

Timing is Everything

By Sep Hendrickson

Turnover Time

Each year, normally during the early fall period, freshwater trout anglers anxiously and often impatiently await the arrival of the "turnover". It's no wonder; with turnover comes possibly some of the best and most exciting fishing opportunities of the year. Turnover however, is a short-lived process and knowledgeable anglers know they must be ready to act. Simply put..."turnover" is the process of hypolimniation. It is that brief period of time brought on by the arrival of fall, when lake waters intermix and create the same temperature from top to bottom. A combination of temperature change, wind and weather, creates this upwelling inversion of water. This annual process consistently brings trout and other game fish to the surface for several days to actively pursue the nutrient rich food chain. Plankton, minnows and other naturally occurring "meals" are readily available. Turnover can often produce wide-open bites and trophy-sized fish.

Starting first at higher elevation lakes, normally turnover lasts for a few days to a few weeks before winter's arrival. The lake's water will then slowly begin to re-stratify into the normal layers of Epilimnium (surface waters), Thermo-cline (ideal temperature range) and Hypolimnium (oxygen and nutrient poor, deeper waters). Fishing success will vary, eventually slowing down considerably as re-stratification takes place.

If you troll, toplining will be the ticket. We recommend letting out 75 to 125 feet of line and slow trolling minnow imitating lures or threaded nightcrawlers. Flashers or dodgers will enhance your presentation. If casting from shore is the preferred method, lures such as Kastmasters, Krocodiles or Little Cleos will work well. Spinners such as the Blue Fox Vibrax or Mepp's will also do the trick. Anglers who prefer using baits will find live minnows (where legal) or nightcrawlers suspended just a few feet below a bobber to be a deadly effective method.

Ideal temperatures plus oxygenated and nutrient rich waters with "easy pickins" puts turnover fish and anglers alike in an aggressive frenzy. Check on your favorite lake to find out approximately when turnover will occur and plan your trips accordingly. Marina operators and guides are well aware of conditions at their favorite lakes and will gladly share information. They want you to catch fish and return again. •

Right Time

For years we have kept a diary of our fishing excursions and it has proven invaluable in planning upcoming trips. One recurring entry clearly advises; "Never, ever fish on a Full Moon". This was obviously written after countless hours of angling frustration on the water. We have found that the best fishing occurs on a new or no moon phase or when the moon is so low on the horizon that it shines only a short period before disappearing. Out of necessity however, we have not always been able to take our own advice.

Dedicated anglers know that the right time always includes being on the water in the very early morning hours. Minnows, baitfish and game fish move to feeding areas and slowly, but methodically, create a food chain throughout the lake. As the first rays of light illuminate the sky, fish species become more active, searching out forage as well as eluding predators that may consider them a meal too. Dusk also offers anglers another prime opportunity to intercept feeding fish and many times the evening bite far surpasses the morning bite. But don't be lulled into a morning/evening program. Fish will go on and off the bite several times each day and anglers can often miss prime time angling if they restrict their activities.

Let's take the subject one step further...We have found a very useful "tool" to help pinpoint the exact times during the day that anglers can expect to find the best fishing and hunting periods that the day has to offer. John Alden Knight's "Solunar Tables" is a small thirty-two page paperback that forecasts the daily feeding times of fish and game for every day of the year. Each day is broken down into two or three peak angling opportunity periods that often last several hours. By region, it defines the window of maximum opportunity for anglers and hunters. Similar to the tide tables, it spells out periods when the moon alignment is directly overhead or underfoot. "Moon Up-Moon Down", this theory has been proven for over 60 years by outdoorsmen, both in the field and on the water. There are periods where for no particular reason, action breaks loose. We've all had those days. Sometimes we call it luck or being persistent. Chances are, if you were to check out Knight's Tables, you would find a direct correlation between the action and the predicted peak periods. We've been skeptical about these tables...but now have used and checked them enough to have reasonable confidence in their accuracy. You may think we're kooks for following this guide...but it really does seem to work. Ask for the book at

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your favorite tackle shop. If you're like us...you need all the help you can get.

We always anxiously await the coming of Turnover and the fall fishing season. It marks the beginning of great late season angling opportunities for trophy-sized fish. Big fish are actively on the prowl, feeding frequently in an effort to build body fat to hold them through the cold winter months. Check the calendar, take note of the moon phases, review the solunar table and make your plans.

This is the time that a properly presented bait or lure is likely to catch that one fish of a lifetime. Go for it! •