



# NORTHERN INDIANA SPOONPLUGGER



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**PRESIDENT/FOUNDER: Denny Coulardot**  
**(260) 691-3118**

**SECRETARY: Ted Walter**  
**(260) 495-5042**

**EDUCATION DIRECTOR: John Bales**  
**(260) 854-3921**

The last meeting was held March 21, 2005 at the Kendallville Public Library with 23 members and guests present. We welcomed 4 new guests: Paul Peterson of Fort Wayne, Paul Rouch of Kendallville, Bill Lynch of Ogden Dunes, Indiana and Phil Doolittle of Valpariso, Indiana. Welcome guys, hope you decide to join us again.

Fishing reports were given. A few people have been to the St Joe River and caught a few bass, walleyes and catfish. Denny reported that Big Lake was open and that he has been catching a few there. The ice is off most lakes now. I checked Clear Lake (a 100 ft deep drinking water lake near Fremont) and it is about 1/2 opened up. It's always the last to loose it's ice. So....this is where our season begins. Been a looooong winter!

John reported on his recent trip to the Illinois Spoonpluggers annual Winter Spoonplugging Seminar that was held on March 12th in Oak Grove, Illinois. John felt it was a very well-run program with a lot of good information being shared. Wally, Jim, Jerry as well as others contributed to the effort and John felt everyone there benefited from the seminar. One of the things that impressed him the most was the digital camera photos of shoreline sightings that Jim had loaded on his computer, then enhanced the photos by superimposing the structure situation giving an "underwater" representation of the structure. This would be very helpful for beginning Spoonpluggers in visualizing the structure situations.

John also mentioned that he expects club members to bring some of their mapping to the meetings. Many members are very knowledgeable Spoonpluggers

and it would be helpful to the newer members to see how we go about mapping. Most of us are definitely NOT artistic, so our drawing ability should be an inspiration for those members to exclaim: "Geez, I can draw better than that!"

Seriously, many of us know a few spots so well that we can go to them on any day and tell if the fish are moving within a few minutes. We don't need to tell the name of the lake, just be able to draw the spot, no matter how crudely. Terry O'Malley sez: "If you can't draw it, you haven't fished it properly".

John also addressed the proper use of markers and explained how important they are. Our boats should be equipped with several markers. One should be within reach at all times. If we are fishing with a partner, both should have immediate access to a marker so that no time is wasted. The quicker the marker is thrown when a good fish is hooked, the better our chances of getting into a proper anchoring position. **Seconds and inches** can make the difference between catching a couple of big bass and catching a STRINGER of big bass. We should have at least one marker with enough line length to be used in a deep water situation. This deep water marker can be used when a fish is hit in deeper water, as a "rear sight" for a shoreline sighting, or just as a "decoy" if you're fishing while a tournament is going on and you want to keep your spot semi-private!

**NEXT MEETING: April 18, 2005 at the Kendallville Public Library 6:30 P.M.**

**"KNOWLEDGE IS THE KEY TO FISHING SUCCESS"**

## River Fishing

We can't do much about the weather and water conditions except to pray they will be good on the days we plan to fish. Many Spoonpluggers have a choice of waters they can fish and if you live in an area where you can get to a river, you MAY have a leg up on the rest of the fishermen when it comes to cold-front conditions. I say "MAY", because rivers often present challenges not experienced in other bodies of water.

But first, let us understand why rivers can partially offset the negative effects of a cold-front condition. During cold-front conditions, the water becomes unstable from the top down in most bodies of water. The surface of the water becomes colder than underlying water and so the cold, dense water begins to sink to the depth where the water temperature is equal to the sinking water's temperature . The water is then said to be stable. Under these conditions, the fish will move deeper until stable conditions are reached. If we are to make a catch of adult fish under these conditions, we will most likely need to fish at or below the depth where conditions are stable for the fish. Severe cold front conditions may send fish to a depth that is nearly impossible to fish with a trolled lure.

In a river where moderate to heavy current is present, the water can get constantly mixed to the extent that the effects of the sinking, colder water is lessened to a certain extent. So, we should all head for a river during a cold-front condition, right? The answer is a definite "maybe".

Let's discuss the challenges before we decide to head for a river. First of all we must consider the issue of safety. If we run out of fuel or experience a dead battery on a lake we are not too worried. If our engine fails on river with a heavy current, it is entirely possible to be a considerable ways from the boat launch before we get help. Lesson: When fishing such waters, take extra precautions concerning fuel, battery strength, water, food, warm clothes, wearing of life jackets, etc.

The next issue is the water conditions. Rivers can experience changes in water conditions in ways other bodies of water may not. Runoff after a storm can turn a river into something resembling chocolate milk. While this water condition may APPEAR to be a good thing (dark water), the fish may react negatively because of the suddenness of the changing water condition. Fish can adapt to changing conditions, but the change must be GRADUAL.....no matter the condition or body of water.

Fishing in current requires a good deal of practice. It would not be the recommended place for a beginning Spoonplucker to learn the mechanics. Fishing upstream can require many more layers of line than fishing downstream. And we must learn to do both with equal efficiency. Fishing only in one direction would be the same as making straight-line passes in only one direction on a bar in a lake.

