



# NORTHERN INDIANA SPOONPLUGGER

VOLUME 12 ISSUE 5

#151

**FOUNDED 1991**

May 2007

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The last meeting was held April 16, 2007 with 21 members present.

Dan Luley reported that son Matt and his wife, Chanda had recently joined the National Spoonpluggers and therefore our own group. Welcome Matt and Chanda! You've got a great teacher in the family!

Denny Coulardot reported 21 muskies to date. The largest being 44 inches, but had a 47-48 incher to the boat recently. Most are being caught on 500's 400's and 250's. Denny says movements have been rather short, lasting 15-30 minutes.

Denny also reminded everyone that with the largemouth will be in the shallows shortly and will be catchable as the shallows have been nearly to proper temperatures and will warm up again quickly with only a few good days needed to get the job done. Once the spawn begins, we should leave the bass alone and concentrate on other species in order to keep a good population of bass available to work over at a later date!

John Bales discussed the importance of fishing waters with good color, especially in the spring when many of the lakes are clear due to lack of algae blooms. He gave a list of lakes that are likely to have good color and suggested that newer Spoonpluggers learn to run the first three sizes of Spoonplugs on these lakes before fishing the deeper structures. He demonstrated the importance of learning to contour the shallows in a proper manner as a lead up to contouring deep structures when being right on the money will make or break a fishing trip. John illustrated contouring versus straight-line passes on

deeper breaklines.

Denny and John also explained using longer and shorter lines depending on the season. The spring-time is normally a time of longer lines when the fish are shallower. Later in the season, when trolling weedlines and the water has warmed to the deeper depths, shorter lines are called for in most instances. And it should go without saying that all speeds need to be checked, regardless of the season.

It was also mentioned that several of the area lakes will be treated for Eurasian milfoil this year. I didn't get all the names but I'm sure Webster will be re-treated. Some weed control is initiated by the DNR and some are sponsored by various lakes associations. The treatments are almost always controversial over the effects on the fish populations as some treatment teams are responsible and knowledgeable and others are...er...less so. We will hopefully have an update as to which lakes will be treated and when. Perhaps D. J. Erdly can shed some light on this subject for the next newsletter.

Several articles have been circulating recently concerning viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) which has now spread from lakes Ontario, Erie, St Clair and Huron into Lake Michigan. This virus is blamed for the large fish kills in the Detroit River and surrounding waters.

If you are going to be fishing the Detroit River, it would be wise to obtain a passport before going. They can take several weeks to get.

**NEXT MEETING: May 21, 2007 at the Kendallville Public Library (This will be the last meeting in the old facility)**

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

Early in my Spoonplugging experience, I learned a valuable lesson that I'd like to share with beginning Spoonpluggers and perhaps some experienced ones as well. I attended the Muskegon Network Outing with Mike Erhardt in 1995 or 1996. Mike had taken me under his wing and on the second day of the outing, we decided to fish Mona Lake on the south side of Muskegon. Mona had fairly good water color and since a cold front had gone through the night before, we figured our best bet was a lake with the best water color we could find.

As we left the launch, Mike suggested that since conditions were not too favorable for a good catch, that we spend our time learning. I was running the boat and Mike asked me if I had ever trolled the shallows without the aid of a depth meter. I said that I hadn't. He told me to put on a 500 series Spoonplug and head toward shore until the 500 began bumping the bottom and then head away from the shore until it began running free, then turn back toward shore again.

Having spent a couple of years Spoonplugging and relying on my depth meter, I can tell you I felt pretty humbled without it being turned on. In fact, I kept looking at the screen even though it was blank. I spent quite a while madly weaving back and forth until I became comfortable and began SLOWLY turning in and out. We continued around the lake, switching to 400's, then 250's until the shallows were strained. I had a renewed sense of accomplishment having gone through this exercise.

Several years later, I was fishing with Bob Adams. We decided to fish a lake neither of us had previously fished nor did we have a lake map along. Leaving the launch I attempted to turn on the depth meter and found that it didn't work. I told Bob that I had attempted mapping without the aid of a depth meter only once before, but that if the old timers could Spoonplug before the depth meter was invented, so could we! The lake was moderately deep and didn't have very good water color, but we managed to work it out and caught a few fish in the process.

Later, we looked at the lake map and discovered that we had mapped it very well, except for one hump or one small hole that we didn't find (can't remember which).

The point being, mapping without the aid of a depth meter, especially in the shallows, is a great learning lesson. Finding a lake on which you can safely perform this exercise can be difficult in the Midwest, but well worth the effort. We sometimes tend to get our head so buried in the depth meter, that we forget other aspects of mapping, such as looking at the shoreline for feature that may tell us something about the bottom structure or for shoreline sightings. Placing all your eggs in the depth meter basket can also obscure the "feel" of your Spoonplug as it bumps the bottom.

So, the next time you're feeling especially smug about your Spoonplugging abilities, turn off your depth meter and see how you do. It may give you a whole new sense of respect for our Spoonplugging pioneers!

