

Game Plan For Your Big Musky Trip

JUNE/JULY 2011

# Musky Hunter<sup>®</sup>

**NORTH AMERICA'S MUSKY AUTHORITY**

**Battle  
The Beast**



# Solar Considerations

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**On The Cover**

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# Big Water Muskie

## Finding giant 'skies in inland seas ... Part 1

By Matt Straw

Big water can be as intimidating to anglers as it is beautiful to sight-seers. Where to begin? So much water, so little time. A 54-inch musky is a pretty big needle, but the Great Lakes and many surrounding waters are among the largest haystacks on earth.

Unlocking the mystery of big water begins by eliminating the impossible, the unlikely, and the low-percent-age areas from the search. Most good anglers conquer big water by dividing it into segments and picking the segments apart. But big-water muskies might wander right out of one segment to the one three doors down, and the way they use each segment changes with conditions.

Even after the structural makeup is dissected, unlocking musky location can be quite different from one body of water to the next. Every lake and river is a unique environment. Excellent habitat for some forage species

might be merely adequate for others. Specific forage abundances can drive musky behavior and direct their movements. Conversely, waters like Lake St. Clair produce abundances of every forage species every year, creating a different set of problems.

Water clarity can determine depths muskies forage in. Annual temperature profiles, average depths within the waterway, insect hatches — many things affect location. Sometimes you need a professional, so we rounded up the best big-water guides and musky heads in the business to discuss specific keys to location throughout the year on big water.

### Temperature

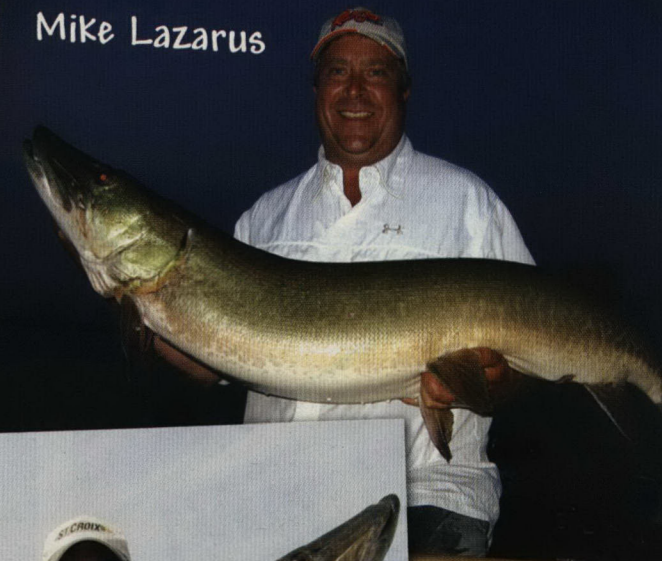
When summer begins, big waters may have no thermocline, and rivers never have a thermocline. Mike Lazarus, who has been guiding for muskies since 1989, said St. Lawrence River muskies don't want to deal with powerful currents until temperatures reach the mid 60-

degree Fahrenheit range. "Concentrate on the slower areas, certainly, but find the warm water. I concentrate on temperature for three weeks in the early season. Judging by water color, I can see where it's going to be warmer. Sediment helps water warm faster, so brown water will be warmer. I can prolong the early bite by six weeks by avoiding blue, glass-clear water."

Don Miller, a veteran musky captain for over 30 years on Lake St. Clair ([www.MotorCityMuskies.com](http://www.MotorCityMuskies.com)), works huge Lake St. Clair. Being shallow, it warms quickly and by midsummer, muskies hunt for cooler water. "The water might read 80 degrees in one section and you go upstream and find 75 degrees," he said. "That's your ticket. They move there for comfort. You won't mark many — muskies don't school much."

Richard Dawidiuk, a musky head from Illinois who chases muskies on big water from Crow Lake to Green Bay to Erie, says he starts searching with water temperature. "I find myself watching the temperature gauge all

Mike Lazarus



Steve Herbeck



the time, now," he said. "It makes it easy for me, fishing big water and new water all the time. Just search for the warmest water and start there, especially early and late in the season," he said. "Then, when the water gets really warm, temperature becomes a good indicator again. At about 68 degrees, muskies seem to be most active. At 80 degrees, they get stressed. Many respond by dropping down to the thermocline and that's when the search simplifies again. When the surface temp on Crow Lake reaches 80 degrees, boy, they go deep. You can catch them on wire line or heavy braid with Bucher DepthRaiders and similar lures 25 to 30 feet down. Muskies will be in the main basins. Just go out and find baitfish on the thermocline and troll above both."

Famous musky guide Steve Herbeck of Andy Myers lodge on Eagle Lake, Ontario, concurs: "Big water warms slow, so it can be an important point," he said. "Even if muskies aren't temperature sensitive, many of the things they hunt are. When you hit those big

JIM SARIC PHOTOS