



LAKE EFFECT: Late-season bass can't resist the subtle movements of a wave-tossed jig below a slip bobber. This fish was taken from a chilly lake in northern Minnesota.

Float and Fly

A NEW TACTIC FOR TAKING AUTUMN BASS

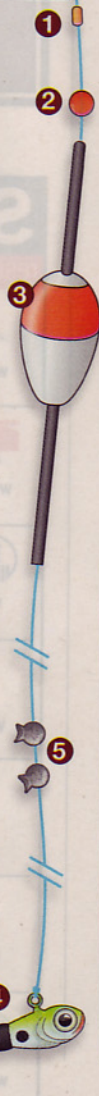
IF THERE WERE AN AWARD for the simplest new and effective bass technique, the float-and-fly would win. It's an easy way to keep a lure in front of suspended bass that have been made lethargic by cold, late-season water and are reluctant to eat. Even better, this method also takes trout and panfish.

The float-and-fly in bass fishing form originated in Kentucky and Tennessee, where anglers attach a jig 10 to 15 feet under a fixed bobber to catch suspended reservoir smallmouths in winter. The bobber holds the jig in front of the bass. When windblown waves and ripples move the bobber up and down, the sunken jig comes to life and entices fish to bite.

A slip-bobber rig makes the whole process easier. Rig the components on a light spinning rod as follows: Add a bobber stop [1] to your main line; thread on a small plastic bead [2] to prevent the stop from getting stuck in the top of the bobber; and slide on a small slip bobber [3].

Tie on your jig of choice [4], knowing that it has to hang horizontally, without the tail up or down. Spro's new Phat Flies are designed for this and work well for both largemouths and smallmouths (1/8- and 1/6-ounce sizes; five colors; \$3.50; 770-919-1722; spro.com). These are heavy enough to draw your 6-pound-test mono down through the bobber to the set depth. If you're using smaller jigs for trout or panfish, add a couple of BB-size split shot [5] about 18 inches above the jig to get the necessary weight. Soft feather or hair jigs, which have more inherent action in the water than most soft plastics, usually work best, given the limited movement of the bobber. Adding scent can help, too.

Use your boat's sonar to find a suspended school of coldwater bass—off a cliff face, say, or on the deep edge of a point. Then back off to a comfortable casting distance and cast the float-and-fly to where the fish are. Give a little slack to allow the jig to sink under the bobber, then wait. If nothing happens, retrieve the bobber a few feet closer to the boat, then stop and let the jig sink again. Watch carefully, as the bobber will make a darting motion if a fish hits the jig. If you're not watching, you won't be catching.



SOLVING PINHOLE PROBLEMS

After plenty of use and abuse (like sliding down gravel riverbanks on your butt too many times), breathable waders can develop pinhole leaks that are really difficult to find. Visiting the Simms wader-making facility in Bozeman, Mont., recently, I got to see how

these leaks can be repaired.

Turn the damaged part inside out and wipe the suspected leak area—such as the inside of the seat—with denatured alcohol. Pinholes show up as dark spots against the lighter fabric background. Smear some Aquaseal cement on the spots, let it dry overnight, and you're good to go.

BORN IN THE U.S.A.

The U.S.-made Ardent baitcasters (660-395-9200; ardentreels.com) are a real homegrown delight. The new C400 model is a low-profile style with a six-pin adjustable brake, a hinged side plate, 6.3:1 gearing, and an excellent drag. It has an industry-leading three-year warranty and costs about \$170.

"If you're an American and you fish, there's a bit of you in every one of them," says company founder David Gray, whose reels are made in a Missouri machine shop.

