

## **LUNKER HUNTER SPOONPLUGGERS MEETING DECEMBER 6, 2007**

### **FISHING REPORTS**

Bob Strek has been fishing Muskegon Lake at night and has been getting a number of walleye from 17 to 21 inches. Don Stephens has fished the Grand River at the Rogue for steelhead this fall but has only caught a few fish, likely because of the low, clear water and lack of rain. Some ice is beginning to form now, so access will be more of a challenge. He has also gotten a few muskies on Murry Lake. Speaking of Murry Lake, It has been a "Study Lake" for some in our club this fall. Instigated by Roger Bouwkamp, a number of nice pike, bass, and muskies have been caught there by Don, Roger, Charlie Myers, and Jim VanAsselt. One of the most persistent has been Charlie who brought pictures of a few muskies landed there. In his learning the structure of Murry, Charlie brought up 3 anchors and a tent---talk about thorough fishing! The weather has been very cold lately and one picture showed a red face with a grimace that did not exude warmth and comfort! Once he had to stop fishing because his reel froze solid with ice! Their persistence has paid off, and they have been rewarded with some nice catches. Murry Lake is clear and deep. Most fish were caught from 18 to 30 feet trolling Spoonplugs. Chase reported catching two 5 pound smallmouth from Macatawa and an 18 and a 24 pound flathead catfish from the Grand River.

### **MEETING**

14 attended the meeting. Charlie reminded us that we will have elections in January. Those clamoring to gain power should begin their campaigns now! If there are no challengers, we will continue with the existing officers: President, Charlie Myers; Vice President, Chase Klinesteker; Treasurer, Roger Bouwkamp. The Valentines dinner was brought up and only 4 raised their hands that they would come. Let Charlie know if you would come and if there is enough interest, we could have it. Chase reminded everyone to check the latest issue of "National Spoonplugger" newsletter for 3 great articles by Terry O'Malley on "Saddles", "Humps", and "Slides" plus a John Bales article on "Our Changing Natural Lakes". Jeri Perry is doing a super job in coordinating and getting this publication out. An upcoming TV program on Spoonplugging is one we all should be looking for. John Bales did a show catching big smallmouth from Lake Erie with Mark Zona on "Worlds Greatest Fishing Show". It will be on ESPN2 (Comcast channel 74 in our area—7:30AM Sat. + 6:00AM Sun.). The date has not been set yet, but we will put it out on E-Mail as soon as we know. Chase talked with Terry O'Malley and Terry emphasized that Scott has caught up on making Spoonplugs and all the changes with the factory move. Start thinking about Christmas wishes and check out buckperry.com!

### **PROGRAM**

Will Schultz, president of the Michigan Musky Alliance, spoke to us about their organization. It is mainly a conservation organization which assists the Michigan DNR in promoting, tracking, identifying, and planting muskellunge. Some of their projects include purchasing Iowa strain muskies for planting in Michigan and placing ID plaques at launch sites on lakes containing muskie. They also have a web site at: michiganmuskiealliance.org and a forum on muskies. Their educational meetings are open to the public and their summer meetings occur on the water. Will started with some interesting facts about muskies. In Michigan, a 2 year old muskie is 24 inches, the same size as a 6 year old northern pike. Muskies spawn mostly in rivers in areas of clean, hard bottoms with current. Spawning in lakes is less successful because silting will suffocate the eggs. To easily identify which is which, pike have light markings on a dark background and muskies have dark markings on a light background. Muskies eat mostly suckers (47%), perch (17%), and crappies (7%). In lakes that contain ciscoes, that is their preferred food. These fish have less spines, which muskies have difficulty handling. Walleyes and bass are farther down on their list. Muskies are difficult to raise and are stocked at about 12 inches. Out of 1000 planted fish, only around 50 may reach legal size.

Will strongly advised against eating muskies because they likely will have a high concentration of toxins in their meat. At 42 inches legal limit and being the top predator, they will probably be tainted. He also encouraged for all muskies caught to be released to help preserve the fishery. A 45 to 50 inch musky is 12 to 20 years old, and

those over 50 inches may be over 30 years old. The big fish are the females, as the males are quite a bit smaller. One adult muskie per acre of lake is about all that can be expected in a healthy population. How one handles musky is critical in their survival rate after release, as they are very delicate and should not be out of the water more than a minute. Do not bring a fish in the net into the boat, but keep the fish resting in the water with the net over the side. The fish can be measured resting in the net with a yardstick or tape measure. A jaw spreader is helpful in getting access to the mouth and removing the hook. Use a long needlenose plier to remove the hook from the fish. A coated net is much better as the hook barbs will not get caught in the net material. The net he brought to show us was a Beckman 32 by 36 inches with a wide, deep pocket. Slightly larger mesh in the bottom can help prevent tail splitting, which can cause heavy bleeding of the fish after release. If a hook is deep into a fish where extraction will injure the fish, he uses a small compound bolt cutter to cut through the hook. One should have experience handling pike if you wish to take a picture of a nice muskie. With the camera ready, grab under one side of the lower jaw with one hand and place the other under the stomach to support and subdue the fish. The fish should need to be out of the water only a minute or less for the picture before it is released. If one insists on weighting the fish, weigh the net with the fish in it and later subtract the weight of the net. A quality spring scale gives a faster reading than a digital scale.

Will demonstrated his knowledge of structure when he reviewed areas on a projected contour map of Murry Lake during his Power Point presentation. He has read Buck Perrys' book "Spoonplugging—Your Guide to Lunker Catches", and used the terms "Tools", "Structure", "Breakline", "Migration", "Depth", "Speed", and "Contact Point" with familiarity. He related how the Michigan Musky Alliance has had an online study of Bucks' book on their website. In going over the Murry Lake map, he shared a number of spots where he has caught fish and their relative ranking from his experience. He brought a variety of casting and trolling lures from about 8 to 18 inches that he uses for musky. They weighed from 1½ to several ounces. When he informed us that most of his fishing is done by casting, one could understand why he looked to be in such great shape! He uses a variety of crankbaits, spinnerbaits, and jump lures to control different depths and speeds. One of his favorites is a large 2 ½ ounce jighead with a 15 inch plastic body and tail that he can use at many different depths.

Casting and trolling outfits were demonstrated and passed around. For casting, an eight foot fairly stiff rod is used along with a heavy duty baitcasting reel. This setup will handle an 8 ounce lure with no problem. He uses 80 pound superbraid line and a 14 inch single strand wire leader that tests at 120 pounds. He also uses a large split ring rather than a snap to attach the lure. Some may feel this setup is overkill, but Will feels that if a fish busts the line or opens the snap and takes the lure, he will probably not survive with it stuck in his mouth. On the trolling rod he uses 30 pound mono with an 80 pound fluorocarbon leader. Trolling speeds can be from 3 ½ to 7 mph with short lines, so some give with the mono is important.

Will talked about area lakes that contain musky. Murry is good because it contains cisco, their favorite forage. Campau and Kettle lakes do not hold large numbers, but can be good at times. Campau, which is shallow, can hold fish in the spring. After that, most will move into Kettle Lake. Thornapple Lake has always been a consistent producer and should not be overlooked. It was mentioned that they are beginning to plant muskie in Hamlin Lake in Mason County. Natural reproduction is virtually non-existent in these lakes, so we must support our DNR and preserve the fishery.

Many thanks to Will Schultz for giving a great and very informative program. We wish him and the Michigan Muskie Alliance the best in their endeavors.

Chase Klinesteker