

How to catch more fish with your HotBack™

The HotBack's genesis was in 1982 at Devil's Kitchen Lake in IL and Kentucky/Barkley Lakes in KY. Why these lakes? Wood, and lots of it. DK Lake is a few thousand acres of standing timber. KY and Barkley Lakes are a few hundred thousand acres of submerged stumps. My tournament friends and I became priests of wood cover. There was amazing bounty in close proximity to all this wood. In DK, we'd run deep-divers thru treetops of trees standing in 20-100' of crystal clear water. In KY/Barkley, we'd grind the same deep-divers in stumps and root systems that were in 2-20'. Bounty came in the form of monster bass and lots of them. Gone were the days we'd fish all year for a 6+lb bass. Now we wondered how many 8+lb fish we'd get this month. Fishing took on a whole new aspect when we knew we had a chance at 8-10lb bass on every outing. And with those big fish came tournament winnings. Life was good.

Enough history, but we want you to realize that the HotBack and its cousin the Termite are not only tools capable of providing you the ability to be uncannily effective fishing the snaggiest cover in the lake or river, but in using these tools you will quickly put more and much bigger fish in the boat than you may have thought was possible even with prayer.

So, how to do this? Luckily, it's really very simple with these lures. No longer do you have to hold your breath running the old style crankbaits (treble hooks) thru cover wondering when you were going to get snagged. No longer do you have to spend time with a lure retriever striving to get back that favorite crank. Just put the HotBack on, over, thru and into every piece of wood structure you can see. Even if it is a small tree branch that has fallen into the water and is resting on the bottom with some limbs above or near the surface. You'd be surprised how fast even trophy size fish will find, get on, and use this little piece of wood to "lean on" for the rest of the day. This is so true, that if you are running down the lake and see a piece of wood sticking up out of the water, then the wood is big enough to hold a trophy fish. So pull over, stalk the wood quietly, get close enough to throw the HotBack well past it, and then pull the lure back into it. You might be amazed that this can be a pattern that you'll use the rest of the day! If fish are on wood, you can pick up a limit of fish running and gunning this wood pattern! Now understand that fish may be all over wood that is in or near X feet, but may not be on wood that is deeper or shallower than X feet. Example: They may be on wood that is in 6', but you won't get a bite on any wood that is in 4' or 8'. So as you stalk that wood, know how deep you are near the wood. Where is the channel or a ditch? Where is hard bottom or soft bottom? Where is rock or sand? Where is weedgrowth? Where is other wood? THIS IS IMPORTANT to establishing a true "They're On Wood" pattern.

Tip: Hold your rod away from your body. By holding it only in your hand, you'll get better feel of what the HotBack is doing down there. Whether we're using a light saltwater open face reel or a big baitcaster, our rods to match these reels are always at least 6'6" and closer to 8' and with long handles that allow us to cast crankbaits with both hands. With such a long handle, it's easy to get lazy and rest it against your side as you

reel lures back in. But avoid that with the HotBack and especially with its cousin the Termite.

Tip: When first throwing the HotBack (or the Termite), don't scream it thru thick wood cover. A lot more times than not, crawling it thru the cover once you're in it will be your best tactic anyway. But we mention this because until you know how this tool works, you can get into trouble working it too fast.

Tip: It was in 1982 that we came up with the soft-plastic Pectoral Fins. During cold-fronts and when fishing pressure was really hurting the fishing, we wanted "a little something extra". So we rigged a prototype crankbait with a version of the Pectoral Fins and took it to a tournament that had a cold front come thru the night before. DK Lake as a matter of fact. Crystal clear water and 100' deep makes cold-front fishing very tough. Well we "ticked the tops" of weeds with this new creature, took 2nd place, and got Big Fish on the thing! So tick the tops of weeds during a cast. You only have to tick one weedtop during the cast to get bit – you don't have to stay in the weeds the whole cast. Ticking the tops without burying the lure will take some effort dialing into just how deep the tops are. But once you're dialed in, you can really load the boat on that weedbed. Now go to the next weedbed and dial into that one. You'll start seeing a pattern develop showing you how deep the tops have to be before you'll get bit. Or their relation to deep water. Or to hard bottom. Etc.

Tip: Once you hit cover, you have a few options: Rip the lure forward hard! Or you can just keep the retrieve coming along without hesitation. Or you can stop the lure. If you stop the lure, you have a few options: Let it slowly rise for a period of 3-5 seconds (don't be in a big hurry...see what happens if you wait...and wait. Or you can pause it for just 1 second and then continue the normal retrieve (this may be slow or fairly fast) or rip it forward hard.

