

Shad Rap

by 'Footy'

Andy Horwood loves his Rapala lures and no more so than the perch-catching Shad Rap! Here he details the history of the lure and gives details of how best to fish it for perch.

I do love *Rapala* (pronounced rap-a-luh) lures! Why? Because they are without doubt the best crank-baits for perch. I would forgo any other manufacturer (reluctantly mind) in favour of a *Rapala*. And among those *Rapalas* one lure stands out as a real perch go-getter and that is the 'Shad Rap'. I will quickly point out that I personally have not caught that many large perch on them, though a few friends have had multiple 3lb perch catches in a day, including fish to 4lb. But for sheer numbers of perch they are hard to beat. The Shad Rap is a balsa-wood floating diver with a lazy wide action on a straight retrieve.

The story of the Shad Rap is an interesting one in that they were a success before they even went on sale, and as a result caused a huge headache for the manufacturer and the distributor. In 1978 the distributor of *Rapala* lures in the USA, Normark, asked *Rapala* to start on a shad shape lure, which would equate to a roach shaped lure in Europe. By 1981 proto-types were produced and tested. The main tester Ray Ostrom went out and won a load of walleye competitions with these Shad Raps. Needless to say the reputation of the lure was well established as a result, so that when it went on the market it was in great demand. Stocks disappeared and production could not match demand resulting in back orders of one 1 million lures! A Shad Rap could sell for \$45 in 1982. It is far easier to buy them today, although not from UK distributors. Like for instance *Masterline*, who seem to think lures are only used for pike, so don't stock sizes smaller than 9cm.

I have to say even the 9cm Shad Rap often connects with a perch when I am pike fishing and it's often taken by relatively small fish too! But by far the best sizes are the 5cm and 7cm. Incidentally, despite being the 5cm and 7cm they are not actually that length. Being made in Europe they are metric sized, but being that the USA is by far its biggest market their apparent disparity in size is that the 5cm is in fact a perfect 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ " and the 7cm a tidy 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " from tip of nose to tail. Our older members will be pleased. Empirical lives on!

Shad Raps were further divided in deep diving (the original version) and shallow diving, which came out in 1983. There are five sizes of Shad Raps, 5cm, 7cm, 8cm, 9cm and the super Shad Rap at 14cm. Certainly the last is not considered a perch lure (except Nile perch), but I have know some very large perch take them. The 5cm to 8cm are certainly my bread and butter perch sizes, and I like the 5cm deep diver the 7cm deep and shallow diver and the 8cm shallow diver best for my local waters.



*Left Shad Rap shallow in 5, 7, 8 & 9cm in perch and Walleye
Right Shad Rap deep in crawdad and silver/gold*

Yorkshire is largely a shallow water region. We only have one river, the Yorkshire Ouse, that has a lot of depths greater than 10 feet and even that is patchy and largely restricted to the last few miles. Therefore lures diving between 3 and 5 foot are the mainstay of our crank-bait fishing. The 5cm shallow shad rap dives to around 3 to 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet, though I find it very successful to flick it about just under the surface in summer. It great to watch a perch rise from the depths and nail the shad!

The shallow 7cm goes a foot deeper. My favourite technique for this lure is a slower retrieve with occasional stops to allow the lure to rise in the water, and then twitch it forward quickly while starting the slow retrieve again. Particularly effective around lily pads, I find.

Surprisingly the 8cm shallow seems to go no deeper than the 7cm and a similar retrieve is usually the winner.

The 9cm goes deeper to about 6 feet. I tend to repeatedly twitch this lure, making the lure flash from side to side. This is a very successful pike technique, and I'm usually thinking pike when I use it. But every now and again it gets mugged by a perch. Invariably it won't be a big one either.

Shallow shad raps are very effective perch getters, but the extra depth of the deep diver keeps the bait in the strike zone longer. The 5cm gets down around 4 to 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet, and an aggressive action of rapid reel twitch and reel seems to provoke the best response. With the 7cm I again find a more restrained action is the key. A leisurely retrieve and twitch, rest, twitch and retrieve is my most successful technique. Without question the 7cm deep diver is my favourite perch choice shad rap going around 4 to 5 feet deep. That is a spot on depth on my local waters. As I mentioned in my article in *Perchfisher No.41*, there was also a sinking Shad Rap, which is still available in Japan, but now nowhere else. But in this article I will stick to today's shad raps and not dwell on the past.

