

More on Whipping

Insider information from St. Clair locals

In the April 2008 issue of the Walleye Edition of FLW Outdoors Magazine, a feature titled "Eye Noir" by Dave Csanda gave mention of a tactic known as "whipping".

Whipping involves anchoring upstream of a group of fish, slowly letting multiple lures drift back in the current in front of them, whipping the rod quickly upstream, then releasing more line to let the lures drift back again. It is a simple, easy fishing method requiring very little tackle and expense.

While it seems whipping is nearly exclusive to the St. Clair River, it's a tactic that could be applied to other river fisheries. With that in mind, here is a more in-depth look at whipping technique, tackle and strategy, courtesy of two members of the Lake St. Clair Walleye Association:

THE ROD AND REEL

Original whipping rods were made from broken musky rods upon which anglers fixed new tips. The results were short, stout rods capable of whipping a heavy weight and multiple lures through the water. Because the popularity of whipping has grown tremendously, there are now several local companies in the St. Clair region making rods specifically



PHOTO ■ JASON SEALOCK

for the fishing technique.

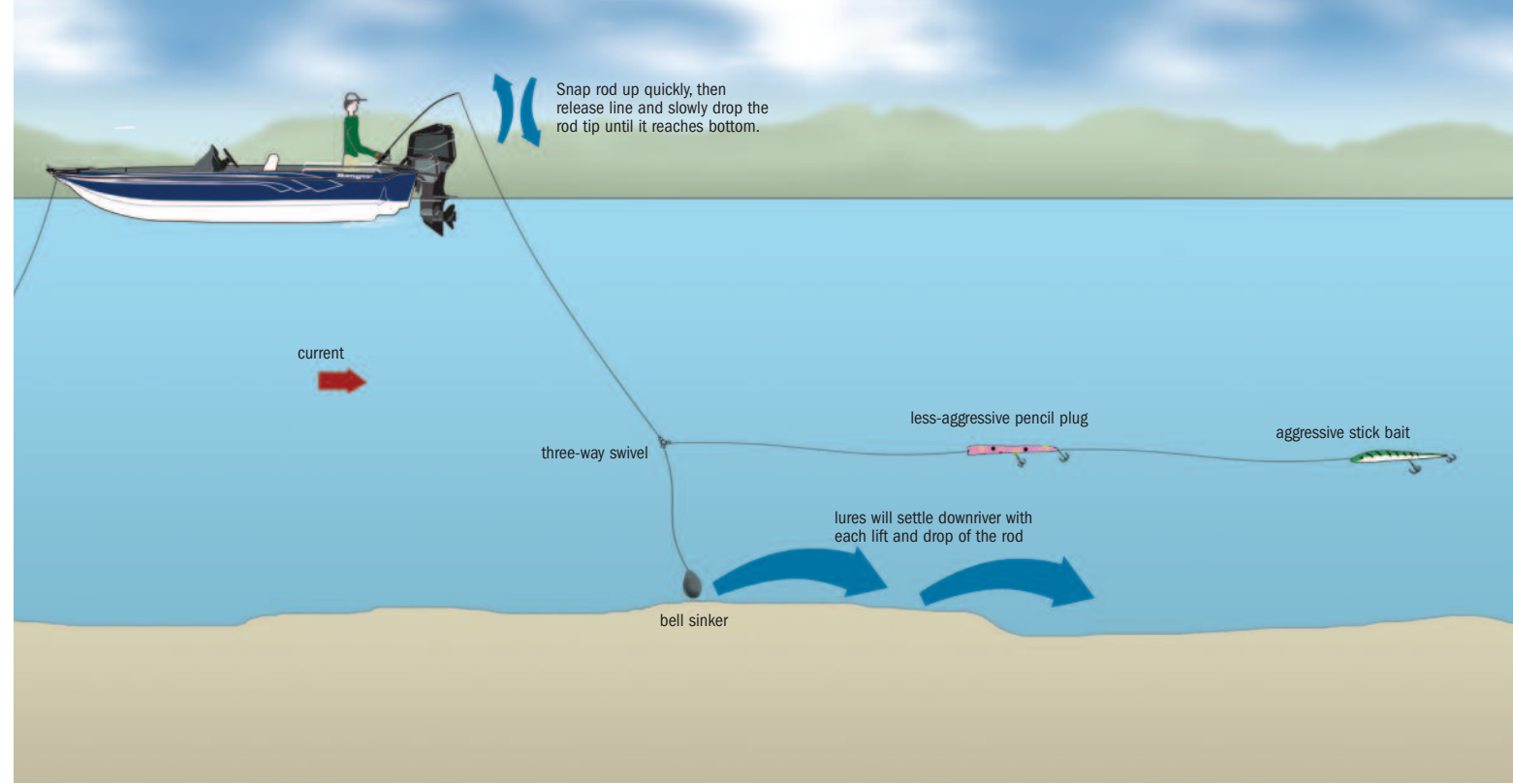
Shelby Township, Mich., angler Ron Sharp, a member of the LSCWA, prefers a St. Clair Jerk'n Rod made by Grapentin Specialties Inc. in Imlay City, Mich. There are three models of the rod available, but Sharp prefers the 140C, a 4-foot heavy-duty rod that sells for only \$29.99. For more information on Grapentin Specialties, visit grapentin.com.

