

# A Guide's Guide to Night Fishing

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**Moving your bass fishing to the dark side may produce your most successful trip this summer**

ONE NIGHT NOT long ago on Lake Fork, where he has been a full-time guide for more than 15 years, Lance Vick and a client caught enough fish to convince anyone that fishing in the dark really can be fun. Vick didn't keep track of everything that hit their Gene Larew Hawg Craws that evening, but he did count two bass weighing more than 10 pounds and three more that weighed more than 8.

When they'd tallied 15 more over 6 pounds, he really did stop counting because he figured their experience was already almost beyond belief.

"An absolutely incredible night, one I'll likely never duplicate," remembers Vick, "but it does show you what can happen at night, especially on a truly good lake. All of those bass came from less than 10 feet of water, too. It really was one of those rare times when absolutely everything went exactly right."

*(Continued)*



Vick, who also fishes the Bassmaster Open circuits, isn't sure why more bass fishermen don't consider night fishing, especially because the majority of the action takes place in relatively shallow water throughout the spring, summer and autumn.

"I think bass feel more secure under the cover of darkness and feed more freely at night," he notes. "They patrol more aggressively, and because of that,

I believe they come from farther away to actually hit a lure."

Because bass do tend to be more active at night, noise-making lures rank high on the list of productive lures, and these are certainly part of Vick's nighttime arsenal. But Vick is a strong believer in softer baits, as well. Here are this veteran guide's five favorite lure recommendations for after-dark action.



Vision Lures  
Viper King

## SPINNERBAITS

On windier nights when creature baits and big worms lose some of their effectiveness in the water turbulence, Vick suggests fishing a big spinnerbait. His favorite places are around boat docks, over grassbeds and along tapering points.

"I have the most success with spinnerbaits on Fork when I use a raise-and-drop type of presentation so the blades change their vibration continually, and I try to keep the lure close to the bottom," he explains. "After you cast and your lure falls to the bottom, just raise your rod so the spinnerbait starts climbing for a foot or two, then lower your rod so the lure falls back.

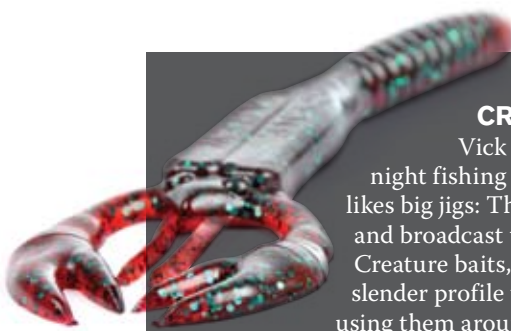
"Most of the time, I use a 3/8-ounce black Viper King spinnerbait ([www.visionlure.com](http://www.visionlure.com)) with a single big Colorado blade and with two rattles attached under the skirt; but sometimes in the summer, I'll fish a heavier double-willowleaf model. With these lures, I'll cast and let them sink to the bottom, then start reeling back as fast as possible so the bait just jumps off the bottom. Then, I let it fall back and reel it up again as hard as I can."

## TACKLE CHOICES FOR NIGHT FISHING

With the exception of a heavier rod and line when he's using his 1 1/4-ounce jig, Lance Vick seldom beefs up his tackle selection for night fishing. To use a big grass jig in vegetation, the Lake Fork guide prefers a 7-6 heavy action flipping rod and either 25-pound fluorocarbon or 65-pound braid.

For creature baits, buzzbaits and spinnerbaits, he drops down to 15- or 20-pound fluorocarbon, primarily because of its strength and abrasion resistance. Some may prefer monofilament and other braid with these lures.

On some lakes, the potential size of the bass may need to be considered. On lakes like Fork with heavy cover and the potential to produce a double-digit fish on any cast, Vick usually rigs creature baits and big worms with 5/0 hooks, which dictate the use of heavier action rods and stouter lines.



Gene Larew  
Hawg Craw

## CREATURE BAITS

Vick likes creature baits for night fishing for the same reason he likes big jigs: They move a lot of water and broadcast their presence to bass.

Creature baits, however, have a more slender profile than jigs, so he suggests using them around boat docks, brushpiles and other cover.

"I like to Texas rig a creature bait so it will get in and out of brushy cover without getting snagged," he explains, "but with all their appendages, these lures still have more vibration and water movement than a plastic worm.

