

## Topwater Too

### Tattoo's Tackle's Surface Swimmer

Story by [Russ Bassdozer](#)

Last week I wrote to you about a few new topwaters lures from Deps. Although very popular and productive in Japan, the Deps Buzzjet, Radscale and Basirisky, and the unique actions they cause on the surface, are virtually unknown to bass and anglers in North America... until now. Deps lures are now being imported and distributed in the USA by Optimum Baits ([www.optimumbaits.com](http://www.optimumbaits.com)), a California company.

This week I desire to introduce you to another productive new topwater too. Like the Deps lures, this is a brand new style of freshwater lure that bass have never seen before.



Tattoo's Tackle's Surface Swimmer causes an action swimming across the surface unlike anything else you've thrown in freshwater before.

Mike Dauphin is the owner of Tattoo's Tackle, located in Rhode Island, where his company designs and manufactures these Surface Swimmers.

Famous for crafting wooden surf fishing plugs, this is the company's first parlay into freshwater lures. You can see some of Tattoo's Tackle's legendary saltwater masterpieces at ([www.tattoostackle.com](http://www.tattoostackle.com)).

First of its kind for freshwater bass, Tattoo's Surface Swimmer weighs 5/8 ounce, it's made of wood, and measures 4-1/2 inches long. It's through-wired from nose to tail with stout stainless wire, and the belly treble hangs off a heavy duty (220 lb. test) swivel. The line tie eye and metal lip are both adjustable, enabling an angler to create an infinite variety of surface swimming actions ranging from a tight, fast wriggle to a slow, sweeping, last gasp kind of death roll across the surface.

The action has never been seen before in a freshwater lure. It really does define a whole new freshwater lure category called "surface swimmers."

Now, surface swimmers have been around saltwater since 1944 which was when Bob Pond of Attleboro, Massachusetts created the first of what Pond called his Atom Forty (40) Surface Swimmer. It was called the "Forty" because Pond built it for massive striped bass of forty inches or longer that were marauding on the surface in Cape Cod Canal. Interestingly, Cape Cod Canal anglers of that era held a notion that striped bass couldn't be caught on lures, only live or dead bait. Pond's wood creation went on to become perhaps the most famous saltwater striped bass lure of all time.

So surface swimmers have been used in saltwater for over sixty years. Yet, they are virtually unknown in fresh. It's a bridge many great lures never cross, until now.

The best way to describe the action of a surface swimmer is to visualize a "walking bait" action. For example, think of a Heddon Super Spook or Lucky Craft Sammy zigzag action, yet softer or smoother. The surface swimmer is still an aggressive, exciting non-stop action, except not as splashy, albeit every bit as deadly. Tattoo's Surface Swimmer rolls and roils the surface as opposed to frantic splashing.

There are two big differences between "walking baits" versus Tattoo's Surface Swimmer.:

1. First, no rod action is required to make the surface swimmer zig and zag. Just steady reeling is all that's required to create the side to side walking movements.
2. Second, whereas other walking baits usually lose some of their effectiveness under bright sun on calm surfaces, Tattoo's Surface Swimmer keeps on producing even under bright skies, clear water and calm conditions.

It certainly does fill a niche that's missing in the topwater lure market for largemouth, smallmouth and spotted bass.



**Under Construction!** Shown above is a sample paint job of one of the new freshwater colors to be produced by Tattoo's Tackle. This chartreuse shad surface swimmer (top) has been painted, hung up to dry, and is ready for the metal lip, swivel, through-wire and hooks to be added. Then, it's off to catch freshwater bass! "We looked at some of the best freshwater paint patterns today, and particularly felt two paint patterns from Japan - first, chartreuse shad (shown here), and second, green ayu (not shown) were highly effective. Whereas many other US companies have simply tried to copy these Japanese paint patterns, Tattoo's Tackle has improved upon them. "There aren't all that many freshwater prey species that have sharply defined colors," says Mike Dauphin. "So I went very soft on the lateral line, making it more of a muted yellow than a bold chartreuse, and I went very soft on the black operculum (gill flap) spot behind the eye. It's more of a shadow than a spot. I overlaid a pearl sheen on top of the whole paint so the colors are very soft and flow together. Adding the pearl covering adds a lot of sparkling diffusion of colors, and homogenizes the underlying colors into a blended whole. It's plain to see that it is an original as opposed to a copy cat color," says Mike.

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