

A BETTER WACKY RIGGING METHOD

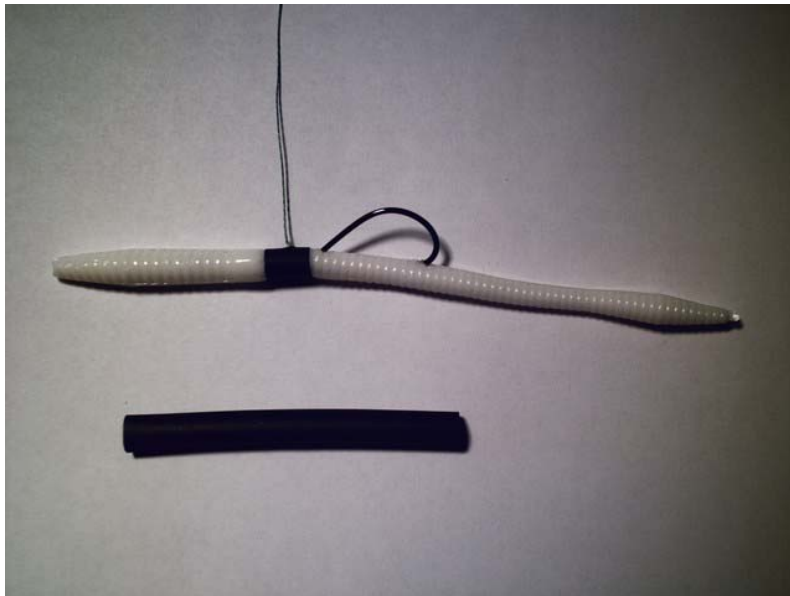
I had been using a wacky rigged plastic worm for many years and was aware of the effectiveness for catching largemouth bass and other species. With several hook failures when hooking into large bass occurred, a change was in order. The Octopus style of hook has proven to be what I was looking for.

The reason I started using that hook is because all of the weedless hooks I have seen and used are not strong enough to handle a big bass in cover, this one is and there is no wire weedguard to interfere with hookups or to break. Also the hook is short and presents less metal for the fish to detect. Its shape gives a very high percentage of hookups. One caution is to not get the hook confused with an Octopus Circle Hook, some do and it won't work.

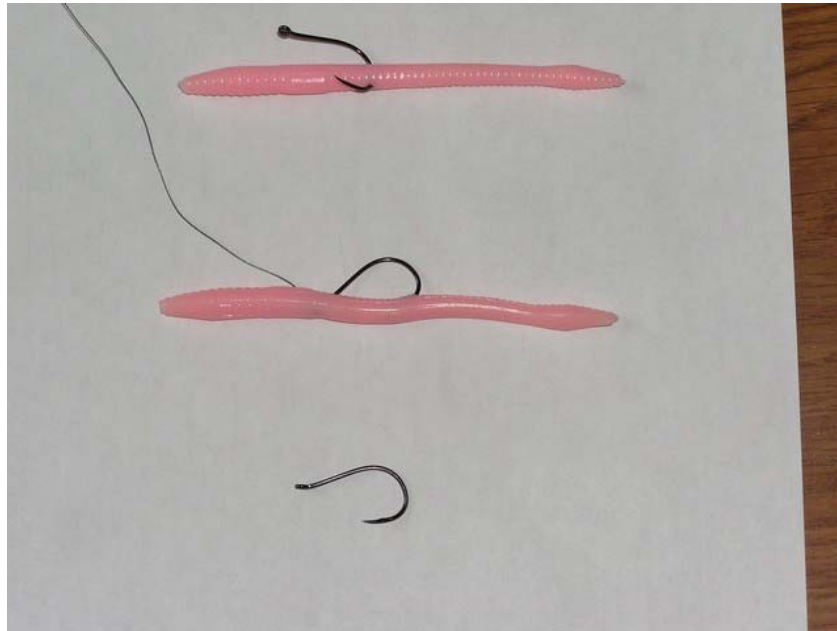
I always mash the barb down to make hook penetration and removal easier and it doesn't result in any lost fish.

