

# Striper Fishing Live Bait 101

## Locating Fish:

We fish the same bodies of water most of the time and find ourselves fishing areas that bring fond memories of the fish we have caught in the past. The areas we consistently fish have brought us good catches in the recent past and therefore we generally see no reason why they will not again.

I guess what I am now asking is why we were successful in the first place? How did we end up in these places that have produced fish? I think most people, if they are honest, will say that a friend or better fisherman at some point, gave us a tip or showed us a place, that has caused us to look and fish certain areas. These past successes can be our crutch that cause us to be limited in our pursuit of predatory fish such as a Striper. If we fish “spots” and do not look deeper into the reason why those fish were there in the first place, will, in my opinion, restrict our fish locating abilities when we are presented with a tough day or we venture onto unfamiliar water.

The eye opener for me was a tournament held on my home lake and I watched “out of towners” fish areas of “my” lake where I thought there were limited chances of catching a good fish .. until the weigh in. These “out of towners” had success that I never would have predicted and showed me that I needed to look a little more in depth as to the “why and where” these winning fish were caught.

“Stripers like deep water!” How many times have I heard that statement? Though not untrue, there are other contributing factors as to why a Striper will be found and or caught in or near deep water. Stripers like shallow water! Again, I’ve heard it said many times.

The man made reservoirs in the southeastern United States have a common trait in that they all have an older, deeper main river channel that is the water source for the construction of the lake. The main river or creek channels are the super highway and main travel arteries of any reservoir. Fish like to be in or near the channel. However, as anyone that has driven through North Dakota can attest, Interstate 94 can be a lonely place. If you find yourself on I -94 a little further upstream, say in Minneapolis MN, you

might find a little more action. These river channels are the same, in that, not all of the channel is created equal. So where do we look?

The first thing we need is a good Topographical map, either electronic for your on board GPS or a hard copy. There are more and more companies developing software maps that are available for your electronics. Navionics, LEI, Lake Master, Magellan, Garmin, just to name a few.

I look for “S” turns in the channel. These are the some of the best first places to look at when looking for Stripers. If there are shallower flats and structure near these sharp turns in the channel, they will typically hold fish. The bait fish will live predominately shallow and the bigger fish will live and travel around these areas. Nothing is absolute, but a Striper will feed across these curves much like the vertical line through the the dollar sign (\$). This allows the fish to hunt shallow and retreat to deep water in the event of perceived danger. This configuration also is typically loaded with ambush points for predatory fish. I think Stripers are as lazy as the next guy, in that, this configuration gives the fish the most hunt-able “bang for the buck” with the smallest amount of travel and space.

A singular, short tight curve in the channel may also yield the same result. A long straight away in and of itself is not my favorite place to look, however, there can be other factors in this type of area that can be fishy. If the channel passes near the mouth of a long narrowing cove that holds bait, the fish can be found, at different times, in the back of the cove or out near the channel. If there are humps or drop offs near the channel these areas can also hold fish. The river channel is the oldest part of the lake and therefore can create over time, bluffs and lay downs near the channel. These areas can also be productive. There is no substitute for time on the water. The guy who looks and spends time with his lines in the water will ultimately be able to rule out unproductive areas.

## Method:

Covering the water column with bait is key to finding and settling on a pattern that catches fish. We are fortunate in Tennessee to be able to fish as many rods as we can afford. My favorite method, when fishing and experimenting with live bait, requires at least seven rods. The lines furthest from the boat are the shallowest. 5 long lines with planer boards and

floats, and 2 Carolina rigged poles, with at least an ounce and a half, up to three ounce slip sinkers should do nicely. The rods are set in a specific order with the electric trolling motor moving the boat forward at a slightly faster speed than I would fish the lines once they are all set. About 1.5 MPH allows the planer boards to get into position quickly and then slowed to .6 to 1 mph while fishing.

The rear or furthest lines are set first. The bait is hooked straight up through the lower jaw and out the top of the nose. This gives the same hook exposure to the fish no matter which direction the the bait is attacked. It should be attached to a line with no weight. 20 to 30 feet of line and then the rear float. This will fish directly behind the boat approximately 75-100 feet away. The rear left and right planer boards are hooked similarly with the difference being that each line has a small split shot about 2 feet above the hook, to fish a little deeper. The forward planer boards get 2 split shot on each line to fish a little deeper yet. The Carolina rods are set to the deepest depth and set the furthest forward. The Carolina rods are also a good indication of your trolling speed. These lines should be nearly straight down. If not, you may be moving too fast. Pay attention to which rod the fish came on. See if it happens more than once. If so, you can adjust your other poles to increase you chance at success.

There are no absolutes when it comes to Striper fishing, but if you find yourself on a strange lake or you are having a tough day on your home lake, this is something to try. This method also translates to creek arms as well. the depths may be different but the approach is still the same. Good Luck.. Patience!

Capt. Bob Angello

<http://www.fishforstripers.com>