

CHUCK THIS



FISH THIS



THE SUPER SIX

ALTHOUGH YOU MAY COVET A TACKLE BOX STUFFED WITH LURES, THESE ESSENTIAL BAITS WILL FOOL (ALMOST) EVERY FISH THAT SWIMS ||| BY JAMES HALL



Target Species: Bass, pike, sea trout, and redfish

HEDDON ZARA SPOOK

◆ **QUICK HISTORY:** This top-water bait was developed in 1939 (although it has a wooden forefather called the Zarragossa). Its side-to-side action inspired the phrase “walk the dog,” which is how most describe the technique of twitching it across the water. Thousands of lures are now built to imitate this action.

◆ **CONSTRUCTION:** The Spook’s hard-plastic body allows for terrific consistency

in action. That said, be sure to check its buoyancy after each tuna or muskie you catch—giant fish can crack it.

◆ **FISH-FOOLING FEATURE:** Although it’s a very small part of the design of this lure, the line-tie is very important. Positioned beneath the nose, a twitch on slack line makes it dart to the side, which has proved irresistible to any fish that will eat bait on the surface, from large and small-mouth bass to tarpon.

◆ **SIZE:** For speckled trout, opt for the 3-inch Zara Puppy. This dainty walker perfectly mimics fleeing bait. For yellowfin tuna, toss the 5-inch Super Spook and work it as fast as you can. Make sure you upgrade hooks, though.

◆ **BEST COLOR:** Bone

TIP TO MAKE THIS BAIT walk even easier, utilize a simple loop knot as your primary line-to-lure connection.



Target Species: Trout, bass, panfish, and salmon

2 ACME LITTLE CLEO

◆ **QUICK HISTORY:** The spoon is one of the simplest and oldest lure designs (most fishermen believe Julio Buel invented the first spoon in the mid-1800s). These baits come in a crazy number of shapes, but we’ll narrow our selection to one of the most popular choices: the Acme Little Cleo.

◆ **CONSTRUCTION:** Although the paint will become chipped and the hook will need to be replaced from time to time, this bait is basically indestructible.

◆ **FISH-FOOLING FEATURE:** The cup of a spoon dictates its action to a large degree.

A shallow-cupped spoon will have a slight wobble, while a deep one will wobble like crazy and have an erratic action.

◆ **SIZE:** For trout, opt for a tiny 1/8-ounce version on super-light line. Cast upstream and slowly wind back. When you’re in the mood for a striped-size beast, go with the 1 1/4-ounce Little Cleo.

◆ **BEST COLOR:** Gold

TIP IF TROLLING IS YOUR GAME, tie on a spoon that matches the size of forage in your lake and simply drag it around.



Target Species: Bass, crappies, muskies, trout, and walleyes

MISTER TWISTER CURLY TAIL GRUB

◆ **QUICK HISTORY:** Although grubs have been around for a very long time, it wasn’t until Mr. Twister added the animated tail in the early 1970s that the bait gained crazy popularity. Soon, millions of Curly Tail Grubs were being sold and many manufacturers embraced the design. The effectiveness of this bait likely rests on its simplicity. It has a baitfish profile that, depending on the size you choose, could mimic forage ranging from shad fry to full-grown mullet. When matched to the proper-size jighead, it can be fished effectively for virtually all species in a variety of water conditions, from fast-moving rivers to small ponds.

◆ **CONSTRUCTION:** Once a fish bites this bait, it generally hangs on. The lure’s soft-plastic body feels much like the real thing, allowing anglers a little more time to set the hook.

◆ **FISH-FOOLING FEATURE:** Although it looks a little dull in hand, once that tail is pulled through the water, it comes to life, seeming to propel the lure forward.

◆ **SIZE:** To target panfish, use the tiny 1-inch version with a 1/32-ounce jighead. When jigging for cobia, opt for an 8-inch grub with an 8-ounce head.

◆ **BEST COLOR:** Chartreuse

TIP THIS BAIT IS NOT ONLY great on its own, but it also can enhance other lures. Add it to spinnerbaits and chatterbaits to improve effectiveness.

4 RAPALA ORIGINAL FLOATING MINNOW

◆ **QUICK HISTORY:** In 1936, Lauri Rapala, a Finnish commercial fisherman, was sick of baiting hooks. So, he carved cork into the shape of a minnow, covered it with foil from a candy bar, then melted photographic negatives over it to coat the bait. According to legend, he would catch up to 600 pounds of fish per day on this artificial. This early prototype led to what is now a balsa bait that may be responsible for more world records than any other lure.

