

Vertical jigging, "simply the best" by: Jan Ohlsson (artikel för engelska www.anglersnet.co.uk)

Only two years ago a new word was introduced in the Swedish fishing community Vertical jigging. At first I saw nothing new in this method, it reminded of old time fishing, dragging bait up and down at places you knew held fish... but I was wrong. Vertical jigging is a method brought to Sweden from Germany and the Netherlands by dedicated fishermen who wanted to develop their fishing for zander, pike and perch. It's in many ways simple but to be really successful it takes a lot of training. This fishing has revolutionized my own fishing for especially zander during times of the year when fishing traditionally has been poor, late autumn, spring and wintertime (when the lakes are not frozen). The method requires a boat, a



onar of decent quality, a short rod approximately 6 feet with a sensitive tip and lots of jigs. It's a great advantage if the boat is equipped with a front or back mounted electrical motor. This allows you to control the boat and the bait much better. You need to be able to move very slowly. Braided thin lines is the only option for this fishing, choice of reel is your own, spinning or casting.

How and where to fish...

Me and my friends has practised VJ in different kind of lakes an also in the Baltic Sea. The colour and visibility of the water has shifted from gin clear to muddy. Despite witch, places to fish are where the bottom is "hard". By hard I mean everything from sandy and small pebbles to bottoms covered with rocks. In springtime, nearby spawning the males gather around hard bottoms at depths around 3 to 14 feet.

These fish are often visible on sonar. You fish the jig close to the bottom and every now and then you bounce the jig at the bottom.

Remember; don't wave your rod to much. Small controlled movements with the rod, no waving. Just lift the jig a few inches of the bottom and slowly let it sink to the bottom again. Sometimes the movement of the boat is enough. You need to move very slowly, if not you loose bottom contact and will hook less fish. The take often comes when the jig is still or when it's on its



way down. If it's a male, the take is powerful and aggressive, if it's a female it's the opposite, a small "tjick" that often goes unnoticed if you're not paying attention... Its great fun to se the fish on the sonar and seconds after hook it. In time and with growing experience the sonar combined with knowledge of underwater structure will be your best friend in the art of vertical jigging.



Recently we have discovered the advantage of using marker buoys. These are not new to us but I must admit that we have underestimated the advantage of using them. These buoys (see picture) are excellent for marking spots that you want to fish and it makes the strategy how you fish a selected area easier, especially if the area that holds fish is small.

Summertime is quite different... The fish is now to be found on soft bottoms 15 feet and deeper, the fish often attacks the jig aggressively, hold on tight to your

rod... Use your sonar as a fish spotter, beware of where the baitfish is. This is often where you find zander.

Autumn and winter, the places to fish are the same as in autumn, steeps and plains with hard bottom but with the exception that the fish can be found in a bigger variety of depths. This has a lot to do with the temperature of the water. Places that hold the warmest water are the places that hold the most fish. When the temperature is very much the same everywhere in the water the fish becomes more spread out and harder to find, look for baitfish on your sonar. Always bring a thermometer, very small differences can be of importance, search for warm areas. This can be the big difference between failure or success...

Bait...

Well, jigs in different sizes such as Big Hammer, Relax, Fin-S, Fox Slayer and Fox Crusader (the two last jigs are developed by the Dutch fisherman Luc Coppens, VJ Guru) are very good. Don't be afraid to use big jigs up to 6,5 inches. You might think that a lively jig always is the best choice but it is often the opposite, don't be afraid of stiff jigs, they are very effective but I can't say why... Colours are important, green and yellow are always reliable. Don be afraid of experimenting, sometimes a brown big jig is the winner.





In addition to the single hook it's a good idea to mount one or two small treble hooks at the side of the jig, this induces the chance to hook the fish enormously. Another method is called Fireball, instead of a rubber jig you use at small dead baitfish, small roach, sprat or whatever you can get hold of. Rigged the same way as a jig. This often triggers the fish when the fish is inactive or not in the mood. We always use a leader of decent quality fluorocarbon, this to prevent pike from stealing the jig.

Summary

Equipment: Short rods, thin braided lines. A sonar is a big advantage. **Jigs:** Stiff or lively, both works. Don't be afraid of big jigs. **Hotspots:** Look for hard bottoms, sand, pebbles, rocks and clay. The exception is summertime. **Technique:** Controlled movements, don't wave your rod. Make bottom contact every 5-10 seconds.

Catches up to forty good zanders and a few pikes and perch in a day are not impossible using this method. As I said in the beginning vertical jigging has



improved my fishing in a radical way. It outmatches ordinary jig fishing and every, to me, other known kind of way to catch a zander... Why is this? Well, when using regular jigging methods you present the bait to the fish only a few seconds in every cast, this giving the fish a very short time to decide what to do, while vertical jigging allows you to fish a long time over hot spots and with the occasional advantage of actually seeing the fish on the sonar. Give it a try and above all its not complicated, it just takes a little training, I guarantee that its great fun...

