



NORTHERN INDIANA SPOONPLUGGER

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The last meeting was held January 16, 2006 at the Kendallville Public Library with 20 members present.

Well, so much for ice fishing. Most lakes are now completely open and can again be fished in a boat, provided the ramp is not a sheet of ice. Be sure to carry a bag of salt with you. Boats being taken out leave a wet ramp that can quickly freeze and trying to pull your boat out of an ice-covered ramp can be challenging at best and downright dangerous at worst.

John and Denny reported fishing the Elkhart River recently and had some success. The river doesn't seem to offer up any really large fish, but there seems to be good numbers of small and large mouth as well as some northerns. Since river systems (flowing water) often lessen the effects of cold fronts and the cold temperatures that accompany them, these can be especially good bodies of water to fish during the unstable weather conditions that are predominant in the colder seasons of late fall, winter and early spring.

Mike Price and Denny Coulardot have also been catching a few muskies from some of the area lakes. Most recently they were catching the muskies casting shallow (4-6 feet). So don't overlook the shallows during the cold weather period. It is getting close to spawning time for all the toothy fish. Northerns and musky typically spawn just as soon as the ice leaves, if not before! This year is really unusual since the ice only lasted a few weeks. Although I'd be surprised if winter is over! We could still get an

ice-up that could last a little while.

