

Landing bait can be as rewarding as reeling in fish



**JOE FITZGERALD
CHASING PISCES**

The rain had stopped, and a heavy mist crept around the rocks and weeds.

A chorus of spring peepers serenaded me as I approached the water's edge. Like crickets in a summer field, their song fell silent wherever I approached.

It was getting dark, so I ignored the tiny and elusive tree frogs to slice off a few chunks of the slippery, bloody organ. I could have used bread, it would not have been so messy, but I was told raw beef liver was a sure bet.

I put the pieces of liver into a large pickle jar I had brought with me. I then took the sawed-off top of a plastic pop bottle and inserted it into the jar so it created a funnel going inside.

I secured that with duct tape and some string, and then waded out into the shallows of the backwater. I pushed the trap down, bubbles gurgling while it filled up and sank. I marked the spot in my mind and waded back out.

Very wary

By the time I arrived at the field, it had been dark for a couple hours. I walked onto the wet grass with a flashlight and a two litre ice-cream container and began scanning the ground. There was one. I bent to pick it up and it quickly disappeared.

I forgot how wary they were. These were not drowned garden worms on the side of the curb. They were big, healthy night crawlers. I found another one and this time eased my hand toward it. I grabbed it and felt it pull back.

I knew if I pulled too hard, it would break so I just held on.

It was like fighting a fish, keeping tension on the line and reeling when there was slack. Millimetre by millimeter, the mighty worm relented, and finally slid exhausted out of the earth. Within an hour I had a bucketful.

In the morning, I went back to

USING BAIT IN NOVA SCOTIA

- **NIGHTCRAWLERS:** Nightcrawlers are easily caught on wet spring nights when they emerge on lawns and fields. Spraying an area of your lawn with a hose just before dark will also bring them out.
- **FISH TRAPS:** Although fish traps can be purchased, a simple jar with plastic pop-bottle top inverted into the mouth is a cheap and effective minnow trap if you do not want to chase them with a dip net.
- **LIVE-BAIT WELL:** If you do not have a live-bait well, dry leaves will keep minnows fresh and lively for hours.
- **MATCH BAIT:** Take note of minnows you catch in a certain area and try to match your lures and flies to them.
- **DON'T DUMP BAIT:** When using minnows, do not dump unused bait into the water you are fishing. Many minnows are juvenile species that are not native to a particular watershed. They can cause serious damage if they survive and proliferate.

check my trap. I was gripped with anticipation as I wondered might be in it. I waded out and pulled it up.

I could see frantic movement in the jar; I took it ashore to examine the contents. There looked to be about 20 minnows swimming around. Minnow is a loose term, for at an early stage of their lives, any species of fish can be called minnows.

I looked closely at my captives and tried to identify them. From the black strip on their sides, I could see most of the minnows were black-nosed dace. However, prominent spines showed two sticklebacks, and also some juvenile yellow perch and white suckers.

Irresistible to bass

I now had an arsenal of bait for my next fishing trip. Trolling lakes with minnows just before the mayfly hatch is deadly for speckled trout, and the trusty nightcrawler trailed behind a spinner or in pieces on the hook of a lure is irresistible to spring bass and pickerel.

Fully armed, I now only had to decide where to go.

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