



Hot Surface Bait on The River

Big Smallmouth caught with a Hubs Chub Bait



I have yet to meet an angler who does not like to catch smallmouth bass on topwater. Not only is experiencing an 18 inch smallmouth crushing a topwater bait exciting, but it is also addicting. After catching a few fish on top, many of my clients continue to fish the topwater bait, even if no other smallmouth shows any interest. The problem is that many anglers fail to put together all the pieces of the puzzle and consequently have only limited topwater success.

From June through early September, I can usually be found on the Menominee River, in pursuit of big smallmouth with my favorite topwater bait. While the topwater bite on the river is always excellent, in some years it is better than others. This past summer was one of the best years for topwater fishing I have ever experienced. We were locked into a consistently hot summer weather pattern and by August the action was fantastic. Smallmouth were on the feed and they were very predictable. In fact, I had the topwater bite patterned as to the times it would start and end. Some

of my clients were amazed at not only the topwater bite, but at how accurate my predictions were.

Although the topwater bite was sporadic last summer, when the bite was on it was fantastic. July was good but the best fishing occurred from mid August through mid September. The topwater bite last summer and early fall might not have produced large numbers of smallmouth but my clients and I caught and released many 18 inch plus smallmouth. A typical pattern was to use a wacky worm to locate smallmouth then switch to a topwater bait and catch the big fish of the day. Over the years I've learned that the big fish of the day can't pass up a properly placed topwater bait.

All topwater baits are not the same; some have a greater tendency to trigger strikes from big smallmouth. One such bait is the Hubs Chub made by HC Baits. The Hubs Chub has a rear prop but the front of the bait is beveled, making it a cross between a popping bait and a prop bait. Its vertical presentation attracts huge smallmouth that refuse other surface baits. The explosive

surface attacks that you'll experience with this lure are matched by no other surface bait on the market. The three inch bait is ideal for river smallmouth.

I have used the Hubs Chub for over 30 years and have kept it a secret, especially on the Menominee River. The problem was that I thought they were out of production, and since I only had a few baits left, I would use them only on a special occasion. This year I discovered that they are readily available and manufactured in Pennsylvania. HC Baits is in the process of making the Hubs Chub in new colors and they have improved the original bait.

www.hcbaits.com Do not Fish the River without one. The best colors are Chrome/Black, Black, Tennessee Shad and Chrome/Blue. Do not Fish the River without one!

Many anglers think color is not important when using a topwater bait. When using a bait like the Hubs Chub which has a vertical presentation, color can act as another trigger. The chrome color patterns have reflectivity that mimics baitfish and will cause a neutral smallmouth to go on a feeding frenzy. In dark

stained water smallmouth will not see a painted surface bait but they will quickly zero in on a bait with a high degree of reflectivity.

While I primarily use the three inch bait, if you are in big fish water and the conditions are right the four inch Hubs Chub can be deadly. It works best right before a front or at dusk. The four inch bait is a great bait for big largemouth bass, northern pike and muskies.

I use both casting and spinning tackle, and for the most part this is a personal preference. When using a spinning rod choose a medium action rod like a the Lamiglas XMG 50 series EXS 663. For a casting rod I prefer an EXC 722 or an XC 734 Topwater Special. I spool my spinning reel with Yo-Zuri Hybrid Ultra Soft which is a fluorocarbon/nylon blend designed especially for spinning reels. On my casting reel I use Cortland Master Braid.

Putting together all the pieces of the smallmouth bite pattern, using proven topwater baits and choosing the right combination of rod and line for the situation will definitely increase your topwater success.

Mike Mladenik Fishing Classes Hook, Line & Sinker Crivitz

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Northwoods Outdoors

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