



NORTHERN INDIANA SPOONPLUGGER

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The last meeting was held February 24, 2013 at the Kendallville Public Library with 15 members present.

We welcomed new member Mark Persons of Burr Oak, Michigan.

John Bales mentioned that Jim Shell (Illinois Spoonpluggers) has produced a series of TV shows called "Structure Fishing" which debuted a few weeks ago on CSN (Comcast Sports Network-Chicago). The show airs on Saturday mornings at 11:00 AM. DISH channel 429 or 440 (HD); DIRECT channel 665; ComCast channel 37 or 200 (HD). The shows will also replay on Wednesdays at 11:00 AM. if you forget to watch or record them. In addition, there are several short Spoonplugging "classrooms" by Jim on YouTube that are very good instructionals for those interested.

Denny reported that he and several others are still catching a few crappies and bluegills. Ice is still plenty safe with averages of 18 to 20 inches on most lakes.

John's educational portion of the meeting concerned the setting of new goals for the upcoming season. Everyone should have an outline of goals to work toward or accomplish during the new season. John's own goals were to improve on disappointments experienced during the previous couple of seasons. As an example, he feels the spraying of weeds in many

area lakes has hampered his ability to make good catches. He has experienced a dramatic reduction in the quantity and quality of catches in these lakes and has talked to numerous tournament fishermen who have also experienced lower than normal weigh-ins. It also appears that this phenomenon is not isolated to our area as members from clubs in other states are experiencing much the same thing.

The DNR are sympathetic to our complaints but there are a lot of moneyed interests on these lakes that are likely to have a much bigger voice than the fishermen.

As a result, John's game plan for the upcoming season is to concentrate on smaller lakes that experience little or no speedboat traffic. These lakes typically are not as targeted for weed control as the larger lakes. They are also the lakes that are more likely to have better water color. They may have restrictions on speed limits and some even restrict gasoline motors but most Spoonpluggers have trolling motors. Hopefully conditions will improve and the larger lakes will make a comeback. I believe the DNR is beginning to recognize the problems and it is hoped that efforts will be made to mitigate any damage done to fish populations and their respective food sources, but we cannot count on that happening anytime soon, therefore we must make contingency fishing plans....or take up golf!

NEXT MEETING: March 17, 2014 at the Kendallville Public Library 6:30 P.M.

" KNOWLEDGE IS THE KEY TO FISHING SUCCESS "

Spring Tips

A fresh fishing season is underway and below is a quick list of tips. Chances are you have already taken care of many of these, however, it may save valuable fishing time to go over things that may have been overlooked. Equipment problems anytime can be a pain, but equipment problems that occur during a critical fishing situation can be a disaster!

Make sure your rods and reels are in good condition. Reels should be taken completely apart, cleaned and re-oiled. If you've never done it before, now is the time to learn. Check guides and tips for wear. Check your lines for wear. If you've had the same No-Bo on for over 2 years, it may be time to replace it. Wire will last a long time, but will "wear-harden" so you may want to strip off 75-100 feet. It's a good idea to re-tie snaps and swivels periodically. Those knots take the brunt of abuse and can get weak over time. If you're unsure on your "knot-age" check with John or Denny. They have about 80 years experience between them.

- * Check your lures for hooks that may need sharpened or replaced. It's better to do it now than to wait until it's needed in a hurry on the lake. Make sure you have enough of each size Spoonplugs and the many different weights and types of jump-type lures.
- * Anchor size and type should be appropriate for your boat to hold in strong wind or moderate current. (anchoring in strong current can be dangerous). You should have 100 feet of anchor rope in case you need it. Have one marker buoy with 50-60 feet of cord also in case you need to mark something deeper OR you can always use one marker in deep water as one of your rifle sights if need be. It can also be used as a decoy for those those annoying fishermen who like to elbow in on your markers.
- * Battery(ies) should be in good condition and engine should be serviced and lower unit checked for water in the gear oil. If it's milky or hasn't been changed in a couple of years, drain and replace with new lube. Change spark plugs every year or two; it's good insurance.
- * Check your trailer out thoroughly. It has set all winter and there may have been water in the wheel bearings. It's a good idea to pull the bearings and check them for wear and lubrication. I know some guys who put in a new set of bearings each year...just to be sure. It's also a good idea to check them closely before any extended fishing trips. It's much easier to check things out on your home turf than to end up changing bearings on a busy interstate 200 miles from home....with inadequate tools!

