

Northwestern Ontario

Volume 1, Issue 3

**FREE**

# Outdoors



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**Team  
NOSA**

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- **Fed. Conservatives propose positive changes to gun reg's**
- **Fish For Life Tournament Update...And More!**

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J. Kaplanis Photo



Donna and Ashleigh Kaplanis and some great eating size walleye.

# Giving Ol' Marble Eye the Slip!

By John Kaplanis

Summer time walleye action can be hit or miss depending on water temperature, wind conditions, air pressure - you name it. Sometimes it can be downright frustrating. Factor in a mere 4 fish limit and the cost of fuel for truck and boat, and at times it is tough to justify the effort and expense associated with sport angling.

Every now and again it's nice to get out and catch a good haul of fish to host a family "fry up" or to just keep a few fillets in the freezer to host a special dinner. I preach conservation and the need to catch-and- release fish, but let's not beat around the bush - eating fish is a highly motivating reason to actually go fishing and commit to the expense of doing it. I decided to load up the boat and take my wife and daughter on a walleye day trip to do just that. My girls love a walleye cook up as much as anything, so the deal was, we had to go catch our dinner!

Techniques for putting big walleye on the hook are as diverse as the many lakes and rivers there are to catch them in Northwestern Ontario. But when it comes to putting quantity in the live well, I know of few other techniques easier than using a slip float and live bait rig presentation to hammer the walleyes or perch. With wife and daughter early to rise on the day of our big day-trip, and knowing that a long drive had better include some decent fishing at the end of it, my plan was to employ the slip float and hope to cash in on a good catch.

The joy of the slip float is that it is incredibly easy to use and it makes great sense when fishing with kids or when you have a lot of people with lines fishing out of one boat. There are no tangles, no snags and you can leave your line in the lake while you put your rod down to enjoy a book, eat a snack or check out your text messages! You see where I'm going with this! You really don't have to do anything except watch to see if your float sinks below the water surface, thus indicating that you have a fish on the other end! Simple and fun.

To rig a slip float, all that is needed is a stopper knot placed in-line above a single plastic bead, followed by the slip float and then your jig and bait. I prefer the Thill brand of slip float. Thill also sells stopper knots pre-tied in a bag of several dozen so getting pre-rigged before you hit the water is easy. Once you set up over the depth you want to fish at, it's simply a matter of setting your lure depth by adjusting the stopper knot.

This also allows for targeting suspended fish, as walleye and perch often are when they are on the feed bag. In fact a good strategy to start out your day is to fish your jigs at various depths from near bottom to somewhere in the middle range of the water column or wherever you mark fish on your electronics. This is a good way to target potentially hungry fish, but get ready because if you hit that hungry pod of feeding walleyes, the action is going to get fast and furious. Using a variety of live bait presentations from leeches to minnows or crawlers will also help you dial into what the fish are hungry for.

Upon arrival at our destination walleye lake, we launched and headed straight to a known walleye haunt where I had success in the past. But after an hour of only catching a few small walleyes and pike, I knew this location was not holding the fish in quantity, so it was time to "gun and run" - sort of!

The anchor was pulled and we motored to another location on the lake and dropped anchor. Before we could get a second line in the water, my wife was hollering for me to get the net. She had a fish on within seconds of setting up. My daughter was next to start landing too many walleyes to count. I tried to get in on the action but between taking fish off hooks and baiting up new ones, I was busy for about an hour until we had filled our bag limit with chunky eating sized marble eyes as well as caught and released many more than that! It was a perfect day on the water, we had fun and the girls didn't get bored "fishing all day" with little to show for it. In fact if anything, they got tired of catching so many fish! A good problem to have any time.

We had a productive afternoon that we all look forward to repeating in the future. If you enjoy relaxing while fishing, then spend the time on the water with family by giving the "slip float" method a try for your next walleye outing. Good luck and have fun!



