

New kayak fishing skills to add to your arsenal

BY PHILLIP GENTRY
FOR THE JOURNAL

A lot of anglers enter the sport of fishing via a paddle boat — it's less expensive than buying a motor boat and trailer, and it can be used just about anywhere there's water.

However, kayak fishing is not without some specialized skills that will help you be a better angler.

Probably the most difficult scenario when fishing from a plastic boat is when the wind is in your face and there's some speed behind it.

If you let off the paddle or the pedal, your boat is going backward, taking you further away from your target.

To combat the wind, there are a few ways to hedge your bet.

First, have a quick and quiet way to park the boat on the spot.

If that's a stakeout pole or a bow-mounted anchor or a brush clamp, take the time to paddle up, position the boat, then make that first critical cast. Avoid

the temptation to paddle up, drop the paddle and throw a Hail Mary, which is more likely to wind up in the brush or weeds or whatever makes that spot so desirable.

When you do make that cast, a simple side arm motion low to the water with enough weight to reach your target will reduce the effects of a hard wind.

Targeting deep-water targets is near impossible, because you cannot get a visual reference on them.

In this situation, kayak fishing becomes more like a video game.

If you don't already have one, obtain and mount a sonar unit on the strong side of your kayak where the transducer is located a rod length in front of the seat. Make sure that unit allows a decent view of fish and bottom structure, and is sensitive enough to graph your bait as it descends in the cone of the transducer.

Without going into detail, most units will read in either an 8-degree or 20-degree cone. Make sure you understand which

this year

PHILLIP GENTRY is the host of "Upstate Outdoors," broadcast from noon to 2 p.m. Saturdays on WORD 106.3 FM. The show can be streamed live online at 1063word.radio.com or via podcast anytime. This week, the show will be broadcast live from Cabela's in Greenville.

one you are in and why. Becoming proficient in placing bait vertically in front of fish at a specific depth on the sonar screen will double your catch rate. Inlets, tailraces and large rivers are great places to catch fish from a kayak because of limited access and strong currents, which relegate most anglers to the shoreline.

Areas of strong current are still hazardous

places for inexperienced kayakers, and many have learned the hard way that placing an anchor on the bottom and the other end of the line on a kayak was more than they bargained for. The downward force of the anchor line can submerge the craft very quickly in enough current.

Other than using 3-4 times the amount of anchor line than water depth (scope), which typically re-

quires a lot of rope, try anchoring a poly ball with a 10-20-foot tag line attached to the end. The roughly basketball-sized ball takes all of the exertion of the current and provides a horizontal anchor point.

The boat slides across the surface rather than getting pulled down. Use a quick release clip that will slide through a guide on the front or rear of the boat, depending on which

way you want to face, to release the boat from anchor in an emergency, or when chasing down a fish. The ball retains the anchor site. Too many kayak anglers take a casual power boater's mentality when it comes to kayak fishing. You cannot go out and just fish for everything. Plan your trips for targeting specific fish and specific waters with specific tackle and tactics.

"Just go fishing" is a great mindset, but to really catch fish, you have to plan. Map the area, get fishing reports, determine entry and egress spots, check tides, wind speed and direction, and do all the little things, which means you're probably going to have to get up earlier, paddle farther and fish harder than the rest of the crowd.



PHILLIP GENTRY | FOR THE JOURNAL

Spending some time this year learning some new kayak fishing skills will help make you a better angler.