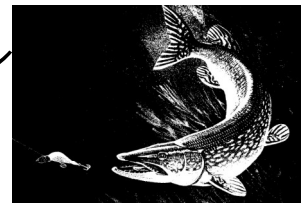
I've probably forgotten a few things, but the point is to make sure your equipment is in as good a shape going into the season. It can save the Spoonplugger a lot of frustration and possibly be the difference between a successful fishing trip and getting skunked.

"KNOWLEDGE IS THE KEY TO FISHING SUCCESS "



Good Spoonplugging

By John Bales, Spoonplugging Instructor



This winter was a tough one, mentally and physically. The last two seasons, we were on the water by this time and Denny had caught his first musky on March 3rd. Before we get in a hurry, have you prepared your mind for what you might do to get better at this game for this season? Do you know the areas of Spoonplugging that you might be a little weak that you could improve on? Have you thought about checking out a few new lakes or taking a trip to a body of water that you have never fished? Maybe a reservoir or two?

If you are anything like me, if you do not set some goals or do not have much to look forward to, life can get quite boring. This is why I always approach the new season asking myself, what can I improve on? Where am I weak and what do I need to do to get better?

During the first few weeks of fishing, the water is cold and the fish may not be too active so how do we cope with this? First of all, we should always be prepared to either cast or troll. Who knows what will be best until we check it out. In the early season, we will do a lot of trolling with the smaller lures unless we are after the musky and for most of the time, we are doing a lot of straggler fishing in the 8-10 foot zone. It is not likely we will make contact with many fish that are active enough to take a trolled lure in 30 feet of water on our first few trips. Although if we have a secluded hole or slot, we could very well go to the cast and if we get our jump type lures close enough for a fish to see it, we can get quite a lot of fish on some days. A blade bait or a light jig should be used a lot in the early season. It is the correct speed control for much of the early season. If you are into some fish early and you have a couple of warm days and your fish are not there, then it might be wise to check out the shallows. Just as soon as the ice goes off, most of the fish are in and around the deeper sections of the lake but it doesn't take but a couple of sunny warm days and they start showing up in the shallows. It never pays to try and tell a fish where he has to be because it is a sure way to miss them for that day. This is why Mr. Perry said to always start out in the shallows, then the in between depths and then the deep.

Good Spoonplugging
John Bales



Here is Jeff Parham on a lake a couple years ago where the water temp was 47 degrees and we caught them trolling a 250 at over 3 mph and you could not keep up with the fish as they ran towards the boat.

“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:

MAPPING AND INTERPRETATION

Most important of all in the mapping and fishing process is for the Spoonplugger to RE-CORD what he finds.

The drawings and markings on your first structure map may not be complete and in correct detail. You may find that there will be slight changes to be made on every trip. These changes may be something you missed, such as a small detail or break, or it could be a depth factor. Even a slight direction and distance change will have to be made. This will call for an additional change in your trolling and casting patterns, and your shoreline sightings will possibly be altered.

A proper record of structure will not only tell you where it's located and what some of its particular features are, but most important is that in making this record you increased your knowledge about proper interpretation. This is the important factor in your fishing know-how and growth. **THIS IS THE TEACHER THAT YOU CARRY WITH YOU.**

You may ask, “Do I have to have **exact** depths, distances, and scale when preparing structure maps?”

The answer is NO.

The important thing in mapping and recording the findings, is to show LOCATION, SHAPE AND DETAILS. Having **exact** depths, or **exact** measurements in feet, of the different dimensions of a structure is not necessary. It is not likely you would gain any knowledge, or that it would help you present lures correctly, if you had exact measurements.

If exact measurements are desired, there are several methods which could be used to get them; the use of contour maps prepared by engineers, depth sounders to secure depth readings, and even a tape to measure the distances.

Having everything to exact scale isn't important. In preparing your detailed structure maps, you would be using a certain section of the shoreline as a reference point. You would be using a certain object on the shoreline as a reference in determining location of the structure. With very little effort you will relate these things and a satisfactory SCALE will fall into place.

After all, the purpose of the map is to allow YOU to know where it is, how it is shaped, how far out it runs, how trolling passes are to be made, what size lures to use to reach certain sections, and where to position the boat for casting, etc. What do you care if your map does not give a true picture of actual measurements.

The same thing applies in your shoreline sightings for locating certain areas on structure, trolling paths, or casting positions.

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