



NORTHERN INDIANA SPOONPLUGGER

VOLUME 15 ISSUE 3

#185

FOUNDED 1991

March 2010

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 February 22, 2010 at the Kendallville Public Library with 22 members present.

John Bales reported that Scott Jenkins of Bucks Baits was scheduled to undergo back surgery soon and as a result, he may be laid up for some time. We hope that Scott has a speedy recovery and is able to continue to produce the tools we need.

Denny reported that the ice would soon start to disappear. Even though we have had below normal temperature for nearly a month, it is the time of year that traditionally see the ice begin to deteriorate making it unsafe to ice fish. Denny reminded everyone that as soon as the ice retreats, the spring muskies will be ready to attack. Once the water temperature reaches 50 degrees, springtime bass can be caught casting blade baits and rattletraps over the tops of the emerging weeds.

John polled the membership of those wishing to attend the Illinois Spoonpluggers Winter Seminar on March 13, 2010. It appeared 5-6 members were going to car-pool.

John Bales gave the membership a short history of his early Spoonplugging experiences. John, Denny and John's father-in-law, Chuck Gladieux started Spoonplugging at the same time. They all read the Green Book and started applying the Spoonplugging methods. Their biggest obstacle they encountered was that there was no one around to ask questions. They were unsure if they were doing the right things at the right times. John wrote to Mr. Perry on a regular basis with questions about the problems they were encountering and Mr. Perry would write back

with advice. They made many mistake during those first years. They would re-read the Green Book many times and with each reading, they would pick up things they had overlooked or misunderstood. Gradually, they became better and better, and when the Jamborees began to be held in Chattanooga, they attended and discovered what a great source of knowledge these outings were.

We are very fortunate to have John and Denny as instructors. They have made many of the mistakes for us. They are about the only shortcut to be had in Spoonplugging and we should take advantage of the knowledge they can share.

John presented me with a very special gift: a trolling rod that was personally wrapped by Mr. Perry himself, nearly 50 years ago for providing the club with a monthly newsletter for 15 years. This rod is one of 3 known to exist. It is something I will always treasure. Thanks to all the guys who made this gift happen. I am a lucky to be a part of such a great club.

On a very sad note, the day following the last meeting, our former club President and long time Spoonplugger, Lloyd Klein and his daughter were both killed in an automobile accident near South Bend. Lloyd's wife was in critical condition in a South Bend hospital. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the family.

**NEXT MEETING: March 15, 2010 at the
Kendallville Public Library 6:30 P.M.**

"KNOWLEDGE IS THE KEY TO FISHING SUCCESS"



Good Spoonplugging

By John Bales, Spoonplugging Instructor



PRESPAWN BASS

Mr. Perry gave us enough knowledge that if we do some studying and put forth some effort, we can become good fishermen. In his mind, what was not given in the study material, he thought that we should be able to figure the rest out ourselves. He figured that whenever the fish were in a position that they came shallow enough for a period of time that anyone would be able to catch them. Fishing knowledge is not generally known. It must be learned. What is generally known about fishing has been passed down from one generation to another. Some of what is known fits into what Mr. Perry found out as being true and other information out there is not worth a hill of beans. If you were to ask 100 fisherman a series of questions on what we need to do to catch a fish consistently, you may just get 100 different answers. This is the exact reason why Mr. Perry needed to find out the answers on his own. Mr. Perry said that a fish can be caught by most anyone, most any time, and by most any method. The real key word is catching fish consistently. Without knowledge of what to do, when to do it, where to do it, why to do it and how to do it, the fisherman cannot catch fish consistently.

A fish has a pea-sized brain without an original thought in his mind. He is given way too much credit for being a smart creature. However, a fish is born in his environment. As a small fish, he spends his "teenage" years in and around the shallows where he is safe. When he becomes an adult, he spends 99% of the rest of his life in and around the deeper waters. He knows what every feature in that area looks like because it is where he lives. He can see every structure, break and breakline no matter how large or small. His movements and migrations are totally controlled by the weather and water conditions. His metabolism is controlled by the temperature of the water. He eats less in the colder season and more in the warmest part of the season. Every move he makes, he does so because it is his nature to survive and carry on the species. One thing about a fish, he is **never** lost.

You and I need to know something about these conditions that effect the fish and then learn what we have to do to put him in the boat. The only way to accomplish this is by lots of study and then by going fishing. At first we do not understand everything that is studied, but the more time that we spend on the water, the more we see understand what has been written in the Green Book and what we need to do about it. There are times during your study that you will just read through the material and do not grasp it for one reason or another. Either we are not ready to suck the knowledge into our brain or we are just not in the correct frame of mind to be studying at the moment. And then again there are times that when you are studying that you run into that AHA! moment that just absolutely blows you away. You wonder why you missed that the first twenty three times that you read it.