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**Nose to Nose  
with ground  
blind  
bears**

*By Tom Armstrong*

**T. Armstrong Photo**



**Kyle Noyle and his bear taken by using a ground blind in a corn field.**

Six feet away....that's how close I found myself to a rather large bear last fall. I sat there unmoving, watching and waiting, listening to him breathe, and watching his nose work as he tried to sort out what wasn't quite right. Now 6 feet is a touch close, and likely closer than most people would prefer to be from a black bear, but it is where I found myself one day last fall, camera in hand.

I was hunting with a friend's son who was perched above waiting for a shot as I sat in the ground blind below waiting to film the new hunter taking his first bear. We had sat the blind the night prior, and had several bears in close proximity to the blind, but no shot opportunity, and this second night out he had decided to relocate to the tree. We had three bears come by that night, all very close to the blind, but didn't end up taking a shot.

Ground blinds can be a great means to hunt bears; they're a very effective means to hunt, as well as making for an incredibly exciting bear hunt. It's something else being on the same level as the bears, and having close encounters like these sure make for a pulse-pounding hunt.

Blinds give hunters the opportunity to hunt areas you may not be able to hunt with a tree stand if there are no suitable trees. It lets you dictate where you hunt from, and allows you to get close to bait. They are perfect for gun and bow hunters alike, but are especially good for archery hunting, as it is a great means to get you well within archery range.

I've never harvested a bear outside of 20 yards, and many of them were from ground blinds, with several bears being harvested from blinds under ten yards away. It makes for excellent shot opportunities with a bow, concealing some movement, and giving you room to move and draw your bow.

One thing to consider when hunting from a blind, is that it may limit your shooting opportunities at last light if you are hunting with a bow. At last light, the sight pins aren't as visible, and it can be hard to make out the silhouette of a bear against the dark ground for an accurate target.

When targeting bears, a hunting blind is fairly easy to conceal, and I find bears are not as easily spooked as deer by the presence of the blind. I try to have my blind against some brush or trees then I will weave some branches and sticks into the straps on the ground blind for camouflage. But it doesn't have to be as hidden away as when I'm whitetail hunting. I've had ground blinds setup along the edge of fields, and although bears may give it a second look, they are generally comfortable coming into baits near blinds. I always try and limit the open windows, to avoid gaping black holes that may give bears pause, only leaving the window open for me to shoot out of.

I'll typically setup my blind 18-20 yards from my bait site, at a good angle to try and give yourself a good shot when a bear's at your bait. Whether your bait is a barrel chained to a tree, or in a hole in the ground, try and set it up so the bear will spend most of its time at your bait broadside to the blind.

No matter what equipment you choose to harvest a bear with, but especially if it's a bow, ensure you practice sitting, drawing and shooting in your blind, to ensure you can comfortably get your bow up and drawn without hitting your bow or arms on the sides of the blind, as that's a sure fire way to spook a bear. Also, if using a crossbow, make sure you have enough room for the bow to fire without the limbs hitting the walls, making a racket and potentially tearing your blind.

Many blinds come with shoot through windows, which is something I have yet to test, but in theory you can shoot right through the mesh windows, thus keeping you totally hidden inside with no open windows. It's something I wouldn't try with mechanical broad heads, and would be slightly apprehensive even with fixed blades, but if after practicing and it works, it could be worth a shot.

When you're looking at blind options, I prefer the newer hub style blinds, they setup simply and quickly, and offer the most space inside, and are ultra stable in the wind. They offer lots of elbow room inside for using your bow, crossbow or gun, and let you sit and move in comfort. Whatever your choice, getting nose to nose with bears, hunting from a ground blind is sure to make for an exciting hunt.



# Late Summer Pike Tactics

G. Ellis Photo

By Gord Ellis



Gord Ellis hoists a heavy summer northern caught on a crank bait.

Ok, I confess. I do like pike. Not so much the really small ones but those big scary fish that break lines and hearts. Pike that top 40 inches are a formidable beast, and a lot of fun to catch. Most interestingly, they are also not that easy to fool. Ask anyone who spends a lot of time fishing for trophy pike, and they will tell you just how rare it is to get on a good big fish bite. If it's going to happen early fall is often the time.