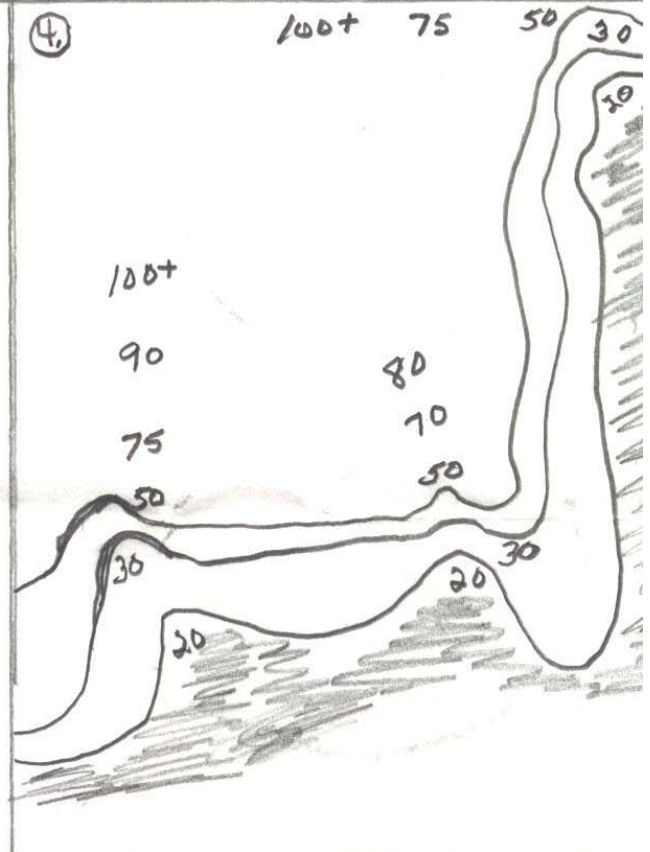
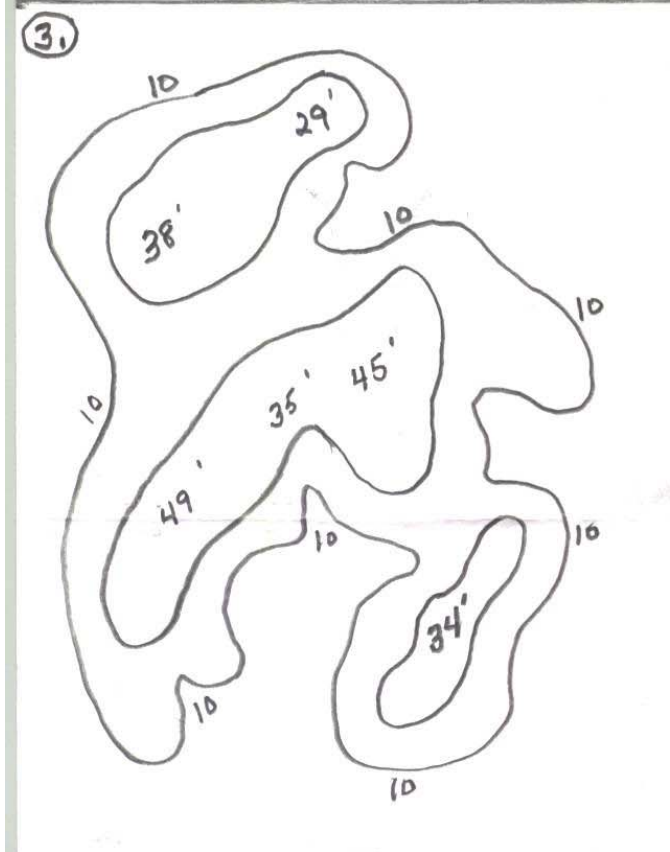
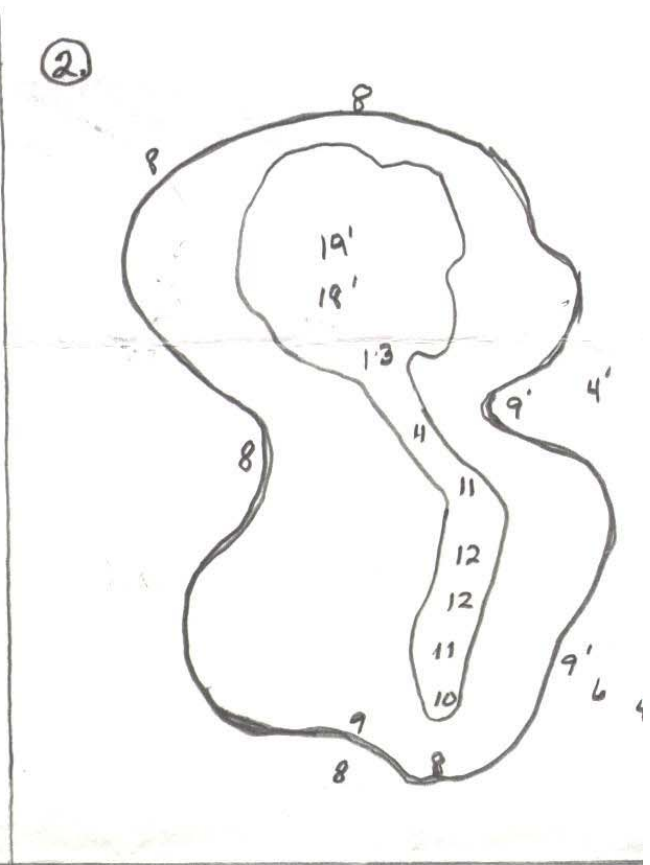
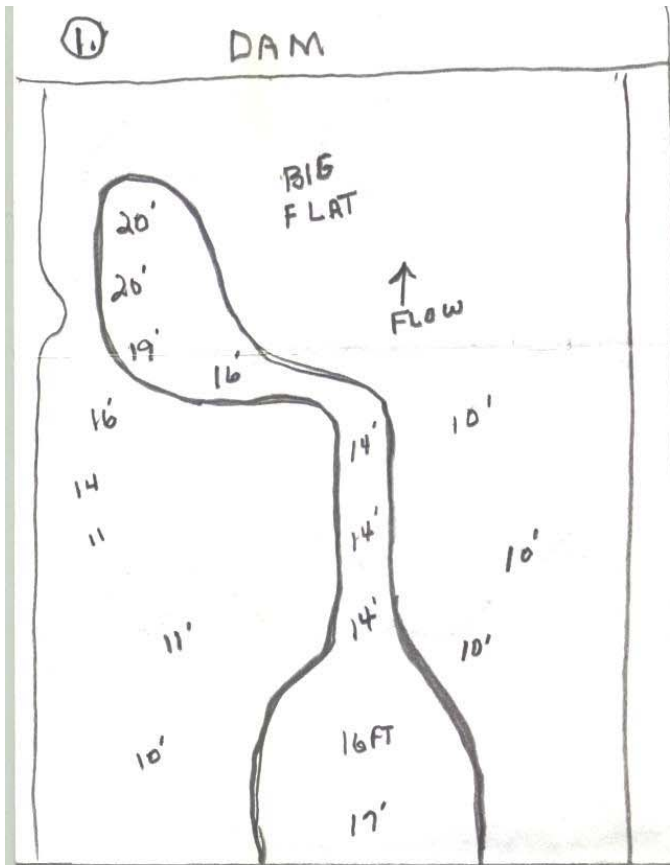
The discussions of marker buoys are continuing. Several brought in markers that have been used with varying degrees of success. Everyone got a look at some new designs. If any prove to be outstanding after some use in the "field", we'll report back. Some one reported that Mike Moran labels his bottle markers "DANGER-POISON" to avoid losing them to would-be marker thieves. And John Zaborney uses the deterrent of a partially urine-filled bottle marker with a dollar bill inside. They only pick them up once!

