

SPOONPLUGGING STUDY GROUP SEPTEMBER 15, 2005

FISHING REPORTS

11 members attended. Fishing reports were given. Charlie Meyers reported that the fishing in Muskegon Lake has not been as good the last 2 weeks. He did mention catching a 13 pound pike in 20 feet of water on an 800 Spoonplug and wire, but fewer fish than before. The weather at times has seemed to be ideal (hot, muggy, hazy) but other factors (seasonal, etc.) may be in play also. John Steponovitch reported there are many more weeds on Lower Herring Lake than earlier and fishing has been tough, although panfishing has been good. Clarence Allen caught 47 bluegills from Camp Lake 8-9 inches on wax and regular worms in 10-14 feet of water. He and Russ Noom have been doing well lately on panfish. Roger Bouwkamp fished Mona Lake and caught 4 big catfish, all about 27-28 inches in 14-15 feet trolling. He also caught a 28 inch pike trolling in 5 feet and a 28 inch sheephead in 9 feet. Friday he fished Hess Lake and got an 18 inch largemouth in 8 feet, a hopeful sign, since Hess has been very tough lately. Roger has been progressing well with his Spoonplugging skills lately and making nice catches under tough conditions. Jack Clark says the water in the Grand River is low and doesn't recommend launching at the Rogue River ramp now since construction is diverting water flow making it difficult to get upstream. 2 weeks ago he got 8 bass and 1 walleye from that area. Jack also fished Murry Lake and had a big musky on that tore the hooks off a 100 Spoonplug! Riley Rogers has been doing well on Big Pine Island Lake with bluegill catches of 39 and 44 fish from 8-9 inches on worms in 10-12 feet.

MEETING

Chase reminded all to put March 16-19, 2006 on their calendars for next springs' DeVos Place Sports Show. He also read a very nice note from Jeri Perry thanking the Lunker Hunters for the nice flowers and vase sent in memory of Buck. Bob Streck attended a recent meeting of the Great lakes Coalition. There was a wide range of groups involved, from practical to fanatical environmentalists. There is a \$20 billion price tag on the project but no new money has been appropriated. 7 states and Canada are involved and much of the project is aimed at controlling sewage runoff.

PROGRAM

John Bales is one of our top Spoonplugging instructors. Recently, Chase was fortunate to spend 4 days with John fishing Lake Saint Claire and the Saint Clair River. Observing John in action was an education in itself. Johns' goal was to learn as much as possible about the areas' structure and fishing potential. Covering a lot of water was essential on this huge river and lake system. Eliminating much water was accomplished by checking contour maps, observing the terrain, and trolling fast. On big river structures, some trolling runs were 5 miles long. The best structures were fished more thoroughly by trolling, casting, and/or vertical jigging (study Bucks' "Green Book" for what constitutes the best structures for big fish!). 11 hour days were spent searching and fishing. One day we covered over 50 miles of water! Needless to say, one of the key ingredients in Johns' success is his hard working persistence at Spoonplugging. He follows Buck Perrys' Guidelines closely. Every minute on the water was used to learn more. This was carried to the point where yours truly had little time to take pictures, eat lunch, or make notes! However, the learning experience was so fantastic that I wouldn't have had it any other way (I did manage to eat my lunches and take a few pictures anyway).

The weather for the 4 days was mostly hot, calm, and sunny---very tough cold front conditions! Other than some panfish, we never saw a gamefish caught by another boat during all that time on the water. Especially no muskies were seen caught, which was the main fish we were trying to pinpoint. By having lures in the water most of the time and covering lots of territory, we did manage to catch 4 muskies up to about 45 inches, a few walleye, and several smallmouth bass to 4 pounds. Most in the river came from water 26 to 35 feet deep and those in Lake Saint Claire (3 muskies) were from walking the bottom or very close to it in 16 to 18 foot depths. We had heard reports that musky could only be caught in Lake Saint Claire by trolling lures 3-6 feet under the surface and that one couldn't walk the bottom due to the weeds there. John did find short weeds on the lake bottom, 3 different kinds to be exact. His

persistence in learning more about the lake bottom (by getting lures down there) located hard workable bottom and weed edges that were trolled, and this is where the muskies were caught.

Facts and techniques that were learned on this trip were shared during the program. Actually, much of the information was a good review of Buck Perrys' written materials, as John follows them closely. Some pointers included: how to make a strong tie with wire line, how to walk a lure deeper, boat control and vertical jigging in heavy current, speed control and keeping slack out of the line using jump lures, taking good linesights constantly, wind observations, the importance of a walking lure, using a section of 90 lb. monofilament in front of the lure, and how to walk an 800 Spoonplug on bottom in 40 feet and heavy current. No fish were netted, as John feels this can harm the slime coat on muskies especially. Much experience is required to land a large fish for a picture without a net. Most fish he releases at the boat. The more fish are handled, the less chance they will survive when released. Pictures attached and following.

The next Spoonplug Study Group meeting will be Thursday, October 20 at 7:00PM in Leisure Village Activities Building.

Chase Klinesteker

