

A Complete Guide on **SPOON JIGGING** FOR TROUT IN LAKES

By Ed Marsh

Jigging spoons in lakes can be an extremely effective technique that will often catch far more trout than the commonly used straight, unvaried retrieve. This is because trout are predators, especially the larger, trophy-sized ones. A jigging spoon that appears to be a crippled or distressed meal will usually arouse those predatory instincts.

As trout grow in size, especially browns and Mackinaws, but also rainbow, cutthroats and brookies, it takes more food to satisfy an ever-increasing appetite, so smaller fish will be a big part of satisfying that hunger. Oddly enough, the jigging technique works best during spring and fall. This is especially true of states where winter produces frozen lakes, making “ice out” and “freeze up” dates just as important as the opening day of deer or pheasant seasons! This is probably because as waters warm in late spring and summer, trout feed more readily on insects which is the food source most readily available. Yet jigging will produce throughout the summer when done very early in the morning or just before dusk.

VERTICAL JIGGING

The purpose of jigging a spoon is to create the appearance of a crippled or distressed fish. While many lures have a built-in action, jigging will enhance it, making the lure even more appealing. Besides, how many times have the older, wiser trout seen a lure retrieved in the conventional manner and learned that it's nothing to get excited about. Then suddenly here comes something totally different than what they're used to seeing and they go into an attack mode.

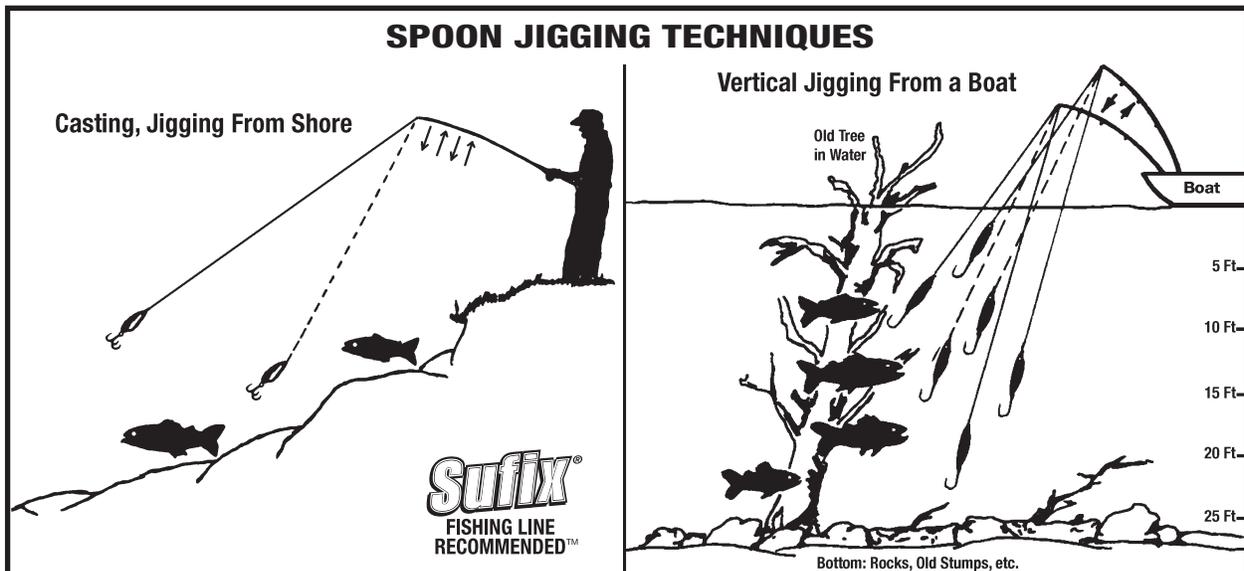
Jigging is accomplished by raising the rod tip vertically from waist level to anywhere from a few inches, to several feet. At the top of the jigging stroke, drop your rod tip back to horizontal, reeling in the slack line. Don't be surprised that if when the slack is in, you have a fish on! This is a rather common occurrence because almost every species of

game fish will hit a spoon as it sinks. Vary the speed of the retrieve and the length of the jigging stroke to create an extremely erratic action. Then reel smoothly for a few cranks of the reel handle and if a strike isn't forthcoming, return to the erratic retrieve. Another rhythm-varying retrieve action is to STOP! FREEZE! Let the spoon sink but be ready for a strike. If after a few seconds nothing happens, resume the jigging retrieve. Just don't get into the rut of maintaining a predictable retrieve. Be just like the trout . . . unpredictable! For days when the wind interferes with an upward jigging motion, try working the rod tip parallel to the water, using horizontal jigging strokes instead of vertical. Again, use varied length strokes to impart that crippled prey action and never be in a big hurry to retrieve that lure.

