



# NORTHERN INDIANA SPOONPLUGGER

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The last meeting was held November 20, 2006 at the Kendallville Public Library with 12 members present.

President Denny reported that bass fishing had been very slow lately. He did catch a nice 5 pounder but had to go to 30 feet to get him. The muskie are still being caught on the troll. Denny stated that they had caught 21 musky in the previous 2 weeks. Although the musky and the northern pike are biologically closely related, northerns are nearly non-existent this time of year, yet the musky are still very active. Northerns are particularly susceptible to a trolled lure from about June until October, then they seem to disappear. Once the stable weather of summer gives way to the first cold winds of fall, the northerns retreat. Even slow presentations are not very effective at this time. Denny said that if we had the ability to troll thru the ice, we could catch muskies all winter long. If you are after ice-up northerns, however, you'd better be jigging a jump lure or have live bait! Denny reported that he and his "team" had caught 463 northerns this year as well as 80 muskies.

Mike Price related a recent SNAFU. It seems that Denny caught a musky (?) on the troll. As he started to reel him in, his reel fell off the rod. He reattached it....but it fell off a second time. In a true team effort, Mike held the rod while Denny held the reel and reeled the fish in. So we all know what we can get Denny for Christmas.....duct tape.

John Bales asked everyone to recall his comments of the previous meeting about not being able to catch a bass on the cast following a nice fish being caught on the troll. This had bothered him for some time. Nor-

mally, when a nice fish is caught on Lake Erie, a marker is thrown, the boat is anchored and several fish are caught on the cast. During his last trip, he couldn't buy a fish on the cast, even though he had tried all speeds and many different jump-type lures. Having a number of years experience on these waters, he KNEW the fish were there, but could not get them to take. This had happened several times over the past few years.

He presented his quandary to several people but could not come up with a satisfactory answer to the problem. When something bothers John, he will work on it until he gets answers!

Finally, he hit upon the solution and the next weekend, he was fishing with Mike Brown on Lake Erie. This time when a fish was hit on the troll, the boat was anchored and the first lure cast was an 800 Spoonplug. The problem was solved. The 800 was cast out, allowed to sink to the bottom, then ripped off the bottom with a high rod tip and several turns of the reel handle until the lure left contact with the bottom. The lure was allowed to sink again, and the rip & crank was repeated. In other words, the 800 was worked just like a jump-type lure. A bunch of big smallmouth were caught over the next couple of days using this approach. The lure never tumbled as it sank, and the lure sank much quicker than expected. 800's can be a little tricky to cast, but John proved that it is worth the effort and an extremely effective solution should now be in everyone's arsenal. Good work, John.

**NEXT MEETING: December 18, 2006 at the Kendallville Public Library 6:30 P.M.**

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

***"WHEN WORKING DEEPER ON STRUCTURE, ALL TROLLING PASSES ARE IN A STRAIGHT LINE, only in this way can a structure be fished, mapped or interpreted. Don't ever forget this."***

It's right there in black and white, on page 136 of the Green Book. Mr. Perry began this sentence in **bold print** so we would not overlook it. I read it. I believed it. But somewhere along the line I lost site of this valuable guideline. This fairly simple sentence says so much in so few words that I failed to give it the full measure of its importance. If you've only been Spoonplugging for a short period of time, perhaps you did too.

Several years ago, John Bales and myself attended the Crab Orchard Outing in southern Illinois. Since John has many years of experience, he is usually at the helm, but we took my boat so I controlled the motor most of the time. It took John a long time to say anything, since he didn't want to hurt my feelings and risk a long quiet ride back to Indiana. But finally he explained things to me in the brutal frankness John is famous for: "You're limiting your ability to catch fish--and **mine** too!" At least that's the version I am able to put into print!

When I first started Spoonplugging in 1993, I felt the hardest thing was controlling the boat while stacking my lures down the deep weedlines on the lakes I was fishing. By really concentrating, I learned to follow these weedlines TOO well. I was soon using my depth meter to follow the base breakline EXACTLY. In a perfect world, all breaklines would be perfectly long and straight and I'd have made great catches using my method. But the world is far from perfect and John explained that my method is fatally flawed because by using my depth meter to keep my boat in perfect position over a deeper breakline that meandered around the bar we were fishing, my lure was perfectly OUT of position much of the time and therefore unable to catch a fish. Lesson learned.

Consider the importance of this guideline: Straight line passes will give us much more information and give it to us faster than following a certain depth around a structure situation. If I had John or Denny's experience on the water, I'd be able to interpret things much faster, but I have many years of fishing to do before I reach that level. Guideline save us.

If we have followed the guidelines correctly and checked out the shallows with the first three sizes of Spoonplugs, we already know the shape of the structure. By making our straight line passes in relationship to what we learned in checking the shallows, we will now be able to interpret the deeper structure. A straight line pass will tell us, in short order, if the structure goes "all the way" to the deepest water in the area and how that deep water relates to the structure situation. Breaklines will be easier to detect and we will know if their depths vary from one area of the structure to another. The straight line pass will help us define where the "contact point" is likely to be in the fastest and most efficient manner. If a fish is caught on a straight line pass we will know if it was **before** our Spoonplug came in contact with the structure, **while** it was walking across the structure or as it started to run free **after** it came off the structure. We need not worry whether fish are holding tight to structure or whether they are suspended off structure. We will not have to waste time getting into the proper anchoring position because we have pinpointed the potential school of fish.