John Bales reported on his recent trip to the Musky Show in Chicago. He reported that the size of some of the baits he saw would require a steamer trunk to be converted to a tackle box and that a home equity loan would be required to buy just a couple! He said it was very interesting to see how musky fishing has grown as a sport. Tackle manufacturers are seeing BIG-MONEY opportunities supplying the needs of the musky guys. Not unlike the growth of the bass fishing phenomenon of the past two decades.

John also reminded everyone of the **Illinois Spoonpluggers Winter Seminar, March 11, 2006**. John attended last year and said it was well attended, extremely good presentation and worth everybody's time to attend. He will try to recruit Frank Cipria again to lead the way for a convoy to the Chicago area.

NEXT MEETING: February 20, 2006 at the Kendallville Pubic Library 6:30 P.M.

"KNOWLEDGE IS THE KEY TO FISHING SUCCESS"



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Good Spoonplugging

By John Bales, Spoonplugging Instructor



Fishing knowledge must be learned in stages. The shallows, the in-between and then the deeper waters. Mr. Perry divided the shallows and the deep by saying that anything shallower than 8-10 feet deep is the shallows and anything deeper is the deep water. Mr. Perry did not pick those depth's, the fish's behavior did. His observations gave us this guideline and many others that we can use to guide us to fishing success.

There is a lot of interest among Spoonpluggers in increasing their fishing knowledge. Learning how and when to fish deeper seems to keep popping up when we are around a group of fishermen. We must be careful not to confuse a new Spoonpluggers or give too much information unless he is ready to take the next step. Four drawings were made to try and explain the experience that we must all go through before we can take that next step.

In drawing one, we show a river close to my home. This is directly above the dam and is the deepest water in the whole river. In the fall, many smallmouth migrate there for the winter and the narrow channel as well as the area of the 20 foot hole can be loaded. For many trips on this river, the 500-400 and the 250 were used on the troll to learn every structure situation for nearly ten miles. Eventually there came a day that the 200 had to be brought out to make a catch. At some places in the river, this depth of ten to twelve feet would be the deepest water in the channel. Our final passes would be right down the middle in the deepest water that was available. The later in the season or under a bad weather condition, the deeper we had to go to make a catch. Many times a casting position in and around the deeper holes was all that was needed to load the boat. By starting out with the smaller lures and learning our fishing waters, we are able to eliminate the unproductive waters and arrive at the fish. In time the deeper holes were found and when we needed to go deeper, little time was wasted in knowing where to go deep. "The home of the fish is in the deepest water in the lake or in the deepest water in the area being fished". "When you are not catching fish, you are not fishing deep enough". These are two guidelines that we must keep in mind.

Catching fish from a 12 foot deep hole is not difficult whether casting or trolling. Controlling our depth's and speeds does not create much of a problem at these depths. Several things come to mind. We started out with a 500 and kept each lure in position while checking out the different depths and speeds. All along we knew where the 12 foot hole was and kept working towards it and down into it where we finally caught the fish. Our interpretation of what was there and what we needed to do to catch a fish was experienced. We now have gained fishing knowledge that can be taken to other fishing waters.

Drawing two is similar in depth to drawing one except that it is a natural lake with very good water color. All features of this small lake can be covered in one day from the shallows to the deepest holes. In time you will know in what areas of the shallows and the deep are productive and the ones that are not. There are two sections of deeper water that must be checked in this body of water. The twelve foot deep section and the nineteen foot hole. They are to be checked only after the shallows are trolled and no fish are caught. The nineteen foot hole is so small that it cannot be trolled. The breaklines into the hole can be trolled but a couple of casting positions must be taken to cover the deepest part of the hole. Because this lake has good water color, many times you will make a good catch just running the first three sizes of Spoonplugs. It is when the fish are not in the shallows that we must fish in and around the deeper sections to make our catches.

These first two fishing situations are important for the beginning Spoonpluggers. In the beginning, a lot of time should be spent learning how to run the first three size lures. By keeping the first three size lures in position, we begin to learn how to map a lake in short order. Learning how to run the smaller lures in the shallows will eventually show you how to troll the extreme depths. If you are one that cannot turn off the depth meter off and map a bar successfully with the first three size lures, then you need to go back and spend some more time in doing so.

