

# Weed Beds At Shabbona Lake

*by Dennis R. Sands*

In any lake, Shabbona Lake in particular, WEEDS = FISH. Annually, there are lots of fishing articles written about Bass, Crappie, Muskie, Catfish or Bluegills, but rarely is there an article written about their primary habitat. Weeds are the predominant home of at least 90 % of the fish in any given lake.

In this article I will show you that weeds make fishing easier, contrary to public opinion. Read on, you will learn how to fish inside weed edges, outside weed edges and main weed pads.

## INSIDE WEED EDGE:

In the early Spring, during the month of May, weeds begin to form along the shoreline. This creates an inside edge closest to the shore and an outside edge toward the main lake. The most under fished area, and obviously, the area you should try first, is the inside edge.

Many fishermen are not sure of the correct techniques for inside edge fishing. Walk quietly along the shoreline, always looking at least 50 feet in front of you. Move slowly and quietly. With a good pair of polarized sunglasses, you can see the fish before he sees or "feels" you. He "feels" you through the vibrations that you make when you walk along the shoreline, which are transferred to the water and picked up by the fish's lateral line.

Prepare your fishing rod before you start walking. Be ready to cast past the Bass or other fish that you see. This draws his attention in the opposite direction from you. You can reel and set the hook, without spooking the fish, because he is looking the other way at the bait. A nightcrawler, plastic worm or plastic mouse seem to work best at Shabbona Lake. The secret is to make a soft cast past the targeted fish.

You will simply be amazed at the number and the size of the fish that you can catch, once you have mastered the above techniques. Some of my biggest Bass (20 inch plus) have been caught using these methods. Even if you do spook a fish back into the weeds, make note of the area & return in about 15 minutes. He will be back in the exact same spot.

## OUTSIDE WEED EDGE:

Once the Weedbeds form at Shabbona Lake, Walleyes set up on the outside edge weedpoints, especially next to drop offs, such as Area 10, Area 17, Area 23, Area 29 and along the 1/2 mile dam face. (Maps portraying these areas can be purchased at Shabbona's Lakeside Bait, Tackle & Boat Rental, located on the shores of Shabbona Lake, within Shabbona Lake State Park, 815-824-2581.)

The best outside edge is the one with the wind blowing directly INTO it. Anchor your boat upwind at least one good long cast upwind from any visible weeds. Chances of some nice catches are very good, if you picked an outside weedpoint, that the wind is blowing into.

There are several techniques that work on outside weed edges. At Shabbona Lake, some of the favorites are : 1) drift a bobber with a leech or nightcrawler along the weed edge, using the wind to your advantage, 2) bounce a nightcrawler or leech with a small slip sinker, 1/16 - 1/8 ounce maximum, and 3) work the edge with a crank bait or top water lure.

At Shabbona Lake, under these conditions, you can catch Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass, Walleyes, Catfish, Crappie and Perch. Don't be surprised if you end up staying in one productive spot for over an hour. Once you hit a good point, you can stay there and catch several fish over an extended time.

### WEED PADS

The main mass of weeds can be referred to as a Weed Pad. As the weeds grow they form a thick pad of weeds. As they grow up to the top of the water, they start to grow horizontally making a thick cover for the fish. The weeds are much thicker on top then below. This creates cool water with tunnels for the fish to swim in and out of.

At Shabbona Lake, you want to look for open pockets in the weeds to fish. These occur naturally as the weeds form. Every so often there will be an open pocket, even in the thickest weeds. Whenever and wherever, you see these pockets, a signal should go off saying, A There is a prime spot to try.

Make a long cast past the pocket and bring your lure back to the edge of the pocket. Hesitate momentarily, then pop your lure into the pocket. Pause again and hang on ! This is when the weeds will explode, as the Bass comes charging after your lure. If you get a big Bass (18 inches plus), you will need to take your boat to him. You will not be able to pull him through the thick weeds

Lures that work great at Shabbona Lake for fishing weed pads are : Plastic Mouse, Buzz Baits, Plastic Frogs, Plastic Worms and large nightcrawlers Texas-rigged. Hook the nightcrawler once through the head end and then bury the barb of the hook back into the body of the crawler. This makes it basically weedless, and with an accurate cast, it is almost a guaranteed fish every cast.

### SUMMARY

Try these techniques on the three parts of the weeds : 1) Inside edge, 2) Outside Weed Edge and the Main Weed Pads, 3) and you will catch more Bass and Walleye than you ever thought existed.

For more information on Shabbona Lake call us at Shabbona's Lakeside Bait Tackle & Boat Rental at 815-824-2581. Stop by and see us at Shabbona Lake State Park, we are located on the "Shores of Shabbona Lake".