

## **When Is the Best Time for Devils Lake Walleye?** *by Jason Mitchell*

When is the best time to fish Devil Lake? This is a question I get asked constantly. Truthfully, if I knew the answer to this question and was always right, I wouldn't have to guide for a living. The fact is every year is different and everybody's luck is different. Just because I had a good or bad day in my boat does not necessarily mean the fishing was good or bad for everyone else. I have seen my share of seasons come and go and have been guiding professionally for some time. The only thing I can guarantee is that there will be some pretty good fishing each month out of the year along with plenty of not so productive days. I encourage people to visit Devils Lake when their schedule allows and to pick a period of time that is inclusive to fishing tactics that are interesting or comfortable to the inquiring angler.

### **Ice Out**

The end of April and beginning of May can be tremendous for big pre spawn fish. You either hit this bite or miss everything entirely. There is a window where anglers can do very well and expect to hit big fish but the problem is that you never can predict when this window will exactly occur with any long-range forecast. During and right after the spawning ritual itself, the fishing is usually quite tough for a period of about two weeks. Granted not all of the fish spawn at the same time and males can still offer opportunities but fishing can be tough after the spawn until fish start reacting to warmer water in usually shallow water. With ice out fish, you are either a hero or zero, one extreme or another from my experiences. This period of time is usually a jig bite all the way.

### **May/ Early Spring**

Stable weather at this time of year can produce some awesome fishing in shallow water. We often find nice spawned out females in less than three feet of water. Casting is one of the most productive methods and a very exciting way to catch fish. If you or your fishing party isn't excited about casting all day, pick another period of time. That being said, cold fronts and or wind can crash the shallow water pattern in a hurry. We often use a temperature gauge to find fish at that time, looking for warm shallow water. Adverse weather will often push fish deeper, resulting in using more traditional methods like Lindy Rigging or jigging.



### **June/ Early Summer**

Patterns become very obvious as the spring fades into summer. We usually find fish shallow and in the mid-range depths and several patterns emerge. Usually, most of June can be fished effectively by either casting the shallows, probing the mid-depths with slip bobbers or jigs or live bait rigging. June is by far; the most popular time of year for anglers to fish and the fishing is usually pretty good at that time. Can't say however that the fishing is any better in June as it is during other periods of the open water season.

### **July and August/ Mid Summer**

People are hung up on June no doubt but for numbers of walleye, July and August are usually our strongest months. As a general rule of thumb, the fish will move a little deeper as the summer progresses. Trolling, live bait rigging and jigging will catch fish somewhere on the lake all summer long. We will normally experience an "off day" now and then but this time of year seems very consistent as fronts don't have as devastating effect on fishing success as earlier in the season. If you are not a fan of trolling, this might not be the best time for fishing Devils Lake unless you are prepared to jig or rig in deeper water.

### **September and October/ Fall**

September is a very popular time to fish Devils Lake, as many anglers like to travel that time of year. The days are usually very comfortable and the kids are back in school. Several different patterns emerge in the fall as trolling, live bait rigging, jigging and casting are all tactics that can and will produce fish. Unlike other periods of the season, the fish can be found spread out much more in several different depths and patterns that might be completely opposite of each other. As fall progresses into October, classic deep structure areas with rock become classic producers. Remaining weed edges and shallow water patterns can sometimes remain productive right until freeze up. Bottleneck areas with current also seem to become more productive as fall progresses.

### **Conclusion**

So which time is the best time to fish Devils Lake? I can honestly tell you that each of these periods or months can bring back some pretty fond memories. What happened last year or the year before however might not be on the agenda for this year. Visit and experience this great fishery when it works for your schedule and is conducive to how you like to fish. Be flexible and take advantage of whatever pattern that presents itself because in the end, the walleye aren't reading this article and don't always do what they are supposed to. More and more anglers are experiencing just how great this fishery is however. We have our bad days but believe me when I tell you that our good days are just about as good as it gets for walleye fishing. For more information on fishing Devils Lake, visit the Devils Lake Area Tourism web site at [www.devilslakend.com](http://www.devilslakend.com).

*Editors Note: The author, Jason Mitchell heads Devils Lake's premier open water guide service. For more information on fishing Devils Lake with Mitchell's Guide Service, call their office at 701-662-6560 or check them out on the web at: [www.fishdevilslake.net](http://www.fishdevilslake.net).*