

For example, if crayfish comprise the major source of food for the bass population, use plugs in traditional crawdad patterns. If shad are the major forage, then a standard *Tennessee Shad* color or *Metallic Silver* pattern usually will be effective.

SOME OF THE CRANKBAIT FINISHES AVAILABLE FROM LUHR JENSEN

- Pumpkin Seed Longear Sunfish
- Breeding Bluegill • Green Sunfish
- Summer Mud Craw • Nearclear Pearl Shad
- Crystal Chartreuse Shad • Crystal Texas Shad
- Crystal Tennessee Shad
- Blue Belly Pond Craw • Crystal Crawdad
- Crystal Fire Tiger • Crystal/Chart/Blue
- Crystal/Hot Texas Red • Clearwater Flash
- Bluegill Perch • Olive River Craw
- Rainbow Trout • Metallic Perch
- Bleeding Shiner • Silver Shimmer Shad
- Pearly Orange Belly • Orange Crawfish
- Gold/Black Stripe • Silver/Black Shad
- Silver/Blue Top

But also think about other sources of forage bait in a particular lake. If there are rainbow trout, perch, bluegill, crappie or shiner minnows, then plugs in corresponding patterns may be the hot trick. Similarly, frogs or salamanders may be indigenous to the shoreline. Here a crankplug in the old favorite yellow-green color scheme may prove to be the sleeper.

When it comes to crankplug fishing, color selection also can be affected by climate and water conditions. A rough rule of thumb is to use dark-colored baits under dark skies or in stained water, lighter shades under bright sky or clear water.

However, it also pays to try newer color patterns that give the bass something dynamic to look at. Luhr Jensen's *Clearwater Flash* pattern with its opulent prismatic reflection and the multicolored *Fire Tiger* finish for example, can be dynamite in the Hot Lips Express plug series. This particular coloration closely resembles the rainbow-like hues exhibited by frantic shad minnows.

Other metallic colors such as *Gold* and *Silver* often produce erratic light refraction underwater. This also can serve to trigger strikes from bass when

more traditionally-colored plugs fail to produce.

SIZE

Crankbait size usually is determined in regard to the size and silhouette of the primary forage bait in the lake. If crawdads are on the small size, then a more compact lure in the 2 5/8" to 3 5/8" length would be appropriate. If shad are large and mature, switch to plugs from 4 to 4 1/2" long.

A recent development in crankbait technology has been to design plugs which closely match the natural silhouette of indigenous baits. *Fingerling Hi-*



FINGERLING HI-CATCH™

Catch™ plugs are long thin-bodied lures made to imitate small baitfish in terms of size, action, color and silhouette. These unique plugs come in a wide array of colors ranging from *Rainbow Trout* to *Fire Tiger*, to *Perch* and *Baby Largemouth Bass*. The largest models will dive up to 12 feet on the retrieve.

ACTION

The most subtle dimension to crankplug selection is the action of the lure as it is retrieved. This is sometimes hard to determine without first trying the bait with a particular spinning or casting outfit. You will find that some plugs track with a very "tight" side-to-side vibration, while other have a wide wobble. At times, bass definitely will key in on one action over the other.

Here again Luhr Jensen offers a systematic choice with regard to lure action. For a wide, slow, side-to-side motion, the Floating Power Minnow would be a good choice used with a ripplin' or twitchin' retrieve. Similarly, the thin Fingerling Hi-Catch will also have a seductive "wobble" with a slow retrieve. Faster retrieves produce more vibration and tighter swimming action from crankplugs. The Speed Trap and Hot Lips Express series of baits excel in this

capacity combined with modern high-speed bait-casting reels. Again it is important to be flexible and try different plugs at the same depths to key in on the swimming action the bass prefer.

Yet another type of crankbait is the lipless variety. Luhr Jensen's *Sugar Shad®* is called "The Rolls Royce of Lipless, Vibrating Crankbaits" for good reason. When fished on the bottom it stands on its



SUGAR SHAD®

nose like a feeding forage fish. You can "burn" it back to the boat or jig it off the bottom and it has superior stability in river currents with intense vibration and rattle sound. The Sugar Shad is also excellent as a high-speed trolling lure, not only for bass, but large strippers as well! It is available in three sizes: 1/8-oz., 1/4-oz. and 1/2-oz. and comes in 14 fish-enticing colors. Don't overlook this lure when it's time to go crankin'.

By stocking your tackle box with specific crankbaits chosen as to size, coloration, diving depth and action, you will have narrowed the field to a workable number of plugs to suit most any condition you'll encounter. You'll spend less time lookin', more time fishin' and your catch rate undoubtedly will climb.



Ronnie Kovach owns Ronnie Kovach's Fishing Expeditions and can be reached at P.O. Box 3118, Huntington Beach, CA 92605-3118 or by calling 714-375-9888.

This is one of a series of more than 20 detailed technique reports produced by Luhr Jensen & Sons. For a complete set, a patch for your jacket or cap and a price list/catalog showing all of Luhr Jensen's quality fishing tackle and accessories, send \$5 (\$3 credited to your first order of \$20 or more) and your name and address to: Luhr Jensen, P.O. Box 297, Hood River, OR 97031, Attention: Customer Service.

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TECH REPORT #7

How To Go CRANKIN' FOR BASS

By Ronnie Kovach



Bass fishing with crankbaits is one of the most successful ways to get down where the trophy lunkers are. It's an addictive kind of angling and the lures available are nearly as numerous as the fish you're after. This report will help you select and effectively use casting crankbaits.