Fish relate to structure in the same manner regardless of the body of water. The fish are never lost. Breaks and breaklines are equally important regardless of the body of water. In a river, a current breakline may be an important factor. Even though fish are constantly swimming, they have a need to get out of the current from time to time to "rest". The obvious places are the deeper holes. Especially the heads of the holes. These are the key areas just as in other bodies of water. But other current breaks also exist and they are worth searching for. Water flows in a straight line until something (harder) causes it to turn. Where a change occurs in the direction of the water flow a current break exists somewhere. It may vary in size from very small to very large, but anytime a change in direction occurs, the water is flowing faster in one area and slower in another. When a movement occurs, the fish may move away from the current break just as they may move from the more stable conditions of deeper water in a lake.

Although rivers may be challenging, they can teach us many things about the makeup of structure situations in lakes and reservoirs and offer valuable insights about how they may have formed. The knowledge gained on a river can help us better understand a structure situation encountered in a reservoir. The more and varied the waters a Spoonplucker fishes, the better he will become.

Ted

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# Good Spoonplugging

By John Bales, Spoonplugging Instructor



We learn and adapt to all fishing situations that we come upon. Some have asked about our rigging to compensate for the introduction of the zebra mussel. We will explain the use for each of the rigs shown.

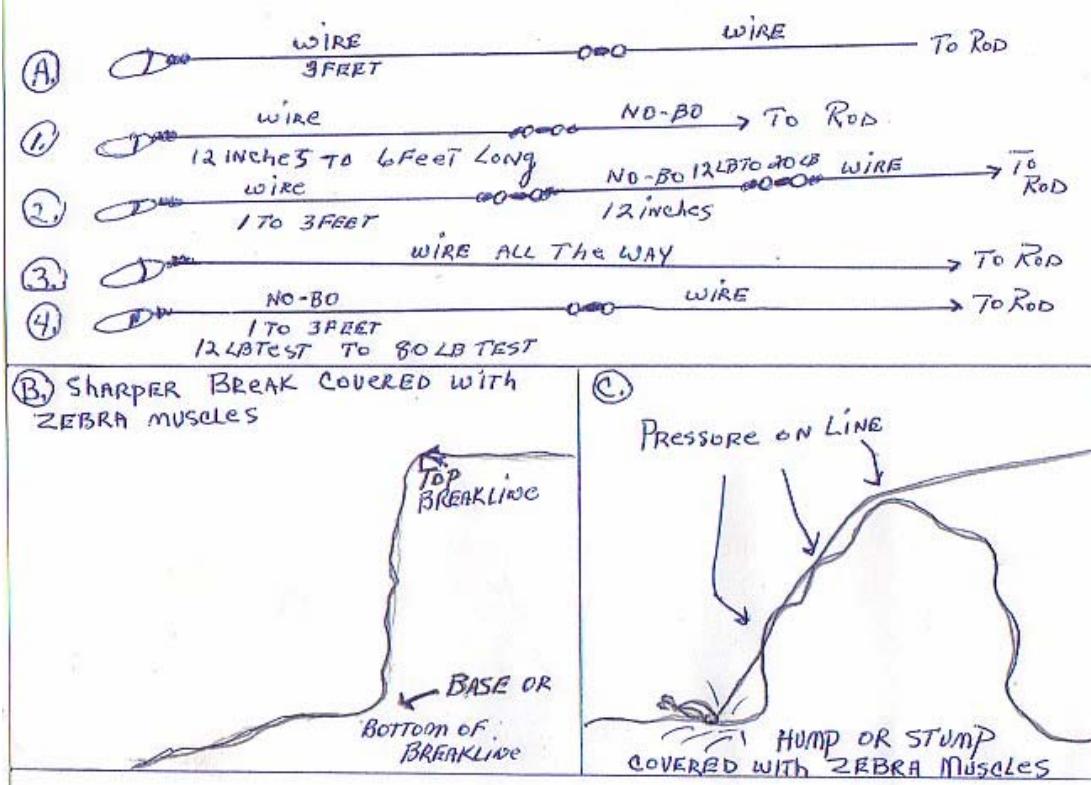
Where the zebra mussels are not many in number, you may get away with just checking your No-Bo line a few times a day and re-tie. Figure 4 can be used and the pound test line be adjusted to what is needed to withstand the cutting of the line.

In figure 1, a length of wire is used behind the No-Bo in the same way that you would use it for rigging up for the northern pike or musky. Our guideline to the length of the wire leader would be the bottom conditions. In figure C we have a hump or a stump which may stick up several feet off of the bottom. You can see that if the wire leader is too short, we will still continue to get cut off as the line rubs on the break as the lure comes up against it. When we run into this situation, the only thing that we can do is use figure 3. This will solve any problem with getting cut off, although we will have trouble breaking the wire if we get snagged.

Running wire directly to a snap and then to the lure is a last resort. We may have problems running the 100 lure doing this because in doing so, we limit the side to side action of the lure by tying direct. We may compensate for this by tying in a piece of No-Bo (figure 2), or adding a #10 swivel (figure A) which will allow the lure to work.

