

## **SIGHT FISHING – FOR YOUNG & OLD**

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What if you could watch a fish study your lure then decide whether to grab it or simply turn away ignoring it?

That is what sight fishing is all about. You can learn a lot about fish behavior/activity level by observing what occurs, and possibly gain insights into what may be necessary to attract and successfully catch a fish.

At a minimum, you will begin to realize just how many fish your lure may pass by without you knowing it. It's a lot. The observations you will make will instill in you the idea that you need to search for active fish, and if you are not having any luck at one place don't waste your limited time at that place, instead try several other places if necessary.

Sight fishing runs a close second to topwater fishing for true fun and excitement.

I have not found anything that entralls children as much as being able to watch a fish they are trying to catch. If there are multiple fish which they can see at one spot, you can not drag them away. It's like their feet and butts have heavy weights on them. It will not matter that you have been catching larger fish elsewhere. If there are more than one child doing this together, you need to record it.

When a child can see the fish he wants to catch, the play-by-play commentary tends to go in this manner: "He's seen it. He's looking. He's looking hard. He's coming toward it. Oh no, he's turning away. He's turning back. Oh look, there are two more ....., Oh no, I have run out of water, I'll have to throw out again .... "

Sight fishing is not just for kids. Teenagers and grownups love it too. William Tebrake (currently almost 16) and I were fishing at Hickory Forest pond and had been catching a number of fish, especially William. William kept noticing bass swimming along the shoreline, sometimes remaining stationary, sometimes swimming back and forth along the same area, and somethings swimming back out into deeper water. He walked around the entire pond catching the fish he saw. He caught many more fish than he realized at first. He estimated maybe 15. I told him that it had been a lot more. He thought a minute and said well I have used an entire bag of 10 wacky worms and

normally have caught at least 2, often 3 or more, off each worm. The fish were not small bass (1.25 lb or less). They were generally 1.5 to 2.25 lb fish. I do not remember the largest one he caught.

Soon after I moved to Hilton Head from Nashville, I was fishing at High Bluff pond. I caught 15 bass in a short period of time using a wacky worm. What was most interesting was that I could watch a group of bass come out of the deeper water and compete with each other to see which one would be able to grab the worm first. Later in the day, after my son got off work, I took him the spot where I had caught the 15 bass, and he was able to catch 5 or 6 in the same manner.

When you see fish stationary along the shoreline, or swimming back and forth along an area, or swimming off into deeper water, it tells three very important things (1) there are fish where you are fishing, (2) those fish are likely active, and therefore, catchable, (3) if they are moving, you will need to check not only the shallow water where you can see fish but also the nearby deeper water.

How do I find ponds where I can sight fish? Look for ponds with very clear water (e.g., Hickory Forest pond, Honey Locust pond, Misty Morning pond, etc.)

How will I know if I have seen any fish? Wear polarized sunglasses to minimize glare from the sun. Walk slowly along the banks, frequently stopping for a few seconds. Sometimes the fish will be quite visible. On one occasion, I watched two bass that each appeared to be about 3.5 lbs. sit stationary looking straight at me. However, more often you are looking for slight unusual movements or quick changes to the appearance of the bottom (e.g., there will be light and dark areas on the bottom, and you may simply notice that a lighter area briefly became darker; this quick change in bottom coloration indicates a fish swam over that lighter area). Once you realize what you are looking at (for), you will quickly recognize those clues in the future.

Does it matter which side of the pond I am fishing on? In the middle of the day when the sun is overhead, it doesn't matter which side of the pond you choose to walk to look for fish. However, early and late in the day, I find that I can see the bottom, and therefore notice fish, more easily when I am on the side of the pond where I will be facing the sun. The best time is when the sun is still behind the trees. Once the sun has risen above the trees (or just before it drops behind the trees), you will face a real problem of surface glare. Obviously, you can't look directly toward the sun. You may need to look (and cast your lure) at an angle of 45 degrees or more away from the sun.

An aside: At certain times of the day, if the pond is shallow, you will be able to see the bottom far away from the bank. This helps you recognize which portions of the pond are very shallow, normally shallow enough for topwater lures to work (normally 3 feet in depth or less). Normally, the bass hide in the dark areas and dart out to get your lure.

If you notice a large dark area within lighter colored (shallow) areas, you are looking at a deeper water pool. Remember that area. When you are doing your regular fishing, you should concentrate your time and efforts in areas like that because that is where the bass, especially the larger bass will be.

Keep in mind that when you can see the fish, the fish can also see you. When in shallow water, fish can be quite skittish, and easily spooked. Therefore, avoid light colored clothes. Also try to avoid quick movements.

What lures will work best? You need to select a lure which will allow you to strain the portion of the water in which these fish are moving. The best lure I have found for that purpose is a wacky worm, rigged with the hook through the middle of the worm, worked very slowly only twitching the lure lightly, then stopping to let the worm settle toward the bottom. The fish normally strike the lure on the fall. They also normally move off with the worm, I think because they do not want any other fish to be able to get it. So, watch closely for any unusual movement of your line which would indicate a fish has taken your worm. I have used wacky worms ranging from 3 to 5 inches in length. You will normally catch more fish if you use the 3" wacky worm especially if you are trying to catch small fish, but you will not be able to cast the smaller worm very far. You can buy 5" wacky worms at Walmart (I prefer the Watermelon/Pearl color). Search on-line to see where you can order 3" wacky worms, I know Bass Pro Shops & Tackle Warehouse has them.

Other lures you should try would include in-line spinners (e.g., Mepps, Joe's Flies), small or tiny jigs (e.g., 1/64 to 1/16 oz jig heads with tube or twister grubs or Maribue skirts), very small topwater lures (tiny Pop-R) or popping bugs.

What type of rod do I need? For regular fishing, I normally use a medium light power rod with a fast tip. Look at shaft of rod which will say Medium Light and Fast or use the code MLF. This rod works fine for sight fishing. However, if your intent is for kids or grown-ups to catch lots of fish and be able to cast very light lures easily, an ultra light rod or light power rod is better. Look at shaft of rod which will say Ultra Light or Light and Fast or use the codes ULF or LF.