

SPOONPLUGGING STUDY GROUP NOVEMBER 17, 2005

9 attended the meeting. Welcome to John Smith who has attended the last few meetings and shows a lot of interest in Spoonplugging. He has mentioned that Spoonplugging knowledge has helped him with his fly fishing! This is not surprising since Bucks' knowledge applies to all species, all waters, and can be used with any method.

FISHING REPORTS

Charlie Meyers has been catching a few steelhead at the Muskegon Lake rivermouth trolling Flatfish over the breaklines. He found an eddy south of the rivermouth related to a channel breakline that produced some fish. He also claimed the title "Drum King" by catching 8 and 10 pound drum in 37 and 42 feet on the bottom, but if anyone else wishes to claim that title, he would be only too happy to relinquish it! Don Stephens caught 4 steelhead so far this fall in the Grand River from 6-9 pounds. The floating leaves are not too bad if one keeps off the bottom with their lures. With the slower current earlier, Don trolled X-5 Flatfish, but with the recent rain and more current, he is using Hotentots which handle the current better. Bob Streck fishes the Grand River below the 6th Street Dam and said that during a recent Steelheaders tournament there, 12 fish were caught. More fish are expected to come up as they are still catching fish off the pier in Lake Michigan.

A discussion ensued about what were the criteria that made fish "take" a lure. It was noted that color can occasionally make a difference but that it was not a major factor. In fact, there is still some debate among scientists as to whether fish can see different colors or if they see just in shades. The visibility of a lure in a given environment is likely more important---in other words, can a fish see the lure against the existing background, light intensity, and water color, which changes. Fish can use their lateral line "hearing" to find lures even in dark water, but they must see the lure to strike it. That is why muddy water (less than 6 inches visibility) can be very poor fishing. But color or visibility alone is not what makes fish strike. It is the movement of the lure (speed) and presenting lures in front of the fish (depth) that triggers strikes. The depth of the fish changes as they move and the speed needed for a reflex strike changes with the weather and water conditions, so all depths and speeds must be checked. What about size and action? They can be "aids", but by themselves (without proper depth and speed) will not cause fish to strike. Fish may not be as discerning and selective as we may think. Just ask any person who keeps tropical fish. Fish will often take other fishes' feces moving through the water into their mouth to test it, then spit it out! This is all we can hope for with any artificial lure. This is why Buck Perry emphasized depth and speed as our two most important lure controls. In fact, he has stated: "We must answer all our fishing successes and all our fishing failures in terms of depth and speed". It can't get more basic than that!

What time of day fish become active was also discussed. Bob Streck noted that when fishing the river in the fall that the salmon were active early and late in the day but the steelhead could be active throughout the day. Chase noted that many of his best fall catches in the river for bass, catfish, and pike have been from about noon to 4 PM.

PROGRAM

The program subject was "Reading Contour Maps". In his study material, Buck Perry mentions the 3 main ingredients in a contour map as being: 1) Deep Holes or channels, 2) Structures (bars, humps, etc.), and 3) Breaklines. Finding these ingredients in a contour map and studying them will help you arrive at the fishable spots. This does not put you precisely on fish, but it eliminates much water and tells you where to concentrate your fishing efforts. Detailed mapping and interpretation then will help you pinpoint the fish. Buck also has in his Home Study Guide a sequential approach to studying contour maps (Vol. 7, Part 1, page 49). 1) Find deep holes and channels, 2) Note any underwater islands, 3) search for bars and narrow ridges that extend out towards deep holes, 4) note any large flats between bars and deep holes, 5) Carefully study contour lines on all structure to see where a break occurs (sharper break). If the above is done, all the important details that the contour map has to offer will be found.

The contour maps of Hess and Lincoln Lakes were projected on the wall with our overhead projector. Criteria and areas were pointed out on each map to demonstrate what we are looking for. Members that knew those lakes added information on where fish have been caught on them. Roger Bouwkamp brought a map of Long Lake in Ionia County and we evaluated this lake also. It has a 10 foot weedline and may be a good lake for an outing next year. The last lake map looked at was of VanEtten Lake in Oscoda County. It is a reservoir with good water color that has smallmouth, walleye, and pike in it. Most of its' structure is related to small isolated slightly deeper holes from the old river channel. After the program ended, members concurred that going over contour maps is something we should do more often. That and the fishing reports seem to create the most interest at our meetings. We welcome suggestions from others on how to improve our meetings.

Chase Klinesteker

