

Fishing Tip – “Fishing the D.O.A. Bait Buster” *By Jerry McBride*

The Bait Buster comes in three models: Shallow Runner, Deep Runner and Trolling. Worked at the proper speed, each model precisely imitates a finger mullet.

As with other lures, tie the Bait Buster to the leader with a loop knot. The loop connection allows much more freedom of movement and generates greater life-like action in any lure. After you catch a fish, check the leader near the lure to see if it is frayed. If it is, cut off the frayed end and retie. Frayed leader obviously breaks more easily, but is also more visible to fish, and will deter bites. We also recommend that you carry a small hook file to make sure the hook stays sharp. A sharp hook is absolutely critical, especially when targeting tarpon.

Shallow Runner

The Shallow Runner Bait Buster can be used to imitate a top water lure, but is much more versatile. With a single upright hook and hook eye at the front of the lure, it can run snag free in foot-deep water, ideal for shallow grass flats at first light.

Although it is a slow-sinking lure, you can walk the dog, twitch it, or wake it along the surface by raising the rod tip. However, it also excels when retrieved just beneath the surface. Cast it upstream of the target area, allow it to sink for a couple of seconds, and retrieve it slowly and steadily or with a slight twitching motion. The key is to retrieve it at the right speed; too slow, and the tail doesn't wiggle. Too fast, it breaks the surface. When that happens, hesitate the retrieve a couple of seconds, letting it sink. That hesitation often triggers a strike. Otherwise, continue the retrieve.

At just the right speed, the tail wiggles enticingly as the lure runs just beneath the surface—shallow enough that you can watch fish strike. It's perfect for those days when fish refuse to break the surface to eat a lure. And if you miss a strike at the surface, the Shallow Runner Bait Buster gives you the option of letting it sink like a stunned bait fish. This frequently entices a second strike deeper in the water column. The sharp, thin-wire hook makes setting the hook on giant spotted seatrout and snook easy, but is less damaging to fish than lures with multiple treble hooks.

Deep Runner

The 5/8-ounce Deep Runner Bait Buster is more versatile for casting in deeper water. With the hook eye positioned on top of the lure, it dives quickly and can be retrieved at a variety of speeds and depths. A simple, steady retrieve is very effective. Both the Deep Runner and Trolling models feature heavier hooks to stand up to bigger fish. This model excels for catching rolling inshore tarpon. Cast in front of the fish and allow the Bait Buster to sink. If the fish doesn't strike on the drop, begin a slow retrieve. Experiment with various drop counts until you discover the depth at which the fish are feeding.

Trolling Bait Buster

Similar to the Deep Runner (the two are somewhat interchangeable), the 1-ounce Trolling Bait Buster was designed for catching tarpon, grouper, cobia, dolphin, bonito and other offshore fish. The heavier weight makes it dive faster, and allows the lure to track and swim well at higher speeds and greater depths. It is an outstanding lure to throw in front of rolling tarpon along the beach and offshore. Simply allow it to sink, and retrieve it slowly and steadily if the tarpon doesn't strike on the drop. Again, make certain the hook is sharp.

As the name implies, the Trolling Bait Buster is excellent for trolling both inshore and offshore. It also makes a superb pitch bait for dolphin or cobia which appear around the boat or under floating debris. Inshore, it excels for casting in deep, fast current—such as around bridge structure and passes—for tarpon, striped bass and snook. Even giant tripletail has been known to inhale it.