



TECH BULLETIN

MISSOURI / ARKANSAS

BULL SHOALS LAKE

Compiled from the Diaries and Logs of the Luhr Jensen Fishing Research Team.

Bull Shoals Lake is synonymous with "bass fishing" in Arkansas. This U. S. Army Engineer project on the White River in north central Arkansas enjoys a well-deserved reputation for lunker largemouth bass as well as for a wide variety of other gamefish. It also provides recreation for thousands of boaters, swimmers and water skiers.

Located in the middle of the scenic Ozark Mountains, Bull Shoals Dam crosses the mainstem of the White River, some seven miles from Cotter, Arkansas, creating Bull Shoals Lake, a 6,036 square-mile impoundment lying within the states of Arkansas and Missouri. Scrappy largemouth, spotted, smallmouth and white bass abound, along with crappie, channel cat, bream and walleye which can be fished year-round.

Bass weighing up to 12 pounds are available here and earn the lake its "lunker" reputation. Below the dam, in the cold water of the White River, anglers can tempt rainbow and brown trout with whatever method they fancy. This trout fishing, which was formerly enjoyed only in more northerly streams, is made possible by the release of cold water from the

bottom of the lake which creates a water temperature favorable for river trout. The fish appear to be somewhat larger than their northern kin and a nearby federal trout hatchery assures a continuous stocking of the river.

Nearly 1,000 miles of rugged shoreline is open to visitors who come here from all over the nation to fish, camp and relax. Commercial docks can provide boats, motors, have guides for hire and also sell supplies. There are several launch areas available, should you bring your own boat. Other water sports such as water skiing and swimming are popular, as is cruising the hundreds of miles of lake arms and coves by motor or sailboat.

Sight-seeing also is a popular year-round diversion as each season unfolds a brand new panorama. The summer contrasts the lush green hardwoods and cedar glades against the towering rocky bluffs and unusual rock formations.

TOPWATER EXCITEMENT

Some of the greatest fishing excitement you can find is that with topwater plugs. The tension and challenge of this kind of fishing will turn almost every trip

into a memorable one. It's an addictive kind of angling and the excitement and explosiveness of the surface strike has a tendency to unnerve even the most experienced fisherman.

