

## **Make “Sound” decisions when picking crankbaits**

by: Captain Lance Valentine

Crankbaits have been catching fish ever since they showed up on the fishing scene over 100 years ago. Today you can't find an angler targeting any species of fresh or salt water fish who doesn't have at least a small collection of crankbaits in their boat. Lure manufacturers are also experiencing an increase in crankbait sales that has led to the development of new shapes, sizes, actions and custom colors.

Ask a crankbait angler why he chooses or prefers a certain lure, and you will get answers covering size, shape, dive angle, color, diving depth and more. But very rarely will the angler focus on the sound the crankbait makes moving through the water. Sound, most often overlooked by anglers when choosing a crankbait, has a huge effect on the production of a lure, and sometimes is the MAIN reason a fish attacks a crankbait.

Fish sense sound underwater in two different ways. First, is the use of the inner ear, or what is usually classified as “hearing”. This sense focuses on high frequency sounds very close to the fish. High frequency sound is created by fish moving through the water, wave action, hooks and split rings on a lure. Lure makers can create more high frequency sound in a lure by adding a large amount of small “BBs” to the body of a lure. Fish are constantly bombarded by high frequency sounds and they expect lures to make them, and they do by simply displacing water as they are retrieved or trolled.

Second, the lateral line of fish is designed to detect low frequency sounds in the water, or what we as anglers usually call “feeling”. Low frequency sounds can be felt by fish at a further distance than high frequency sounds can be heard. While usually not “natural”, low frequency sounds are often the first indicator a fish has that something is in the area and needs to be inspected. Lure makers create low frequency sounds by adding a small number or large “BBs” in the body of a lure.

For years anglers have discussed how important sound is when picking a lure. Some are sure that sound is a big factor all the time, some feel it really isn't a big deal and that other factors are more important, and some pay more attention to crankbait sound only in certain conditions such as night fishing, dirty water or scattered fish. I get asked the question a lot in seminars and my answer is “yes”! I believe sound, especially low frequency sound, makes a big difference, especially when trolling for open water walleye.

I have always been an information junkie, and use information that I and my fishing friends collect to help make decisions for more fishing success. When the question of sound kept coming up, I decided to do some basic tests, record the results, analyze them and come up with some guidelines regarding sound in my fishing. Actually, my curiosity about the importance of sound was triggered a few years ago when a lure called a Deep Bandit began catching Lake Erie walleye at a high rate, often out fishing other lures that have been effective for decades.

Setting up the experiment, I started with some things I believe to be true. First, walleye need to see a lure before they will attack it. Second, low frequency sounds are easy for walleye to “feel” from long distances. Third, a lure with low frequency in a trolling spread will never lower your catch rate. With those things in mind I set out to get data on the following questions. One, will lures with a low frequency sound catch more fish than one without low frequency sounds? Two, will a lure with low frequency sound in my spread make

other lures, even those without low frequency, produce better? Three, what is the best location in a spread for a lure with low frequency to be placed? Four, are there times a lure with low frequency will lower the catch rate of a spread? Yeah, I know, that is a LOT to worry about while fishing, but I truly believe these are the things that make average anglers good, good anglers great and great anglers awesome, especially on days when the bite is slow!!

After getting a basic premise, I started my “testing” during the summer/fall of 2016-17 using a Deep Bandit lure as my “control” low frequency sound producer. The testing took place on Saginaw Bay and Lake Erie, and I ignored data from days when “everybody caught fish on anything”. Here is a quick recap of the results:

### **Basic Results:**

291 fish caught while trolling and keeping data logs

Fish were caught on Saginaw Bay and Lake Erie (206 on Saginaw Bay)

Fish were caught in water from 6’ to 46’ deep, both open water and in weeds

Fish were caught on 7 different crankbaits (including Bandit)

Speeds from 1.4 – 3.2 mph

### **Data on the 291 fish caught:**

35 caught on Bandit Lure (12%)

209 fish caught with Bandit in the water (72%)

True Bandit percentage (14%) –percentage of fish caught on Bandit WHEN a Bandit was in the water.

Conclusion----Bandits “Attract” fish to the spread even though other lures may “trigger” strikes

### **Bandit Location Data:**

209 fish caught with Bandit in water

171 fish caught with Bandit CLOSEST to boat (82%)

25 fish caught with Bandit behind MIDDLE board (12%)

13 fish caught with Bandit behind OUTSIDE board (6%)

Conclusion ---Low Freq sounds closest to boat bring fish in to look at the “Spread”

Obviously, this is just a beginning at proving a theory, but I feel there is enough data to make some conclusions and strategies to my trolling spread when using crankbaits. My spreads will have a lure that creates a low frequency sound near the boat, and will probably always have one in the water. I’m looking forward to gathering more data this fall and also doing some testing on how low frequency sounds may increase catch rate when using spoons and spinners. Stay tuned!

The next time you choose a crankbait to cast or troll, be sure to think about more than just the color, shape and action of the lure. Paying attention to what sound your lure creates, and keeping track of when and where different sound profiles work will increase your crankbait success in the future. The fish are telling us what they want, are we listening?

For more information to help you catch more fish, check out [www.teachinfishin.com](http://www.teachinfishin.com)