

ciency of your baits and get you more fish. Luhr Jensen's **Sharp Hook File™** produces excellent points and is easy to use. Start by placing the file along one side of the point and create a cutting edge on the inside of the hook gap. Repeat this on the other side of the point and you'll have a sticky-sharp hook that will improve your catch ratio.

There are three basic categories of wooden topwater lures. These include surface chuggers/darters, jerk-walkin' baits, and propeller baits. The following are some proven techniques for using lures from each of these categories.



Jerk 'n Sam™

SURFACE CHUGGERS/DARTERS

These are ideal baits for someone just starting to use topwater lures. Those such as the **Bass-Oreno®** make a chugging sound, much like a trout feeding, when worked as a chugger. When used as a darter, they have a swimming action that entices redfish to take a bite.

1. When fishing near the edges or through the deeper water of cuts, the Bass-Oreno can be used as a swimming/wobbling bait. Use a sharp twitch of the rod tip to bring the bait forward and make it dive underwater with a splash and a pop. Allow it to float back to the surface and then repeat the process. Working the bait in this manner utilizes its sound-action abilities to the fullest.

If you're working a sand flat for reds, use the Bass-Oreno as a subsurface wobbling lure. With a slow, steady retrieve, this bait will wobble from side-to-side, giving every indication that it is a wounded baitfish.

If neither of these techniques seems to work,

try a combination of the two. Use the twitch method for several feet across the surface, then switch to the subsurface method. After you have retrieved the lure several feet under water, allow it to surface and begin again.

2. When fishing along grass shorelines or above a grass-covered flat, use a slow twitch-and-pause technique. This will keep the bait out of the grass and give fish the best opportunity to take the bait.



Peacock Bass Lure™

WALKIN'/JERK BAITS AND PROP BAITS

Covering a flat with baits such as the **Dalton Special®** Walkin'/Jerk Baits such as the **Wood-walker™**, **Jerk'n Sam™** and the **Peacock Bass Lure™** can be done in several ways. Explained below are two of the better saltwater techniques for using these lures.

1. While fishing over a grass-covered flat, allow the sharp VMC® hooks to cut through the grass and prevent snagging. Work the bait with a sharp twitch of the rod, stopping it over sand pockets. At this point, twitch the lure lightly until it is back in the grass, then repeat the process.

2. "Walkin' the dog" is a method which has been used by successful bass anglers for years. In the recent past, saltwater anglers have also discovered this excellent manner of working lure to catch fish. While keeping slack out of the line, work the lure with short and sharp twitches of the rod tip. The result is a bait that jumps or "walks" from side-to-side, creating the illusion of an injured baitfish struggling on the surface. The Dalton Special, Jerk 'n Sam and the Peacock Bass Lure baits are all

excellent lures for this type of fishing.

A FEW OTHER TIPS

1. Many of us tend to work topwater baits too fast. If you are missing more fish than you're getting, **SLOW DOWN** and give the fish a chance to see the meal being offered.

2. If you don't get a strike on the first cast, keep trying. Look for baitfish and other signs to make sure there are gamefish in the area. Above all, if the lure's not in the water, it won't catch fish!

3. Don't forget that fish are cold-blooded and during winter may not feed as aggressively. Work the bait slowly during these times. When you think you're working slowly enough, slow it down even more.

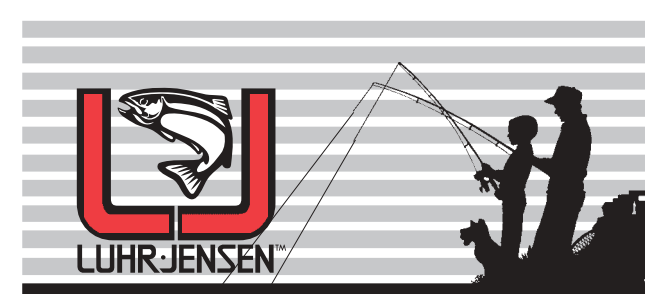
4. Remember that most of the redfish and speckled trout fishing is done in protected water, not the surf. Usually it is done in back bays, channels and canals.

GOOD LUCK
AND
HAVE A
SAFE TRIP!



This is one of a series of more than 25 detailed technique reports produced by Luhr Jensen & Sons. For a complete set, a patch for your jacket or cap, a price list and a full-color catalog showing all of Luhr Jensen's quality fishing tackle and accessories, send \$5 (\$3 credited to your first order of \$20 or more) and your name and address to: Luhr Jensen, P.O. Box 297, Hood River, OR 97031, Attn: Customer Service.

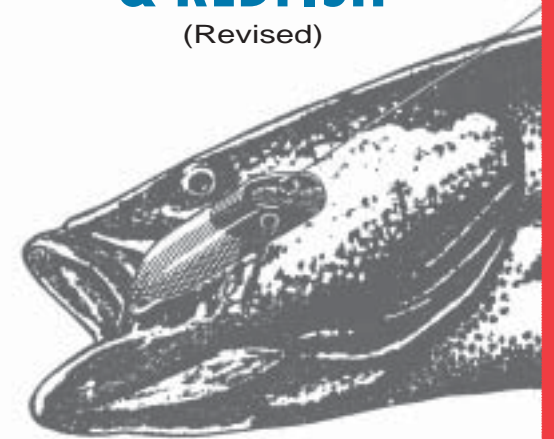
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TECH REPORT #25

How Fish With TOPWATER WOOD PLUGS for SPECKLED SEA TROUT & REDFISH

(Revised)



Speckled sea trout and redfish inhabit all of the coastal regions of the Gulf of Mexico. They range from the Florida Everglades and the Texas bays to the Third Pass of Mexico. Following are some techniques and suggestions to help you catch these sensational game fish.