So what makes a good late September pike day? Stable, high pressure usually means it's time to go fishing. The first hard frost of the year is also a sign the pike will be on the move. Also, when a thunder storm is threatening, northern pike go on the prowl. I don't mind a sunny day for large pike, especially if the weather has been cold. As much as big pike like cold water, they will sit out on rocks and soak up the sun like big cats. Pike that are digesting large meals also soak in the sun, and may even strike a bait, despite a distended belly. I've caught huge pike with whitefish, sucker and burbot tails sticking prominently out of their mouth.

Big pike areas to look for include main lake points, extensive rock reefs, saddles between islands and weed beds. If you can find green cabbage weeds in September and October, there will always be pike nearby.

As the summer turns to fall, pike will set up on rock reefs, island saddles and boulder strewn points. The more expansive the reef, the better the chances of pike being around. Spawning areas for lake trout, herring and whitefish also draw monster pike. I've seen some dandy gators caught by anglers casting for lakers at the end of September.

Tactics that catch fall pike are many. Trolling crank baits such as the Rapala Super Shad Rap, Believer and Swim Whizz are the most efficient way to cover a lot of water. Putting a bait in front of the fish is the key to trolling success. However, when working weed edges and reefs, you can spook fish off the spot with repeated passes. If you find a consistent lunker hole, casting is the way to go.

Bucktail spinners of about an ounce are tough to beat when casting for pike. Spinners like the Musky Buck, and Musky Killer always get a pike's attention. A bucktail should be retrieved somewhat slowly as the water cools. Speed up only if pike are following and not hitting. In waters with a herring, sucker or whitefish forage base, use silver blades and black or white bucktail skirts. In dark or stained water, a fire-tiger blade and green or red skirt is the ticket.

As for tackle, I'd recommend using a seven foot, one piece flipping stick, and a bait-cast reel spooled with 17 pound monofilament test line. I like 30 pound Fire-line for pike, but if you use a "super line", you need to have rod that can take the abuse a big fish can hand out. If you insist on spinning gear, go with a 7 foot medium action rod, large size spinning reel and 12 pound line. Steel leaders with a quality snap and at least 30 pound test multi strand wire are a must. These big fish bite hard.

Trophy pike are a slow growing fish and are getting rarer. Killing off the large fish soon leads to a stunted population of ravenous hammer handles. So please let those big pike go. Hopefully, with the help of these tips, your pike of a life time will present itself this month.

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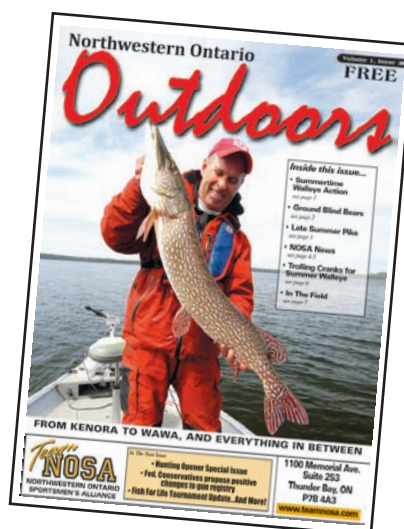
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# Team NOSA

## THIS MONTH'S NEWS

### Shebandowan Smallmouth Showdown Results



**Trevor Zimak and father Ken proud champions of SSS 2014.**

The Shebandowan Smallmouth Showdown bass tournament added much needed heat to an otherwise cool start to summer in the Thunder Bay region! Tournament organizer George Clark reports that 75 teams took to the waters of Shebandowan Lake over two days in July to compete for cash and merchandise prizes worth over \$32,000 in total. However as the would-be Champion of the tournament would later say, it wasn't about the money - it was about being number one on the water that weekend!

