

A Complete Guide to **OPEN WATER DRIFT JIGGING**

Drift jigging in open water is a fishing technique being used by an ever increasing number of anglers as they discover its effectiveness and ease of application. It's a technique tailor-made for open water, fresh or salt, where fish are oriented either to bottom structure or temperature layers. With the aid of a depth sounder, drift jigging allows pinpoint presentation of a spoon or jig within inches of a fish, providing you with a distinct advantage not easily obtainable with other fishing methods.

By using wind or current to change your boat position, in open water drift jigging you will be prospecting different areas until a concentration of fish is located. Then, either by using a motor or oars to hold your position, or by motoring back and repeating the drift, you will be able to stay over them.

Once fish are located, free-spool the jig or spoon to the desired depth and then begin a series of varied jigging motions which impart erratic actions to the lure.

The jigging technique consists of raising your rod anywhere from six inches to four feet, throwing some slack in the line as the rod tip is lowered toward the water, pausing and then raising the rod upward again. A two second pause is recommended after the lure has been allowed to fall. It's best to vary the distance of the upward rod motion with each sweep so the spoon or jig produces the most erratic and varied actions possible.

Strikes which come when working a jig or jigging spoon almost always occur as the lure is falling. Hesitation in the descent of a lure, a twitch of the line, a "tap" or any other unusual motion or happening as the lure is falling should be immediate reason for setting the hook. Many times you will not be able to detect the "strike" but will feel resistance as you begin to raise the rod. This too signals "set the hook".

An aid in detecting strikes when a lure is falling is the use of a premium quality high-visibility line with high knot strength and thin diameter in relation to pound test. By carefully watching the line as the jig or spoon is falling, you will be able to detect slight twitches in the line as the strike occurs.

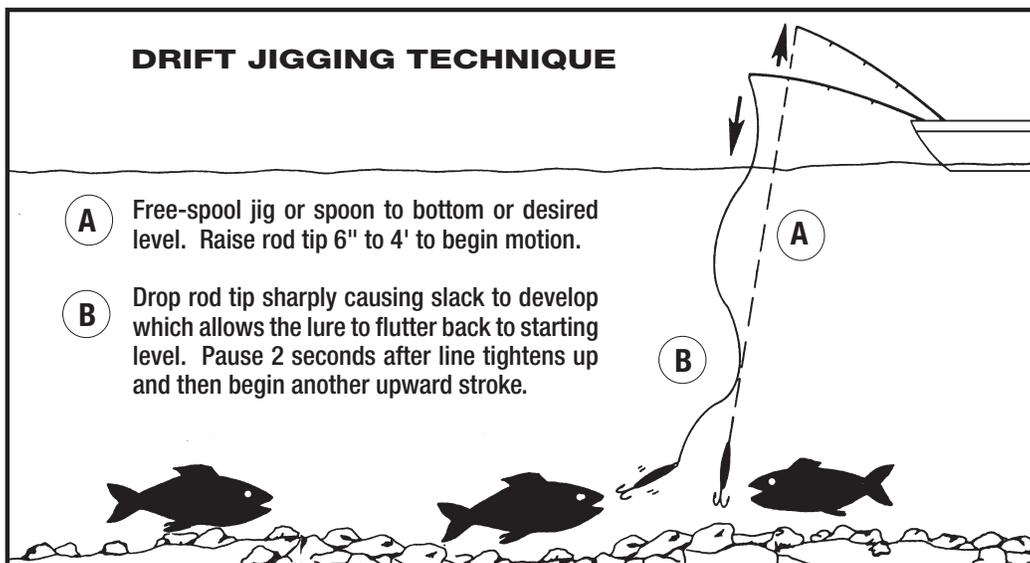
If you haven't developed any strikes in a particular column of water, change the location of your boat slightly, either by drifting or motoring so you will constantly be covering new water. It is important to keep moving until fish are located.

DEPTH FINDERS

There is no substitute for a good quality depth finder when drift jigging open water where fish can be just about anywhere. A fish finder unit will pinpoint the depth at which fish are suspended and, to the knowledgeable eye, reveal structure and fish close to structure. You can also see underwater contour changes such as ledges, dropoffs and islands that otherwise can't be located or fished over with any degree of consistency.

JIGGING LURES

Lures used for drift jigging can take on several forms, the most popular being jigging spoons such as the Crocodile[®] and Cast Champ[™] and fish-shaped lead jigs such as the Crippled Herring[™] and the Deep Stinger[™]. Regardless of whether you're fishing salt or fresh water, you should try to match the size of the jig or jigging spoon as closely as you can to the prevalent baitfish in the area as well as to your tackle. If using lightweight lures, you'll need lighter tackle -- heavier tackle for jigs and spoons from three to seven ounces.



The desired depth also has a great deal to do with your selection of a spoon or jig. For example, you will need a heavier lure for fishing in 100 feet of water than needed for fishing 20-foot depths.

It is advisable to carry several sizes of Krocodiles®, Cast Champ and Crippled Herring® so you can match any water and depth condition.

KROCODILE - Versatility best describes this lure which has the reputation for catching all kinds of fish in all kinds of conditions. It can be cast or trolled and the thicker models make excellent jiggging spoons as many bass anglers will attest. The “Kroc” comes in a wide variety of finishes to suit every fishing situation and various weights for heavy-tackle, deep-water fishing.

CAST CHAMP - Long a favorite casting wobbler, this is an excellent jiggging spoon, having an erratic, fluttering action when allowed to free-fall.