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Bass anglers have a tendency to either oversimplify or overcomplicate the selection and use of crankbaits. On one hand, some get into a rut by choosing the same plug, trip after trip, despite condition fluctuations. On the other hand, some novice bass anglers become overwhelmed by all the crankbaits on the market. They don't know where to start when it comes to selecting the right lure for a particular condition from their tackle box.

There is a systematic way to develop a concise repertoire of crankplugs for your tackle arsenal. By dividing them by (1) diving depth, (2) coloration, (3) size and (4) action, you will be able to narrow your choices down to suit the conditions you are fishing.

DIVING DEPTH

Perhaps the most integral component to crankbait design and function is the lip or "bill" of the lure. This is the planing surface that serves to drive the bait downward upon the retrieve to a prescribed depth. As a general rule, plugs with short diving lips are made for shallow water conditions and those with longer, more pronounced bills are designed to dive deep.

The first challenge is to initially estimate the depth at which bass seem to be holding. This information can be gleaned from a variety of sources. Using fish locators and similar electronic instruments, you can monitor both bait and bass activity. This will clearly give a strong indication where fish are holding.

Without electronics, you can rely on past knowledge of prime spots on the lake, other anglers, current reports from marina operators or a basic understanding of bass movement based on seasonal patterns.

Once you decide on a depth to fish, select a plug that is correspondingly made to dive through that strike zone. For instance, Luhr Jensen markets an entire family of lures designed to attack a lake from the shallowest to deepest water. Understand, no single lure can do it all. Shrewd anglers develop an "arsenal" of sorts, allowing them to select a crankbait, based on prevailing conditions!

If bass are determined to be in a subsurface feeding mode, this is where a floating/diving minnow can be deadly. The **"Floating" Power Minnow™** is

made to float at rest, then dive a few feet under the surface on the retrieve. This particular lure is highly effective on a straight "chuck-and-wind" or when gently "twitched" slightly below or on the surface.

Another way to fish the Minnow in a subsurface



"FLOATING" POWER MINNOW™

fashion is to make long sweeps with the rod to quickly drive the plug down. In between sweeps, the Minnow will start to float to the surface. This is when you may expect strikes to occur. This process is known as "rippin". You might also want to innovate, using a combination of a "jerk", "twitch" and "rip" to generate strikes with these lures from otherwise disinterested fish. Floating Power Minnows are available in two sizes, 3-3/8 inch and 4-1/2 inch, which allows you to match a lake's prominent baitfish size.



SPEED TRAP™

If the bass are working slightly deeper, select a more traditional fat-bodied plug with a small diving lip. The Speed Trap is sensational for this situation. The tiny 1/4-oz. plug can be retrieved F-A-S-T but still continue to run in a straight line. Or, you can reverse speeds and use a S-L-O-W grind with the Speed Trap diving 4 to 6 feet

If you're fishing for bass in brush, weeds, fallen trees, stumps and even beaver lodges, the **Brush Baby®** is specifically designed to get you through these types of structure without hanging up. Special "brush

cams" guard hooks and keep the body away from brush, etc. The ultra-buoyant body quickly backs away from obstructions when you give the line a little slack, allowing you to fish through the type of structure bass prefer to hide and ambush in.



BRUSH BABY®

Savvy double-digit largemouth bass specialists will troll the larger Luhr Jensen **A.C. Plugs®**. Using both top-line and lead core trolling tactics, the A.C. Plugs in Rainbow Trout finish will sometimes produce that wallhanger of a lifetime! Huge bass feed on smaller rainbows and there is no better replica of a live, small trout than the Luhr Jensen A. C. Plug!



A. C. PLUG®

HOT LIPS EXPRESS®

The **Hot Lips Express®** lures have specially designed diving lips which make them the steepest, deepest-diving plugs for their size, while still maintaining high fish-attracting action. These lures are capable of a true 10 to 18 foot diving range, normally unheard of in baits of comparable size.

When it comes to reaching bass, stripers, wall-eye and even big trout at depths beyond ten feet, Luhr Jensen's potent Hot Lips Express becomes the ultimate deep-diving weapon!

The **"Tournament Advantage" (T.A.) Hot Lips Express®** allows the angler to present a deep-diving lure at a maximum diving angle. It is not uncommon for freshwater gamefish to suspend along steep



HOT LIPS EXPRESS®

rocky walls, or on the edges of extreme drop-offs. Here's where the T.A. excels!

Depending upon the size you select, expect to reach fish holding deep at 12 to 24 foot depths. This becomes a deadly lure, particularly during extreme cold or hot periods when bass suspend deep near This kind of structure.

One of the most innovative crankbaits available to the serious bass angler is the new **Klawdad™**. When largemouth, smallmouth and spotted bass are foraging on crayfish, the Klawdad can be a deadly alternative to traditional crankbaits.

Designed to replicate natural crayfish in both shape and action, this lure can trigger strikes from shallow-feeding bass using slow-to-high speed retrieves. Its unique design also allows the angler to



KLAWDAD™

fish the Klawdad in heavy brush and cover with maximum snag resistance.

With its loud rattle and distinctive swimming action, the Klawdad calls in lunker bass, while mimicking one of nature's most popular bait-food sources!

COLORATION

The best dimension to key in on when it comes to selecting proper coloration in a crankbait is to try to match it for the dominate forage bait in the lake.