

Hawk Talk - Pre-spawn Bass in the Grass

Written by Kevin Hawk

Monday, 04 February 2013 09:56 - Last Updated Monday, 04 February 2013 10:10



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I've been fishing Lake Guntersville over the past few weeks in anticipation of starting the 2013 tournament season. It's given me an opportunity to dial in all of my new tackle and equipment, and gain confidence in some new lipless crankbaits I've added to my arsenal for this season.

The lipless crankbait bite on Guntersville is strong right now and will continue to get better as the pre-spawn approaches. I throw a lipless crankbait throughout the winter and pre-spawn on any body of water with grass in it, because it's an effective tool to cover water quickly and efficiently and helps me find concentrations of pre-spawn bass.

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A chunky Guntersville pre-spawner caught in the hard grass

Where to Look

Guntersville's bass relate heavily to both hydrilla and milfoil during the pre-spawn. I start looking in the creeks off of the main lake and river for areas that have a combination of the two mixed together. Then I start covering water with my vibrating bait to find the healthiest grass. I can always tell the healthy grass from the dormant grass by running my bait through it. My bait "pops" free from the hard, healthy grass while the dormant grass just mucks up my hooks.

Hard objects like stumps, laydowns, and rock mixed in with the grass are important to look for as well. So are depth changes. A ditch running through the back of a creek, or a high spot in

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the middle of a pocket or cove can be inconspicuous, but worth finding. Pre-spawn bass will stack up on any depth change with grass and other hard cover around it. Keying in on these specific areas is the difference between catching and not catching them a lot of the time.

Ripping the Grass

I keep my lipless crankbait in contact with the grass during my retrieve, so I can rip it out when it catches. Ripping a lipless crankbait is no different than deflecting a square bill off a piece of hard cover. It causes a reaction strike. Sure, I can catch fish winding it around and occasionally ticking the grass, but it's not nearly as effective. I always watch my line when I rip the bait out of the grass too, because it creates slack in the line and the bites can be subtle sometimes.

The Right Equipment

I keep three rod and reel combinations on my deck when I'm on a good lipless crankbait bite. Two are spooled with 17lb and 20lb test Seaguar InvizX fluorocarbon. I like fluorocarbon in sparse grass or in depths greater than five feet, because it allows my bait to sink better and I can fish it more effectively deeper in the water column. I also have a reel spooled with 40lb Seaguar Kanzen braid for when I'm fishing extremely shallow or in thick grass. I can rip the bait out of thick grass much easier with braided line, which helps me keep it clean during my retrieve.

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My favorite lipless crankbait tools

~~Base of the Kinami Rattle Flash to the ST-41 2X Owner Stinger Trebles. The Owner Stingers are "sticky" sharp and I feel they help me hook and land more bass.~~
Confidence Baits

I've developed a lot of confidence in both the DUO Realis Vibration and Kinami Rattle Flash. Just like with any other hard bait, bass can get conditioned to a bait's vibration, color, and sound after repeated casts. That's why I like to mix it up, especially in a multi-day tournament. The DUO Vibration has a thin profile and a tight shimmy that comes through the grass well, but don't let its compact design fool you. It casts like a rocket.

The [Kinami Rattle Flash](#) falls vertically and rests upright without rolling to its side when stopped, so I like to pause it after I rip it free from grass and let it fall prior to starting my retrieve again. Regardless of which bait I throw I always replace stock hooks with ST-41 2X Owner Stinger Trebles. The Owner Stingers are "sticky" sharp and I feel they help me hook and land more bass.

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Kinami Rattle Flash

Keeping it Simple

If you read my last column, [“Wintertime Jig Trailers”](#), you know I like to keep my jig color selection simple. I take the same approach with my hard baits. I carry four colors in my boat that will cover any water clarity. I like both a red/orange combination and chartreuse for stained and dirty water, and a shad and chrome pattern for clearer conditions.

I’m headed down to Texas this week to scout both the Sabine River and Falcon Lake prior to off-limits for the upcoming Elite Series. You can bet if I find grass I’ll have the DUO Vibration and Kinami Rattle Flash tied on helping me find the bass.