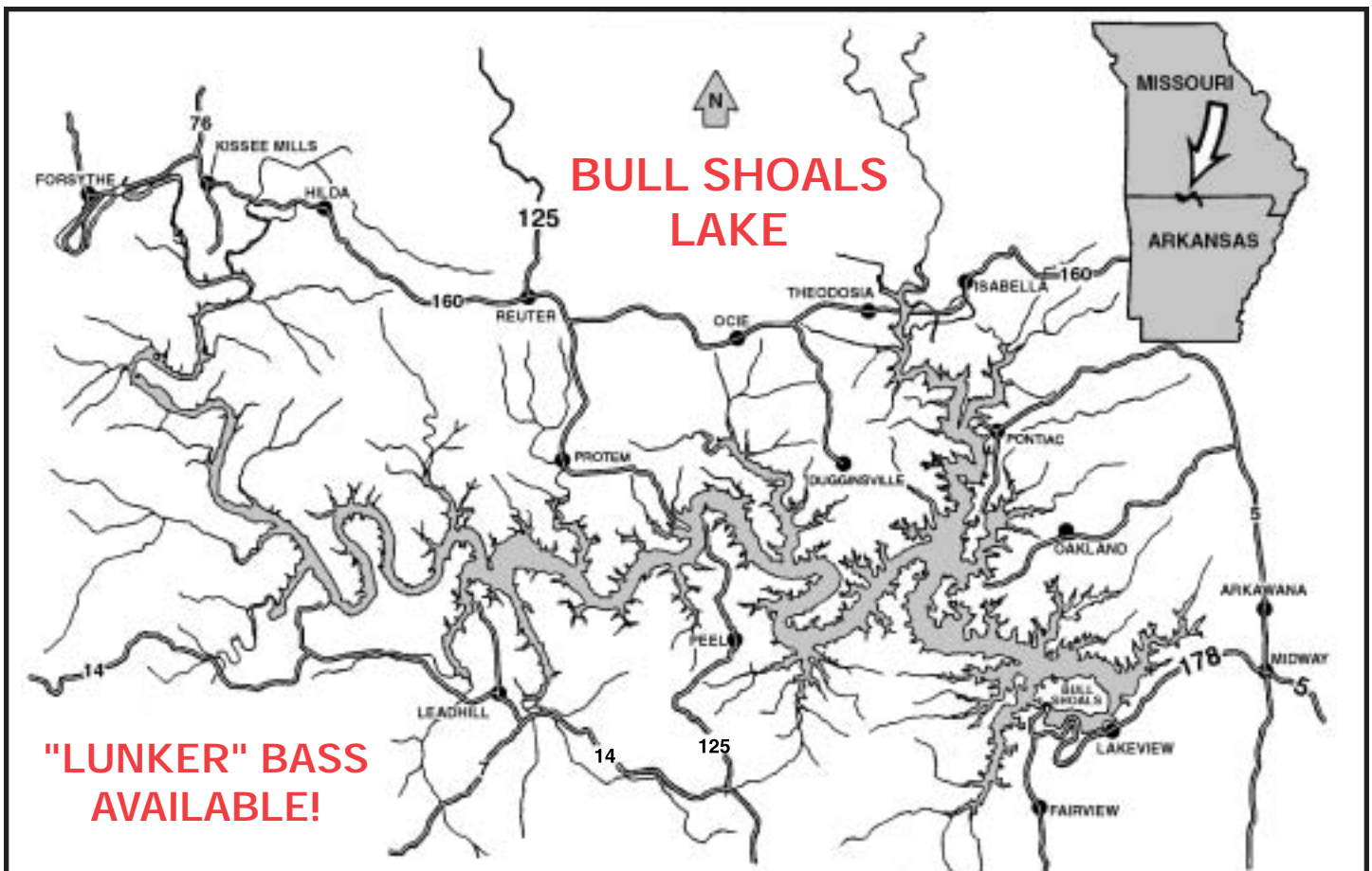
PLUG FISHING HINTS

Topwater lures can be divided into three main categories: surface chuggers, propeller baits and buzz baits.

Before examining the various kinds of lures and how to fish each one, here's some useful information about bass, their habits, lairs and color preferences.

Surface angling for bass begins in early spring when water warms up, thus bringing fish into the shallows to spawn and feed. Bass will then remain in these shallower areas (one to six feet of water) until the intense sunlight and heat of summertime drive them into deeper water during low light periods (early morning, late afternoon, at night and on overcast days).

The right time to fish surface lures for bass is when they are in shallow water where a lure can easily be presented close to them. In addition to spring months and low light periods, bass will also be in shallow water in fall when water has been



chilled back down to springtime temperatures. The “right” water temperature is between 58 and 72 degrees.

To be most effective, surface plugs should be fished when the water is relatively calm. If there is a heavy surface chop, bass will have a difficult time hearing or seeing the plug and you are not likely to draw many strikes.

There are several colors which consistently successful bass anglers prefer. These are *brown, black, perch scale, crawfish, frog* and those plugs with *green* tinges. Other effective plugs are those which exhibit contrasting colors such as *white/red head* and *yellow/black*.

SOME TECH TIPS

The technique for fishing topwater plugs such as the *Nip-I-Diddee*® or *Bass-Oreno*® is to cast next to likely-looking cover, wait until the impact rings disappear and then gently twitch the lure, producing another set of surface rings. After the second set disappears, make another twitch. Continue this routine for a minute or two. Then the lure should be twitched and moved in 6- to 8-inch distances until it is about six feet away from its original landing spot. Work and pause the plug in this fashion for about six feet out from the cover. If one hasn't taken the bait by then, it probably won't.

Because of the difficulty a bass has in seeing things in the water, it is paramount that you master the art of casting to the point that you can drop a lure within a foot or so of cover likely to harbor a fish. Mere inches can mean the difference between a fish and none. Casts should be made to openings in or near cover such as underneath or alongside a dock, inches away from a stickup, between lily pads, etc.

Any object that contrasts with the natural environment of a bass in color or darkness will be sensed quickly and will arouse curiosity. If the object also produces distress vibrations, it will then trigger an explosive feeding response. Bass often will hit a surface lure once to stun it and then come back around to inhale it. If you miss a first strike, keep the lure in the area and work it some more as you often will hook the fish on the second attack or even the third or fourth.

