

Lake St. Clair — an overlooked muskie haven

The dream of catching a 50-inch-plus muskie eluded me for years. I felt somewhat comfortable in that I didn't share this distinction alone.

Once I overcame the belief that a muskie is "the fish of a thousand casts," my luck improved.

How did it happen? Two reasons.

First, I concentrated on learning more about areas that consistently produce big muskie.

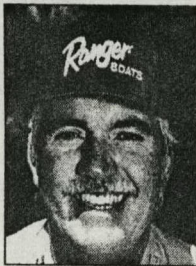
Second, I gave up the notion that the only acceptable way to catch a muskie is by casting baits.

Yes, where appropriate and allowable by law, trolling for muskie is a major option.

Last week, I trolled for muskies in Lake St. Clair, Mich., one of America's most overlooked muskie lakes.

Lake St. Clair is a shallow 256,000-acre body of water located 20 minutes east of Detroit. It's fed from the north by the St. Clair River and Lake Huron, and empties to the south into the Detroit River and Lake Erie.

Lake St. Clair is known for its abundant perch, walleye and smallmouth bass. Few



**Mike
Norris**

Based on the number of guiding trips Miller does annually, that's between five and six muskies per trip. If Miller's average catch doesn't trip your trigger, maybe this will. Collectively, Miller's guests average between 25 and 30 muskies per year that exceed 45 inches or better.

Fortunately for me, I was able to add to this year's total.

I boated and released a 52-inch monster Great Lakes muskie, and two more that

ever try fishing Lake St. Clair for muskie.

Don Miller is the exception.

Miller runs Miller's Sport Fishing Charters and has guided numerous clients to huge Lake St. Clair muskies for the last 20 years.

"I average between 300 and 350 muskie per year guiding clients on Lake St. Clair," said Miller.

stretched the measuring stick at 48 inches each. I did this while fishing with Miller for two days last week. Miller and I caught and a released several smaller muskies along the way.

Sounds simple, doesn't it?

Miller made it look easy because he's equipped to do so.

Miller knows what baits trigger Lake St. Clair's huge muskies, and is a master at matching certain colored lures to bright or cloudy conditions. He's also among a small group of muskie anglers that believe muskies are attracted to an outboard's prop-wash.

"I lived behind the legendary Homer LaBlanc, who is widely regarded as the best muskie troller that ever lived," said Miller. "I listened to and applied every belief he had on how to catch muskies."

Miller prefers large, 6-inch jointed baits called Believers that send vibrations to a muskies lateral line via their shake and wobble. He believes these baits cause muskies to strike with abandon. He also believes muskies become conditioned to, and impervious to, boat traffic.

Miller set one jointed Believer 6 feet down and 15 feet behind his boat. The second Believer was set a mere 2 feet down and 5 feet behind the boat. Two other rod-and-lure combinations were set farther back on planer boards. We trolled at a nippy 5 miles per hour. The 52-inch muskie came on the Believer on the short lead.

Lake St. Clair's muskie season opens the third week in June and continues through November. As muskies recover from their mid-

June spawn, they feed aggressively along and nearby Lake St. Clair's emerging weed beds.

"Mid-July is always a peak period for numbers of muskie according to my past records," Miller said. "But my real trophy time starts in mid-

August and continues into October."

Miller's boat, a 30-footer with state-of-the-art navigation equipment and fishing electronics, is large enough to support one to six anglers per outing.

For information on fishing Lake St. Clair muskies and Don Miller Charters, give him a call at (734) 429-9551.