"I do fish them like Texas rigged worms, however, getting them into cover, pulling them up and then letting them fall and swim back down. It's almost the same way you'd fish a creature bait during the day. The only thing you try to do differently is emphasize the lure's swimming ability by creating more and longer falls."

For these lures, Vick rigs with either a 3/16- or 1/4-ounce tungsten sinker and 15- or 20-pound fluorocarbon. This is much lighter than the 25-pound fluorocarbon or even 65-pound braid he uses with the jig because of the lighter lure and different cover.



**Black Angel Jigs  
Grass Bomb with  
Grande Bass  
Mega Claws Trailer**

## BIG JIGS

“Overall, I believe the primary difference in lure selection for night fishing is using larger lures,” the Lake Fork veteran says.

“Everyone knows how much I like to use jigs, and so at night I use a 1 1/4-ounce rattling jig I designed myself ([www.blackangeljigs.com](http://www.blackangeljigs.com)) specifically for hydrilla and thick vegetation. I put a big Mega Claws trailer ([www.grandebass.com](http://www.grandebass.com)) on for added noise and vibration, too.

“Much of night fishing is about getting a bass’ attention with your lure, so I keep my boat out in slightly deeper water and cast to the outside edge of the grassline where the bass are patrolling. Then I jerk it out with a series of pumps and drops so the lure is really moving erratically up and down.”

The same retrieve can be used along underwater ridges, over dropoffs, and even through stumps and timber — something Vick

discovered almost by accident. He designed his jig, which he named “The Bomb,” to be another east Texas grass jig best suited for pitching and punching through heavy vegetation. But, one night while testing prototypes, he tried the much more active jerk-and-drop retrieve along one of Fork’s main-lake points and promptly caught a 10-pounder and four more that weighed more than 6 pounds. All came from water 4 to 12 feet deep, too.

“When you use a heavy grass jig at night, you actually accomplish two things that will help you,” Vick notes. “First, of course, you have a lure that not only penetrates heavy vegetation but also comes out of that vegetation, so you’re not always having to clear it; and secondly, when you add a big trailer, you’re using a large-profile bait that naturally moves more water, which should be one of your main considerations at night.”

## BUZZBAITS

“I don’t think there’s a wrong time or place to fish a buzzbait at night,” Vick says, “but I think the best time to fish one is during that transition period between the end of daylight and the beginning of darkness after the sun goes down. It does take a little time for a fish’s vision to adjust to darkness, so any lure that makes a lot of commotion and is easy to find is a good choice.”

Vick prefers a 1/2-ounce buzzbait because he can cast it farther and cover more water, and he likes one that makes a lot of noise. His personal choice is the Honey Buzz by Vision Lures ([www.visionlure.com](http://www.visionlure.com)), on which the blade hits the lure head on each rotation. He targets shallow rockpiles and riprap, the edges of boat docks, stumpfields and, of course, Fork’s famous grassbeds. His retrieve is normally just fast enough to keep the lure on the surface, and whenever possible he bumps targets to create a more erratic and unnatural noise.

“You can throw a buzzbait toward the bank and start reeling back in 6 inches of water, or you can rattle them along bluff walls or bridge pilings in 15 to 20 feet, and you’ll catch fish with them in both places,” Vick says.



**Vision Lures  
Honey Buzz**

## BIG WORMS

On lakes without vegetation, there is probably no more time-honored lure for night fishing than a big 10- or 12-inch plastic worm — such as those produced by Gene Larew, Berkley, Lake Fork, Mann’s, Gambler, Zoom and others — and in these situations Vick doesn’t hesitate to use them in place of a jig or creature bait. Primarily, he prefers them for structure fishing rather than cover fishing, especially on lakes where trophy-class bass may be present.

“I like to Texas rig big worms with a slip sinker and crawl them up slopes and points,” he explains. “I think when you’re fishing on the bottom and retrieve from deep water to shallow that you may bring bass to you with a big worm. They may not strike right away, but I will guarantee they’re aware of your lure as you move it through the water, and (they) will follow it.

“I don’t limit myself to simply inching these lures along the bottom. I hop them; I raise my rod to pull them up, then let them swim back down; and I speed them up by reeling faster. I’m always looking for something different to try so I have a chance for a reaction strike as well as a feeding strike.”



**Gene Larew  
12-inch worm**

