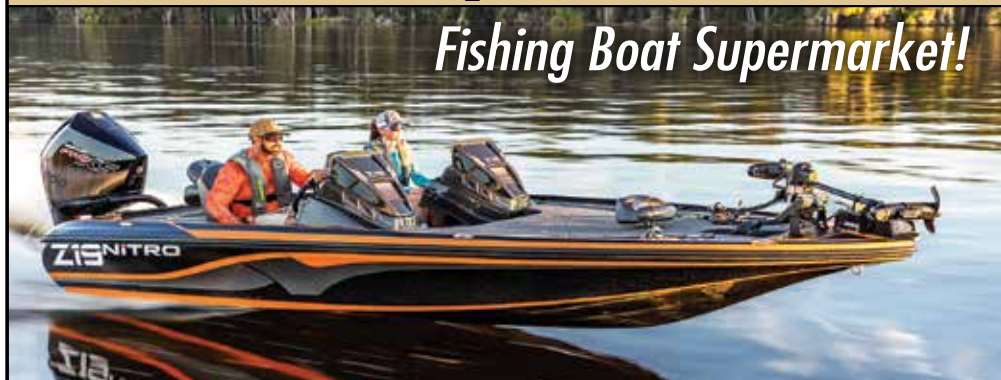
Big Buck Night Thursday 6-8 pm!

From exotic hunting trips to family camping trips, you can find them all at the

Outfitters Expo

Get the latest in Hunting & Fishing equipment from techs who know how to rig ‘em right!

Fishing Boat Supermarket!



SUBURBAN COLLECTION SHOWPLACE
Grand River One Mile West of Novi Road

SHOW HOURS:
Thursday 1pm-8pm Saturday 10am-8pm
Friday 12pm-8pm Sunday 10am-5pm

Outdoorama.com

Special Bonus!

Cottage & Lakefront Living Show
Detroit™ SUBURBAN COLLECTION SHOWPLACE

NoviCottageShow.com
with Paid Admission to Outdoorama



VANDAM WAREHOUSE

269-372-2277 - WWW.VANDAMWAREHOUSE.COM
8178 WEST MAIN STREET, KALAMAZOO, MI 49009



HUMMINBIRD®

BLOWOUT SALE

HELIX 15



MDI+ GPS G4N CHO	\$700 OFF	\$2699	\$1999
MSI+ GPS G4N	\$830 OFF	\$3199	\$2369
MSI+ GPS G4N CHO	\$900 OFF	\$3049	\$2149

HELIX 12



MDI+ GPS G4N	\$600 OFF	\$2299	\$1699
MDI+ GPS G4N CHO	\$600 OFF	\$2199	\$1599
MSI+ GPS G4N	\$750 OFF	\$2549	\$1799
MSI+ GPS G4N CHO	\$700 OFF	\$2699	\$1999

HELIX 10



MDI+ GPS G4N	\$400 OFF	\$1499	\$1099
MDI+ GPS G4N CHO	\$370 OFF	\$1399	\$1029
MSI+ GPS G4N CHO	\$600 OFF	\$1949	\$1349

MEGA LIVE



MEGA LIVE IMAGING	\$200 OFF	\$1499	\$1299
MEGA LIVE TARGETLOCK	\$900 OFF	\$2999	\$2099
MEGA LIVE HAND CONTROL	\$350 OFF	\$2049	\$1699

Connect with us



SALE VALID ONLY WHILE SUPPLIES LAST
NO SPECIAL ORDERS - NO LAYAWAYS
ALL SALES FINAL