

Fishing Big Smallmouth Swim Jigs



Every angler is looking for a lure that catches big fish. There are several lures that at any given time will catch their fair share of lunkers, but conditions need to be just right. Topwater baits, for example, catch a high percentage of big fish, but if you are fishing after a cold front and dealing with high winds, forget it. One bait that consistently shines under adverse conditions is a swimbait.

Swimbait is designed to be cast and retrieved at a steady, rapid rate. Similar to a spinnerbait or crankbait, the lure provides the action. The entire body shimmies as you pull a swimbait through the water. They are relatively easy to use but they do take a bit of getting used to. The problem is not in the retrieve but in the hook set. If you react to a swimbait like you would to a spinnerbait you will miss a lot of fish. This makes them frustrating for new users.

Smallmouth bass usually hammer a spinnerbait or crankbait. The thumping action of the swimbait causes smallmouth to follow the swimbait for a longer period of time. Sometimes they fully commit and just smoke it while at other times they leave it alone and can follow the bait back to the boat. Most of the time they just tease the angler by bumping the swimbait, resulting in missed fish.

When I first started fishing swimbaits it took a while to build up my confidence due to all the missed fish. I experimented with different speeds of my retrieve but the results were the same. The smallmouth I caught were big, which excited me and kept me interested. I was coming to the conclusion that swim baits were only good for catching monster smallmouth, which is not a bad thing, but on many days the actual catch rate was low.

Eventually, the light came on and I realized that the missed fish were a result of operator error and not the swimbait. I figured out that if I was having trouble hooking fish with a steady retrieve that if I let the bait fall a few seconds, waited for the pressure, then set the hook hard the fight was on. My catch ratio went up drastically. My whole approach changed; not only was I catching big smallmouth but big numbers as well.

The larger smallmouth will often not thump the bait but move behind it and suck it in. Most of the 20 inch plus smallmouth I caught on swimbaits were solidly hooked inside the mouth. I believe that the smaller fish were coming up to the swimbait, swiping or thumping it. Most often, these fish were hooked in the lips or jaw. So be prepared to vary your retrieve accordingly.

I used a variety of different swimbaits but did not find one that was perfect until I rigged a Big Hammer body on one of my jigheads. The jighead has an elongated 2 inch shank with a super sharp hook and a fine wire weedguard. This combination makes for a remarkable swimbait. The incredible thumping action of the ribbed body and hammer tail creates a distinct vibration like no other swimbait. This action triggers strikes from a higher percentage of big smallmouth. The thin wire weedguard allows the swimbait to be fished around weeds and cover. With the longer shank on the jighead I eliminated many of the short strikes. Due to the huge number of monster smallmouth I have caught with this swimbait, I named it the Big Smallmouth Swimbait. The four inch swimbait comes in three sizes; 1/8 ounce, 1/4 ounce and 3/8 ounce, as well as several hot colors.



I fish the Big Smallmouth Swimbait in all types of water throughout the seasons. It is a fantastic search bait for pre-spawn and post-spawn smallmouth in natural lakes, reservoirs and rivers. The vibration of the Big Hammer body acts as a magnet to pull a smallmouth away from cover as well as creating commotion and attracting suspended smallmouth. This past May after a spring cold front, which dropped the water temperature 5 degrees, the Big Smallmouth swimbait saved the day.

While swimbaits will catch smallmouth in natural lakes, they are great for summer river smallmouth. They can be fished around cover, whether in the form of boulders, brush or bridge abutments and current seams. A one quarter ounce swimbait works best for most river situations. If you are bumping rocks and the swimbait gets hung up, downsize to a one eighth ounce swimbait.

The best presentation is to cast just upstream beyond a specific target and swim the lure back quickly and steadily so that the smallmouth reacts immediately when it sees the lure as it comes past the cover. Being opportunistic feeders, they can't pass up an easy meal. If you are missing fish, stop your retrieve, let the bait drop a few seconds and, if you feel pressure, set the hook. Otherwise, continue with a fast retrieve. The angle of the cast can be important, but it varies according to the type of cover and the speed of the current. Try to present the lure so the fish doesn't see it until it is close.

The fall swimbait bite is awesome both on rivers and natural lakes. In the early fall period river smallmouth can start to scatter and anglers need to cover water. Crankbaits and spinnerbaits are typically a good choice but swimbaits are again an option, particularly when the bite is tough. On natural lakes I like to fish the Big Smallmouth Swimbait on windy points and humps. On some days, smallmouth that will not chase a crankbait or spinnerbait find the thumping action of the swimbait irresistible.

As the water temperature drops, swimbaits become more effective. This past November I was unable to get my hands on any redbtail chubs and had to rely on jerkbaits and big smallmouth swimbaits. There was a brisk northwest wind and we spent the day on the river casting 3/8 ounce pearl/flash and sexy/shad big smallmouth swim baits over weeds and boulders, catching 22 smallmouth in the process.