



TECH BULLETIN

COLORADO

SANCHEZ RESERVOIR

Compiled from the Diaries and Logs of the Luhr Jensen Fishing Research Team.



By Ed Marsh

Sanchez Reservoir, located 12 miles southeast of San Luis, Colorado's oldest town, covers 2,000 surface acres when

full and has some monster northern pike, hefty and heavy walleye and jumbo yellow perch. These species are what has made this lake famous, BUT there are also rainbow and brown trout plus some big catfish, yet these latter species are rarely fished for.

Residents of the San Luis Valley fish here regularly as do many from neighboring New Mexico what with Sanchez only a few miles from the Colorado/New Mexico border.

NORTHERN PIKE

Starting right after ice out, which can be anywhere from late March to early April, the northern pike go on a feeding spree and will hammer crankbaits such as the *Speed Trap™* or *Brush Baby®*, either from shore or better yet, from a boat. From the bank, work the shoreline from the boat ramp on the northeast side,

back to the southeast, which covers a whole lot of prime pike habitat.

Boaters have a distinct advantage here because they can work so much of the shoreline that is unavailable to bank anglers, especially around the island and also the small bays in the southeast corner of the lake. This boating action will last well into August as will the shore fishing.

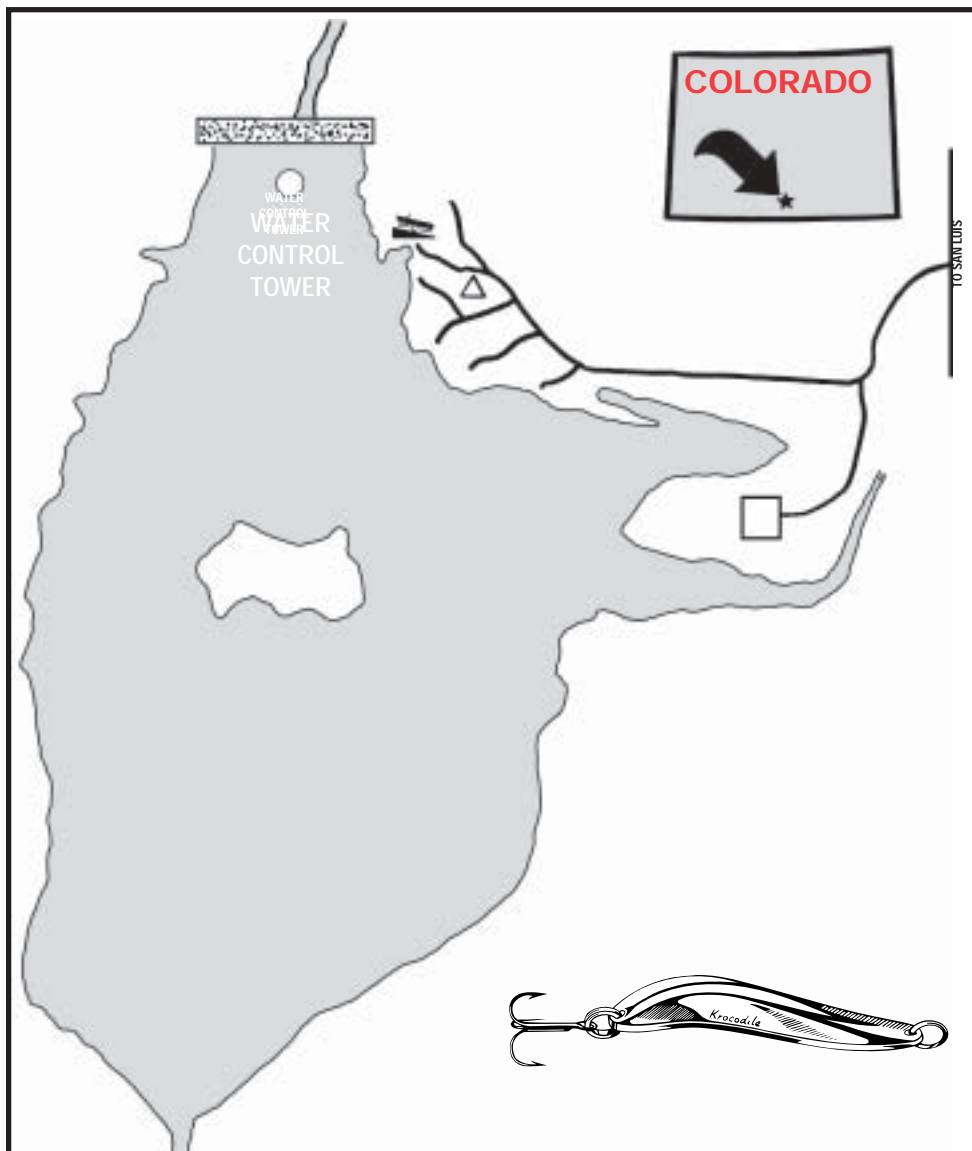
As the water warms in mid-May and well into July, top water plugs such as a *P.J. Pop™*, *Nip-I-Diddee®*, *Bass-Oreno®* or *Woodchopper®* worked from shore or boat can produce savage, spectacular strikes that only a northern pike is capable of! Just remember not to strike too soon. Let the pike actually get that lure in its mouth.

