

## Inside Angles - Through-The-Gill Hook Removal

By Doug Stange

The technique works superbly on largemouth, walleyes, smallmouth, and other fish, usually taken on smaller hooks, often walleye-style hooks.



*(1) With the hook in the gullet, note which side of the fish's mouth the hook shank is toward.*

*Note: For illustration sake, the line is eliminated here in steps 2 through 5. In reality, the line stays connected as this technique is performed.*



*(2) With a finger or two, reach in through the last gill arch on that side of the fish and push and pull down on the hookeye so the hook turns and . . .*



*(3) rolls out below the gill toward the side of the fish. At that point, amazingly, the hook, barb and all, almost always pops free from its hold in the fish's gullet.*



*(4) Reach into the fish's mouth and grip the bend in the hook (which is now up) and . . .*



*(5) lift it free. If the fish's mouth is too small to reach in with your hand, use a needle-nose pliers to grip the hook bend.*

\* Look down the throat to check the hook position. If it's set in the throat or gullet--or it's out of sight--give a gentle pull on the line and the hook eye usually emerges.

\* Check which side the hook shank is on. Then open the gill flap and, with small walleyes, use a forceps to grip the hook shank just below the eye. Roll the hook out toward the gill and side of the body of the fish and the hook and barb pop free from the lining of the gullet.

Simple as that. Really, it's amazing. With a bit of practice, you'll be killing fewer fish--indeed, almost no fish that you plan to release.

Once these techniques become much more widely used, we'll have taken another large step forward in helping to sustain better fishing based on a commitment to release some fish so they can be caught again.