



NORTHERN INDIANA SPOONPLUGGER



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The last meeting was held October 17, 2005 at the Kendallville Public Library with only 11 members and guests present. Must be deer hunting season!!

President Denny stated that fishing had been pretty tough the last few weeks. Lakes are beginning to clear up and weather conditions have not been real stable as yet. He had caught 17 muskies in a couple of days a few weeks ago, but the strong cold front came through and the fishing has been very tough since. Once the last leaf has fallen off the trees, things will improve until ice-up. Some of the best fishing of the year can be had between now and then! Denny and Mike Price said the crappies are still going good, but they're sick of catching them and are ready for some late season bass action. A few north-erns are still being caught, but that part of the season is nearly in the rear-view mirror.

John Bales brought a couple of videos in for us to watch. The first one was *Lunker Lore*, an early video made by Buck. It is probably from the late 50's or early 60's, but is a very good video. The underwater footage of the Spoonplug bumping along the bottom is really remarkable. You can see why the bumping Spoonplug is so deadly when you see how it looks from a fish-eye view.

The next video was one done by Chase Klinesteker of the Grand Rapids Lunker Hunters. It was a recent video of a trip to the Detroit River. It featured some nice muskies being caught by Chase, Don Stephens and Brent Robbins. The size ranged from

36 to 50 inches. Chase does a great job with the videos and this particular one demonstrates the extraordinary opportunities this area offers to catch BIG fish.

Right now, most species offering the best size/action in the Detroit River area is smallmouth. It is a little spotty, but as you can see from John's article on the following pages, some good fishing is still available.

It is a very good thing indeed to know the contact points on the structures you are fishing in the fall season. As Denny pointed out, the lakes are clearing, and although the water temperatures are unusually high for this time of year, those temperatures will be dropping quickly in the coming weeks. That may mean slower speeds, both on the troll and casting. Knowing the contact points will put you on the most produce spot on the most productive structure. That will give you the best opportunity to make a catch. Schools of fish can be pretty tightly grouped and often in the very deepest water being fished. All speeds must be checked. When fall turnover is complete and the water column is nearly the same temperature throughout, conditions are more stable and fishing should improve.

**NEXT MEETING: November 21,
2005 at the Kendallville Public Li-
brary 6:30 P.M.**

"KNOWLEDGE IS THE KEY TO FISHING SUCCESS"



Good Spoonplugging



By John Bales, Spoonplugging Instructor

Even though I consider myself a Spoonplugger, I still read an occasional fishing magazine, watch it on TV, and keep in touch with what other fishermen are doing. What is being seen is not much different than what most fishermen have been doing for the last 100 years. The equipment has come a long way but in general, you still see the same old thing. Last weekend a brisk cold front came blasting through with 30 mph winds and clear blue skies. I did not get to fish on that day but went with Dan Luley the next day. We went to Lake George for the pike and the good population that exists there. There was a tournament and you could not help but notice where and how they were fishing. There was a fellow in a channel fishing a top-water bait as we put the boat in. Going out into the lake there was a boat up into the lily pads. A bit farther out was a fellow fishing the boat docks and several more dock fishermen around the lake. Just an observation, not putting any one down for the way that they fish.

Up on Lake Erie there are large areas of humps. Some of these humps are 1/2 mile round. They have some deep water on one side and some slots on the other. The key is locating the humps that stick out (fingers) closest to the deepest water in the area being fished. The smart bass guys and the ones that catch the bigger fish are fishing the base of these fingers and the ones that are the followers that stopped there because they saw someone catch a fish are usually too far out of position to catch a keeper fish. The followers just don't understand what they need to do to catch a fish. Lucky for them, someone invented a GPS so that they can get close to the other fellow and come back later and maybe catch a fish. Who knows if they try to figure out why or if they are even able.

I have many friends who have the bass boats. Recently I stopped by and talked to one and he had recently fished the lake that we had just fished last weekend. He showed me three spinner-baits that the small pike had tore up that day. The heaviest one couldn't have weighed more than 3/8 of an ounce. He had a jig tied on which was a 3/16 oz and a rubber frog which he couldn't tell me enough times how much action these legs on the rear of this thing had.