After a very well organized morning launch, day one of the tourney saw some great catch limits weighed in at day's end. The first day leaders were John Fogolin and David Veneruzzo, but that spot is apparently tough to hold onto by day two! The Youth Mixed team of Kevin Ritchie and his daughter Alyssa did however maintain top position in their categories for both days winning the coveted mixed team and youth team championships at the end of day two with an impressive 8th place finish among the overall standings ringing in a total weight of 23.16lbs.

The SSS Tournament Champion for a second time, was Trevor Zimak teamed up with his father Ken Zimak. After landing 9th place on day one, they made up for it and finished the tournament with a Championship winning total of 28.11lbs to take home the well deserved grand prize cheque of \$5000 and the BDO Dunwoody sponsored SSS Championship Trophy.

The SSS tournament would not be possible without the strong support of major sponsors and numerous volunteers who graciously donate their time to assisting George Clark with organizing the event. Also, George Clark has spear headed the "Friends of Shebandowan Public Boat Launch" to raise funds that are devoted to improving the infrastructure of this Crown held property. Essentially the boat launch is being maintained and kept useable due to the volunteer and financial donations of day users like those who use the site during the tournament. It seriously begs the question, why does a group like this have to form to do the work that OMNRF should be doing to promote and maintain the future interest in sport angling across Ontario? Hats off to George Clark for an outstanding SSS event in 2014 and for taking the lead to improve the public launch at Shebandowan Lake.



**NOSA Pro Bass angling team of Mike Krassey and Kyle Huillery at final weigh in of SSS tourney.**

### Conservative Hunting & Angling Caucus Chair Visits Thunder Bay



**John Kaplanis of NOSA and Conservative MP Robert Sopuck enjoy Kam River walleye action.**

Federal Conservative MP Robert Sopuck hails from Dauphin Manitoba, and he's the Chairman of the Conservative Hunting and Angling Caucus, which is a group of likeminded MPs within the Federal Conservative government who clearly recognize the value of our outdoor heritage on a national scale. Bob Sopuck recently stopped over in Thunder Bay as he worked his way throughout several "hunting and angling" strongholds across the region.

Sopuck brought with him a presentation on the activities of the Conservative National Hunting and Angling Caucus, the only one of its kind among the major federal parties in Canada. Clearly, the Federal Conservatives value the hunting and angling vote, and they intend to make gains in the Thunder Bay region in the next federal election. Why? Because hunting and angling are a huge part of the fabric of our region - and we show up at election time.

Probably the most important point to highlight about Bob Sopuck is his recent past Presidents award from the Canadian Wildlife Federation for his work on conservation policy in Canada that he received this past June. Indeed Bob is passionate about the outdoors and conservation, but more importantly he's passionate about the future of these activities in Canada, and he understands the threats to that future.

The presentation was held at the Davinci Centre in Thunder Bay and it was supported and well attended by the heads of major regional outdoor groups such as OFAH, NOSA, NW Fur Trappers, TBay Salmon Assoc., TBay Elk Restoration, Tournament Anglers, Black Bay Fish and Game Club, and North Shore Steelhead Assoc. to name a few. The outdoor groups in the region do hold strong membership numbers who factor in at election time. This has not gone unnoticed by the Federal Conservatives.

Bob's presentation centered on the work of the Conservative Government as it relates to national conservation initiatives but most notably is the National Conservation Plan which includes numerous fisheries habitat restoration and rehabilitation programs all across Canada including the Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnership Program. Locally, the North Shore Steelhead Assoc. received a very large grant courtesy of the National Conservation Plan funding, thus demonstrating the federal government's commitment to conservation and recreational fisheries in the region.

Sport angling contributes over \$8 billion dollars to the GDP while hunting adds another \$1.5 billion of the GDP. Therefore, with over 5 million Canadians buying licenses to hunt, fish or trap it is clear that the Conservative Party of Canada intends to work with professionally competent groups to not only provide their members with project funding but also to ensure that the hunting and angling heritage is protected by common sense federal legislation.

