

SCRATCHING THE ITCH

FISHING FOR SMALLMOUTH BASS ON GREEN BAY

BY TERRY BITZ OF
OUTDOOR CONVERGENCE

Sometimes you have an itch that needs to be scratched. For Doug Kloet and me, that itch has been to fish smallmouth bass up in the waters of Green Bay around Door County.

Both Doug and I have fished Green Bay numerous times, but generally our quarry has been walleye and muskie. We recently made a trek up to Sturgeon Bay to fish for smallies in the surrounding waters of the Bay.

In advance of the trip, Doug did a lot of homework talking to bait shops and friends to get information on general locations and the type of structure we should be targeting.

“I was told to look for locations that transition from rock to sand”; said Doug.

We started by fishing a shallow flat on the north side of the bay which contained exact that type of structure. There were scattered weeds, but it was mostly a sandy flat with a mixture of rocks leading into the shallows.

Doug started fishing with a soft plastic twister tail on a jig head. I was using a Senko-style worm on a wacky-rig. The water in the bay was clear which would allow us to watch our baits, but also meant that fish would be easily spooked by the boat.

We drifted a long stretch without catching fish. The only activity came from what I believed were small panfish grabbing my plastic worm. These fish would grab the bait, but when I would attempt to set the hook, there was nothing there.

Doug and I started a second drift. Within minutes I felt that familiar aggressive tap of a fish hitting the worm. Instead of setting the hook, I opened the bail on my spinning reel and let the fish take the bait. After about 10 seconds, I closed the bait, reeled up the slack and set the hook. It turned out to be a bass that measured about 13 inches.



A Dose of Door County Itch Medicine—Doug Kloet of Kenosha Holding A Large Smallmouth Bass

Over the next 30 minutes I landed a couple more fish. Doug made the wise decision to switch to the same worm and rigging combination that I was using; the change allowed him to quickly land a couple of fish as well.

A little over an hour later, we packed up and headed for the open waters of Green Bay. Even though we were catching fish, including one that measured over 16 inches, these were not the size of fish we were looking for.

We settled into a large bay that Doug had visited the previous year while walleye fishing. Again we looked for the sand and rock transition that were targeted in Sturgeon Bay. This time I changed up to a white spinnerbait to see if it would trigger fish. It did.

On my second cast, a nice smallie hit the bait just after it hit the water. I set the hook and cranked in the fish. It

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measured 17 ½ inches. Now we were in business.

Minutes later, Doug, who was still using a worm rigged wacky-style, set the hook on a big bass. As soon as the fish cleared the water, we knew it was huge. The fight dragged on for over a minute while Doug battled the fish that was putting a serious bend in his pole.

I finally netted the big brown bass after several missed attempts. Doug and I traded high fives, measured the fish and then released it back to into the shallow water. It was a 20 inch bass. That was the size of fish we were after. We immediately went back to fishing knowing that while it was a big smallie, there are even bigger ones that can be caught in that area.

That bass, however, turned out to be the last big fish we would catch that day. We landed more fish, but nothing sizeable.

The fishing turned worse as the afternoon wore on. Even though we tried other productive areas, it seemed that we just could not get fish to bite.

At 5:30 p.m. our wives let us know that it was time for Doug and I to pack up and head for dry land. They were finished shopping and were ready for a nice dinner.

We reluctantly left knowing that we had barely scratched the itch that has nagged us for years. The only cure would be a return for repeat doses of Door County fishing medicine.