The Gamakatsu Octopus 2/0 #02412 is for the finesse worm and the 3/0 #02413 is for the Trick worm. The Owner Mosquito hook in 2/0 is good for waters with no chance of a double digit bass as the wire size is a little smaller than the Octopus hook and less effort is needed to get a good hook set. The 2/0 size Owner is the largest available in that model.

This is the worm with the shrink tubing applied to help keep the hook eye from slipping out when fishing in timber or grass. It also helps when making forceful casts like with baitcasting gear or skipping under docks. I used a white trick worm so the components would show up good for the picture. The shrink tubing is electrical shrink tubing in the 1/4" size. I get it in packs at Lowe's. Heating it to make it shrink is not necessary as it is a tight fit.



This is a finesse worm using the 2/0 Octopus hook rigged weedless and exposed point. If you can get away with it in snag free waters, the exposed point rigging will get you about 100% hookups.



I fish these rigs mostly on spinning gear so I can get long casts and also skip under docks and overhanging bushes. Whether with spinning gear or baitcasting gear, I use Stren Super Braid in 30# test or Daiwa Samurai in 40# test as my main line. Since the braid floats, I use a fluorocarbon leader of about 4' in length to make the braid sink. Most of the time the fluorocarbon line is 20# test and I will drop down to 14# in waters with mostly small bass. This is basically my weight for depths down to about 5'. If it is windy or I am fishing in current, I will add a size 3d finishing nail in the head of the worm to help it sink and for fishing down to about 10'. If I want to fish deeper than 10', I will add weight to the worm with a Lunker City lead nail in 3/64 oz. Also the braid will eliminate the loops and tangles you get with mono especially when fishing light weight lures that may spin during the retrieve.

The presentation goes as follows: cast out, give it some slack line so it will fall vertically. After it hits the bottom and a fish hasn't already gotten it, I will pull it about 1'-2' with no manipulation at all, just a slow pull. Then give it some slack so it will fall back to the bottom. Repeat this all the way to the boat/bank. On each pull, the worm will fold in half and when given slack, it will back up a little when it straightens out. Some people will give the worm a twitch or jerk when moving it, but in my opinion, it's the slow fall that is the trigger for a strike and not any movement made by the fisherperson. You want as many falls as possible during the retrieve.

Worm color: it doesn't make any difference to the fish as I have used as many as 10 different colors in a single day. What I purchase are worms with lots of flakes in them to make them softer. I tend to use dark colors for dingy to muddy water (junebug, junebug with red flakes) and the watermelon versions (watermelon with

red flakes, watermelon with purple flakes, cotton candy, and watermelon with black flakes) for clear to stained water. I prefer the Zoom brand as they are the softest I have tried. The solid or laminated colors are fine for exposed point rigging, but not for the weedless rigging with these hooks-the plastic is too hard. Occasionally the bright solid colors are preferred when sight fishing during the spawn as they are easier to see when a bass takes it.

Another tip is to set your reel drag to about 1/2 of what you normally do because most hookups occur at the back of the fish's throat in the soft tissue and a lot of pressure will tear it out.

When I go fishing, I like to catch lots of them and some large ones. This presentation helps me accomplish that task more than any other method I have tried. During 2007, I caught a total of 2,537 bass and somewhere over 2,000 of those were when using the weedless wacky presentation. I caught the most largemouth bass in a year during 2008 which was 3,197 with approximately 2,800 using the weedless wacky presentation. For 2009 my total bass catch was 3,100 with about the same wacky ratio.

All of the bass that I have caught that are 9# plus have been with the finesse worm rigged weedless wacky as shown. One of the 10# was in a tournament at Lake Fork where I won first place and had big fish.

I have used it with good results at the lakes near Orlando, Florida, at Lake Guntersville in Alabama, at Lake Fork in Texas, several lakes in North Carolina and every major body of water in Va. including some smaller bodies of water.

Most of the kids of the Virginia Orange County High School bass club use it with great success. Most of my fishing associates utilize it as their primary presentation. Others and I have won several bass tournaments using the weedless wacky presentation as the primary tool.

As a reference: I introduced my weedless wacky version to a friend in Texas while practicing for a internet rally a few years ago and he put it in an article on his web site.

<http://mysite.verizon.net/restmvit/wacky.html>