On another rod he had a plastic worm with a hook rigged in the middle with no weight at all. He commented how many fish he and his buddies got earlier in the year on this rig. My thoughts on everything that he had rigged was that these were the lures that he uses to control his depth and speed. Obviously he was not going to be fishing water that is any deeper than ten feet unless he was to fish the jig and let it sink to the bottom but with a 3/16 ounce jig, you won't have too much control deeper than ten feet anyway.

It is interesting to see how other people choose to fish. Mr. Perry said that when we look at or choose a lure, we should look at it as how to use it to control our depths and speeds. This is a simple guideline which we are lucky to have many hundreds more. Through Mr. Perry's teachings, we are able to understand what makes a fish tick and what we need to do to catch him.

We, as Spoonpluggers, are taught that a fish is a cold blooded creature that is totally controlled by the weather and water conditions. We are most definitely the oddballs when you compare us to the rest of the fishing world. Everything that we do is different. The old generation trolls slow. We troll fast and then faster. Did you ever hear the guy say that his 90 hp motor will do the job because he can idle the thing down to nothing. This is not even what we are looking for! We want to go fast. See the difference in the thinking?

The musky has been made into the most elusive fish that swims. "The fish of 10,000 casts." In reality, the musky is one of the easiest fish to catch that swims. There is one fish that is easier and that is the walleye. With a bit of Spoonplugging knowledge, the musky can be a fish of "one good trolling pass!" There is the opposite or the oddball in us again.

The walleye is generally known as a live bait fish. Early in the season and under a bad weather condition this may be the case, but when the water warms and summer is upon us, the trolled Spoonplug is deadly. And forget about an 800 as being too large a lure for a walleye. If he is at a depth where an 800 is called for to reach the fish, then that is the ticket! Many a large walleye have gotten in the way while fishing for the musky in the Detroit River.

We see many fishermen fishing for the smallmouth with light line and only the clear lines and the light weight jig-heads. The spinning rod goes well with this setup also. When a decent fish is hooked, the fight may last for several minutes before the fish is landed using such lightweight tackle. We are taught to get the fish in quickly as the rest of the school will follow the hooked fish to the boat and all is lost. What do we do? We use bait-casting equipment with 15 to 17lb test and a heavy action rod and we see how many fish we can catch out of that school. We use bright yellow lines so that the fish can see it and follow it and see that there is a lure on the end of it. When a fish is hooked, we

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put as much pressure as we can and get him into the boat as quickly as possible. Our knees get a bit shaky and we are a bit nervous and giggly while this fast action is taking place but this is what we were taught and what our goal must be. This is how the fish react to being caught and in order to put as many fish in the boat as we can, this is what we must do. Just another fishing guideline that was shared by Mr. Perry. And again, notice how we are the oddball?

Have you ever watched a fisherman fish a plastic worm or a jig? Throw that thing out and let it go to the bottom. Then the rod is barely moved or twitched. Then he lets it sit there a while. Then a little jig and then it sits a while again. Then he feels a weed or a stump. Then the rod begins to just shake. Not moving the jig or worm but just shaking it in place. There's a method of fishing a worm that is called stitching. That is where you take the line in your hand and run it through your fingers so that the worm just barely moves. Mr. Perry might refer to this as a very slow speed control. I heard him say that watching a guy fishing this way makes him wonder if he is trying to sneak the worm or jig past the fish without him seeing it. We do things just the opposite. We were taught to hop the jig. Little hops for checking out the slower speeds and up to pointing the rod tip low to the water and ripping it over your head. For the fastest speed on the cast. There's the oddball in us again.

We do not put down the other fishermen for the way that they fish. I do enjoy watching some of these guys. A few weeks ago my son and I went to Lake Erie. We had a marker out and was anchoring on two spots in that area. A bass boat moved in and began fishing up on top of the humps. We were anchored on two fingers out on the edge of these humps and they watched us catch ten or so smallies from three lbs to four and 1/2. They did not crowd us at all. About the time that they did get close, they began going back the other way and then drifted towards us again. This went on for about a half an hour and we saw them catch a few small fish. We would throw them in the live well and then take some pictures and then release them. Once the fish seemed to slow down we decided to let these guys have this spot. When we left, we asked them if they had gotten any keepers from this area and they said that they were just waiting for us to leave and were very grateful that we were leaving. They said that they had all day to fish it and we could see that they were there for most of the day. A few days later while talking to a friend that fishes tournaments, I found out that this fellow had won the *Everstart Tournament*© and got a check for \$60,000. His partner had also won but we didn't hear what he had won. My friend had asked me what color the boat was and with my description he believed that this was the winner. It was the boat sponsored by *Banana Boat*®, the sun screen people and it was a lot of orange. We were glad the guy did well because he did not crowd us and never got in our way. This is not normally the case when you are seen catching a bunch of fish.

