

Dennis Radloff loves fishing for muskie. However, during the summer and into the early fall he sets aside the heavy tackle to go after a different species of fish.

Radloff is the owner of Sterling Guide Service and almost daily he has been taking clients out to chase after Wisconsin's most popular gamefish; the walleye.

So why does Radloff switch to walleye in the summer?

One of the biggest reasons has to do with the stress that is placed on muskie when anglers pull them up out of their cool summer retreats into the warm surface water. Dead fish can be the result even when the intention is to release them unharmed.

"I shift gears away from muskie out of respect for the resource due to the negative impact the high water temperatures have on the fish. I can protect the resource and still provide a quality day on the water for my clients by switching to walleye," Radloff said.

His targeted lake until the first week of August is Lake Winnebago, Wisconsin's largest lake and veritable walleye factory.

Kendall Kamke a biologist with the DNR said "There are somewhere between one half million to one million walleye in the perfect eater size range....and seven out of the last 10 years there has been above average spawning success"

All of which means this lake supports a huge walleye population, many of which fall into the perfect eating size of between 15 to 18 inches.

Radloff's main tactic is to troll the large mudflats which are the dominant mid-lake structures on Winnebago.

He typically sets out 4 to 6 lines which are spread out to the sides and slightly behind the boat using planar boards. Planars allow anglers to troll more than 2 lines without them getting tangled together. They get the lines away from the boat and help anglers to cover more water.

Using nightcrawlers and crankbaits, Radloff trolls at almost exactly 1.5 mph using a GPS system to track his speed and course. At that speed and using 10lb monofilament, the crawlers are trolled 14 feet deep and the cranks run at about 18 to 20 feet.

The tactic serves Radloff's clients well and most will go home with enough fish for several meals.

Starting in August the walleye chase will switch from one that targets "eater" sized fish to one that targets trophy sized ones. Correspondingly, Radloff changes his workplace from the mud flats of Winnebago to the rocky structures of Green Bay.

Green Bay in the last number of years has gained a reputation for its monster walleye and those monsters are what Dennis and his clients will be chasing.

Anglers can pretty much ditch the idea of catching a cooler full of fish like they would when out for a “food” chase on Winnebago. Instead, 1 to 3 fish days are the norm.

The lower catch rate is a fair trade considering that the average size fish anglers can expect to catch will likely be between 27 to 29 inches with the occasional 30 inch fish coming aboard. That’s big for a walleye and Radloff has had even larger fish showing up.

“Last year during one of the best days we ever had on Green Bay, I had a client lose a fish at the boat that dwarfed everything else we have ever caught.” said Radloff.

Don’t be too quick to dismiss that as just another fisherman’s tail. The last DNR walleye survey from the Door County area of Green Bay showed fish up 32 inches in length.

Mike Toneys the senior DNR biologist in Door County said “Green Bay is very productive and has higher than average growth rates due to the variety of forage.”

Many people including DNR biologists have said that the next state record walleye could come from this body of water and Toneys does not disagree.

The tactics Radloff uses are similar to Winnebago as far as the use of planar boards, the numbers of lines and bait choices. However, he will generally be fishing deeper water and presenting his lures and baits down 20 to 30 feet near the rocky reefs.

Radloff of course is looking forward to getting back into the muskie game in the fall, but for now he is more than happy to chase this smaller less toothy fish.

Dennis Radloff guides on Green Bay and Lake Winnebago for walleye and the waters of Waukesha County for muskie. He can be reached at 262-560-1309 and by email at [sterlingmusky@charterinternet.com](mailto:sterlingmusky@charterinternet.com). Radloff also has a website at [www.sterlingmusky.com](http://www.sterlingmusky.com).