



Blue Fish Sustainable Catch-and-Release Muskie Fishing Tips

1. USE APPROPRIATE SIZE TACKLE:

Using the right strength rod and line ensures muskie are captured without causing undue fatigue and stress. Properly matched line, hook-size and appropriate leaders increases your hook-to-landing ratio by preventing muskie from breaking off with your tackle in tow.

2. USE NON-OFFSET CIRCLE HOOKS WHEN FISHING WITH LIVE BAIT:

Non-offset circle hooks allow musky to be easily unhooked. Circle hooks prevent deep-hooking muskie and have a 99% hooking ratio when used properly.

3. TRY BARBLESS HOOKS WHEN CASTING CRANKS:

Catch-and-release muskie fishing is practiced more efficiently with hook barbs pinched down. Unhooking takes less time reducing stress and injury to fish. Barbless hooks also means hooked anglers are far less likely to require a trip to the emergency room – a real problem when fishing remote locations.

4. USE THE RIGHT-SIZE NET:

Having a net large enough to accommodate muskie is crucial to minimize fish stress during hook removal and recovery. Choose knotless nets that are safe for fins and scales. Never bring a netted muskie into the boat as it will thrash about causing injury to head and fins.

5. KEEP HEAVY DUTY HOOK CUTTERS AND LONG-NOSE PLIERS HANDY:

Needle-nose pliers and hook removers make hook removal efficient and safe by keeping hands away from the mouths of muskie and hook points. When hooks are difficult to remove, jaw spreaders and hook cutters can quickly and safely provide enhanced access and quick work of problematic hooks. Avoid using lip grippers as these can lead to jaw injuries.

6. AVOID REMOVING FISH-PROTECTING SLIME:

Bacteria found in fish slime serve as a protective coating. Make sure fish nets and hands are wet and hold musky away from clothing or boat decks to avoid removing slime.

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7. SUPPORT THE BELLIES OF LARGE MUSKIE:

Muskie are anatomically designed to move through water with minimal resistance and live in a constant state of neutral buoyancy. Muskie do not possess the stomach muscles required to support internal organs when out of the water and subjected to gravity. Never place fingers in the gill area, but instead grab the skin area between the gill arch and the lower jaw while supporting the muskie's stomach with your other hand.

8. MINIMIZE THE TIME MUSKIE SPEND OUT OF WATER:

Following a muskie's expenditure of energy and elevation of their heart rate, they cannot tolerate more than 15 seconds out of the water before their stress level spikes. Remove fishhooks with muskie in nets and their heads under water. Only take fish out of the water when ready to take photos or measurements, for no longer than 30 seconds, and not-at-all if water temperatures exceed 80 Degrees F or 25 Degrees C.

9. STAY NEAR-BY MUSKIE DURING RECUPERATION:

Released muskie need time to regain strength. Stay near-by to protect recovering muskie from birds-of-prey or other harm. Minimize handling to reduce stress levels even if the muskie is floating belly-up.

10. CHOOSE REPLICA OVER SKIN MOUNTS:

Using length and girth measurements and a series of digital photos, taxidermists can now create replica mounts that often appear more realistic than actual skin mounts. Male muskie seldom grow longer than 40" in length, meaning it's the breeding females that make up the over-50" trophies – release large muskie to ensure the future of the species.

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