

Spoon-fed catfish

Try a little flash, wobble and scent to land the predatory fish

BY JOHN N. FELSHER

Bass anglers sometimes catch catfish on jigs, crankbaits, soft plastics, even occasionally on topwaters or other lures. Crappie anglers catch cats on tiny tube or hair jigs, but few people intentionally fish artificials for cats.

“All catfish have predatory instincts,” explained Brian Barton, (www.brianbartonoutdoors.com) a catfish guide. “Some of my best sources for finding catfish are bass fishermen who catch them by accident.”

Most people fish for cats by tossing out natural baits and waiting for a fish to find and eat the temptation. Although catfish typically act like scavengers scouring the bottom for any morsels that might taste good, they also hunt, catch and eat small baitfish such as bream or shad, frogs, insects, crawfish, grass shrimp and anything else they can swallow. Some people prefer to do more than just sit and wait for a bite.

Like largemouth bass, catfish often hunt in or around lily pad patches, dense weeds, log piles, stumpy flats, fallen trees and other shallow cover. Most traditional bait-and-hook catfish rigs stay snagged in such entangling habitat. Even most bass lures wouldn't go far through gnarly fallen trees or thick weeds common to places like the Mobile-Tensaw Delta. However, a weedless spoon can wobble through seemingly impenetrable cover without snagging.

“Spoon fishing is deadly on cats,” Barton proclaimed. “With a spoon, I can cover a lot more water than with just a bait. A hook-and-bait rig is not as effective when moving fast as when sitting still and it hangs up more than a spoon and bait. I can put a spoon through just about anything. I like



Photo by John N. Felsler

A strip of skipjack fillet on a spoon makes a great temptation for catfish. The spoon gives off vibrations and the bait strip gives off scent, making a good combination for tempting catfish.

to fish a spoon around weeds, stumps, blowdowns, logs and other structure along the bank.”

Toss a weedless spoon as close to the shoreline or other cover as possible and bring it out slowly into deeper water. Pull the lure over the drop-off edge and let it sink to the bottom. Then, reel it just fast enough to wobble above the bottom. Occasionally pause to let it fall. Catfish frequently hit baits as they fall.

“I throw it up into the structure and drag it back through the cover slowly to get a reaction strike,” Barton advised. “I keep the rod tip at about a 45-degree angle and keep the bait moving slowly. I never really let the bait stop or settle down for too long. If fish are more lethargic, I just crawl it along the bottom, sometimes just twitching the rod tip a bit. Fishing a spoon is usually more of a numbers technique,

See **CATFISH**, 48

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