Drawing three is a natural lake with three deeper sections. We have fished lake one and two and know all of the shallower features. We experienced this with the running of the first three size lures. With some time on the water, we had made some good catches by running the first three sizes and when the fish were not in the shallows, we continued our depth control down into the holes and slots and made some catches there also. With some effort, we have gained some fishing knowledge that can be taken to our next body of water.

We interpret lake three just like any other body of water. We begin in the shallows and learn what is there. We find the structure situations and map them out. We locate the five or six possible spots and go to work on them. We learn the size and shapes of the structure situations and what trolling passes are needed to catch the fish. We will soon spend all of our time fishing in the best places that we have a chance to catch a fish. There will come a day that we do everything right but the fish do not come as shallow as we have done our homework so far. It is time for us to carry our depth control a little deeper. There are some guidelines to bring up now. "When we are not catching fish, we are not fishing deep enough". "At times the weather and water conditions are so bad that the fish may not move very shallow." "When this happens, you had better go to the fish because they may not come to you".

Mr. Perry says that we begin to have a more difficult time in controlling our lures at a depth of around fifteen feet. Our line lengths are longer, the bottoms may begin to silt in and get softer, all making the feel of what is going on more difficult. With a little practice, this can be overcome.

"KNOWLEDGE IS THE KEY TO FISHING SUCCESS"

In drawing three, let's say that the base breakline of the three holes is around 28 feet. Below this depth, it is just a very gradual slope out into the deepest part of each section. The bottoms are very soft and silted in which will make our choice of lures and line lengths important. We want our lures just skipping the soft bottoms and not plowing. This will take some time but can be done. We want to begin with markers or shoreline sightings so that we can keep our trolling passes as straight as possible. We want to begin our checking deeper directly off of the contact points where we have caught the fish in the past. At first, we may make a lot of bad trolling passes but with a little practice with lure sizes and line lengths, we will find the ones that catch the fish. We make enough passes until we get it right. We may spend a lot of time at the 28 foot base breakline and learning its shape and the right trolling passes but so what! There will be times that the weather and water conditions are so bad that this is as far as they come. Depth control is not depth in feet but meaning depth where the fish are in feet. We must mention that you do not go deeper without knowing just where to go deeper. You have already done your homework on this lake so we assume that you do know when and where to go deeper. If you do not know, then you are far better off waiting for the fish and hope that they show up on a shallower feature. There are certain weather and water conditions that come along that a Spoonplugger with enough experience will be prepared to carry their depth control down into the deepest waters that they can reach for some species if need be. There are times that we must go to the cast in the deeper sections. By spending some time learning how to troll the deeper waters, we will know where to do our casting when needed.

Drawing four is a very deep and clear lake. Our water color guidelines tell us to steer clear of this body of water. It would be very wise to do so in most cases, however with the introduction of the muskies and a good northern pike population, we would want to check out a few of these. The zebra mussels have given us a few of these lakes and not by our choice so we are forced into learning to fish deeper. Do not pick out a lake of this type when you are a beginning Spoonplugger. It will slow down your learning process! You cannot learn how to troll the shallows in a lake like this! Do not even try. Find yourself a lake with good water color and begin your learning there.

On this deep clear lake we could have a weedline that goes beyond twenty feet. We begin just like the others. We stack our lures along the weedline all the way to the base of the weedline. We locate the best bars and go to work on them. In time we learn the best spots in the lake. We know all of the correct trolling passes that catch the fish when they move. We have spent some time in learning this lake and have even spent some time checking down to a depth of around thirty feet. Today we have made all of the right trolling passes and have also checked out a couple of anchoring positions where we have made some good catches in the past. We have varied our speeds throughout the day and have not caught a fish. It is time to carry our depth control deeper than we have in the past. We find that there are breaklines that exist even deeper than we can control our lures but with the big north-erns and muskies, we must continue to check as deep as we can.

Refer to your "Green Book" on page 264. All of what Mr. Perry has written has come from experience and would have never been stated if not proven as fact. "First let me say more about the deep water sanctuary of the fish. The 30-35 foot depth is the normal depth that you view as the starting point of migrations for most fish. In your situation; the deep clear water, BIG northern and muskie, you have to increase the 30-35 foot depth down to 45-55 feet. The myth that the muskie is an elusive fish, and that only the expert can catch him, can easily be dispelled by working the deep structure. THE BIG MUSKIE WILL BE IN THIS AREA MOST OF THE TIME."

I have never found any statement made by Mr. Perry not to be absolutely correct. Each and every comment by him has furthered my fishing knowledge. This is why many of us do not hesitate to go deeper when conditions deem necessary.

