



TECH BULLETIN

VERMONT

LAKE CHAMPLAIN

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

By Captain Gary Longley

Lake Champlain, considered the 6th Great Lake, is 110 miles long and 12 miles at its widest point. It is noted for tremendous landlocked salmon, lake trout and brown trout and is considered by biologists to be one of North America's most up and coming productive coldwater fisheries.

APRIL THROUGH JUNE (Water Temp 39° - 62°)

Concentrate on river mouth areas that have runs of spawning smelt. In April and May, shallow bays with depths ranging from 10 to 30 feet with 20-ft. deep areas are the most productive. Also try off points, sharp banks and sunken reefs. By June, landlocks will still be in close in the early morning with bays more productive than river mouths. After about 8 a.m., head out to deeper water. With spring runoff, the brighter colors of **Needlefish**® work best, smaller sizes being your best choice. Dodger/Fly combos can sometimes save the day at times. Lead core line on your fly rod with three or four colors out will sometimes out-fish other techniques. Planer boards are our favorite technique with Needlefish and small trolling sinkers, 75- to 150-ft behind the releases.

Always run one or two downriggers close to the bottom when in 20 to 30 ft of water. Big trophy landlocks seem to stay at these depths, close to the bottom during early spring. We tie on the smallest ballbearing swivel made, then run a leader 7 to 8 feet long of high quality 6- or 8-lb. test *Maxima*®, *Trilene*® *Ultrathin* or *Silverthread*® line. The smallest snap (round end) is tied to the end of the leader. The

snap ensures good action from our Needlefish and lets us make quick and easy lure changes to find out what lure color and size is working that day. Boat speed during the spring is always close to 2.0 mph. Slow down by 0.2 or 0.3 when using your dodger/fly combos. Always check action next to the boat.

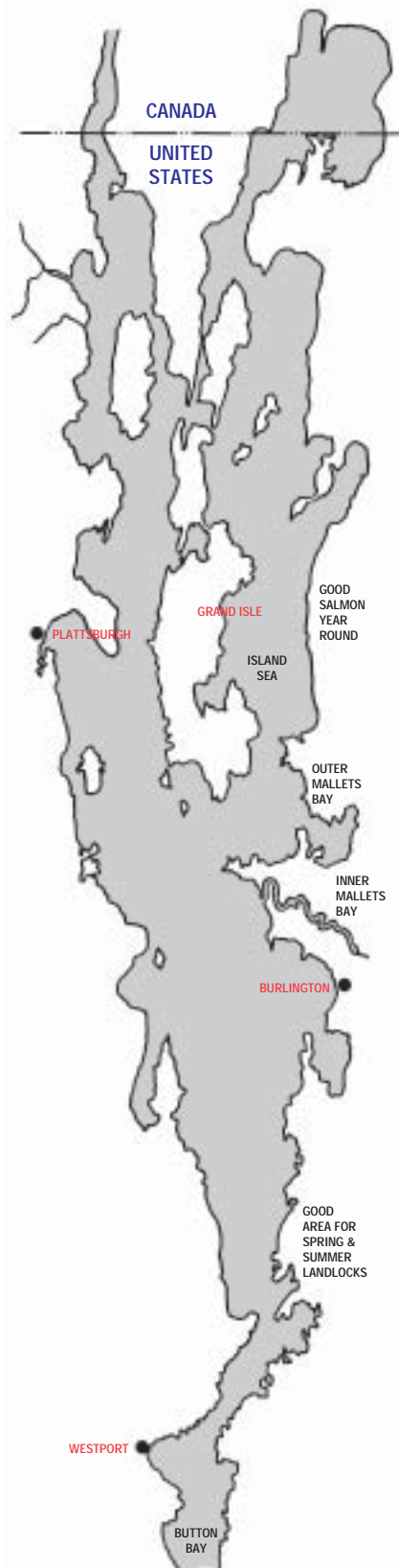
A trick we learned when running dodger/fly combos is to "peg" your dodger (see illustration) so it can run faster, maintain the proper back and forth swimming action required to give the fly its jerk-pause-jerk-pause action. This pegging is needed when the rest of your lure spread (Needlefish) needs speed (2.0 to 2.4 mph) to keep lure action proper.

JULY AND AUGUST (Water Temp 63° - 74°)

Trolling one or two small (#004) **Diamond Kings**™ can be a serious threat to deep landlocks. Try #0621 **Dolphin** (Flo Chart-Neon Green "H&H/Hologram "Scale"/Silver Back), #1081 **Dodge Man** (Metallic Blue Superman/Silver Back), #1083 **Fireman** (Chart-Fire "H&H/Hologram "Scale"/Silver Back) and #3134 **Hendrix** (Silver Plate/Metallic Blue-Purple-Blue H&H) at 2.8 to 3.0 mph. Open or deep water (over 200 feet) will find landlocks suspended 40 to 90 feet down, far from any structure or shore. Run spoons 35 to 50 feet behind the downrigger releases. Diamond Kings will take lakers all day off 80 to 100 foot deep reefs using the same colors.

