



Tips for Catching Burbot

Since their illegal introduction, numerous Burbot can be found in Flaming Gorge (FGR), Fontenelle and Big Sandy reservoirs. In an effort to reduce their abundance and the impact they are having on the sport fisheries in these reservoirs the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources instituted unlimited harvest and requires anglers to kill immediately the Burbot they catch.



Burbot can be caught year round, but they are most active when water temperatures are below 50 °F. They are also nocturnal which means they are more active at night. These two facts combined mean that the best fishing for Burbot is after dark in spring, winter and fall. During the day, they find dark recesses in rocky habitat: under rocks, in holes and cracks, and around sunset they emerge from hiding to feed. That said, some can be caught during the day in deep water (≥ 70 feet), even during the summer below the thermocline. The first few hours following sunset and prior to sunrise are productive periods for catching Burbot. Consider hitting the reservoir early and fishing for Lake Trout if you are heading out for an evening of Burbot fishing. Lake Trout limits are liberal for fish < 28 inches at FGR. Arriving earlier will also insure you are

ready to go when the Burbot bite starts around sunset. Find Lake Trout fishing tips at:

<https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Regional-Offices/Green-River-Region/Flaming-Gorge-Management>.

Burbot fishing is most productive during the winter both through the ice and from a boat. They can also be caught from shore by throwing a bait rig out on the bottom, with sucker meat. No matter how you decide to pursue Burbot you will have the greatest success if you are fishing the right spot. A good bathymetric map that shows the underwater contours is essential to identify promising areas to fish (for example: Fish-n-Map Company available from local stores or online at www.fishnmap.com or use an app on your phone like Navionics). Good Burbot fishing is most commonly associated with rocky habitats both on the main body of the reservoir and within larger bays. A good map will not only help you select productive fishing locations but also identify roads to access those areas.

Fishing in or immediately adjacent to rocky habitat is key! Rocky habitats harbor crayfish; Burbot's primary forage, and it provides security cover when they need it. Target the habitats immediately adjacent to rocky cliffs and slopes of 60 degrees or less. Avoid cliff faces that are vertical with no slope. The points at the mouth of bays tucked into large cliff complexes are good places to fish. Burbot roll out of the cliffs and into the bay to feed after dark. The ends of cliffs are also productive spots to fish. The top of underwater cliffs, which are often times overlooked, hold good numbers of Burbot as well.

Winter, through the ice, is one of the most productive times to fish for Burbot. Pick your favorite ice fishing gear, they all work: jigging rods (medium to medium heavy action), tip-ups, Jaw Jackers or something similar. Stout sharp hooks and low stretch lines like braid and fluorocarbon (8-12 lb) are recommended as Burbot have hard mouths and can get big. Heavy monofilament will work as well.

Lures that glow are a must for Burbot. Glow lures come in a wide range of shapes and sizes and can be purchased in local tackle stores or by searching the web for "glow lures" or "lures that glow". Jigs with grub or tube bodies and spoons with a wide hook gap are recommended. Burbot are not lure or line shy so use a lure of sufficient weight (1/4 to 3/4 ounce) to get down to the bottom quickly. It is critical to recharge the glow regularly; they can dim in a little as 15 to 20 minutes. Glow lures that rattle and vibrate



are also productive. The glow attracts the fish while a piece of sucker or chub meat, seals the deal. A strip of meat (skin on) no more than 1 inch by ½ inch is plenty to add scent and flavor.

Once you have selected your spot, it's time to get set up. Folks that catch the most Burbot auger 20-30 holes before wetting a line. By drilling holes early, you are not disturbing the fish during "prime time". Burbot can be caught at any depth, but fishing near the bottom in 20-60 feet tends to be the most productive. If you are fishing with multiple lines, start by spreading them across a range of depths. As the night progresses, consolidate lines near the depths that are producing the most fish. Lures should be fished within inches of the bottom and if you fish a hole for more than 15 minutes without a bite – try a different hole. Successful anglers are spreading out across the available habitat and away from the noise and commotion of others.

Burbot angling is an active sport. Successful anglers are actively fishing and constantly moving from hole to hole. They typically only fish a hole 10-15 minutes without a bite before moving to a new hole. Jig a rod lightly, while watching your stationary rods or tip-ups. Dead sticking and tip-ups can be productive, but anglers should always be actively fishing one rod. Remember to check tip-ups regularly. Burbot will frequently grab a lure and settle to the bottom without triggering the flag. When you check your tip-up always hand jig the line for a minute, this will frequently incite a strike. Recharge your lures every time you check them - a strong glow catches more fish. Flash lights and head lamps work to recharge lures, but UV lights work better.

Burbot often move and forage in schools. If you catch one, there are likely others close by. Get the first fish on the ice and your lure back down to the bottom as quick as possible. More times than not, you will ice several Burbot within minutes of the first.

A cooler lined with a large trash bag is handy for transporting your catch home. A couple of towels make quick work of Burbot slime. A headlamp is a must when night fishing and extra flash lights can be positioned to shine on rod tips or tip-ups to help identify strikes. Dress warmly and remember to wear a life jacket - a little extra security is a good idea when out at night.

Fishing for Burbot from a boat is fun and productive, but anglers must take extra precautions boating at night. Make certain you know the area you are fishing, you have all the appropriate safety gear, a good Sonar/GPS unit for navigation and that your boat's navigation lights work. A strong spot light is a good idea. Everyone should wear a life jacket and share your plan with someone.



The rod you use is the only real difference between boat and ice angling for Burbot. Boat anglers can either vertically jig or cast lures toward shore, slowly working the lure along the bottom. Boat anglers can catch large numbers of Burbot when conditions are right and water temperatures are below 50 °F.

Next time you have the urge to go fishing or you are looking for some fish for your favorite recipe, do the fishery at FGR a favor and pursue Burbot. If you need a recipe you can find some at the following Wyoming Game and Fish Department website: <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Regional-Offices/Green-River-Region/Flaming-Gorge-Management>.

For more information, contact the Wyoming Game and Fish Department in Green River, Wyoming at 307-875-3223 or the Utah Division of Wildlife Resource in Dutch John, Utah at 435-885-3164.