Just as Mr. Perry said: ....*only in this way can a structure be fished, mapped or interpreted. Don't ever forget this.*"

Ted Walter

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



# *Good Spoonplugging*

**By John Bales, Spoonplugging Instructor**



"Water Color is the most important observation that we can make in our fishing". Mr. Perry searched out these lakes with color and based much of his teachings on the importance of finding and fishing them. Our successes and failures could be looked at, just by the color of the waters that we choose to fish.

The whole ball of wax is easier when the water color is good. The fish come shallower, they stay longer, and everything is easier when there is good water color. When the weedline in our natural lakes is ten feet or shallower, then we have a good chance of being able to cast and walk a Spoonplug through the school of fish. This control is one of the most important ones that we want to have. It is a control that can be had just by fishing the lakes with good water color. Any time that you do not have the option of casting a Spoonplug and walking it through a group of fish, then you will catch less fish. We are speaking of jump type lures as our other options.

Who would have known how the Zebra mussels were going to affect our natural lakes? They took some of our best big bass lakes which had a weedline that went to 8 feet and they now grow to 20 feet. How much deeper do you think that the light penetrates into the water? How did that effect the movements of the fish? What bottom conditions may have changed with the clearer water. Where you used to be able to walk the bottom, there is now a thick layer of moss. What percentage of fish will we not catch if we cannot walk the bottom with our lures?

Some of you were not Spoonpluggers back in the early 70's and did not know how easy it was to make a catch out of these great lakes with good water color. They have changed and if you plan on whipping them, then you had better plan on spending a great deal of time in learning how to fish deeper to catch them. For most of the time, you would be far better off driving a few miles and find a lake that still has some good water color.

I talk to Terry O'Malley all the time and he talks about how good Palmer Lake in Michigan once was. Terry and Vic Saunders had this one in their hip pockets for a few years and we got in on the tail end of the good stuff also. If Terry would look at it now, he wouldn't walk across the street to fish it!

We went to a lake north of Muskegon and at the time, it had really good water color. We caught lots of fish on 400's and 250's and some nice ones too. We went back a couple of years later and the water color was not so good. It was actually on the clear side. We went fishing anyways. We didn't do so well and we were asked by Mr. Perry what the water color was like. We said it was on the clear side. He said we should not have launched the boat and found another lake with some color.

Sometimes we have to take a beating to see what is good and what is bad. We learn from our experiences on the water. Everything that we need to know to make us a good fisherman is in the study material. We need to read and believe that everything that is in there is true. It is difficult at first, but you will see with some time on the water that these are true fishing facts. And water color is the most important observation that you can make in your fishing.

*Good Spoonplugging*  
*John Bales*

**“KNOWLEDGE IS THE KEY TO FISHING SUCCESS”**



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

**BUCK SEZ:**

**You Might Say**

*‘Several times during our study, you mention the word ‘satisfaction.’ To me the only way I will be satisfied is to fill the boat every time I go fishing.’*

Well, I suppose you are just like a lot of other fishermen in the world. They, as well as you, should give up fishing because neither of you will ever get satisfaction from it. I just doesn’t work that way. Just about the time you think you have all the answers, old “fishing situations” lets you know how things are—and you get “skunked.”

To me, satisfaction in fishing comes from many directions. I am not saying that satisfaction does not come with lunker catches—that’s the name of the game. But can satisfaction come with guides showing you where to fish? Does satisfaction come with rushing down to the store to buy a hot lure? What satisfaction is there in doing what everyone else is doing? (Do you think you’ll discover some little magic “twitch” the other guys aren’t using?) Do you get satisfaction if you beat all the other guys all the time? I’ll bet you are one of those guys who switches lures when another fisherman approaches. I’ll wager you tell someone you made a catch in a lake or a spot, and then take off in another direction.

How many times have you told the other guy “exactly” **where** and **when** you caught the fish? How many times have you taken the family fishing? How many times have you “taught?” Have you ever experienced the feeling that comes with “working a lake out” all by yourself? Have you ever experienced the time when there was no anxiety about a fishing trip, or a new lake? Have you ever really felt the fellowship that can be had on a fishing trip? Do you know how it feels to not have to make excuses for failure? Do you know the satisfaction that comes with knowledge? Satisfaction can be had ALL the time, not just when you “luck” up on a few fish, beat the other guy, or build up your ego.

\* \* \* \* \*

*“You say the fishing stops when a cold front goes through. I’ve had a front go through and the temperature dropped way down, but I still caught some fish. It would appear to me your cold front ideas are way off.”*

When the cold front was discussed, it was not stated the fishing “stopped.” We said the fish dropped deep and/or became very inactive. It was stated this condition could “skunk” the best of us, but it did not say fishing “stopped.” It meant that a passing cold front could separate the men from the boys. It meant that fishing “goes bad.”—deteriorates.

It was pointed out that AFTER the front goes through, the clouds normally disappear, and you have a completely “washed out” sky. It was **this** condition that curtailed the fish activity, not the drop in temperature. A temperature “change” in the shallow water may cause the fish to drop deeper, but when we think about it, it’s probably the “light” condition that gets you and me into trouble.

As far as the cold front effect being an “idea,” instead of a fact, you can take it either way you choose. I suggest though, before you make up your mind, you should get a little more fishing experience.

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