For whipping, a level-wind reel is a must for complete control of line release. Sharp uses an Abu Garcia Ambassador 5600C4. Some anglers prefer a line-counter reel for even more control, although it is not absolutely necessary.

THE RIG

Although there are a few parts and pieces involved in a whipping rig, it is actually quite simple to set up. A tip from Sharp is to make all connections with snap swivels when not connecting to a bait and crankbait clips when attaching to a bait, so the entire unit can easily come apart and lures can be swapped.

Begin by spooling up with 20- to 30-pound Berkley FireLine. Then, attach a three-way swivel. Off the bottom dropper, tie a monofilament leader of a lower pound-test rating than the main line. At the bottom of the dropper goes a bell sinker, usually 2 to 4 ounces. Determine



a weight that can be pushed downstream in the current but can maintain contact with the bottom.

Off the other dropper goes a stiff, 6- to 10-foot monofilament leader, like Berkley Trilene Big Game 20-pound test. Stiff line helps when landing a fish because the last few feet must be brought in by hand. Next, clip the first of two or three pencil plugs. Pencil plugs have very subtle action, perfect in the heavy current of the St. Clair. To the back hook eye of the plug, clip another leader, which can be anywhere from 6 to 20 feet long depending on the length which can easily be handled when landing fish, then attach another plug to the leader.

Use a third leader to attach an additional plug if desired. It can be a slightly more intense lure, like a favorite Rapala stick bait or Bomber Long A, because this will be the first lure fish see as the baits are let back in the current.

THE RIGHT WAY

The first key to whipping is getting set up in a "fishy" area. On the St. Clair at night, Keith Krych, a 45-year St. Clair walleye-fishing veteran and board member of the LSCWA, usually finds these areas in the mid-20-foot range near a drop-off, hole or other irregularity where walleyes are finding relief from the current to feed. He uses the depth finder to

mark fish then anchors his Ranger 620 VS about 200 feet in front of the fish.

To work the lures, slowly lower them into the current with a thumb on the spool. When the weight hits bottom, leave the reel spool open and slowly walk the lures back before giving them a quick whip. The whip should be a snap of the wrist of a couple of feet, taking the rod tip forward from the 3- or 9-o'clock position to 12 o'clock. Then slowly ease the rod and lures back down until the weight hits bottom and repeat. The drop-back is when most bites will occur, and eventually, the lures will reach far behind the boat and they can be reeled back to the start for the process to be repeated.