EARLY SPRING

There is a spring run of white bass in the river and creek arms of the lake that lasts from late February through April.

Crankbaits such as the *Hot Lips Express*® in *Crawfish* color work very well off deep points on 10- to 14-lb test line. Jerk baits like the *Power Dive*® *Minnow* also begin to be effective this time of year. Use 12- to 14-lb. test line and reel them down fast and then jerk, very slowly. A slow-rolling spinnerbait also is a good lure to try.

Later in the spring, slow-rolling spinner baits and minnow-type baits are effective. Top water fishing can get real hot using wood top water plugs. These versatile wood baits also will work well



from early summer clear through late fall.

EARLY SUMMER

Try fishing back in the coves using floating worms. One of the more effective crankbaits you can use is once again the *Hot Lips Express*. While plastic worm fishing is a good way to catch bass, topwater baits also work very well from early clear through late summer. During this period, the fish can be caught deep in the main lake as well as in the shallow river arms.

FALL

There is very good topwater plug fishing this time of the year, all over the lake. Spinnerbaits and buzz baits are also very effective. The best topwater baits to try are the *Johnny Rattler*™ and the *P.J. Pop*™. *Shad* color crankbaits are effective when fished both shallow and deep. Luhr Jensen's *Speed Trap*™ works well from late spring clear through to late fall and probably is the best all-around bait you can use.

WINTER

Fish are available deep in the lower end of the lake with jigging spoons such as a *Crippled Herring*®. Deep-running crankbaits in *Shad* colors are also good fish-getters. Try the shallow water of the river arms of the lake this time of year for some exceptional results. In December and January, fish deep points with jigging spoons such as 1/2- to 7/8-oz. *Cast Champ*® in *Chrome* or *Genuine Silver Plate*. Try them in 20 to 65 feet of water with 10- to 14-lb. test line. Fishing with grubs and jigs can be very good using light line (6- to 8-lb. test).

GREAT TROUT ANGLING

Some of the best trout fishing in the world can be found below the dam. Try floating it in large Jon boats and use a 1/2-oz. *Brass* or *Nickel Krocrodile*® Wobbler, 1/6-oz. *Metric Pro*™ *Spinner*, 1/16-oz. *Super Duper*® in *Brass/Red Head*. Topwater lures also work well.

There is also some of the old-time float trip fishing for both smallmouth and largemouth in the clear streams that run into

the lake. The major in-running streams are the James River, Kings River, Beaver Creek and the North Fork.

SHARP HOOK FILE™

One of the easiest, yet most important things you can do to improve your fishing success, is to maintain super-sharp hooks on your lures at all times. A fine-toothed file such as Luhr Jensen's *Sharp Hook File*™ is the absolute best hook sharpening tool available. Hold it parallel to the hook point and with gentle, one-way strokes, remove a small amount of metal on at least two sides of the point to make it sticky-sharp with a knife-like cutting edge.

Keep the file clean and dry and occasionally spray it with a noncorrosive lubricant such as WD40™, to prevent rust. Files are available in 5 1/2" (L) x 3/4" (W) or 4 1/4" x 5/8".

Another accessory that will make your fishing even more enjoyable is *Hook Bonnets*™, which can be placed over the hooks when not in use, keeping them sharp and not all tangled up.

SPECIAL MAPS

You can obtain a Bull Shoals Lake contour map from: *Structure Graphics Co. 1436 Westbrooke Meadows Lane, Manchester, MO 63021*. Phone: 314-225-3453. Or get plain maps from: Department of the Army, Little Rock District Corps of Engineers, Little Rock, AR.

WHAT LURES TO USE

SURFACE LURES:

- P.J. Pop™ • Nip-I-Diddee®
- Johnny Rattler™ • Bass-Oreno®

DIVING LURES:

- Speed Trap™ (Dives 6-8')
- Hot Lips Express®:
 - 1/4-oz dives 10'-13'
 - 1/2-oz dives 15-17'
 - 3/4-oz dives 20'+
- Power Dive® Minnow

JIGGING SPOONS/JIGS

- Crippled Herring® • Mr. Champ®

TROUT LURES:

- Krocrodile® • Metric Pro Spinner™
- Super Duper®