

# Try Jerk-Baiting For December Bass!



Contributing writer & Kentucky Lake Fishing Guide, Randy Kuhens displays a KY Lake Hawg caught on a jerk bait!

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By: *Kentucky Lake Fishing Guide Randy Kuhens*

I laugh when I hear folks say that fishing a jerk bait looks a lot like “a jerk on one end waiting for a jerk on the other,” but the fact of the matter is, during the month of December, no lure has produced more big fish for Kick’n Bass clients than the jerk bait. Generally speaking, my clients and I begin fishing a jerk bait when the water temps are in the mid 50s and we’ll fish it until the temps reach about 43-45 degrees or so. Weather permitting; we’ve fished jerk baits on Kentucky Lake right up until Christmas time and sometimes even beyond.

The secret in catching early winter bass is finding them and the jerk bait is a great locator bait. In December, the shad migration has pretty much wound down and bass are feeding up. Fishing areas that become ideal due to the changing water level is critical this time of year.

Chunk rock and rip-rap banks in the northwestern portions of Kentucky Lake that are exposed to the low win-

ter sun and a southern breeze will have the warmest water available and harbor concentrations of shad. Bass, both largemouth and smallmouth, will look for the warmer water to congregate and feed. These areas can be bass magnets and jerk baits catch their share of bass and some really big ones too.

The seven-pounder in the photo was caught on a Table Rock Shad SPRO McStick Jerk Bait in about five feet of water on a rip-rap bank with deep water nearby. The lure was motionless when the fish hit.

### ***What is a jerk bait?***

Jerk baits are small lipped, minnow-shaped diving baits and virtually every hard bait manufacturer makes a version. There are basically two types of jerk baits; ones with a wide wobble and ones with a tight wobble. The tight wobble jerk bait can be fished at a faster pace and with less effort. The wide wobble jerk bait is usually a longer version with three hooks and my lure of choice for cold water bassin'.

They come in various sizes, shapes, and colors and while some float or suspend, others sink. The choices are practically endless. Your local tackle shop can help dial you in on the hot colors, etc.; just make sure the bait has good quality hooks because you'll need them! My personal favorite is the McStick in Table Rock Shad by SPRO. It's reasonably priced, very durable and at times; it's a holy terror on bass of all species.

### ***How do I work the Lure?***

This type of fishing calls for a slower movement and necessitates that the angler keep in contact with the bait. The jerk bait's true effectiveness lies in its ability to stay in the "strike zone" for an extended period of time. Therefore, the bass catching

ability of this lure depends a lot on the angler and how he or she works the lure. Generally speaking, you have to work it with your rod tip and your reel, imparting the action with a jerk of the rod tip while gently taking up the slack line with a crank of the reel. Be careful not to over crank the reel as you want the lure to pause and remain still. The lure action calls for a series of stop and go jerks and when it stops and lies motionless; it's just too much for a bass to pass up. This is what makes the jerk bait such a great cold water lure.

### ***Fishing with patience can be a difference maker When jerk-baiting!***

This is not high-speed fishing, so it's important to have the right mindset before getting started. It's the mood of the bass that determines the amount of time you pause the bait and here's where the "patience part" comes in. The rule of thumb is, the slower the bite, the longer the pause. One of the most productive retrieves

this time of year is done by lowering the rod tip and jerking the bait once, pausing for about three seconds, then jerking it again, pausing for about 15 seconds or more, and then making another jerk.

A lot of times, a bass will hit the lure when it's motionless or right after the last jerk. If that doesn't do it, keep your rod tip lowered and as you reel in slowly, pause the lure a time or two and give it a one last jerk for good measure. You never know when a bass that's following the bait might strike. The jerk and pause and slow retrieve has caught a good amount of bass for my clients, including several really big ones. Next to top-water fishing, catching bass on a jerk bait is about as exciting a way as there is to fish.

### ***Rod & Reel Combos***

Working a jerk bait for any length of time can be tough on your wrist and forearm if you don't have the right rod and reel. That's why my clients and I



**Adding a skirt can produce more results!**

like the Shimano Ci4 1000 series reel and a Crucial CRSJ610MA 6-foot, 8-inch Medium Jerkbait rod. The reel casts like a dream and it has a great drag system. The rod has a fast tip that casts the bait with ease, plus it has plenty of reserve power in the butt-section to handle a big fish. If you prefer bait casting reels, a Shimano Curado would be an excellent choice for this type of fishing. Match it with a Crucial rod of equal power and you're ready to go. These combos are really a pleasure to fish with and they cost less compared to other brand rod and reels of similar quality. Furthermore, the Shimano rod warranty simply can't be beat! (Photo – Kick'n Bass with another good one caught on a Table Rock Shad SPRO McStick Jerk Bait).

### ***Braid and a fluorocarbon Leader is a good choice!***

Using braid with a fluorocarbon leader has improved not only my fishing, but my client's as well! For this application, we use 10-pound Yellow Power Pro braid as the main line and the leader is 10-pound P-Line 100% fluorocarbon. The two lines are joined together using a double uni-knot. This setup not only allows for a longer

cast, but it seems to take less effort to impart action to the lure. Also, the super sensitivity of braid and fluorocarbon allows the angler to feel the strike when the bait is motionless and on a semi-slack line and rarely do my clients lose a fish once they get a hook up.

Since the fluorocarbon leader is virtually invisible, using the yellow braid allows us to see those subtle strikes, so be a line watcher too. The small diameter of the 10-pound braid (equivalent to two-pound mono) and 10-pound fluorocarbon leader (which sinks), doesn't lay on top the water which helps the bait to get down where the fish can see it. With this setup, durability is not an issue either.

### ***Setting the Hook and landing the fish.***

We use jerk baits with three sets of treble hooks as opposed to the two-hook version, for a couple of reasons. The three-set version is usually a longer bait that has a wider wobble which seems to catch the attention of the bass a little better during a slow bite and colder water, plus, the three-

hook version gives you a better chance at a hook-up, since some fish might slash at the bait instead of trying to eat it. It's hard to beat a SPRO McStick right out of the box, but at times, adding a single wide gap feathered treble hook to the front or rear of the bait can result in more hookups, especially during an extremely slow bite. I keep both the original and modified version ready to go.

Keep in mind that the braid and fluorocarbon line combo has virtually no stretch, so there's no reason to do a T.V. hook set. Usually, the fish hook themselves anyway. Once you get a fish on, use a moderate retrieve to reel the fish in. Set your drag towards the light side and don't horse the fish. Instead, play the fish out and you won't be complaining about the one that got away. Remember, let the rod and reel do its work and you'll put more fish in the boat.

One word of caution; the hooks on baits like the McStick are razor sharp, so be careful when removing the lure from the fish, since you'll be staring at an unhappy critter with a mouth full of steel. Use a pair of pliers instead of your fingers to remove the hooks. I've doctored my share of folks who were careless and got stuck a time or two.

Give jerk-baiting a try and you'll find out, like my clients have, that it can be one of the most exciting and productive ways to catch bass and a big one too ... maybe a big 'ole Christmas Bass at that!

To Book a trip with Randy Kuhens and Kick'n Bass Guide Service send an email to: [rk@kicknbass.net](mailto:rk@kicknbass.net) or call 270-703-6133. Visit Kick'n Bass website at [www.kicknbass.net](http://www.kicknbass.net)

For more information on SPRO Baits see your local tackle retailer or [www.spro.com](http://www.spro.com)