Ted Walter

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# Good Spoonplugging

By John Bales, Spoonplugging Instructor



Most articles that we write have something to do with the presentation of lures. So much emphasis is placed on the presentation of lures that we forget that there is so much more involved than just the running of lures. The learning process is all about interpretation; the interpretation of weather conditions and how it relates to the movements of the fish. Not just on a daily basis but seasonally as well. We look at water color as we go about the learning and its relationship to the movements of the fish. We face the clear bodies of water and note how much more difficult it is to get into the fish. We check out the good water color lakes and see that many times, we do not need to go to wire line to make a good catch. In the very early stages we get to see how important water color is to our future successes or failures. There are many weather and water conditions and they are constantly changing. We see our natural lakes become very clear in the spawning season and then get an algae bloom in the summer. We see how the algae blooms become important in when we decide to move in and go to work on them. We see daily changes in our weather fronts and relate those changes to the movements of the fish. We watch a cold front come blasting through and it leaves us with mile high skies. And then things begin to improve and we can watch things get better. There are days when there is no cloud cover in the early part of the day and several hours later the clouds begin to form and then the jet streams come. We can see these things happen before our eyes. And then the fish become active right in the thick of things and then it is over. An hour or so later, the clouds begin to blow off and the jet streams are gone. It just happened that the fish became active when the light condition was at the maximum for the day. We can see these things happen every day that we are on the water. If we pay attention we see them! If we don't see them, then what have we learned about weather conditions and how they control the movements of the fish? Why a certain Spoonplugger is a consistent fish catcher is not because he knows how to keep his lures in position. It boils down to a lot more than just knowing how and where to run lures. It is all about interpretation. Mr. Perry said that the presentation of lures is not a big deal, yet this seems to be the area that most seem to have trouble. The trouble is that the average Spoonplugger does not take the time to learn how. You and I must learn how to troll the shallows. This is the starting point in everything. Your interpretation starts as soon as you stick the 500 in the water and the minute that it hits the bottom. You begin to feel the bottom as you bump and start turning out and you are now beginning the learning process. You learn to contour troll the shallows. You don't know it yet but you are relating what fish are caught to the water color and the weather conditions at the time that you are on the water. You are relating what you are feeling and seeing to the shoreline. You are finding the sizes and shapes of the bars that you found. You continue to learn by using markers and shoreline sightings and the use of straight line passes for the fingers that you found on this bar. In time, you begin to carry your depth control into the sanctuary depths with success. You are now on your way to becoming a great Spoonplugger. It is not because you know how to run lures and keep them in position. It is because you have spent a lot of time on the water learning how to run lures. And you have kept your eyes open to what is happening around you. You have interpreted many water colors. You have seen many weather conditions. You have fished natural lakes as well as reservoirs in many parts of the country. In every instance, you have related all of what is important to the movements of the fish. You have gained Spoonplugging knowledge in all phases of the game. It is not about how well you can run lures. Your interpretation is now good enough that you can go to any lake with no doubts of what must be done in order to catch a fish. Page 199 of the green book: "Success on any given fishing trip will be determined by how well you understand how fish move on structure, the effects of water conditions, weather conditions, and how well you can evaluate these conditions at the time you're on the water." This is the paragraph that says it all! "The degree of understanding that you have will determine how and when you arrive at the fish. Your interpretation of structure, and of conditions affecting fish at the time, will direct you into the procedures necessary to put fish on the stringer. The approach to catching fish will not always be exactly the same, so you must react to the conditions which you face at that particular time." How does a fisherman get to this point? He must spend enough time on the water and interpret all that is found.

Go fishing!

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:**

Just don't forget that clear water can mean the movements are not as predictable; they occur deeper, for a shorter distance, and for less time than those in water of less clarity. It is for this reason, we consider the selection of water color as the most important thing you can do to make a good catch. You can't control the weather, the water conditions, the movements of the fish or his appetite, BUT you can control, in most instances, the water color.

In time, a good Spoonplugger can work out ANY water. If it's clear, it takes a little longer. He will work hard and become good in his interpretation and presentation.

Fortunately, the fisherman does not have to limit himself to just clear conditions. He usually has a choice of different bodies of water, or the SEASONAL CHANGES in water color that occur in both natural and man-made lakes.

In natural lakes there is a degree of change due to algae growth, pollution, boat activity, wind and rain run-off. In artificial reservoirs there is a seasonal change, and in addition, very few reservoirs exist that do not have different water color in different areas. Normally, the upper part of a reservoir will have darker color due to the feeder streams. A good rule to follow is to move toward the headwaters of the main channel or feeder streams when seeking darker water. This could also be true when the reverse is desired.

There are, however, some areas where a fisherman does not have access to a great variety of water. He is limited to water in his area that does not change during the season—a stabilizing water color. If this is a problem, he should realize it and fish accordingly. For instance, if the only available water is clear and deep, he knows from the study how light affects fish, he would have to expect the fish to be deep most of the time, and he would have to present the lures properly. If this proves too difficult, he would put the emphasis on picking the right weather conditions, such as cloudy, hazy, or rainy days; or fish early or late. Or at night so the clear water is partially offset by the darker conditions.

Most of the time we will be faced with too much clarity. But, in some sections of the country at certain periods of the year, we may face water which is too muddy. The entire lake may be affected, but still, some sections will have a greater degree of clarity (less muddy) than others. Most of the time the problem is not finding waters with more clarity, but rather **finding more dingy areas**. Your selection of water color will have a definite bearing on your catches. It could spell the difference between catching fish or not catching fish. It will determine whether or not fishing is easy or tough.

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