WORKING THE SHALLOW FLATS

Grass-covered shorelines and shallow sand flats are the primary feeding and spawning grounds for reds and specks. They can be found in these areas when the water temperature rises above 70 degrees, as they come to feed and leave their eggs in the safety of the sea grass.

The time that water temperatures begin to warm just happens to coincide with the higher tides of spring. These higher-than-normal tides flood the flats, allowing fish access to previously unreachable areas. After a cold winter, they roam the flats, feeding hungrily on schools of mullet and shad. Unlike freshwater bass which have no tidal movement to deal with, speckled trout and redfish feed best during the high tides when their favorite foods are abundant in the shallow water. It's also when these predators are especially vulnerable to top-water lures.

Although high tides provide the best times for catching these fish, you can also be successful during outgoing tidal movement. The fear of being trapped in the shallow water causes them to abandon the flats for deeper holes as the water drops. As long as there is moving water to help move bait from one place to another, specks and reds will be in the vicinity.

This pattern continues through summer and into fall when the second spawning period begins. Fall fishing is similar to spring as the fish are constantly feeding on the flats, storing fat in preparation for winter. During the colder months, they'll spend most of their time in deeper water and feeding activity will slow down. This is when slightly warmer days can make a difference. Once again, on these days the water temperature will rise and you will find fish feeding on the flats.

WADING THE SURF

Although not every part of the Gulf coast has a surf line shallow enough to allow wadefishing, it is a major sport from Texas to the Gulf side of Florida.

"Reading the water" is somewhat of a cliché, but it can make the difference between a successful fishing trip and a stopping at the fish market on

the way home. Most of the Gulf shoreline is made up of sand bars. The troughs or spaces between bars are the highways that fish use to journey from one place to another in the search for food. Within these bars are cuts which serve as intersections, connecting the troughs and providing shortcuts from one sand bar to another. As the incoming tide rises, fish use these cuts to travel back and forth, searching for food. As food is washed from the sand bars, it falls into the troughs where the surf-running predators lie in wait.

Watching the water and taking notes on where and how the waves break, should give you some idea of where the cuts are located. Waves break harder against a greater resistance, hence, if they're breaking less in any given spot, there must be a cut in the bars. Knowing what to look for before choosing the spot you want to wade, can make a world of difference.

SILENT ATTACK

Speckled sea trout and redfish are easily spooked when cruising the shallow flats looking for food. For this reason, the best technique for catching them is to get out of the boat and wade. Once on the flat, you must move slowly and with caution to prevent spooking them. This will help you catch more fish and keep you better aware of what's going on around you. The latter can be very effective in helping prevent an accidental meeting with some of the nastier residents of the flat!

Being aware of your surroundings will also allow you to keep up with what the fish are doing, where they're feeding and what they're feeding on. Casting in a fan pattern not only covers water faster and more thoroughly, but also keeps your lure closer to the previous cast's position. This greatly increases your strike zone.

Specks and reds feed on the smaller baitfish that cover the surface of these shallow waters. When you spot a school of bait acting erratically or nervously, cast the topwater bait to the edge of the school and then begin your retrieve.

Working the edges of cuts and deeper channels that cross a flat is another way of catching

specks. As they use the cuts as highways, they often leave them to ravage a nearby school of baitfish for an easy meal. If the water is too deep to wade, drift the area working the bait with the same technique as when wading. Note that drift fishing must be done quietly. It is important that you wait to start the motor until you are out of the immediate area where you're catching fish. The reason for waiting is so that fish won't be spooked by the noise, and will remain in the area, allowing you to make another pass, hopefully with good results.

The most important thing to remember is that you can't catch fish if the bait's not in the water.



Bass-Oreno®

COLOR AND SIZES

It has been proved that fish spending most of their lives in shallow water, may be able to distinguish between colors. Most expert saltwater anglers agree that when conditions are overcast or the water is off-color, a darker-colored bait will draw more strikes. On days when the weather and water are clear, use a bait with lighter colors.

Fish feeding on the flats are already nervous, so it would be wise to use a smaller bait when conditions are extremely clear. When the wind is up and the water is rougher, a larger bait will attract more attention because of the turbulence it creates.

Remember, in clear, calm water, use a small, light-colored bait and in off-color, rougher water, throwing a larger, dark-colored bait works best.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

If you're working your topwater plug over a

school of baitfish, chances are that a hungry speck or redfish is going to take advantage of the opportunity. The resulting explosion is always heart-stopping, even to the most experienced angler.

Watch the area surrounding the school and your bait for telltale signs of game fish approaching



Dalton Special®

for a strike. Many times you'll see the wake from a redfish before it actually gets to the lure. Don't panic! Just wait it out and when it takes the bait and turns to run, "SET THE HOOK".

If the fish misses your plug the first time, stop and wait for a few seconds to see if it comes back for another try. If not, start working it again. When you first start using topwater plugs, it may seem like you miss setting the hook on a lot of fish. If this is the case, wait until you feel pressure on the line before setting the hook. This will give the fish time to get a good hold on the plug before you nail it.

TACKLE TIPS

Saltwater fishing tackle used for topwater plug fishing is a great deal like that used by bass anglers. The ideal rod should be of medium action and between 6 ft. and 7 ft. long. A light tip and solid backbone will give the plugs the best action and leave you plenty of hook-setting power.

Your reel should hold approximately 125 to 150 yards of a good 10 or 12-lb. line. Stainless steel ball bearings are also a prerequisite for a saltwater reel.

Before going on your fishing trip, take a minute to sharpen your hooks. This will improve the effi-