

SHALLOW WATER

The upstream portion of a wing dam nearest to the shoreline is usually the most productive fishing location because shallower, slower water provides prime feeding opportunities for bass. "If I start [fishing] on the downcurrent side, I go all the way to the shoreline and look for eddies and pockets and riffles and cast above the wing dam and bang it back through and over the rocks and boulders," explained Samo. Sometimes, however, the bass will follow the bait right up onto the wing dike before striking. Lures they might follow include crankbaits and topwaters, as well as jigs and tubes. "When the bite is really tough, a wacky style worm thrown upstream of the wing dam and allowed to drift up and over it can be great."

FLAT SPOTS

Bass that relate to wing dams in summer and fall sometimes will decide to "eat out." That's why an angler should make several casts out toward the main river when he has worked his way to the front of the dike, according to Samo. "Some of these wing dams have shallow flats in front of them that are basically feeding areas and the fish can be located as much as 50 yards in front of them."

SWEET SPOTS

Eddy water along the downcurrent side should be targeted carefully, with particular attention paid to any irregularities in the structure. Samo looks for "sweet spots," parts of wing dams that have been breached by current or by collisions with objects. If he finds one of these irregularities, Samo will make repeated casts to them. Some may be only the size of a basketball, but they can be unseen feeding areas that will replenish with fish. "Other important things to look for," he added, "are logs and brush that have been pushed up against or embedded in the wing dam. These can be key fish-holding structures as well."

SCOUR HOLE

The downstream side of a wing dam nearest shore usually affords the deepest water, and it might be 15 feet deep or more. Bass will move into these areas to rest, but they usually do not feed aggressively in those depths. However, a Carolina rig, a tube or a jig might induce bites in this location if bass are not cooperating elsewhere along the wing dam. During summer and fall, when both current and water levels often are low, bass are likely to be positioned in the shallower water around the structure, feeding often. At these times, Samo likes to fish no deeper than 5 feet. On the other hand, spring is usually not a good time to find bass around wing dams because the water is higher, prompting them to move into side channels and backwaters. If the water is not too high, a wing dam located just outside a spawning area can be a notable exception. Bass will stage there to spawn — and again as they move back out into the river.

ROCK AND ROLL

Sometimes, dam builders dump their excess rocks in piles off the ends of the dikes. These piles will hold fish. "It pays to do some searching on every wing dam," said Samo, who also likes to cast parallel to a wing dam on the upstream side after he has worked the downstream portion. In addition, he will fish the same waters that he cast over the dam to reach when he was on the downside of the structure. To lessen the possibility of snags, and because fighting a fish would be much more difficult due to the current, he seldom casts downstream from the upstream side. When and if Samo finds fish along a wing dam — whether in upstream shallows, downstream sweet spots, offshore flats, or isolated rockpiles — he often can use that discovery to build a pattern, duplicating his success elsewhere on the same fishery.