



NORTHERN INDIANA SPOONPLUGGER

VOLUME 17 ISSUE 10

#216

FOUNDED 1991

October 2012

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March 21, 2011 at the Kendallville Public Library with 13 members present.

Denny Coulardot reported that the dates for the 2013 "Buck Sez" Network Outing has been confirmed with Forest Ridge Campground for August 15, 16, & 17, 2013.

If you're marking your calendars for next year, the Lunker Hunters Muskegon Outing has been set for July 10-14, 2013.

Shawn Nicodemis discussed his recent fishing vacation to Minnesota. He caught some good fish but one of the highlights of the trip was finding a double-ring Spoonplug in his uncle's tackle box while looking for some hooks. His uncle made Shawn a gift of the Spoonplug making it a nice bonus to a great vacation.

Denny reported that the cool nighttime temperatures will result in the largemouth bass taking deeper and deeper positions than they have taken during the recent very warm summer months.

John Bales picked up on that theme in his monthly presentation by explaining his observations of the thermocline throughout the season. With cooler fall temperatures upon us, a time of change is taking place. The first frosts are not too far off and once a frost or two happens, the speed of the turnover begins to pick up quickly. The level of the thermocline will begin to sink. As an example, the level had been as high as 16 feet on some area lakes and it is presently in the 20 feet area, indicating the change has begun. You can actually smell it as the thermocline hits the lake bottoms in shallower holes because there is a release of decayed matter and certain of

this decayed matter will float to the surface. As the thermocline descends, so do the fish. Once the thermocline drops to about 40-45 feet, stabilization takes place and the thermocline disappears altogether. In northern Indiana the stabilization or end-of-turnover usually takes place sometime in November. During this fall turnover, fishing can be very tough. The convection currents of the colder water descending on the fish below causes their environment to become unstable (think severe cold-front conditions) which in turn causes the fish to become more dormant and/or seek more stable conditions. They cannot move deeper as fast as the water moves deeper without getting a "bellyache" and so it takes time for the adjustment.

HOWEVER, once this turnover is complete, their environment becomes much more stable. Water temperatures are more stable throughout the water column. It is at this time of year that produces some of the best fishing of the season. The fish seem to become more concentrated and school more closely together. They also seem to sense that they need to stock up for the coming winter.

Be mindful of speeds, both trolling and casting. Speeds are apt to be slower at this time of year and sometimes it takes a bit of discipline to gear back from summertime speeds. It's good to have selection of different weight jigs and blade baits for casting as we may have to go to the cast more often during the colder parts of the season.

NEXT MEETING: October 15, 2012 at the Kendallville Public Library 6:30 P.M.

" KNOWLEDGE IS THE KEY TO FISHING SUCCESS "



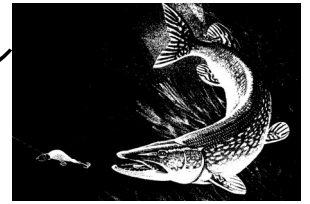
This is a photo of a musky sent to me by Bart Albright who has been pestering a lot of musky lately. Just a couple of things to note if you're fishing for musky. And this time of year with water temperatures dropping is a great time for musky fishing in order that they may be released with as little stress as possible. Warm water is not the musky's friend! For such a vicious fighter, musky are quite tender and abundant care must be taken to preserve their numbers. Notice that Bart is using a "fish gripper" making it easy as well as safe for both fish and fisherman. (And also allows a free hand for photos if you're fishing alone.) Also, notice the clean, slick surface with measure in place in order to quickly and safely measure, photo and release the fish. Nice job, Bart

"KNOWLEDGE IS THE KEY TO FISHING SUCCESS"



Good Spoonplugging

By John Bales, Spoonplugging Instructor



CHANGES

Right now we are going through change. Changes in the two things that both control the movements of the fish. We are speaking of weather and water conditions. Most of the time, we only have to deal with a change in the weather. For most of the season, we are faced with dealing with the cold fronts. Our thinking is that in the stable weather, the fish will be more active, move shallower and may be biting. After the front goes through and the skies turn into blue bird skies, the fishing gets much tougher, the fish are deeper and just plain tougher to catch. For most of the season, our thoughts and planning revolve around the weather changes. In the fall, we now must deal with both changing weather and water conditions. A bit of double-trouble! Our natural lakes get a thermocline in the heat of the summer. As the fall temperatures start to cool, the surface waters cools also. As it cools, it becomes heavier and it begins to sink. This process is called the turnover. The water that is affected the most and is also the most unstable will be the shallows. As a Spoonplugger, this should be going through your mind already because it happens every year. The northern pike disappear from the weedline and most just stop fishing for them because they may not know what is happening. Mr. Perry's guideline of "If you are not catching fish, you are not fishing deep enough", should be slapping you in the face when this happens. So where did they go? Some questions you might ask..... How deep was the thermocline on lake X this summer? What about lake Z? Lake Y? How will this mixing of the water effect the thermocline and more important, how will it affect the fish?

