

SPOONPLUGGING STUDY GROUP MARCH 16, 2006

8 attended the meeting. The main program was to study an article written by John Bales in the February '06 issue of the "Northern Indiana Spoonplugger". This is one of the best articles on how to learn Spoonplugging that I have ever seen, and it should be on the "must read" list for all beginning Spoonpluggers, as well as for those with more experience. All subscribers to "The National Spoonplugger" newsletter can receive the monthly "Northern Indiana Spoonplugger" newsletter online free by contacting Ted Walter at spnplger@gte.net. A better "2 for 1 deal" would be hard to find!

The article contained drawings of structures on 4 different waters. They progressed from the easiest type to fish (shallow lakes with dark water color) to the toughest fishing situation (deep lakes with clear water). John emphasized that fishing knowledge must be learned in stages. With each type of water, we gain experience and knowledge that will help us with the next. New Spoonpluggers will become confused and frustrated if they fish more difficult waters before learning how to fish the easier waters because they have not gained the skills and experience needed.

- 1) The first drawing showed a small darkwater reservoir with the deepest water at 20 feet near the dam. Most holes upriver were no more than 12 feet deep. Trolling the 3 shallowest lures will result in good catches for most of the season, and if the fish were inactive or dormant, casting a small 12 foot hole could be done thoroughly quite easily. Lure presentation skills and control of depth and speed are very straightforward and the fish cannot get away from you—their home is in 12 feet! In trolling, we learn to keep each lure in position and gain knowledge on how to interpret structure, skills we will take to other waters.
- 2) The second drawing is of a natural lake with good water color. 2 deeper holes of 12 and 19 feet exist. This type of lake should be trolled from the shallows to the deep in order to map and interpret the structures and find the most productive ones. Always begin in the shallows. Fish are more active and easier to catch there. If fish are not caught shallow, casting positions can be established. John feels that a lot of time should be spent on these first two types of lakes learning how to run the first 3 sized lures. He says that if you can't successfully map a bar without the depth sounder, go back and do more work in the shallows. A new Spoonplugger often takes 2 or more years on the first two types of lakes before gaining enough knowledge to move on. In most cases one is catching more and bigger fish than ever before.
- 3) Drawing three is a natural lake with 3 deeper sections of 38, 49, and 34 feet. We begin the same way by working the shallows and finding good structure. Here we likely will have to carry our depth control deeper, both casting and trolling. We don't just fish deep, but concentrate in the best structure areas (skills learned on lakes 1 and 2). We will encounter softer bottoms and need to use longer line lengths, both more difficult, but our lure presentation experience will help us through. At this point in the article, John wrote about finer skills that must be worked on which would take some time to learn such as skipping above silted bottoms, running the base breakline at 28 feet, using markers and linesights, and keeping trolling passes as straight as possible. Mapping and interpretation becomes more difficult with greater depths, but now we already have some skills to help out. Much time can be spent learning on this type of water. Also, many reservoirs with

water color fall into this category and are excellent waters to learn because of their varied structure situations.

- 4) The fourth drawing depicts a very large, deep, and clear water lake. Depths go to over 100 feet and weedlines to 20 feet. This is the most difficult type of lake to fish by far. In clear water, fish stay much deeper and are dormant longer. It is wise to avoid fishing these lakes. Knowledge, experience, and skill is recommended before trying them, but they can be a way to gain further knowledge for Spoonpluggers with some experience. Deep water means exactness in both interpretation and presentation, and those skills can be better honed when challenged. This includes the use of wire line and working deep breaklines in 45-55 feet of water. When Buck Perry would make outstanding deep catches of big fish with wire line on this type of water, he would leave the area quietly and not show his catches. He would explain that non-Spoonpluggers would have little concept of what is required to attain the skills to accomplish these catches, and he would do more harm than good by telling them (“There is no magic lure or shortcut to success— Knowledge is the Key”).

My comments on John Bales’ article will not substitute for reading and studying this excellent article thoroughly, which I strongly recommend. Many times we scare off beginning Spoonpluggers by allowing them to start on deep, clear, or weedy lakes where they will become frustrated presenting Spoonplugs. They should start on shallow darkwater lakes where they can learn and have success early on, then later progress to more challenging waters. Spoonpluggers at all levels of skill occasionally run across times when fishing success drops and frustration sets in. Rather than pounding your head against a wall, I would recommend dropping back to an easier type of fishing water to quickly regain your confidence, and then move on.

For the second part of the program, Don Stephens reviewed some of the questions that were discussed at the Illinois Spoonpluggers Winter Seminar and comments were made. Much was learned at this seminar and it was very well organized. Over 50 attended from several Midwest states. All 5 attendees from our group expressed interest in returning next year. We all came back with some great ideas to apply to this years fishing.

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