Another technique that I have used that will catch pike is with jiggging spoons and it usually happens when I'm fishing for walleye or perch. I'll be jigging a spoon such as a 3/16- or 1/4-oz. *Krocodile®* or *Hotrod®* and catching both walleye and perch when, W-H-A-M, I hook a three-foot pike! I guarantee that Luhr Jensen's *Super Shyster®* will hammer pike at Sanchez. The only problem I've encountered with this deadly lure is in hanging them in the rocks and losing them . . . which is a great way to "make a grown man cry"!

One other lure that catches pike here, and used by a number of regular trollers, is a *Kwikfish®* in the larger K14, K15 and K16 sizes. Try these productive lures in *Rainbow Trout*, *Leopard Frog*, *Chartreuse/Fire Dot* and *Fire Tiger*. They can be fished from shore, especially in some of the deeper water near the dam. Just remember to work them **VERY SLOWLY**. The slower the better.

WALLEYE

More and more Colorado anglers are pursuing walleye, especially after taking their first bit of this fine eating fish. Starting in late May, after their spawning activities, these "marble eyes" go on a feeding spree to replenish all that weight lost from spawning. The primary diet of walleyes in Sanchez is yellow perch. They will also eat other small fish including pike, baby walleye and suckers plus there are plenty of crawfish as well. Speaking of which, be sure to try a 1/8-





oz. Speed Trap in *Summer Crawfish* or *Crystal Crawfish* finish. They are deadly.

Other crankbaits to use are the 1/4- to 1/2-oz. **Sugar Shad**[®] and Brush Babies in *Bluegill Perch* and *Crawfish* patterns. These lures can be cast from shore or trolled from a boat. At times, the wallies will be in deep water and this is when a boat with a good fish finder is priceless. Trolling the rocky shoreline on the west side in 20 to 30 feet of water, from the island to the dam, can produce some really big walleye. This is when deep-running crankbaits like a **Hot Lips Express**[®] (trolling model), a **Power Dive**[®] Minnow or a **Rock Walker**[™] will reach the depths where the big ones are cruising.

I have done well at Sanchez jigging spoons like a 1/8- or 1/4-oz. Hotrod, Krocodile or **Hus-Lure**[™] in *Gold* or *Chrome* finishes. It's easy to lose spoons here in the rocks because you need to be right down on top of them in order to be where the fish are. However, the loss of a few spoons is well worth a heavy stringer of walleye. I've also caught some big northern on these spoons, when they didn't cut me off.

