

Topwater For Post Spawn River Smallmouth



The post spawn is a time for recovery and larger female smallmouth do not move any farther from spawning areas than needed. They relate to cover, preferring to avoid the main current flow by holding in the calm water on the edge of the seam. Males are more mobile and aggressive as they search for food. Smallmouth activity levels depend on the water temperature and the prevailing weather. Stable weather means rising water temperatures and a blossoming eco system.

After a bit of searching I found several places on the Menominee River where smallmouth were stacked up along undercut banks. Not only were the smallmouth able to avoid the swift current but there was also plenty of forage present. The only problem I had was that my clients had to cast tight to the bank without snagging the overhanging cover. If the cast fell short of the bank by more than two feet and landed in the current, there was no strike. When the topwater lure landed a few inches from the bank the odds were rather good a smallmouth would explode on the lure.

The 3-inch Yo-Zuri 3DS Popper got the job done when my clients made a good cast. I told my clients that when the Popper hits the water, let it sit a few seconds, then give it a short pop and let it sit again. Several times I stressed the importance of letting the popper sit in the calm water and not pulling it across the seam into the current. The 3DS Popper is the best popper for river smallmouth hands down! It has a short-lipped popper cup, internal 3D Prism finish, rear feathered treble hook with holographic mylar tinsel tail that mimics the scales of an injured baitfish floating on the surface. Once my clients adjusted their casting the action got hot and heavy. Most of the smallmouth we caught hit the popper when it sat a few seconds after the pop. We caught over 50 topwater smallmouth that day.

Clusters of wood will not only hold more smallmouth but larger ones as well. Big post spawn females will position on the edge of overlapping wood. After you position your boat facing upstream into the current with your spot lock in place, it's time to make an accurate cast. Look before you cast. Cast your topwater bait tightly to the best looking cover and get ready, because a strike can occur as the lure hits the water. If no strike occurs, give the lure a twitch and let the rear of the topwater bait drop vertically. Next reel up any slack in the line, twitch the lure again and let it drop. Don't reel the lure in too fast, but try to keep it in the strike zone as long as possible. When the lure hits the seam where the slack water meets the moving water the lure will start moving in the current. At that point speed up your retrieve with a series of fast short pops. Continue with this for about three feet then bring the lure back to the boat. I have caught several huge river smallmouth right on the seam so be ready. Remember, these post spawn smallmouth can be sluggish and will require patience. Last June while fishing with a client we boated 10 smallmouth off one small cluster of shoreline wood. The largest river smallmouth of the day measured 21 inches.

A few days later I had an elderly man fishing with me for a few days and although I had a pattern, things did not go well. I showed him the pop 'n' stop presentation we used a few days ago, caught a few smallmouth to demonstrate and I thought everything would be fine. However, my client made several casts and they all fell way too short of the bank. In a normal year, his casts would have caught a few smallmouth since the fish would have moved away from the bank to strike the lure. I positioned the boat as closely to the shoreline as I felt would not disrupt the fishing and he did catch a couple of smallmouth. Due to his limited casting ability we spent more time on the shoreline retrieving lures than casting. You can be on fish and use the proper lure but you need to get the lure to the fish.

Eventually, I rigged him up weedless with a four-inch Case Magic Stick with a 3/0 wide gap hook. He managed to make an occasional good cast tight to the bank and managed to catch a few smallmouth. What should have been a banner day of topwater fishing was only fair at best due to my clients' limitations. A guide can put his clients on fish, but the rest is up to them, even if the result is the client being convinced that the fish are not biting.



3" Hubs Chub



Yo-Zuri 3DS Popper