On page 199 of the green book, the first three paragraphs include some statements Mr. Perry makes that say a lot about what we need to do to become good Spoonpluggers. "If I were to place the importance of knowledge on any one given area, the highest degree of importance would probably have to be placed on your ability to read and interpret bottom conditions." Look at what Mr. Perry said here! The **highest degree** of importance would be placed on your ability to read and interpret bottom conditions. He is putting this all on you and I. The question that you need to ask yourself is am I able to do this? If I were to point to a particular structure situation and ask you to go over there and look at what is there and ask you to draw it and show me what is there, could you do it? What we need to remember is that this part of what we need to be able to

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do has been placed at the **highest degree of importance.**

“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.” Here again, he is putting all the pressure on us. Our success will be determined how well we understand how fish move on structure, how well we know the effects of weather and water conditions and how well we can evaluate these conditions at the time we're on the water. Once you and I get enough experience to be able to interpret a structure situation and know it's size and shape, then we need to pay attention to how the weather and water conditions effect the movements of the fish in and around these features of the bottom. So many fishermen put so much time in the presentation of lures that they simply forget that there is so much more involved in the learning process than just dragging a lure behind the boat. Mr. Perry told me in a letter one time that “the presentation of lures is the easiest part of Spoonplugging. 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.” The degree of understanding that you have, which means in short; are we good enough to do these things?

Do we know enough to determine how to approach this fishing situation? Do we have any doubts of if and when we may arrive at the fish? Can we interpret the structure that is there, the weather and water conditions, and have an idea of what we need to do to catch a fish? Do we have enough fishing knowledge and experience that if our trolling does not produce, we can react and do what is necessary to put the fish in the boat?

What if the condition that we face at a particular time of the year puts the fish a week or so before the spawn? We are talking about the bass. Are you going to stay at the base of the weedline and deeper all day long if you are not catching anything? Let's say that you see a guy in a bass boat catch several fish in the shallows. Are you going to stay deep because by gosh you are a Spoonplugger and this is what we do?! Maybe you just don't like to cast! What will you catch and learn if you decide to stay deeper? Let's go in the other direction. You see the man catch a fish shallow so you decide to check it out but away from his fishing spot. You have a good bar down the lake and there is a well established inside edge of the weeds that can be seen visually. You saw the man catch a fish on a jig with him making short hops with a spinning rod. You position the boat directly over the inside edge of the weeds and drop the trolling motor. You can see that just ahead, the weedline makes a sharp turn which forms a little point in the weeds. Your cast is made just past the little finger and as you take up the slack to jump the jig you find that a fish has hit you on the drop. You land a nice fish and after fishing the inside edge of the weedline around several bars, you end up making a nice catch. You find that all of the fish were caught on some kind of turn or break in the weeds. What decision did you make on this day? The one who caught the fish was the Spoonplugger.

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:

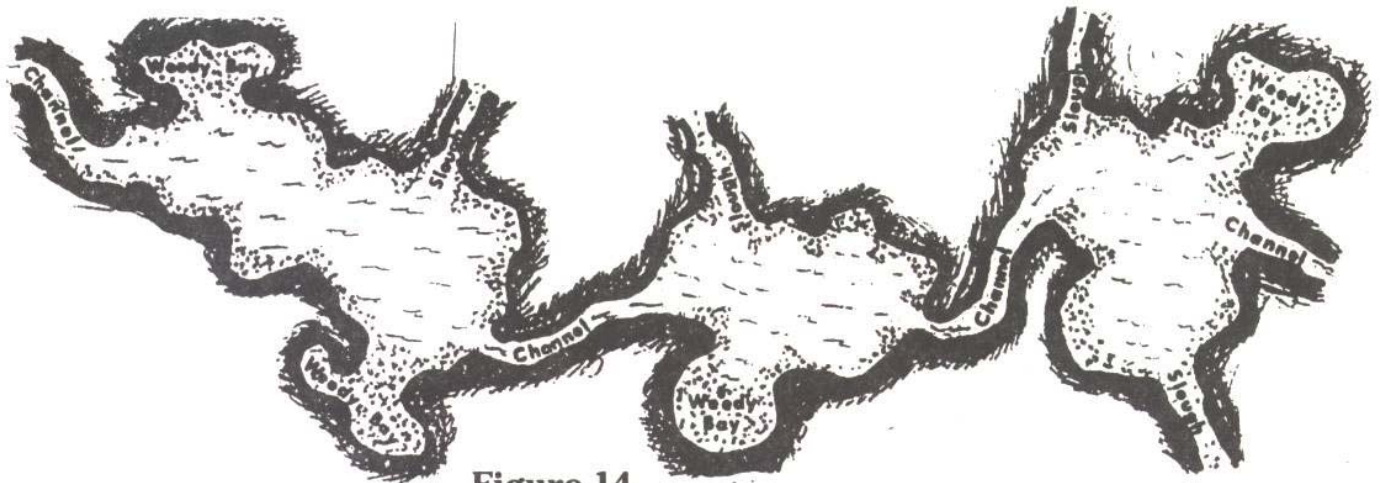


Figure 14

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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