The mixing of the water starts taking place as soon as our night time temperatures start to drop. It will be a gradual mixing and may not affect the depth of the thermocline much at all. If you fish a lot, you can keep an eye on the changes. You might see it drop from 16 to a depth of 19-20 over a two to three week period. Once we get a hard frost or the temps get into the 30's at night, you will see the thermocline drop in depth a bit faster. If there was ever a short cut in fishing for this time of year, it will be the fisherman's observation of the thermocline and how it is changing (going deeper), and how the baitfish are relating to this change. The new fish finders (graphs or down-scans) allow the fisherman to see the thermocline clearly and also show how the fish are related to the depth of the thermocline. They are normally at it (same depth) or above the thermocline. What does this mean to you and I? During this drastic change in our weather and water conditions, the fish are wanting to go as deep as they can to be in a more stable condition. It seems like they do not go or cannot go deeper than the thermocline. I realize that this statement might be crossing the line but it seems like this is the way it is. Whenever I go out this time of year, the first thing that I am looking for is how deep the thermocline is and to see how the fish are relating to it, if any fish are seen at all. When the fish are not active, you may not be able to see them, and are most likely belly-to-the-bottom. The best fish finder will not show fish when they are belly-to-the-bottom. It is only when they become active that they start to show up. This should tell you something is going on when you start to see the fish.

When fishing this time of year, you should still start out in the shallows but continue to move out to check all other breaks and breaklines and finally ending up at the depth that the thermocline is seen. If I do not make any contact with the fish in the shallows, I may stay at the depth of the thermocline the rest of the day and wait for the fish to get active. As the season gets colder, the thermocline will get deeper until it finally gone completely. The water temperature is usually around 48 degrees when this takes place. Once the surface water cools to 39 degrees, it will no longer sink and the water is considered stable. In my opinion, after the surface temperature reaches 45 degrees, this can become the best fishing of the year.

I hate to see the season come to an end but I always look forward to this time of year. No speed boats. No jet skis. Not many other boats. You have it all to yourself and it is time to make hay.

Good Spoonplugging
John Bales

“ KNOWLEDGE IS THE KEY TO FISHING SUCCESS ”



The more I learn, the more I see there is to learn.” E. L. “Buck” Perry

BUCK SEZ:

What ‘triggers’ the activity and movements of the fish?”

There is no question that it is a weather condition. But, we doubt if anyone knows the **exact** part that starts and stops the movements. It could be a combination of many things. We have our ideas but we have no definite **FACTS**. We feel **LIGHT** plays a major role, and Buck can quite often predict when a movement is about to begin, or when one is in progress, by his observations of the light present. He uses his **LIGHT** observations as his guide to the activity and movements of the fish—for he says: “If my light observations give me the answers, that’s good enough for me.”

One thing we should all agree on is the movements of the fish are not “triggered” or controlled by their hunger. We would have a hard time figuring out why all the fish in the lake become hungry at the same time. And, it would not explain the activity and movement without feeding. A game fish can be made to “strike”—this is his nature. We never expect to catch our fish feeding, but we’re happy when this occurs.

You may want to know if the moon has any effect on the fish? We have not been able to find any relationship between movements and the phase of the moon. If there were any, we are quite sure local weather and water conditions would completely wreck it.

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“Are fish of all sizes and age groups bunched up together down in the deep water?”

The study material said the smaller fish were not compatible with the larger fish. We classify the smaller fish into a group, called “yearlings.” These are normally from one to three years old. Some may be older, but where growth is good, you can view the smaller fish group as being of this age. A better way probably to view the smaller fish would be to say, until they reach about 2-2 1/2 pounds, they are not compatible with the larger fish. When the larger fish get on the move, the yearlings scoot to the safety of the shallows.

You will find, in some instances, where a school of bigger fish are all about the same size. At other times, they will come in several different sizes. The age, fertility, and reproduction of a body of water would have a bearing on the sizes in any particular school.

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“Are there fishing situations where the fish, when they move towards shallower water, do not move toward or along structure such as bars, but will move shallower by going ‘vertically’ toward the surface?”

This Spoonplugging (structure fishing) study is primarily concerned with the larger species of game fish (bass, wall-eye, northern pike, muskies, stripers, etc.). However, there are certain water situations and certain species of fish where part of a movement may be, at times, directly toward the surface. The fish may be “drawn” toward the surface due to some attraction or “noise.” However, all the movements would be related to structure or some bottom feature; **AND**, the upward movement (toward the surface) will occur only **AFTER** the fish become active and moving. In a later study we will discuss fishing situations where a part of a migration may be vertical. But to **CONSISTENTLY** put fish on our stringer, “structure” (features of the bottom the fish use) is still our guide to where most of the **CATCHABLE** fish may be found.

“KNOWLEDGE IS THE KEY TO FISHING SUCCESS ”