Look for fish at certain depths on your fishfinder. If you have a temperature probe, look for 52 to 63 degree water. Some say that 55 to 56 degrees is the most preferred. I always do better in the low

TROPHY "LANDLOCKS" AVAILABLE!



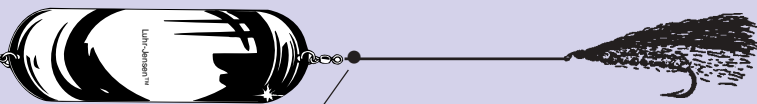
"PEGGING" A DODGER

30-ft. to 50-ft. To Release

12# Test Mainline

Quality Snap Swivel

Use 12-lb. or you'll lose a lot of fish. (Make sure this is a strong but thin 12-lb. test such as *Maxima Cameleon*).



Single Hook Fly

Place a #3 or #5 split shot in this area pinched to the line. We find the closer to the dodger, the better. It acts like the tail on a kite and controls the dodger for more speed.

60s on top of the thermocline. Normal depths for early summer are 30 to 50 feet; midsummer 35 to 60 feet and late summer 45 to 90 feet. Again, as in the spring, our biggest landlocks come deep. Never discount 65 to 90 feet on warm, bright days. Get a size run of dodgers from 000 to 0 with the #00 size being the work horse. Peg your dodgers (see page 1 illustration), run fast, cover a lot of water.

Our most successful summer technique is to run free running "sliders" over our dodgers. To create a slider, tie a 5- or 6-ft. piece of 8- to 12-lb. test leader to a snap swivel. Tie a small (#2) Needlefish or *Coyote Spoon™* on the other end. Place the snap over your main line and throw it overboard while still holding the snap. Let go of the snap gently and let the slider sink. It will seek out the middle of the belly of the main line, approximately half way down to the bottom lure.

Sliders are effective not only because they ride up and away from the path of the downrigger weight, but as the bow in the main line expands and contracts with currents, troll speed change, etc., it gives the lure a slight jiggling or pulsating movement. This really turns landlocks on!

TIPS FOR USING SLIDERS

1. After setting up your bottom lure, quickly attach the slider and get it down. The longer you wait, the more chance there is for weeds or debris to stick to the main line preventing the slider from reaching its correct depth.

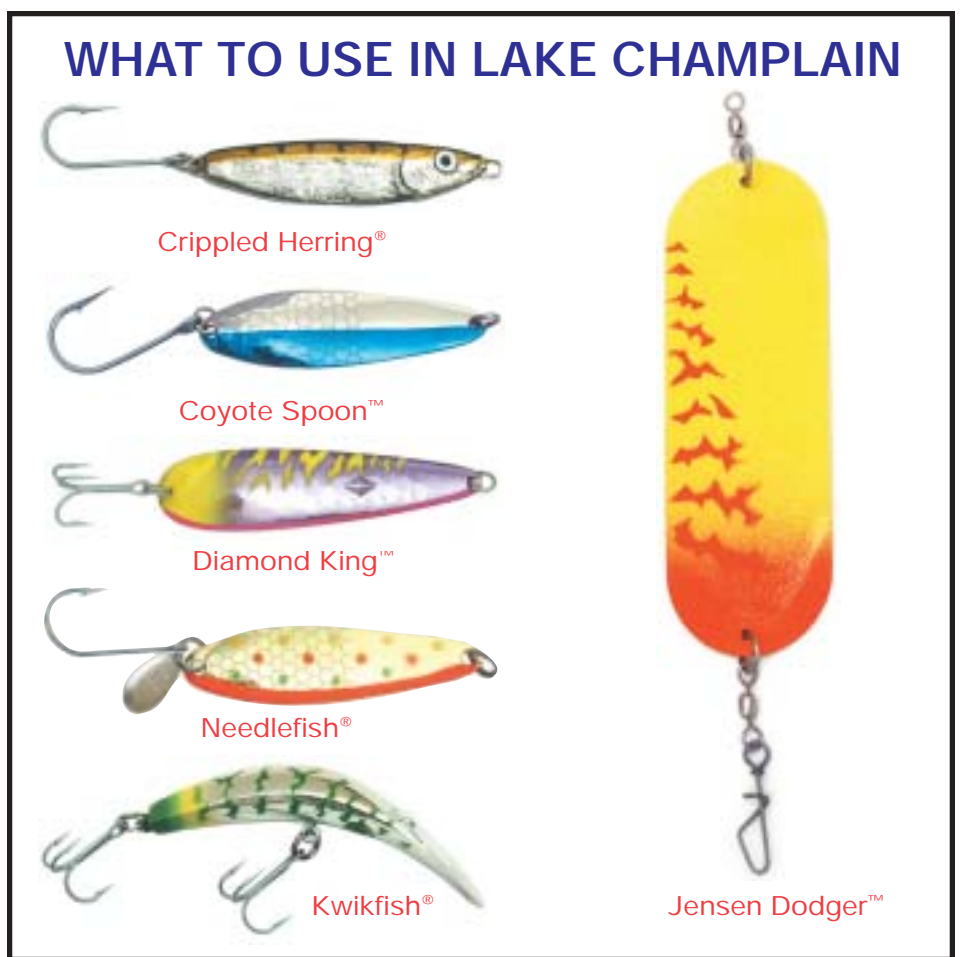
2. Take the rod out of rod holder and lean against the transom so the rod tip is within easy reach. Attach slider swivel and drop it easily so snap doesn't spin around main line, tangle and not sink properly.