Lake number four will take a bit more time in working out the deeper breaklines. The deeper we go the more difficult the whole ball of wax becomes. Some more quotes from the green book. "I have found, if I have the wire, no lake or no species can give me trouble---- for long. To be effective it is very, very important, that you know structure, can read deep water, weather, and know where the fish will be. You just can't go out there in deep water and wander around like some lost dog. Deep water means "exactness" in both interpretation and presentation. Being sure you run "just enough" line is very important. You may have to adjust the length, by winding in or letting out, but proper line length will normally correct any troubles you are having with wire. Proper use of wire will raise your score tremendously. MOST OF THE TIME, IF YOU ARE NOT CATCHING FISH, YOU ARE NOT FISHING DEEP ENOUGH. As I have said before ---- you better go to the fish, as he may not come to you. BUT DO NOT USE WIRE, UNLESS CALLED FOR. If you know what you are doing, wire line can be one of the more important items in your tackle box." One more quote from the green book. "The predominate situations where the fishing was too difficult for the local fisherman was, the DEEP CLEAR LAKES AND RESERVOIRS. The situation was such, that the movements of the fish did not bring them within range of the average fisherman ---- Spoonplugs or not. In so many cases, I had to go to wire line to catch the fish. It would have not only been unfair, but would have been a completely lost cause, had I done anything other than leave the area."

We would not have a chance to further our fishing knowledge without guidelines. Mr. Perry has given us many that if we read and believe and put forth effort, we can take it as far as we want. Fishing deeper with wire line cannot be taught in one easy lesson or in one day. You notice that we tried to start out with lakes one through four and take the learning in small steps. First the learning of the first three sizes and starting out with the deeper sections at around twelve feet, then twenty, then thirty and eventually to as deep as we can control a lure. A fisherman must experience fishing deeper a little at a time. Each experience will gain more knowledge and confidence. Soon you will be just as comfortable trolling a 50 foot breakline (when called for) as you would be a 500 in four foot of water.

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:

“Will different species of fish use the different type structures, breaks, breaklines, etc., found in a lake? Or is the bass the only fish that will use all these different types?”

As I have said before, ALL species of fish will react to the bottom features (structure, breaks, breaklines, deep water, etc.) found in bodies of water. In some bodies of water, certain type structure will be more predominant than others. In some bodies of water the different species may use a particular type structure over another type. In some bodies of water all the species could use all the type structure, breaks, and breaklines present.

In some bodies of water the different species may be “using” a different type structure at a particular time. By this, I mean at a particular time the best bass structure may be a “bar” with a tall weedline, while at the same time a deep underwater bar (or hump) may be the best place to find walleye. While at the same time, a deep breakline is the best place for big northern or muskie. In other bodies of water all the species could be using the same type structure, breaks, or breaklines, at the same time.

When we consider migrating fish such as the walleye, white bass, stripers, etc., they will react to the same features of the bottom—in the area where they might be.

* * * * *

“Why do you say fish pause or stop at “breaks” in the structure?”

Here again, I make this statement through observation, experience, and logic. I have no definite scientific proof why this is so (neither do I need it). But, if I were approaching a “danger zone” (shallower water) or an area that might mean unpleasantness, I’d want to “case the joint” a little, and I’d move from “break” to break.” I would pick out a vantage point ahead, and I’d go until I reached that point. Then I’d pause again until I spotted another vantage point, and move on to that. If things seemed to be getting too bad for me at the next point, then I wouldn’t get any closer.

You still may have grounds for another “why”—even though you would do the same thing. We know fish can adapt to changes in his environment. We also know that this is not instantaneous; it takes a little time. If a big change comes too fast, the shock could kill him. This indicates to us the **pauses** give time for adjustments to be made. As he moves shallower, there is a pressure change, temperature change, light change, oxygen change, etc. He might even have to pause or stop for “resting” from exertions that might have occurred during the migration.

* * * * *

“You indicated that a ‘sharper break’ would be one of the best ‘contact points.’ If I had a structure such as a big wide bar, or a big long hump, should I concentrate my efforts primarily on any ‘sharper break’ that I find?”

I said at some place in our studies, I was going to repeat important subjects until I sounded like a broken record. The “sharper break” is such a subject.

To make a “sharper break” important to a structure, it must have two very important things. First, **it must break into deeper water**, preferably the “deepest.” The next ingredient is the **depth with which it starts to break** (breakline) into deep water. If it breaks as shallow as 8 or 9 feet (or shallower), it may not be as good as **other spots on the structure**. If this **shallow sharper break** is the only “break” around, then you shouldn’t expect many **good** migrations up on the structure very often.

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