

# Trolling to catch summer fish

BY PHILLIP GENTRY  
FOR THE JOURNAL

The end of June typically heralds the end of what many fishing fans refer to as “fishing season.” Water temperatures have risen above the 80-degree mark, and by now most fish have vacated the shallows for more open water.

To make things tougher, fish tend to become more scattered, although at times they may school up to feed without much notice.

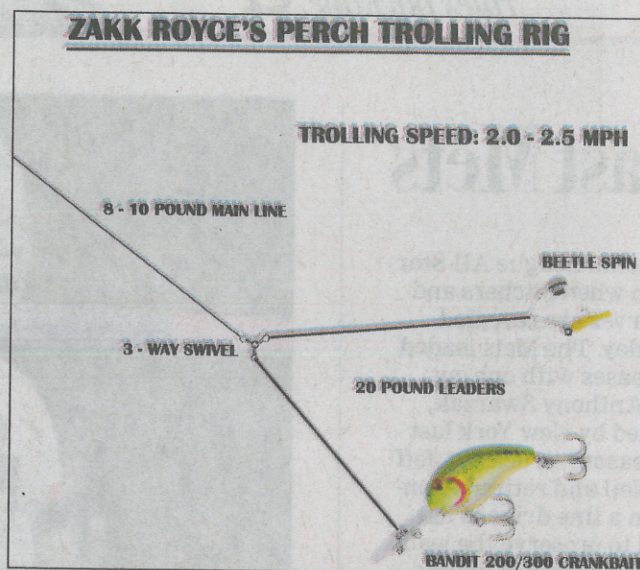
Rather than throw in the towel, why not engage in a faster — and fun — way of fishing by trolling your local Upstate lakes looking for fish?

While many anglers will continue to fish the same way year-round, summer trolling can lead to some fast action, and it targets a number of different fish species, regardless of what lake you're on.

Probably the most common species of open-water, schooling fish to be found on our Upstate lakes are spotted bass and white perch. Both species are non-native fish but show a definite preference for chasing baitfish in open water, making them ideal targets for trolling anglers along with crappie, largemouth bass and even catfish.

Well-known North Carolina catfish guide Zakk Royce loves trolling for white perch. He uses the smaller perch for catfish bait with his guide business and keeps the larger ones for the dinner table. He said the typical trolling pattern through the summer is to find fish congregating on long points and humps in very typical schooling fish fashion.

“I troll crankbaits



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**Trolling is a great way to catch different species of fish during the summer.**

for them,” Royce said. “I’ve heard some of the crappie anglers around the country do the same thing, and I use the same 200 series and 300 series crankbaits they use.”

He discovered he catches more striped bass, spotted bass and white perch than crappie in clear-water lakes.

“I run a three-way swivel from the 8-10-pound main line that goes to my rod and tie two 2-3-foot leaders off of it using 20-pound mono,” Royce said. “On the shorter leader, I tie the Bandit crankbait, and the longer one gets a Beetle Spin or something with a small blade on it.”

Royce uses the crankbait as a depth planer. He said the 200 will run to about 10 feet, and the 300 will run deeper. The lighter jig runs above the crank and tends to collect the smaller perch, while usually only the biggest perch will hit the crankbait.

“That’s not a hard and fast rule,” Royce said. “I’ve caught two small-

er perch on the same crank.”

Royce uses the electric trolling motor on his boat to troll the rigs — one on either side of the boat. The optimal trolling speed is from 2–2.5 mph. He has tried to run more rods but said when he’s in the fish, two rods is about all he can handle. He’ll bring them over the side four at a time and then turn around and run right back through the same area until he gets his fill.

“I run the lines way back, like 100 feet behind the boat, so it takes a little bit of maneuvering to get turned around, but if the perch are in the area, along with catfish, bass and crappie, I’m usually catching fish all through the run,” Royce said.

Royce also recommends changing crankbait colors frequently until you find what they like.

**PHILLIP GENTRY** is the host of the “Upstate Outdoors” broadcast from noon to 2 p.m. Saturdays on 106.3 WORD FM. You can also stream the show live or on podcast at [1063word.radio.com](http://1063word.radio.com).