

Artificial Options for Fall Striped Bass

Some of the best Striped Bass fishing on Smith Mountain Lake will be available to anglers who are hearty enough to venture out in the colder temperatures of November and December. The water temperature cools enough that Striped Bass are comfortable to feed anywhere in the water column. This means you will need to keep your eyes on your electronics and on the surrounding water. The Striped Bass feed heavily in the fall, and this leads to some great action if you are prepared. In this article we will cover some of the artificial lures that are late fall/early winter favorites and how/when to fish them.

In previous articles we covered the different forage options that the Striped Bass have in Smith Mountain Lake. For this article, we just need to remember that the baits are somewhat different in size, but they all share about the same silver color. Your lures should match the bait, especially if the water is clear. If you are fishing in water that is discolored, your lure can have the added flash of chartreuse.

When the fish are actively feeding on the surface, there are several options that will catch fish. The option that most people immediately grab is a top water bait with treble hooks. There are many different brands, all will catch fish. Just make sure the hooks are strong enough to withstand the fight of a Striped Bass. This picture is one example that matches the forage at Smith Mountain Lake, it is the Zara Spook. The only negative about this bait, multiple hooks will be embedded in the fish's mouth. It will take longer to remove the hooks potentially causing harm to the fish.



A great option that is a single hook and won't harm the fish as much is the Storm Swimbait. These baits cast well, are a great option for novice or youth anglers and a simple retrieve usually catches fish.





Many anglers prefer to use swimbaits that they assemble using a jig head and shad body. This allows the angler some creativity to match the bait and the conditions they encounter on the water. Jig heads and shad bodies come in all shapes and sizes, here are some examples. Remember if fish are on the surface, a lighter jig head is preferred so that the bait doesn't fall too quickly through the feeding fish. If the fish are deeper, a heavier jig head is preferred. A general rule is that a ½ ounce jig head will fall about 2 feet per second through the water column. If you are seeing fish on your electronics at 20ft, cast the bait and count to ten and begin your retrieve.



A local favorite is a lure produced right here at Smith Mountain Lake by Lacy Burnette. It is called the Swamp Monkey and the versatility of the lure is off the charts. It is a very simple design, a round jig head with a silicone skirt tipped with a Zoom fluke. It can be used to cast to busting fish (when it hits the water start your retrieve) or it can be used to catch deeper fish (cast, count down and retrieve). The magic in the bait is how the skirt flares when the bait falls. You will want to make that bait fall as often as you can during the retrieve. This can be accomplished by popping the rod tip slightly, letting the bait fall, a few revolutions of the reel handle and repeat. This bait is especially effective as the big fish move into the creeks to chase bait in the shallows. They can be found at SML TackleShack and Captains Quarters here at SML.



EVOLUTION OF THE SWAMP MONKEY





These are just a few options of how to connect with SML's most sought after trophy fish. The Smith Mountain Striper Club meets monthly and offers presentations on how to catch more Striped Bass. The Smith Mountain Striper Club (SMSC) invites you to visit their website www.smithmountainstriperclub.com for the calendar of events. We are proud of the work we are doing with VA DWR to help sustain and improve the Striped Bass fishery at SML.