

The Benefits Of Speed Trolling for Trout

by Jack Naves

We hadn't had as much as a bite all morning. I had made the three hour trek from Roseville to Crosby Lodge at Pyramid Lake the previous evening. That night, I had trouble sleeping, with visions of 20 pound cutthroats slamming my rod tip to the water.

Both my fishing partner Mick Berklich and I were new to Pyramid Lake. We were following the advice of some locals who recommended that we troll Flatfish really slow. They said they had caught "forty fish" the previous day with their technique.

Pyramid Lake as mentioned above, we were trolling at 3 miles per hour in February when the surface water temperature was a chilly 45 degrees.

My typical game plan starts with trolling fast. If the fish aren't cooperating, then I'll try slower offerings. There are some big advantages to trolling fast for trout.

First and foremost, you cover way more water while trolling fast. It's pretty simple math: trolling 4 miles per hour covers twice as much water as trolling 2 miles per hour. Sometimes, fishing success is a simple matter of presenting your lure to as many fish as possible. While trolling fast, you will naturally encounter a lot more fish.

Another advantage of rapid trolling is that you don't give seasoned trout a good look at your artificial lures. Older, larger trout (especially brown trout and mackinaw) are famous for being seen but not caught. One of the reasons they got so big and old is that they've passed up on plenty of lures in their time. Drag a dodger/night crawler setup past them at 1.2 miles per hour, and they'll get a great view of the snap, swivel, split rings, hooks, leader line, etc.

On the other hand, if a Rapala goes whizzing past at 4 miles per hour, their instinct is to lunge out and devour your artificial minnow before it has a chance to get away. This is especially true near structure where real minnows might be hiding out too.

My lures of choice while trolling fast usually consist of stick baits or spoons. Rapala floating minnows are my go-to fast trolling lures. I like the F05 through F18 sizes, depending on what I'm chasing on any given day. The 'F' series are the straight backs, while the 'J' series are the jointed minnows. I usually troll the straight back lures fast, while reserving the jointed lures for trolling under 2 miles per hour.

There is some middle-ground, however, as I've bagged some nice Mackinaw at Lake Tahoe trolling the J13 rainbow trout pattern Rapalas under kokanee schools at 2.5 miles per hour.

Spoons are another class of lure which work great when trolled fast. The erratic darting action of fast trolled spoons produce great reaction strikes from trout. I like to use the larger sized spoons, in the 2 to 4 inch range. I've had the most success using Speedy Shiners, Ex-cels, and Mepps 'Syclops' spoons. While spoons and stick baits work great, there is another lure that I've found works great when trolled fast.

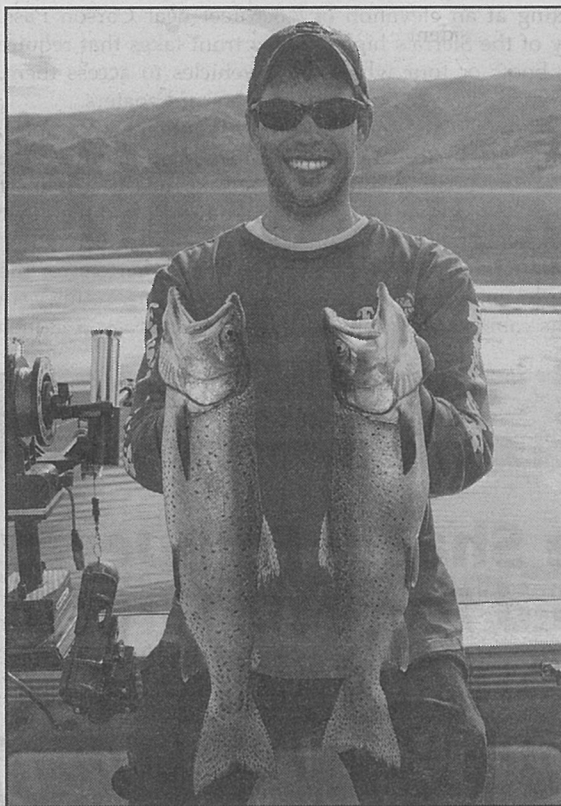
A lure that few anglers utilize but I've had great success with is the Arctic Fox tube fly. The fly has a mini WiggleFin action disc that gives the bait a 'frantic bait fish' type of action.

The disc can be pushed above the fly, but I've had the best success running the disc directly in front of the fly with no space in between. I tip my flies with half-inch long pieces of night crawlers for scent, as gels and oils seem to gum up the action of the hair.

When fast trolling, I normally leave flashers and dodgers in the tackle box. You can get away with using 'Sling Blade' or tear-drop shaped dodgers up to about 2.5 miles per hour, but any faster and the dodger will start to spin.

The 'Flasher' style of rotating dodgers can be trolled above 3 miles per hour, but I typically run my fast-trolled lures without any dodgers. Again, I'm trying to get a reaction strike from a natural presentation without all of the hardware.