YELLOW PERCH

Walleye and yellow perch are related and are easily the best tasting fish in fresh water as far as I'm concerned. I even prefer yellow perch over walleye for eating but never turn down either one! The yellow perch in Sanchez can run to over 14 inches, which are jumbo perch to me. They feed on a variety of prey, everything from their own offspring to other fish's young, plus crawfish and insects. They will feed aggressively and because of this, will readily hit small spoons. Krocodiles, Hus-Lures and **Super Dupers**[®] will all catch perch. Any lure with yellow is especially effective and the lures just mentioned all have some with a that color finish. Another lure that will excite the larger perch is a Sugar Shad in 1/8-oz. and *Bluegill Perch*, *Copper Crawfish* or *Fire Tiger* finish. The only problem with these colors is that walleye and pike will also hit them! Like that's a problem!

TROUT

Most trout, either Sanchez's browns or rainbows, hit lures that are being used for other species. Krocodiles are especially deadly but so are assorted crankbaits, with the 1/8-oz. Speed Trap a personal favorite. The problem with Sanchez seems to be that anglers are after everything except trout! Besides, who wants to eat trout when they could have walleye or perch fillets???

ICE FISHING

Sanchez Reservoir has some outstanding ice fishing for northern pike and yellow perch but strangely, I've never heard of anyone catching a walleye through the ice. Besides, when there is a school of at least 100 yellow perch just under the ice, who cares about any other fish? Lying on the ice, on a plastic tarp and with a blanket over my head to block out the light, or fishing from a darkened ice hut, it's possible to see everything

that is happening in that underwater wonderworld, including watching a big school of perch gathered around my lure and taking turns grabbing it! (The winner loses!) Suddenly the perch are GONE. Vanished. From experience I know what's coming . . . a big northern pike drifts into the picture. Then another and another. Perch are their primary diet in Sanchez so it's quite understandable why they pull a vanishing act. I usually use a 1/4-oz. Ripple Tail in *Bluegill Perch* or *Fire Tiger* or maybe a 1/6- or 3/16-oz. Krocodile in *Brass Bikini*, *Fire Tiger* or *Metallic Perch*. When the pike show up I switch to rods with 10- or 12-lb. test line and put on 1/4- or 3/8-oz Krocs. I normally use 6-lb. test for the perch but that's not heavy enough for the war a big pike puts up. I'm not above putting on a dab of scent such as *Berkley*[®] *Strike*[®] or *Smelly Jelly*[®] and many times this can make a difference.

I've found perch and pike just about everywhere around the lake but remember that they are constantly cruising so if the action slows, be patient, another school or pack should be along shortly. My mid-December the ice is about 18 to 20 inches thick and will remain that way until late February or early March. With ice this thick, it sure helps to have a power auger because you need to put down at least a dozen holes and then keep trying each one, over and over. This will definitely produce more fish.

FACILITIES & ACCOMMODATIONS

ZIP! Right at the lake anyhow. There's primitive camping allowed along the northeast shoreline of this State Fishing Area but it is **PRIMITIVE**. There's no drinking water available so bring your own. The same with firewood. There are no camp tables but the tailgate of a pickup works quite well.

There are two adobe outhouses but bring your own paper. There are also lodgings in San Luis or Fort Garland for anyone wanting something a little more civilized. Both towns have some fine restaurants. For anglers driving through Walsenburg, the **Hollow Point Gun Shop**, 342 W. 7th St., Walsenburg, CO 81089, 719-738-3426 has a very good selection of tackle plus current information on conditions at Sanchez and owner Erin Jerant likes sharing it with folks. If you're coming through the San Luis Valley by way of Alamosa, be sure to stop by **Wal-Mart** at 3333 Clark Street, (719-589-9071) for a good selection of Luhr Jensen products plus current information on fishing conditions at Sanchez.

SHARP HOOKS PAY OFF!

One of the easiest things you can do to improve your fishing success is to maintain super-sharp hooks on your lures at all times. A fine-toothed file such as Luhr Jensen's **Sharp Hook File**[™] is the absolute best hook sharpening tool available. Hold the file parallel to the hook point and with gentle, one-way strokes, remove a small amount of metal on at least two sides to obtain a sticky-sharp point with a knife-like cutting edge.