Tip: If you can get out on a river with some good current, throw the HotBack ahead and pull it back with the current. Obvious targets would be shoreline blowdowns that you'd pull the tool over. Remember sometimes fish may be hanging in the deepest part of the blowdown, but they may also be under or downstream from the blowdown in 1' of water right next to shore. You gotta cover it all till they tell you they are A.) On wood at the time, and B.) How they're relating to the wood if they're indeed on it. An even better target to consider is not visible. It's the log or stump that floated onto a flat off the channel during high water and got snagged on the bottom once the water dropped. Now it's waterlogged and forever a fixture on the bottom. Might be 2' deep or it might be 20' deep. Use the HotBack to find it. Don't ever hesitate throwing out into "open water" because you never know what's out there – especially when river fishing.

Tip: The HotBack likes rocks, too. Scuff the rocks with the HotBack. Determine how deep the rocks have to be in order to get bit. It's hard on the bill, but can sometimes provide outstanding action. The best rocks are going to be "in the middle of nowhere". Such as on the lip of a ditch or channel. Or on top of an underwater hump. Visible rip rap can be good, but it gets hammered pretty hard. Try the deepest rocks on any stretch

of rip rap. Also concentrate on any corners of rip rap stretches where the rip rap turns. And there's always a "lone rock" or two that may be several feet away from the deep edge of rip rap. When they covered the bank with rip rap, some loners rolled away from where it was supposed to stay.

Tip: Brushpiles are legendary fish holders. Both the HotBack and the Termite are perfect for working this kind of cover. With the HotBack, run the lure into the brush and then "finesse" it thru. Cover it at another angle and this time get it in the middle of the brush and stop the lure. Watch your line! If it "ticks", set the hook hard to get the fish away from the cover ASAP. With the Termite, you'll usually just keep reeling it thru the cover non-stop.

Tip: Because our snagless crankbaits don't use treble hooks, setting the hook is as important as when you're fishing any other single-hook lure. Such as a jig, a plastic worm, a spoon, etc. Set the hook with a big sweep of the rod. You should stick the fish in the upper lip or in the corner of its mouth. Either place will allow you to get the fish into the boat even if it jumps.

Tip: Wood boat docks or piers can hold a lot of fish year-round. Find the ones in the deepest water or near it. Also determine what kind of bottom it's on. Hard bottoms are always better than muck. Throw the HotBack beyond or up under the dock. Then move the boat several feet so that your retrieve will now force the HotBack to hit and come around or over some of the structure. This can be some fun fishing and at times, there are big girls swimming down there amidst the pilings. Man-made brushpiles are also frequently placed around the better boat docks.

Tip: Maybe the first tip you should take is to always feather your line (open face reel using your forefinger to "feather" the line during the cast), or thumb your line (baitcaster reel using your thumb to put resistance on the line during the cast). Sometimes the lure tumbles in flight during a cast, and this resistance will keep the line from getting hung up on the "V" Snag Guard in flight.

Tip: **How to swap out the stock collar with the Pectoral Fins collar:** Straight out of the package, you'll want to "stretch" the Pectoral Fins Collar a bit. Put your two index fingers into the collar, up to the first joint in your finger, side by side. Now spin your fingers around several times to gently stretch the collar *just a little*. You want a nice tight fit of the collar into the hard plastic channel on the HotBack, but you also want the collar to go on easily. It's not hard - you'll feel immediately that the collar has stretched a bit and that's all you needed to do, and you won't need to do this again.

Next, remove the "stock" collar that your lure came with - the one without the pectoral fins. Pick up one of the "locking tabs" located on the side of the collar. Gently lift the tab out of the channel and roll the collar out of the channel and toward the diving bill. You'll notice that the "keel weight" hanging off the belly hook hanger is in the way. No problem. Once you get the collar out of its channel all the way around the lure, stop and gently lift the collar up and over this keel weight. Be careful, take your time until you get

the hang of this move, and make sure that you don't cut the collar on the keel weight or the hook hanger. It's not hard - just don't be in a hurry your first time doing this. Once you have the collar in front of the hook hanger and the keel weight, now just roll it on off the diving bill. **SAVE THE NO-FINS COLLAR** because you'll want to use it more times than not!

Now, just reverse this removal process of the stock collar with the Pectoral Fins Collar. First, notice how the locking tabs are positioned on the collar and the crankbait body. Point the pectoral fins downward, so before you start sliding the collar onto the lure body, position the collar in your hand so that when it is seated into the channel, the pectoral fins are pointed downward. This will keep the fins from tangling in the "V" wire snag guard during use. Now just slide the stretched collar over the diving bill and into the channel - again, being careful not to cut the collar on the keel weight or the hook hanger. The best way to avoid cutting is to pull the collar over the keel weight in one motion....don't let the collar rest against the sharp edge of the collar or the hook hanger that holds the keel weight. That's it.

Other cover or bottom-types the HotBack is effective on? Sure. Sand. Mussel shell shoals. Clay.

Catch fish. Let the good-gene breeders go. Send us a pic of a happy fisherman with a "nice" fish that we can use on the web or in a show booth, etc., and we'll send you some free stuff. Good fishing! J. R.