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After numerous lure and location changes, we settled on using one ounce Mepps 'Syclops' spoons near 'The Needles' area of the big lake. Since spoons can be trolled faster than Flatfish, we slowly started to increase our trolling speed. 2.4 mph, 2.6 mph, 2.9 mph...still nothing. Suddenly, Mick's pole slammed down hard in the downrigger. That fish threw the barbless hook, but a few minutes later Mick got one to stick, and we finally had our first trout in the boat.

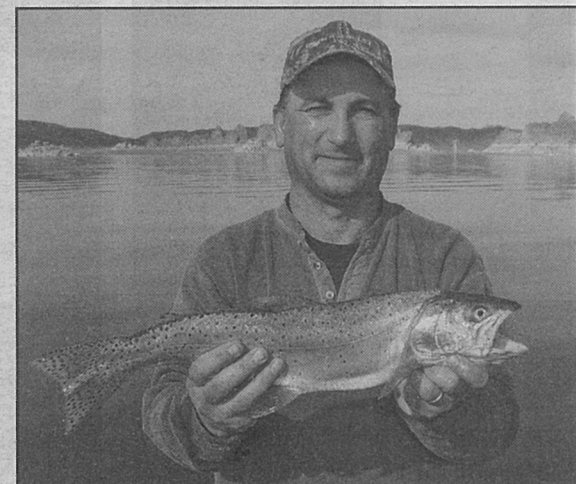
From that point forward, we experienced lights-out action until noon. We ended up landing 22 trout, releasing all but four for limits. Our average speed had been about 3 miles per hour.

While the locals had suggested that we hook Pyramid Cutthroats by slow trolling Flatfish, it took a major speed increase to take us from skunked to limits of trout.

When I was a kid, I was taught to troll for trout as slow as possible. Just fast enough for the blades of my 'Ford Fender' flashers to roll over. While this may have been the latest in trout technology in the 80's, I've since learned that trolling fast can put a lot of trout in the boat as well.

When I say fast, I'm talking about 2 to 5 miles per hour. Don't get me wrong, trolling slow works great under certain circumstances. When the surface water temperature dips below 55 degrees in valley reservoirs, it's time to slow-troll grubs. However, once the surface water temperatures get above 55 degrees in valley reservoirs, it's time to speed things up.

In high elevation lakes, it seems like speed trolling can be a good option to try year round. Case in point, for my first trip to



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Klamath River Flows

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week. Current river flow forecasts indicate that Lewiston Dam releases could increase from the current rate of 450 cubic feet per second on August 21 and could range up to 1,300 cubic feet per second before dropping to 450 cubic feet per second in late September. Additional information will be provided in the event that higher peak flows are needed in early to mid-September as part of the preventative action.

Flows from Lewiston could be raised as high as 3,500 cubic feet per second for up to five days if real-time monitoring information suggests a need for additional supplement flows as an emergency response.

The Final Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact for this project are available online at http://www.usbr.gov/mp/nepa/nepa_projdetails.cfm?Project_ID=22309. If you encounter problems accessing the documents online, please call 916-978-5100 or email mppublicaffairs@usbr.gov.

Tournament Attitude

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Step three entails blending research with mapping to highlight seasonal patterns that will likely be in play during the tournament. "This helps me break huge fisheries into manageable sections," he says.

When prepping for an event on the Sabine River out of Orange, Texas, in late March, for example, Iaconelli keyed on dead-end canals, backwater ponds and other sheltered areas that would attract prespawn bass.

"After I do all that, I prepare my tackle," he continues. Heading to the Sabine derby, for example, Ike armed himself with deadly weapons including a variety of Berkley Havoc softbaits. "I pack a selection of baits to cover different scenarios," he says.

This informative article comes courtesy of Berkley. For more visit them online at www.berkley-fishing.com.

Speed Trolling

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A fun part about fast trolling while top lining is that you can turn on the clicker for bite detection. When a fish strikes and pulls out some drag, you will hear the familiar screaming reels normally reserved for striper trollers like myself.

Fast trolling with downriggers also gives you a more solid hook set before the line pops loose, as long as your line release is set properly.

You may need to upgrade your downrigger line releases to heavier models to prevent accidental trips caused by the added friction on your line or the increased pull from your lure.

When using downriggers, you will want to use 8 to 12 pound weights to prevent blow-back. At high speeds, the pancake-shaped downrigger weights will produce less blow-back than the typical ball-shaped weights.

The next time you find yourself on trout infested waters, crank up that gas motor and try pushing the boat above the 'Ford Fender' speed threshold. With the increased speed, you will be pleasantly surprised at how hard your rod slams to the water when a trout grabs hold.



This impressive 16.8 lb catfish gobbled a live crawfish during a night fishing adventure at Lake Amador this July.

Photo courtesy of THE LAKE AMADOR CAFÉ, Lake Amador.



These anglers enjoyed great Sacramento River salmon fishing with Kirk Portocarrero on August 13.

Photo courtesy of SACRIVERGUIDE.COM, Redding.

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