

TANDEM RIG FISHING

Trophy Striper season usually means fishing in the upper part of the water column and maximizing the number of lures you use when trolling. The type and size of the prey that the Trophy Striper feeds on is about twelve inches long and the fish are both species of spawning shad (American and Hickory) and also includes any large menhaden (about twelve inches in length) that have entered the Bay. Planer boards will help you increase the number of lines you can use and allows keeping more lines in the upper part of the water column by extending the width of your boat. Most fishermen also try to keep their lures as far away from the boat noise as possible, as well as, closer to the surface.

Tandem rigs (two lures each) are also used by many fishermen during this early season. The lengths of the two leader lines to the lure vary according to what users feel is necessary and usually are at least fifteen and twenty foot to the lures from their junction at a three way swivel. Many use a spoon (non weighted lure) for the top running lure and a weighted lead headed lure to run in the deeper position to give separation between the two lures. If you use two lead headed lures most likely they both will have an 8/0 jig hook and use an 8/0 trailer hook. Both are positioned to come out on the top of a nine inch soft plastic shad. The jig headed lures used usually have a minimum weight of three ounces to carry an 8/0 hook. To obtain separation of the two lures a bottom lure of six ounces is used and is needed to have, at best, a minimal separation of about one foot. Even then the bottom lure is running fifteen foot deep if you let out one hundred feet of forty pound test monofilament. Few fishing lines float as high as monofilament and most of the super composite lines with thin diameter would run nearer to twenty foot or more with that much weight at that distance.

There are a few 8/0 jig headed lures that are made with a “no weight” plastic head that you can purchase to run in the top position. However, by using a threaded twelve inch soft plastic shad with a 10/0 hook protruding out of the bottom of the shad you can obtain the length of a lead headed parachute with a nine inch soft plastic shad. If you use a jig head with a six inch soft plastic shad, you can obtain the same length when using a 9/0 hook threaded nine inch soft plastic shad. These “no weight” types of lures on the top of the tandem rig, used with a three ounce lead headed lure below, will allow you to keep the rig at about the four and five foot levels with forty pound mono out about one hundred feet.

Why use a threaded shad (hook on the bottom)? Simply said, it will swim upright in the water because of the hooks weight and it will reduce pull downs, without catching a fish, to an absolute minimum. Think about the hook position on hard plastic trolling, casting, and even jigging lures. They all have hooks on the end or on the bottom or in both places, but never on the top. Most off shore soft plastic lures now have hooks on the bottom and/or the end. Most predator fish, which includes Strippers, attack from below their prey and stun their prey by mouthing it. They then release their prey and approach from its head to swallow it. Why? If swallowed tail first the prey’s dorsal fin(s) might get stuck in their throat and result in a starvation death for the predator if the prey cannot be disgorged. If a hook is located in the top of a lure, when it is attacked, the hook ends up facing out of the predator’s mouth initially. The predator’s path upwards will be altered by a sudden jerk sideways by the forward motion of your lure. Unless your lure is released very quickly and turns to an up right position, the lure will slip out of the predator’s mouth. And more important, your lure will move away, instead of being stunned and floating as a bait fish would. If the predator continues the attack and maneuvers to the head first approach to swallow your lure, your fishing line will deny the attempt. Also remember, at three miles per hour your boat and your lure is traveling almost four and one half feet per second. A lot has to happen very quickly during the initial part of the attack to catch the predator. When the hook is positioned on the bottom of the lure and is attacked the hook points into the mouth and as the lure slips it will be positioned to hook in the outer jaw, tongue, or the other jaw as it starts to slip out of the predator’s mouth.

The threaded soft plastic shad is called a “naked shad” and as such is a very effective lure to use as a non-weighted fishing lure. The nine inch shad originally came with a slot in the bottom for threading. Another good

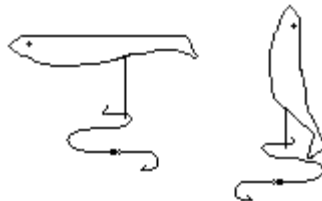
reason is if you go fishing in Virginia you can use teaser rigs with all of your shad teasers threaded with a hook to increase the chance of a hookup.

Hooks to use for threading and best results are size 10/0 for twelve inch soft plastic shad, 9/0 for nine inch shad and 5/0 for five and four inch shad.

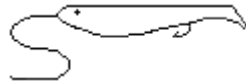
Push a utility knife blade into the bottom of the shad about two thirds of the way back to the tail. This action will reduce the possibility of tearing a slit in the shad when pulling the hook into the shad body. Actually, a tear does not stop Stripers from biting your lure, and even with the slit you make, a tear will happen occasionally. You could, instead of cutting a slit, just push the threading needle into the shad one half of the width of your hook's gap between the shank and the point.



Tie or crimp a length of mono on a hook. Position the threading needle into the slit no more than half of your hook's width. Place the needle on a hard surface, with the tag end of the mono in the needle, and turn the shad upright. Gently push the shad down on the needle guiding it out of the front of the shad.



Pull the needle out of the shad and pull the hook into the shad. Stop pulling when the shad is in the "original" shape. Place a toothpick down from the top of the shad through the hook eye and to the bottom of the shad. The toothpick will help stabilize the hook. Cut the toothpick even with the top of the shad. Your "naked shad" lure is ready for you to use.



Smaller shad can also be threaded with the hook on the bottom using the instructions above and an 8/0 saltwater hook is used for six inch shad and a 5/0 hook is used for five and four inch shad. Another way is to start the hook at the front, with the shank on the side of the shad and slide the shad on the hook until you reach 2/3's of the way to the tail. Turn the hook point to exit out of the bottom of the shad.

To increase the effectiveness of the naked shad lure you can add flash material, such as Flashabou or Krystal Flash (fly tying materials), by threading pieces through the shad with your needle.

You can use the threaded shads on teaser rigs and get good results, also.

It is safest to carry a few replacement "naked shad" instead of threading when on the water. Do you lure and line assembly on shore where it is safer. Why increase the chance of getting a hook, needle, or a cut in you hand while on board the boat, use the time for fishing, not rigging.