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Subject: : Warm Water & Salt Water Fly-Fishing

Topic: : Figuring out Smallie Topwater Action

Figuring out Smallie Topwater Action

Author: : barbless

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I've been seeing a lot of surface action from bass in a stretch of river that I've been fishing- swirls, splashes, rolling and rising with their heads poking out of the water, backs out of the water, sometimes jumping clear of the water. Not just little ones, either. Good-sized fish.

I'm not seeing any emerging insects that might directly account for this. The insect action is mostly midges and a few small water striders. There are damselflies around, but only a few. There are mayflies around, but only a few. I saw maybe four or five Epeorus (white flies) popping up, in the early morning. No crane flies, no caddis.

What I do notice close to the surface is large schools of minnows, mostly about 1"- 1.5" long, hovering about a foot or two below the surface and feeding on something tiny, probably plankton.

I'm thinking that the plentiful minnows holding in the top water column are the likely source of all of the commotion. That's my best guess.

Am I wrong? Or are the bass chasing something else, up from the depths?

Whatever the case, what I've been trying up top hasn't been working- rubber legged hardbodied poppers and sliders, deer hair poppers, Shenk's Sculpins fished both dry and waterlogged, damselfly nymphs tied with flash that also resemble minnows, pearl zonkers...nada.

How do I crack the code, here? I'm not used to bass acting so selectively when they're feeding. Do I need to "match the hatch" with a small streamer, like a 1" marabou? Other than that, I'm out of ideas right now.