

# SWIMBAITS DON'T BITE

by Ross England



**Y**ea, I tried throwing those swimbaits but haven't gotten a bite on one yet so I pretty much gave up. And so another conversation begins on one of the highest reward presentations in bass fishing...and also one of the most frustrating.

I typically share my experience with these oversized creations. It was my third season of throwing a swimbait before I got my first bite and fish; a monstrous reward of a two pound, four ounce scrapper! The next day on the lake armed with my two swimbaits and the success of the previous trip, I got my second bite and fish, nine pounds, twelve ounces. That is what it is all about! Now I have the confidence to carry a selection of these unusual baits in my boat most of the year. If you have been

even test the patience of the most experienced angler. In my opinion, a beginner has an excellent chance of catching a fish on a swimbait on Clear Lake in March and April. Now you know what lake and when to fish it!

The most productive and easy to learn swimbait on Clear Lake during the spring is the 3:16 Lure Company's Mission Fish. How do we know this? Ask anyone you know who fishes this lake in the spring and the majority of them will list the Mission Fish as one of their first choices. As the fish move into the tules to stage and spawn, this bait is very successful at coming through the vegetation and getting bites. For the beginner, go with the five inch size in either the shad, hitch or pearl color. A two pound fish will smash this bait as hard as a seven pound fish!

This particular bait runs on the light side for swimbaits so your equipment choices are simpler. Use a seven to seven foot six inch graphite rod in a medium heavy fast action. Good examples are the Powell 704, Rogue SB796 or Loomis IMX844. If you have chosen a bigger bait to start your hunt with, look to the Rogue SB807 or SB808, good rods at reasonable prices. These rods all have soft enough tips with this weight bait to allow the fish to load the rod tip before you set the hook; a flipping stick does not. Use a quality reel that can hold enough 20 to 25 pound test monofilament to make some real long casts and have some backing still on the spool. Keep the gear ratio of the reel down in the 5.0 to 1 range as you will not be burning these baits.

Now that you have the equipment and the mindset, dedicate the time to practice on the water. Ask your coach for a little help in getting you started in the right direction. Fish the tules in four to six feet of water on the North end of the lake. And with the Mission Fish bait used in this example...do not set the hook until the rod loads up, this isn't jig fishing!

For the sake of the drill, I filled in the blanks for my lake; you fill in the blanks for your choice of lake. I have yet to coach someone through the beginning phase of this process for my lake and had them have an unsuccessful trip. I truly believe if you can catch your first swimbait fish, you can catch many, many more. Follow this template and it won't take you three seasons of trial and error like it did for me.

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Ross is sponsored by:

3:16 Lure Company, Powell Rods, Clear Lake Guide Service and his wife of 30 years Deb  
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unsuccessful with the big baits but really want to add this presentation to your bag of tricks, this article is for you.

Begin by tipping the scale in your favor. You will need a body of water where you know people catch swimbait fish. You will also need to choose a bait to start fishing, an outfit that matches the size/weight bait you have chosen and the determination to set days aside to work on the water to get used to working your bait. Finally, you should seek out someone you know who has enjoyed success with these baits and ask them for some coaching.

Choosing the right body of water is a key place to start. Some lakes have great reputations for producing fish on swimbaits. Every angler on the West Coast knows of Clear Lakes' reputation and it is well earned. Others require specialty approaches that

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