

ATTRACTING BIG FISH IS THE LURE OF MUSKY FISHING

Musky fishermen come in all shapes and sizes and so do the lures they use.

Often called the fish of 10,000 casts, the muskellunge is the top predator in any water in which it is found. Few and far between, muskies are loners, keeping their distance from other fish as well as other muskies.

When all other fishermen are talking about what they caught, musky fishermen are content to talk about what they saw. After casting heavy lures over and over again for up to 14 hours, a single fish following the lure to the boat can be the highlight that makes it all worthwhile.

While musky lures come in every shape and size imaginable, they can be divided into several categories based on how they behave in the water.

In-line spinners, often called bucktails based on the use of hair from a deer's tail, are a staple for many musky hunters. Bucktails feature a large rotating blade followed by a skirt made of deer hair dyed in every possible color imaginable. The rotating blades of a spinner serve a dual purpose. First, the spinning blade gives the lure the three-dimensional body of a baitfish and second the vibrations stimulate the musky's predatory instinct to pursue a swimming fish.

While early versions featured actual deer hair many of today's in-line spinners use nylon skirts in bright, iridescent colors.

Topwater lures are exactly as the name implies, lures that remain on the water's surface. These lures imitate prey, such as an injured fish, mouse or other small animal or even an injured bird, struggling across surface.

Topwater lures often feature propellers, wings or a large mouth creating as much disturbance as possible to attract the predatory musky.

If you know what a jerkbait is you are either an obsessed musky fisherman or someone looking to lure the New Castle News garden writer to their house.

Jerkbaits are lures that work just under the water's surface. As their name implies these lures are jerked through the water imitating an injured or dying fish. Some jerkbaits swing side to side as they are retrieved while others dive and rise. Regardless of their action, jerkbaits can attract violent strikes from big muskies.

Minnowbaits featuring flat sides are designed and painted to imitate a variety of baitfish. As minnowbaits wobble through the water their sides flash seductively attracting the strike of a hungry musky. Minnowbaits are designed to run at a wide variety of depths. Running depth is a result of the size, shape and angle of the lure's lip.

Similar to minnowbaits but with rounded bodies, crankbaits are the most realistic of all the musky lures. Measuring up to 14 inches or more, crankbaits are often some of the largest baits in a musky fisherman's arsenal.

Minnow and crank baits are some of the most versatile of all musky lures. Able to be cast or trolled, retrieved straight or twitched and running at every depth from the surface to 25 feet or more, these lures are a standard choice for many musky fisherman.

Soft plastics are one of the newest of all musky lures. Molded to imitate a wide variety of baits, soft plastics lures feature a heavy wire harness enclosed in a soft body. Able to glide, wiggle and thump through the water, these lures trigger strikes from even reluctant muskies. Offering both the feel and smell of the real thing, soft plastic can fool even the most finicky musky.

For the musky fisherman, pursuit of this fish often verges on obsession. The lures the dedicated musky fisherman relish are a large part of that obsession.