The Northwestern Ontario Sportsmen's Alliance (NOSA) recognizes that no other federal party is working as hard as the Conservative Party of Canada to represent common sense firearms legislation and to also fend off fringe animal rights groups and anti-hunting activism that hurts the Canadian economy and threatens the future of our outdoor heritage. NOSA looks forward to working with the Conservative led Federal Government to ensure our outdoor heritage is protected and promoted.



**Nipigon Mayor Richard Harvey, Conservative MP Robert Sopuck and NOSA Exec. Dir. John Kaplanis.**



# Team NOSA

## THIS MONTH'S NEWS

# NOSA Recommends Ideas to Boost OMNRF's Special Purpose Account (SPA)

Recent news media captured the public sentiment of Ontario resident senior citizens who are opposed to any idea of OMNRF charging seniors for a sport angling license. This comes after an Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR) posting listed possible concepts and revenue generating ideas to increase funding for the cash strapped ministry. The public was invited to consult on this posting by submitting comment. NOSA submitted 3 pages worth of recommendations.

NOSA's recommendations centered around the idea of the OMNRF changing the way it does business with its clientele, namely hunters, anglers and trappers. NOSA Exec. Director John Kaplanis states, "NOSA's advice to MNR was that the ministry needs to operate more as a business, concentrating on a relationship of service to its clientele and thus forming business partnerships and transparent relationships with that clientele." Kaplanis added that for many years in dealing with OMNR bureaucracy the attitude from them seemed to be that "revenue generation" is not their responsibility but he says NOSA disagrees wholeheartedly.

NOSA's Executive Director cites several examples from other jurisdictions in Canada and the U.S. where the thinking is completely different. For example in Minnesota a lottery based fund is used to finance forward thinking research on a declining moose population. This fund is also used to finance numerous other state projects for the benefit of Fish and Wildlife programming.

The concept of lottery based revenue generation holds more promise for sustainable funding than license fees for example, and the reason for this is that hunting/fishing license revenues depend on participation. But if the Ontario government is not investing in this future by improving infrastructure and access (boat launch sites for example) then participation in these activities will fall off over time.

Currently in Ontario, an aging population of sport anglers will spell certain hardship for the OMNRF's Special Purpose Account (SPA) when these anglers hit senior age and no longer contribute to the fund. But NOSA contends that if we are relying on license fees alone to pay for roughly 2/3 of the entire Fish and Wildlife program for OMNRF for all these years, yet the agency has seemingly forsaken the value of hunting/fishing/trapping for the past 15 years while interest in these activities has waned, then it is time for the agency to re-evaluate this relationship and make some changes to improve it.

The easy answer for OMNRF's brass is to simply increase license fees, however NOSA has stated our opposition to this concept for the reasons mentioned above. Increased fees and license costs will discourage participation over time, as cost of fuel and equipment is also on the rise, eventually people will throw their hands up and say, "enough" and simply pack it in.

NOSA was founded 17 years ago when the OMNR was working to reduce fishing limits from 6 to 4 fish for walleye and other species. NOSA warned that this trend would cost Ontario in the end. Since then, our spring bear hunt was stripped away and our moose populations have gradually decreased due to what we believe is a lack of focus on moose management as a shift toward Caribou management took precedent over the past 10 years, thus limiting what was once a lucrative revenue generating opportunity in moose tags and non-resident hunting tourism. What does Ontario have to show for it now? Have we forsaken all that we had for something that will never be?