The time after that, in the same waters, we had a marker out and the waves drifted us slowly away from the marker even with 50 feet of anchor rope out. We were still catching the fish while we were moving and here comes a bass boat. Right up to the marker he went and began casting. My partner looked at me and shook his head and with that, I told him to lift up the anchor and we will fix this guy. The current was moving him right towards us as we made our way back to the marker to re-anchor. Just about the time that we got near him to re-anchor and do some chewing, he asked us if we knew a fellow named Mark Zona? Mark is working for ESPN and hosts a show called *Loudmouth Bass*. He is a local boy and he sold me my boat and the fellow I was with had bought his boat from him too. He shocked us because we just couldn't figure out how he would know of us. Turns out that this fellow had been guided by Zona a couple of days before that and told us that Zona had showed him this spot. When he asked if we minded that he fished here, we had to say "yes, we did mind." I could only figure that Zona must have described what kind of boat we were fishing out of and not to get too far away from us.

It is always amusing to watch the others fish. The difference between how we, as Spoonpluggers, fish and the rest of the fishing world is amazing. Sure, we are the oddballs who do things the complete opposite of everyone else, but it seems to work very well. Mr. Perry taught us the truth about fishing. Knowledge is the key to fishing success, and not something that comes in a fancy wrapped package!

Good Spoonplugging.

John Bales

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“The more I learn, the more I see there is to learn.” E. L. “Buck” Perry

BUCK SEZ:

What ‘triggers’ the activity and movements of the fish?”

There is no question that it is a weather condition. But, we doubt if anyone knows the **exact** part that starts and stops the movements. It could be a combination of many things. We have our ideas but we have no definite **FACTS**. We feel **LIGHT** plays a major role, and Buck can quite often predict when a movement is about to begin, or when one is in progress, by his observations of the light present. He uses his **LIGHT** observations as his guide to the activity and movements of the fish—for he says: “If my light observations give me the answers, that’s good enough for me.”

One thing we should all agree on is the movements of the fish are not “triggered” or controlled by their hunger. We would have a hard time figuring out why all the fish in the lake become hungry at the same time. And, it would not explain the activity and movement without feeding. A game fish can be made to “strike”—this is his nature. We never expect to catch our fish feeding, but we’re happy when this occurs.

You may want to know if the moon has any effect on the fish? We have not been able to find any relationship between movements and the phase of the moon. If there were any, we are quite sure local weather and water conditions would completely wreck it.

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“Are fish of all sizes and age groups bunched up together down in the deep water?”

The study material said the smaller fish were not compatible with the larger fish. We classify the smaller fish into a group, called “yearlings.” These are normally from one to three years old. Some may be older, but where growth is good, you can view the smaller fish group as being of this age. A better way probably to view the smaller fish would be to say, until they reach about 2-2 1/2 pounds, they are not compatible with the larger fish. When the larger fish get on the move, the yearlings scoot to the safety of the shallows.

You will find, in some instances, where a school of bigger fish are all about the same size. At other times, they will come in several different sizes. The age, fertility, and reproduction of a body of water would have a bearing on the sizes in any particular school.

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“Are there fishing situations where the fish, when they move towards shallower water, do not move toward or along structure such as bars, but will move shallower by going ‘vertically’ toward the surface?”

This Spoonplugging (structure fishing) study is primarily concerned with the larger species of game fish (bass, walleye, northern pike, muskies, stripers, etc.). However, there are certain water situations and certain species of fish where part of a movement may be, at times, directly toward the surface. The fish may be “drawn” toward the surface due to some attraction or “noise.” However, all the movements would be related to structure or some bottom feature; **AND**, the upward movement (toward the surface) will occur only **AFTER** the fish become active and moving. In a later study we will discuss fishing situations where a part of a migration may be vertical. But to **CONSISTENTLY** put fish on our stringer, “structure” (features of the bottom the fish use) is still our guide to where most of the **CATCHABLE** fish may be found.

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