3. Slider bites sometimes are just a mad bouncing of the rod tip as a salmon runs up line rather than down. Take the rod out of its holder, snap it off release and reel like crazy! It takes a while to have the slider snap swivel catch the bottom lure so you can get tension on the fish. More salmon are lost because the angler gives up reeling, thinking the fish has come off, only to see it jump and throw the hook, never getting hook-setting tension on it. Never, but never forget to run your sliders.

Note Landlocks seem shy of downrigger weights so fish-shaped weights (about 10 pounds) painted black or left natural seem to have the best results.

SEPT., OCT., & NOV. (Water Temp 65° - 33°)

Early fall is a difficult time on Lake Champlain for landlocks and lakers. September is the time of the year on our lake where these species go through a biological change which is readying them for the upcoming spawning period. Their appetites seem to fade and the catching slows. Our success comes early morning and late afternoon. Spring techniques work well but we seem to score best on clean run Needlefish, small *Kwikfish®*



and Coyote Spoons.

Concentrate on river mouths, sandy bays or rocky bays (for lakers). Late fall (November), things change, the lake explodes with landlock activity. Long-lining Needlefish can result in 50 landlocks per day or better. Preparing for ice up, landlocks go on a feeding spree that has to be experienced. Simple rigging is all that is necessary but be very aware of quick weather changes and forceful winds that can appear quickly.

WINTER

The cold weather of winter brings on ice fishing. From Button Bay south to the Champlain bridge, lake trout activity through the ice is fast and furious most days. Fishing depths range from 6 to 25 feet, shallower than most lake trout fishing in other lakes. This shallow water ice fishing is unique to Lake Champlain and it will seem odd to the first timer to be fishing for a deep water dweller in only 6 feet of water. Large emerald shiners on tip-ups just off the bottom is a surefire technique, along with dead smelt right on the bottom.

A technique new to most Champlain ice fishermen is the use of a fish finder, jigging sticks and jigging lures such as the *Crippled Herring®*. A piece of smelt fillet on the hook is key to success. Finding the fish and presenting the lure with the proper action can mean all day excitement.

Salmon through the ice on Champlain is similar to laker fishing except smaller live shiners are fished just under the ice to half way down on your tip-ups. If ice is clear, forget jigging and set your tip-ups and move away. Salmon are easily spooked by movement and sound. Jigging is good when snow covers the ice.

Try the smallest (1/6th-oz.) Crippled

Herring in a #0306 Nickel/Neon Blue Back, #0814 Metallic Perch or #0173 Pearl/Fluorescent Green-Blue Back color and use a 6-in. lift-drop, 6-in. lift-drop action. After about six lifts and drops, let the lure land with a very slight wiggle. This triggers salmon to hit. Fish the lure clean. Salmon locations vary, but the best winter area is the section of the lake called "The Inland Sea". This is about 12 miles north of the city of Burlington near Grand Isle.

UNSPOILED AREA

Lake Champlain has been described as one of the most beautiful places on earth. Come and enjoy it, but please keep it clean. Take home with you anything you bring in. Litter, fishing line, garbage of any kind is nonexistent on the lake. Most fishing access areas are free, well-kept and maintained. A new fish hatchery keeps fish stocks as a balanced level where forage and prey relationships are excellent. Large trophy landlocks are there.

Test your angling skills and fish for the king of gamefish, *salmo salar*, the leaper. A hookup on a trophy landlock will reinforce their reputation as a jumper and hook you on one of the greatest freshwater fisheries in North America.

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