◆ **CONSTRUCTION:** The fact that this lure is made of balsa offers two distinct advantages to anglers. First, the inconsistency of wood allows for a

lure that will be erratic, which is a good thing. Second, it lets anglers work the bait both on the surface (since it is very buoyant) and beneath.

◆ **FISH-FOOLING FEATURE:** The action of the Floating Minnow is created by how its lip is positioned in relation to the body of the lure. The bait is designed to imitate injured baitfish, and the lip is responsible for creating this action.

◆ **SIZE:** When fishing for small species, opt for the 1 1/2-inch, 1/16-ounce bait, the most diminutive of the series. When hunting for big fish, throw the 7-inch, 1 1/16-ounce model.

◆ **BEST COLOR:** Silver

TIP A FAVORITE MODIFICATION to this bait is to sand the paint off, then cover it with clear nail polish. The factory finish is typically awesome, but sometimes the fish want something a little more subdued.



Target Species: Bass, trout, walleyes, and salmon

Target Species:
Bass, walleyes,
panfish, snook,
and flounder



5 SPRO HAIR JIG

◆ **QUICK HISTORY:** Although nobody can identify the origin of the hair jig with any accuracy, weighted hooks can be traced back to dates that just barely have four numbers. You have to assume that ancient anglers added mastodon hair to make the offering a little more appealing. Spro has the widest variety of hair jigs we could find, and a great color assortment, so they get the nod on our list.

◆ **CONSTRUCTION:** Although all jigs seem similar, the shape of

the lead head is of the utmost importance. A football shape works best in rocky areas. Bullet heads punch through grass. Jigs with line-ties on the top of the head are best for swimming.

◆ **FISH-FOOLING FEATURE:** There are a lot of hair options to choose from. Marabou, rabbit, and squirrel are all popular. Deer hair, however, is perhaps the most durable and widely available.

◆ **SIZE:** For crappies, cast to likely cover or structure with

a 1/16-ounce Phat Flies version and slowly twitch it through submerged limbs or over rock. When you are ready for bottom-hugging grouper or snapper, drop a 3- to 4-ounce (Spro makes these up to 6 ounces) on the wreck or rocks they live in, and slowly jig it to the surface.

◆ **BEST COLOR:** Blue Shad

TIP IF YOU WANT to add a little flash to your buck-tail jig, grab some braid and tie on a couple of pieces of tinsel.

THREE LURES TO JUNK



[1]

HELICOPTER LURE
WHY WE CHUCKED IT: This infomercial special was touted as "too good to be true," and it was.

[2]

HEDDON HI-TAIL
WHY WE CHUCKED IT: This ungainly topwater lure looks like a miniature whale. Whales are not a primary forage species for most gamefish. You're better off throwing a Jitterbug.

[3]

CW CRAB
WHY WE CHUCKED IT: This bait looks like it could catch any fish in the ocean that would eat crabs, but then it wiggles. Crabs generally don't wiggle.

KYLE THOMPSON (3)

6 MISTER TWISTER SASSY SHAD

◆ **QUICK HISTORY:** Although there are a ton of swimbaits out there to choose from, this is the original, and it comes in sizes that will catch fish from dink bream to magnum marlin. There's no telling how many species of fish have fallen for this boot-tailed softbait since its introduction in the 1980s.

◆ **CONSTRUCTION:** This bait is precisely the dimensions of threadfin shad...and menhaden. Match the hatch, baby.

◆ **FISH-FOOLING FEATURE:** The boot-shaped tail section of this lure is where the magic happens. The narrow piece of plastic that leads to the bulky,

wide tail creates a very life-like swimming action.

◆ **SIZE:** When angling for bass, choose a 4-inch model and pair it with a 1/2-ounce jighead. Slow-roll it over submerged treetops and rock piles when fish are inactive, and buzz it near the surface when the fish are feeding. Choose a slightly bigger model for your inshore needs. Bull redfish will crush the 6-inch version no matter how fast you reel it.

◆ **BEST COLOR:** Baby Bass

TIP IF ONE SASSY SHAD IS good, then five are even better. Use with a castable umbrella rig.



Target Species:
Bass, walleyes,
trout, and
redfish