

# Paddle Tail Northern Pike

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## Timing

► Paddle tail swimbaits are effective spring through fall; best April through June.

## Equipment

► Rod - 7'-7"6" heavy action high-power baitcast.

► Reel - High capacity 6:4:1 gear ratio level wind.

► Main line - 20-30# Berkley Spiderwire Stealth.

► Leader - 18" 80# Fluorocarbon. Steel leaders aren't necessary. Abrasion-resistant fluorocarbon leader is stealthier and allows better bait movement.

► Lures - Paddle tail (and its pike attracting natural swimming action) is key component for three baits, each of which has a time and place.

Berkley Powerbait Hollow Belly: Use early in season, rigged weedless, when water starts to flood fields. Can be fished in as little as 6" of water.

Matt Lures Ultimate Bluegill series: Switch to this bait as water warms and panfish start to move in. Work this lure at the first depth change adjacent to the flooded fields.

River2Sea Live Eye Bottom Walker Shad: Best in warm-weather months, use this lure to fish deep outside weed edges.

## Location

► Technique works on any lake, river or reservoir holding northern pike.

## Quick Tip

► When fishing shallow in the spring we have found that rigging the Berkley Hollow Belly upside down creates a larger surface wake and more importantly travels across the weeds much easier resulting in more strikes.

### Berkley Powerbait Hollow Belly



#### Standard rigging



#### Shallow water rigging

## Leader Construction

► Build leaders with quality flat black components. Black draws less attention than chrome couple this with fluorocarbon line and you have a low visibility leader which equals more strikes not only from pike but Largemouth bass.



80# black barrel swivel    18" 80# fluorocarbon    60-100# black snap

## Technique

Spring: When waters are high and fields flooded, northerns are in less than 4' of water. Key on flooded grass. On sunny days, they'll stack in shallows absorbing warmth to boost metabolisms. This is where Hollow Belly shines. Rig bait upside down so paddle is up and make long casts into flooded grass. Hold rod tip fairly high and burn the bait back, keeping it just under surface. The strike of a northern is vicious and thrilling. (You may never go skinny dipping again!) They come up behind the bait like a submarine, pushing a huge wake as they move in. Don't get excited and set the hook before you feel the fish. Keep retrieving the bait until you feel the weight of the fish. Then set the hook hard-- and hang on.

Mid spring-early summer: Look for the first depth change adjacent to flooded fields, where pike will hold as panfish prepare to move into spawning shallows. "Match the hatch" with the Ultimate Bluegill baits, which are realistic imitations of panfish. Parallel bank and cast forward keeping the bait on the transitional edge. These baits work well with a stop-and-go or a rod-pumping retrieve. Panfish move erratically, and this up and down motion triggers pike to eat.

Summer: When northerns move out to deep cabbage beds in 15'-25' of water, cast the River2Sea Bottom Walker in the strike zone for as long as possible. Vary retrieves from slow and steady to high-speed and erratic. Pike can be a little finicky in hot weather, so experiment to find the motion that triggers strikes.

- 1 Early spring location after first high waters flood shores.
- 2 Mid spring panfish staging for spawn.
- 3 Pike relocate to the first depth change as waters start to recede.
- 4 By Mid summer, pike move out to the deep cabbage beds to feed until fall.