# Northwestern Fur Trappers Association Annual Fall Turkey Shoot

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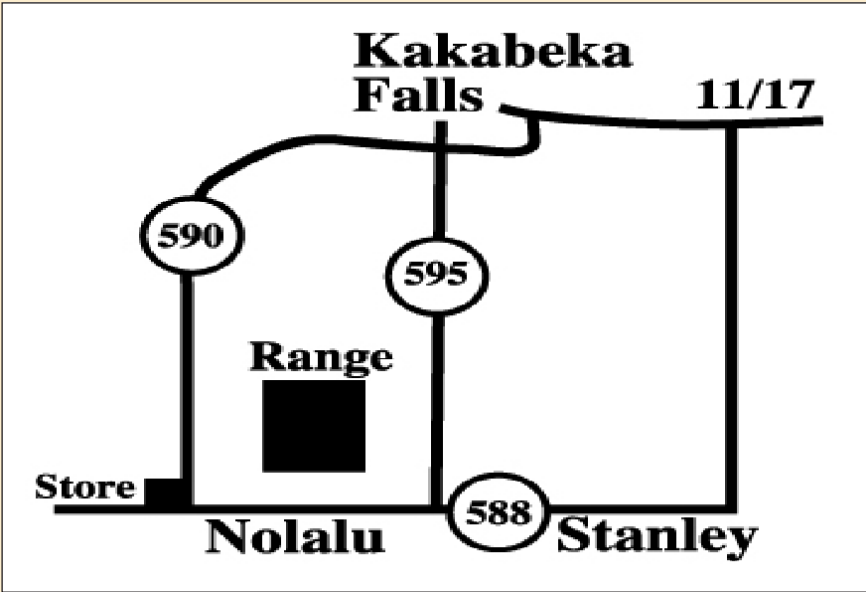
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# Trolling Cranks for Summer 'Eyes

By Davis Viehbeck



Mike Deschamps and a big walleye that fell for a crank bait.

D. Viehbeck Photo

One of my favourite ways to catch both numbers and quality-sized walleye throughout the warm-water period is to troll crankbaits. Trolling crankbaits allows anglers to cover water quickly and effectively by running different styles of baits at different depths while searching out fish. Throughout the summer months, I'll troll anywhere from 2mph up to 3mph and will fine tune my trolling speed based on fish activity and success. Trolling crankbaits is a far faster method to locate fish than traditional live bait rigging presentations such as lindy rigging or bottom bouncing which are generally restricted to slower speeds less than 2mph.

My typical crankbait trolling setup is an 8'3" or 8'7" Rapala North Coast Hot Shot Series rod matched with a smaller-sized line-counter reel. I'll spool the reel up with 4 pound diameter/ 10 pound test Sufix 832 braid and attach a 6 foot piece of 10-12 pound test fluorocarbon leader material joined by a uni-to-uni knot. The North Coast Hot Shot Series rod is a critical component in my trolling program as this series of rods features a very specific tip that reveals if a lure is running properly. If I don't see rapid movement or vibration in the tip, I know that my crankbait has picked up some debris and isn't fishing properly. The line-counter reel is also an essential tool, as crankbaits run at different depths depending on the amount of line let out. Running no-stretch lines results in instant hook ups when a fish bites and also allows most cranks to achieve 25% greater running depth than similar strength monofilament.

As a bit of "crankbait junky", I've come to learn the approximate running depths for most of my "go-to" cranks and more or less know how much line to let out to ensure my bait is running where I want it to. Having said that, I also rely heavily on a great book called "Precision Trolling". This book is a great reference tool for learning the diving depths of most popular crankbaits on the market. Utilizing this book will increase your effectiveness when using crankbait trolling presentations by understanding how much line to let out based on the bait you're using and the depth you're trolling. If you're into technology, this reference tool is even available as an "app" for your Smartphone!

Some of my favourite cranks for trolling walleye include Rapala Minnow Raps, Taildancers, Jointed Shad Raps and Deep Husky Jerks. I've also had a ton of success with the Storm Smash Shad and Thunderstick series of baits, particularly those baits featuring the UV bright finish when fishing stained water conditions.

Leave the bait behind this summer and do some precision crank bait trolling on your next walleye adventure!



David J. Wilson with a big walleye

*Davis Viehbeck is a fishing promoter and outdoor writer based out of Thunder Bay, ON*



# Readers In The Field

Each issue we will feature a “In The Field” section where our readers can email in a high resolution photo with their game or fish. Photos must be submitted in colour at 300dpi resolution and can be emailed to **webpress@tbaytel.net** subject “In The Field”





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