

# 'The ultimate rush'

*Anglers say nothing beats big trout busting baits on top*

BY JOHN N. FELSHER

For sheer exhilaration, few angling experiences compare to big fish exploding on topwater baits with force.

"Seeing big fish blow up on a topwater bait is the ultimate rush," explained George Harrison of Harrison Inshore Charters & Guide Service (251-367-7685, [dauphinislandfishingguides.com](http://dauphinislandfishingguides.com)).

"Once, I caught an 8-pound trout on a pink Skitter Walk. Seeing that fish come up and hit that bait, I immediately knew it was a big trout."

Topwater baits can work any time, but typically work best at first or last light. Early in the morning or in late afternoon, speckled trout frequently move into shallow flats to feed on baitfish. They also work during overcast days when fish may stay in the shallows longer.

"In the spring, I mostly use topwaters and sinking baits for trout," advised Bobby Abruscato of A-Team Fishing Adventures (251-661-7696, [www.ateamfishing.com](http://www.ateamfishing.com)). "On warm, low-light days, I'll fish topwater baits or jerkbaits in shallow water. If I can stay shallow, that's what I like to do."

Big trout normally eat fish instead of shrimp and usually prefer to make one substantial gulp that will satisfy them for hours rather than waste energy chasing a bunch of small morsels. A 5-pound speck can easily swallow a 12-inch mullet. To find big trout, first find the bait.

Since large trout mainly feed upon finfish, topwater baits frequently entice bigger, but often fewer, bites. Many of the best topwater baits resemble crippled baitfish, especially "walk-the-dog" lures. With short wrist flicks, anglers can make these baits slash irresistibly from side to side like mullets swimming near the surface.

"I like to throw anything that looks like a mullet, such as a black and chartreuse, black and silver or green and silver Top Dog," recommended Andrew Carter with Crazy Kjun In-Shore Fishing Charters (251-709-6894, [www.crazykjun.com](http://www.crazykjun.com)). "I vary the speed of the retrieve to find out what the fish want that day. Start out with a quick



Photo by John N. Felsler

Jen Carroll shows off a speckled trout she caught on a topwater bait.

retrieve. If that doesn't work, slow it down. Sometimes, I just let it sit in the water and twitch it. Catching big trout on topwaters baits can be addictive. There's nothing like watching that bait and all of a sudden see an explosion in the water."

Finding a "slick" popping up on the water surface could indicate trout feeding on baitfish, making a good place to toss topwaters. When specks gorge on mullets, menhaden or other oily fish, scales and fish pieces float to the surface. This creates an oily sheen on the surface. Fish emerging slicks whenever

possible. A small slick erupting on the surface may pinpoint feeding trout before winds and tides disperse the sheen. Always fish upstream of emerging slicks.

"Slicks popping up in the bay are good places to fish," Carter explained. "The key to fishing a slick is not to approach too closely and cast toward the edges. Make as long a cast as possible to avoid spooking the fish."

Topwaters also work well at night near lighted docks, rigs or bridges.

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