CHECK OUT THE ACTION

To understand how lures react to whatever action is imparted by the rod, stand on a rock next to clear, deep water, then flip the spoon a short distance out into the lake. Start retrieving and jigging and watch the spoon respond to the action of the rod tip and the speed of the retrieve. Also watch how the lure responds to a straight retrieve, then the extreme difference when jigged. Do this several times. At one point, stop retrieving and watch how the lure acts as it sinks. A spoon will never sink in a straight line. It flutters back and forth as it sinks, creating the appearance of injury. Use the knowledge gained by watching how lures react to various actions and visualize what that lure is doing when retrieved through the depths while you're actually fishing. Another time that this can pay big dividends is when a big trout is following a spoon but isn't striking. STOP! Many times as the lure starts fluttering down, the fish will nail it and the resulting strike will really be felt.

From the time my lure hits the water until I lift it out at the end of the cast, I'm expecting a strike, especially when fishing deep water.



I expect (but don't always get) a strike as the lure sinks. I keep my rod tip low, just above the surface and there is no slack in my line because the weight of the lure pulls on the line, keeping it taut. When a fish hits that sinking lure there is a very distinct tug or jerk. SET THE HOOK! FISH ON! Obviously there won't be a strike on every cast as the spoon sinks. When the lure hits bottom and the line goes slack, give it a hard, upward sweep of the rod tip. Because the line curves down to the lure, this yank will actually lift the lure straight up, thus avoiding snags. Occasionally you'll lose a spoon but that's a small price to pay for the chance of catching a big trout.

DIFFERENT TROUT LIKE DIFFERENT SPOTS

Usually different species of trout will be found in different areas of a lake. While they aren't as structure-oriented as some warm water species, there are definite preferences. Browns and brookies prefer to cruise rocky areas including depths of 50 feet or more. Mackinaws prefer very deep, cold water except right after ice out and just before freeze up when the water temperature is in the upper 30s (when they can be found anywhere). Many times they will suspend from 60 to 80 feet or even deeper and this is when a jigged spoon can be deadly. Rainbows and cutthroats prefer open water and cruise at various depths, feeding on a variety of aquatic foods including plankton. These cruising fish will definitely respond to jigged spoons. Kokanee salmon are found in many states and are also open water fish, cruising in big schools, following the plankton which is their primary food source. Don't be fooled by that plankton diet though because kokanee aggressively attack spoons, especially jigged spoons. Everything discussed about trout also applies to kokanee.



KROCODILE®

This versatile spoon is a favorite of spin anglers everywhere and with very good reason. It

consistently catches trout as well as many other species of game fish. Krocodiles come in an incredible number of finishes and are designed to appeal to fish. While the 1/4-oz. is probably the most popular size, I've caught just as many trout and kokanee with the 1/6- and 3/16-oz. sizes. Larger Krocodiles, from 1/2- to 1 1/2-oz. are favorites when fishing for Mackinaws. Often a thin strip of sucker meat or other bait added to one of the hooks will impart a bit of odor that will really turn the Macs on and could easily trigger a BIG MACK ATTACK!



SUPER DUPER

This time-tested lure dates back to my boyhood days and I can remember catching rainbows and browns in

many California waters with one. Since those "good ol' days" back in the '30s, I've caught trout on Super Dupers in New Mexico, Montana, Oregon, California and Colorado. I have discovered that big brookies are especially fond of them. In states fortunate enough to have kokanee in their lakes, be sure to try jigging a Super Duper in them. I guarantee that if you put one in front of some of these landlocked salmon and jig it, they'll consistently strike it. While a Super Duper isn't a true spoon because of its shape, it can certainly be called a wobbler which is just another name for spoons anyway.

HUS-LURE

I'm really impressed with the fantastic action this lure has and when jigged, it's almost unreal. Try the "standing on a rock" bit and check out its antics in the water. That will explain why this lure is becoming one of my favorites.



CRIPPLED HERRING®

I really like the looks of this slab spoon, and so do the fish! This minnow-shaped lure is one of the most versatile in the Luhr-Jensen arsenal and is the perfect jigging, casting/jigging lure for trout as well. It is different from the traditional jigging spoon because it is made of lead rather than polished metal. Both trout and kokanee hit it quite readily, especially when jigged.



CAST CHAMP

Many people don't appreciate the value of this lure, especially when it's jigged in a lake. It is a thick, slab-sided spoon which has an excellent jigging action and one that will rise and fall in almost a straight line. With a good range of sizes and finishes, this wobbler is a consistent producer. The Prism-Lite faces add much flash when jigged.



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.

GOOD FISHING
& HAVE A
SAFE TRIP!



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