In our checking of figure B, we should have no trouble checking out the top breakline along this sharp drop off. In the checking out of the bottom or base of this thing, our lures may run up the side of this fast drop and when the line rubs up against the side of the breakline, we get cut off. This will call for running of the wire directly to the lure.

We have a use for all of these riggings and which one we use will depend on what is there at the time and place that we fish. We use the tools that allow us good Depth and Speed control and arrive at the fish. John

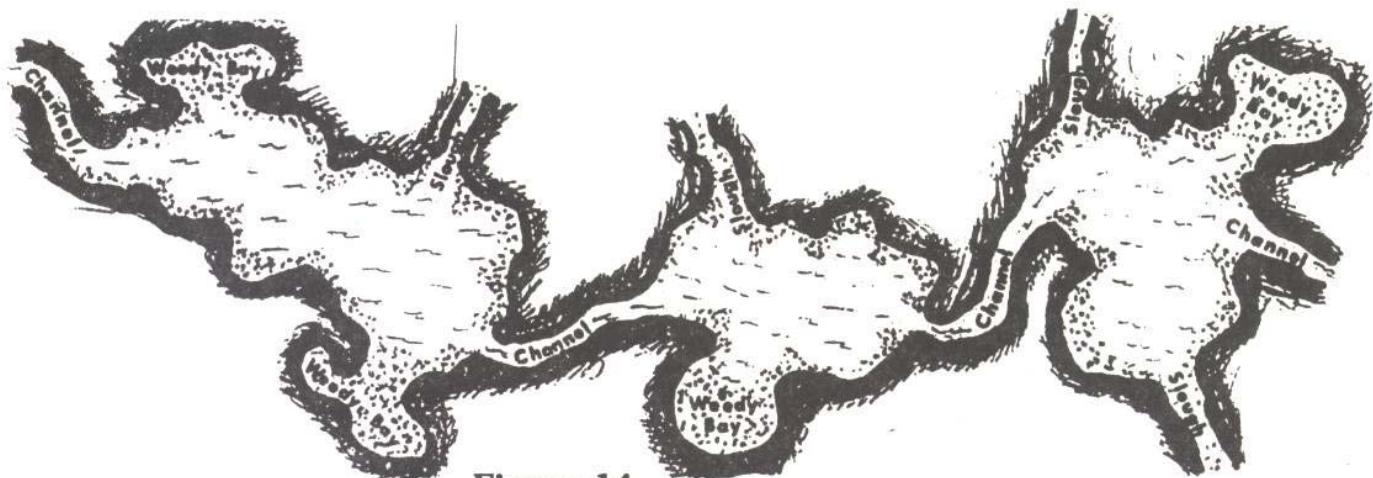


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**"The more I learn, the more I see  
there is to learn." E. L. "Buck" Perry**

**BUCK SEZ:**



**Figure 14**

When viewing northern pike from a seasonal standpoint, there are things worthy of note. The pre-spawning or spawning period will find northern in the weedy bays and sloughs. Figure 14 shows a "chain" or series of lakes. The weedy bays and sloughs are noted. The northern will spawn earlier than most fish in the lake. **After spawning, the main structures and breaklines in the lake would be worked as with any other species.**

Another thought concerning northern in a series of lakes such as this is their apparent mass movement from one lake to another during the warmer part of the season. Large concentrations of big northern may show up in a lake during a certain period and fishing can be terrific for a week or more. Then the action slows in this particular lake, and the fish start showing up in the lake above, and later on in the lake above that one, and so on. When in a given area, these fish will use the structures present. Apparently, they make the return journey—as the next season, the movements starts all over again in the same lake at approximately the same period.

Fishermen who fish primarily for this species, and who fish water of this nature (Lake chain) would be wise to study this yearly migration fully. A definite pattern of date periods may not be possible, as the migration would be controlled by the weather and water conditions that exist, and very few years would be the same. But a good enough pattern could be secured to keep the fisherman in the most likely spots.

Many fishermen consider the northern pike a cold water fish. This is true, to a certain extent, as he is active in colder water, often being the target of the "ice fisherman." But, it would be well to note, the best action occurs during the hottest periods of the year. Casting for northern can be effective, especially when they are in the shallows. But, to consistently catch BIG northern in numbers, trolling the deeper weedlines, breaklines, and drop-offs with appropriate lures is the way to go for most of the season.

When thinking of muskie, we change our view very little from that of the northern. Except in certain reservoirs, the shallower headwater sections will be prime spawning areas. After the water warms, they move back to the deeper sections. In the case of muskie, his deepwater sanctuary may be much deeper—and as he gets larger, he becomes more reluctant to move to shallow waters. His migration will be shorter and for less time. Where bass may have their "shallow" deepwater sanctuary, in 30-35 feet of water, muskie at the same time may have his at 45-55 feet if available. Big muskie are very reluctant to move shallow except during spawning period. After spawning, big muskie in the shallows become few and far between. If a particular lake had several deep holes with different depths, the muskie fisherman should concentrate his efforts around the deepest one for most of the season. Here again, lures trolled at deep breaklines will shoot to pieces the myth that muskies are difficult to catch.

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