Choice of colours is amazing! Having been around for 25 years shad raps have been produced in a vast array of fish attracting and more importantly angler catching colours. For myself, I like the silvers and golds, of which there are several types. Some are better in clear water, whilst others are better for slightly stained water. Particular favourites are the new 'bleak colour', which I think is awesome, the holographic silver and the discontinued metallic silver/gold. Perch, is of course the super colour choice for clear or coloured water. Shiner is good for clear water as is walleye and bass. Another good colour is crawdad, a sort of orange brown, which although discontinued can still be found around and about especially on eBay seller sites in the USA. More on eBay later!



A bit of an idea of the colours available to you!

Over the years colours have come and gone. Some are great; all seem to work in the right coloured water. There have also been many special additions, some just for one country such as the ayu colour, based on a local fish for Japan, while others like bleak are only intended for the European market. There are also special editions, usually requested by large companies, with logos on or just limited edition colours. It is difficult to get into your head around how big artificial baits are in the USA. Bait fishing is by far the minority sport, and in fact you have to say live bait, because a bait to a Yank is a lure of some sort.

The consequence is that some retailers ask *Rapala* to make a special run of lures in a special colour exclusive to that shop. Because the retailer orders so many it is worth *Rapala* doing this. Even more bazaar by our standards is that companies often give away lures with the company logo on to customers rather like we get free pens when we go to a conference. You see fishing in the USA is really big. Not just the serious angler, but also so many people have a little 'go' while on summer vacation every year. It's just what Dads, Granddads and Kids do together. So a free lure is always welcome.

Sadly these special editions are sought by my greatest foe - the lure collector. These people buy lures, and keep them in their box because it's more valuable that way. They pay ridiculous prices for lures, because they are never going to risk them in water. A lure is for fishing - so get it scratched man, because that's what makes it a good lure!

I have managed to get some special additions, by very sneaky late bidding, and picking up the more common ones on USA eBay. Pick up a load for friends as well as you and you can pay as little as £4.50 for a lure in a colour (or should I say color) your local perch won't have seen before. I even picked up some glow in the dark Shad Raps! Me buy gimmicks? No! Fantastic for muddy canals for zander, can't wait to try them. Oh, all right - I was seduced by Shad Rap fever, but I will try them I promise.

Now if your eBay hunting for lures, as I have finally been forced to do to get the Shad Rap sizes I want, then pay attention. Rule A - decide you will not pay over £8 for a shad rap including postage. They are about £9 in the UK through shops and web sites. European sites, such as the wonderful *Tackle Mart* of Poland, sell them for around €8.30. In the USA dealers charge about \$6-\$7 for a Shad Rap. So don't pay over the odds.

Sadly there is a rather irritating bidder from Germany who seems to be either the largest Shad Rap collector in the world, is stark raving mad or fishes frightfully snaggy places. He bids on every, and I mean every; perch coloured Shad Rap that appears on UK eBay. However if you go over £4 he tends to give up. Bargains are therefore somewhat difficult thanks to this gentleman, but with postage, paying £5.50 for a shad rap it is a worthwhile investment. But don't pay the money that causes you to cast in fear!

However, like many on eBay this chap is not interested in second hand Shad Raps, and here lies the best deals. Sometimes the hooks need replacing, but more often the used nature is dependant on the fact the lure is not in a box anymore, though the lure is often still nice and shiny. Not a problem for me. Boxes are for recycle bins, not for keeping lures in.

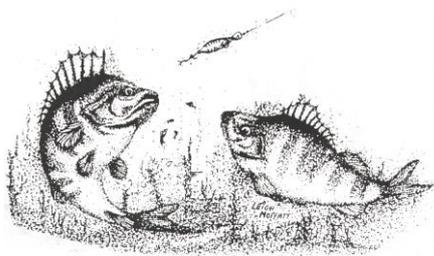
Since 1999, *Rapala* have brought out some plastic Shad Raps. These are suspending lures, supposedly neutral buoyancy in water. With a wire trace they sink slowly. The Shad Rap RS (for rattlin' shad) was the first, and was available in 4cm, 5cm and 7cm, and dives to 5 feet, 7 feet, and 7½ feet respectively. This makes them fairly useless to me except when in the Lake District or Sweden, where they have proven most effective perch getters, especially trolling in about 10 to 12 feet of water.