CRIPPLED HERRING - Natural both in appearance and action the Crippled Herring can be used worldwide, all seasons, for all baitfish-eating gamefish, in fresh and salt water. It takes advantage of the strong, natural predator instinct common to all game fish, with every movement of any type of distressed baitfish (stunned, struggling or dying) engineered into it.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COLOR

A wide variety of painted finishes and color combinations are available on Luhr-Jensen jiggging spoons and jigs. Color becomes very important related to the depth you'll be fishing, with colors changing depending upon how deep they go. Red filters out of the color spectrum first at about 30 feet and yellow and chartreuse at about 60 feet with blues, greens and darker colors the last ones to turn gray. White and/or pearl turn gray at about 60 feet and black is always black, regardless of depth. This means a fish in deep water will see blacks, grays, blues and greens in terms of day-to-day food while a shallow water fish would be tuned in to all colors.

The Everglo finishes produced by Luhr-Jensen are designed specifically for deep water jiggging. They contain phosphor pigments that absorb light on the surface and then give it off down deep. Note: Phosphorescent finishes contain light-sensitive pigments which can be burned and turn gray if exposed to strong, direct sunlight for more than 15 minutes.

The UV Bright finishes reflect more light energy, strengthening the lures visibility. Luhr-Jensen's UV finishes are a unique combination of fluorescent paints, reflective surfaces and optical brighteners that make the lures more brilliant in any visible light. They have proven to be very effective for all-species in situations where fish are feeding by sight.

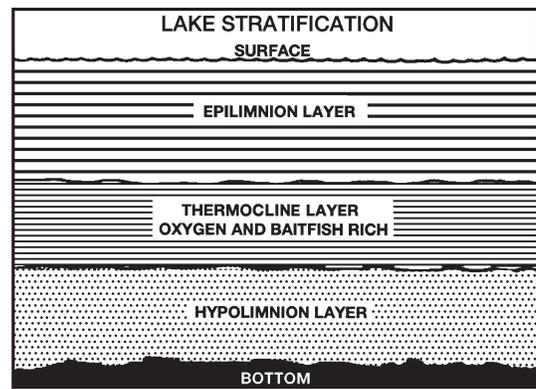
PROSPECTING OPEN WATER

Fresh and salt water gamefish all relate, in one form or another, to either structure (bottom contours) currents, or temperature zones. Here are some tips to make your search pay off in the shortest amount of time when coupled with the use of a depth sounder.

TEMPERATURE/OXYGEN (Freshwater) - In large fresh water lakes and reservoirs, the critical factor in finding fish is the location of the preferred temperature level, as it relates to different species, and the thermocline. With the onset of warm spring weather, lakes stratify into three distinct layers and remain that way until fall. The middle layer of water, where there is a large concentration of dissolved oxygen, baitfish and therefore predator fish, is called the thermocline and can generally be found from 10 to 80 feet down. This is not only an oxygen-rich layer, but also a temperature layer as well and fish relate to it, both as a comfort zone and an area where their body metabolism functions efficiently.

The peak feeding and optimum temperature for coho and chinook salmon is 55° with an active range from 44° to 58°. For lake trout, peak feeding and optimum temperature is 50° with activity from 43° to 53°. For steelhead, optimum temperature is between 50° and 55° with activity from 40° to 75°. Brown and rainbow trout have an optimum temperature preference between 55° and 60° with activity from 44° to 75). Striped bass exhibit a range of temperature preference from 60° to 78° with the optimum temperature between 70° and 72°.

Fish rarely venture out of these preferred temperature zones, except to catch a meal, and then will return quickly. One thing to remember when



fishing temperature layers such as the thermocline is that they can change from day to day because of wind and/or wave action and you'll have to relocate them each time out.

TIDE CURRENTS (Saltwater) - Just as knowledge of temperature layers is critical for fresh water fishing, a knowledge of tides and currents is essential for salt water drift jiggging success. Feeding activity of salmon and other salt water gamfish is at its maximum during the period from one hour before, through and one hour after a tide change. A tide cycle has two highs and two lows so there are at least two daylight tide change periods to fish each day which provide optimum conditions.

Charting one tide period, we would have low slack (the time of change), ebb (run out) and back to low slack. If the tide fluctuation is minimal between high and low, say 3 to 8 feet, fish will be active throughout the tide cycle along rips, in eddies and many times in open water. But the period before slack tide, during the slack and just after will still provide you with top angling as salmon and bottomfish will feed most actively when they don't have to battle currents.

You'll have about three hours of prime fishing time around each tide change and it's extremely important to fish these periods intensely. Purchase a tide book for your area and become familiar with it and schedule your trips, if possible, to coincide with the change periods.

If the tides are moving fast, salt water species such as salmon, which are ordinarily open-water feeders, will seek shelter around structure such as points of land, underwater islands and other areas where they won't have to battle current. These will be the places to seek them out with your jiggging lures. Bottomfish, on the other hand aren't influenced by the tides and always are close to rocks, pinnacles and dropoffs so your search for these should be concentrated near structure.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

One of the easiest things you can do to improve fishing results is to sharpen dull hooks with the Luhr-Jensen's Original Hook File. Simply hold the file parallel to the hook point and, with gentle one-way strokes, remove a small amount of metal from at least two sides of each point to make them sticky-sharp. If the hook is too damaged replace them with premium quality VMC Hooks.



You should always use a premium quality braided or monofilament line that has superior knot strength, small diameter in relation to pound test and is abrasion resistant.

Purchase a quality depth finder which will help in locating fish as well as prime underwater fish-holding structure which can't otherwise be detected.



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