Top to Bottom, Shad Rap RS, Glass Shad Rap and Jointed Shad Rap in 4, 5 & 7cm. Can you find the one walleye?

These RS are no longer available in the UK, superseded by the Glass Shad Rap. Both are the same shape, have rattles and the same diving abilities, but the glass is made from see through plastic. The last Shad Rap, also a plastic suspending lure, is the Jointed Shad Rap. Its diving depth is a little less. I have to say I couldn't catch on this lure until I tried trolling it one day on a friend's boat. I out fished him 13 to 1 in a five-hour session. We both tried other lures and I offered him the Jointed Shad (too proud to take another mans lure), but for whatever reason that lure just had its day and scored when others totally failed. Sadly, UK dealers only stock these lures in the 7cm size. The 5cm was the trolling killer. I have now picked up some 4cm Jointed Shad Raps on eBay, but they are yet untried. The 4cm Glass Shad Rap and RS have already proven to be very good in Sweden.

The original Shad Raps effectiveness was brought home to me this winter, when out fishing with a fellow Lure Angling Society member Kevin Topfer, who I'd not fished with for several years. We were on a relaxed jack catching trip, with the hope of a big perch or two. I'd had a jack and a few small perch on a 5cm Shad Raps and had just had a well-earned cup of coffee and a bit of a chinwag. It was early March and one of those intermittent chilly easterly winds, that run around East Yorkshire so freely, was taking the edge off the sunshine. Out of the wind though it was pleasant enough and while I sipped my beverage the next spot just kept calling to me. I don't know why, as there was nothing especially outstanding about the spot save it was nearing the point where the canal starts to shallow and narrow up. Instinctively I changed the 5cm to a 7cm deep diving Shad Rap in bleak colour.



First cast I put up the nearside edge to my left. I am a great nearside edge man, especially if there are a few dead grasses dangling down the side to touch the water. I was itching to see the lure approach so I could check out the flash of this new lure. However, though my eye was on the lure I caught a shadow behind, which soon became a plump stripy fish. I was running out of space, which is the curse of the floating diving lure. You have to keep reeling to keep the lure at depth, but the distance between you and the lure closes all too quickly. The water was crystal clear. Finally the perch lunged forward, as the lure rose in the water. It gulped but missed. Had it seen me as it was now at my feet? I tried an old trick of swinging the rod to my right quickly, trying to make the Shad Rap do a fleeing fish impression. But something was up. Though he followed the lure the violent intent had left this fish, and he soon bored of the right to left chase and slowly slunk away.

I quickly tried a countdown, but there was no interest. I tried a deeper diving lure, retrieving slower, bumping the lure along the bottom. Still there was nothing more. After a few more lure changes I changed back to the Shad Rap. First cast I caught a shape holding below the lure, I sped up and instead of seeing the perch I had seen before I realised that five 2lb plus perch were now tracking the lure. I love a pack of perch.

The inherent greed of perch, the way they just seem to hate to miss out guarantees that an attack is now inevitable. First one perch charged forward, but missed. However the attack was now on and each of the others shot forward as one to take the lure, then seemingly to get in each other's way. I bumped one on and off, quickly swaying the rod back to my left ripping the Shad Rap back over their heads. For one it was too much and he hammered the lure. We were in. At first, as is often the case, the others tried to steal the lure out of my hooked perch's mouth, but soon slunk away as Kevin ran down the bank to kindly net the fish.

Plump as February and March perch are she weighed a little more than I expected, the only time of the year that is ever true of perch. At 2lb 10oz I was well pleased, though perhaps it is just the illusion of looking into water, or just the illusion of fishing, but I'll swear I'd caught the smallest of the group.



10/03/07 - Andy Horwood with a 2lb 10oz perch
Suckered by the Shad!

Sadly that was the only one from that spot, although walking back to the car I hooked a 3lb bream in the dorsal fin from the same swim. I did catch another perch at 2lb 2oz and a few others to 1lb or so later in the day, but these were on another *Rapala* lure. I'll talk about that one next year, as it is a lure as close to a miracle perch catcher as any I know.

'Footy'

