

Buck talks fishing

by BUCK PERRY, Education Editor

suggest several steps which will allow you to "catch up" or achieve a better understanding of the articles.

May we suggest that you:

1. Study a copy of Buck's great new book, "Spoonplugging, Your Guide To Lunker Catches". This book contains all the basic facts of fish movements, basic structures, basic weather and water conditions, basic presentation of lures, and much more. This book was 25 years in the making, a quarter century of fishing knowledge put down on paper for the first time so that fishermen everywhere could share in better fishing. The book is on sale for \$10.30 postpaid and available on an unconditional money back guarantee from us, Northwoods Publishing Co., Inc., P.O. Box 609, Menomonee Falls, Wis. 53051.

2. Familiarize yourself with our glossary of terms titled "Fishing Talk — Our Language of Structure Fishing", which can be found near the beginning of each issue of Fishing Facts.

No other publication is privileged to have Buck Perry on its staff. He has become a legend in his own time. As Fishing Facts Education Editor, this former Physics Professor from North Carolina State, has consented to share his vast fishing knowledge and experience with us. Many of today's successful fresh water anglers owe him more than they may ever realize.

Successful Fishing Is Not A Difficult Thing

Editor's Note:

E. L. (Buck) Perry, of Hickory, North Carolina is the father of "structure" fishing. It is Buck Perry who gave modern day structure fishermen a "language" with which they could communicate. It is Buck Perry who first coined the words "structure", "migration route", "breaks and breaklines", and many more. It is also Buck Perry who correlated many of the basic facts concerning fish habits, their movements, and how they could best be caught. He later named these facts about fish and fishing, SPOONPLUGGING.

Each month Fishing Facts is introduced to new readers. For many of

them the words "structure" and "structure fishing" will be totally new. For these new readers, we will continue to emphasize the basic concepts of structure, fish habits, instincts, etc. from time to time.

However, in this present series titled "Buck Talks Fishing", Buck Perry will be addressing those fishermen who have already studied their "BASICS" and are now ready to move on to additional knowledge. In order to gain the most benefit from the articles, it is important that the student have a clear understanding of the terminology and nomenclature.

If you are a new reader, may we

Please examine photo below and photo at right. Can you tell which pair of anglers is likely to make the biggest catch? We sincerely doubt anyone could tell which pair is likely to be most successful, since an angler's equipment — though helpful — is not the major consideration in determining his overall fishing success. Education Editor, Buck Perry, explains the reasons why the LEARNING process is the ingredient which will allow sport fishermen to make better use of ALL their equipment. Obtaining good results in fishing need not be a difficult process.



Probably one of the more difficult things in the life of a "teacher", is to get students *thinking for themselves*. Oftentimes the ways and means of doing this is difficult for the instructor. He may decide to lay all the ideas before the students and let the students decide the "facts" for themselves. However, the instructor should also know this may not be the best approach when faced with particular subjects, such as fishing. Some subjects require all types of "pushing" or directing by the instructor in order to get the students deciding for themselves what is right or wrong; or, which way they should go. Quite often the teacher has to say, "Darn the torpedoes, full speed ahead, let the chips fall where they may." These are my thought as we talk about the subject at hand.

Not long ago, I listened for an hour to an "expert" lecturing a group of fishermen on how to fish a plastic worm. He was still going strong when I had to leave. About the same time, I read a dozen pages in a magazine on the "tricks" of using a spinner bait. I've forgotten how many thousand casts the writer made.

Just recently I paused in front of a newsstand and read the captions on the front pages of several fishing magazines. I saw, in big bold letters, headlines such as: "HOW WE BROKE THE DOG DAYS BASS JINX" — "TEMPERATURE, THE ROAD TO

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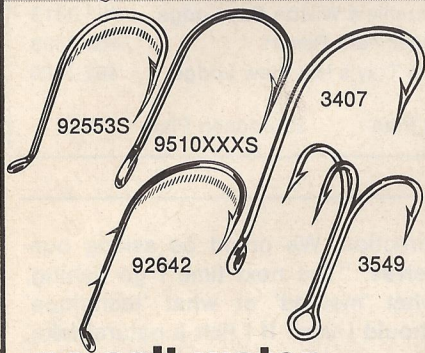
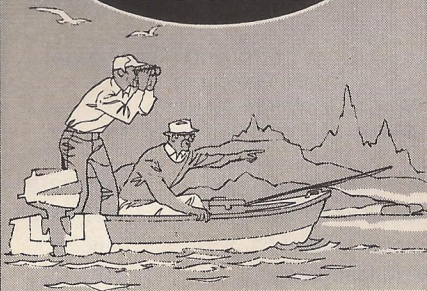
SUCCESS" — "HOW TO CATCH TROPHY PIKE ON THIS NEW MIRACLE LURE" — "HOW TO USE THE GREATEST 'HAWG' BAIT EVER CREATED" — "HOW TO HANDLE THE PROBLEM LAKES" — "WHY TINY LURES LEAD TO SUCCESS" — ETC., ETC., ETC.

When listening to talks, or reading articles, I suppose (if we weren't careful) our minds could go into a whirl and we would lose all sense of

direction. We could be asking ourselves, "The next time I go fishing, what 'method' or what 'technique' should I use? If I fish a natural lake, what must I do that is different from fishing a nearby reservoir? What did the man say I must do to catch pike in the fall? Did the article say I must twitch the worm to the left, or to the right in order to catch fish out of this type lake? What size and color lure did he say was necessary to catch



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fish at 18 feet in dark water? What type of retrieve must I use when fishing a river? Did he sneak up on the bass in the treetops? How early was it that smallmouth could be caught? Have I forgotten the 'pattern' necessary for clear water? What do I do if my depth finder breaks down? Did he say it took a 1/4 oz. white jig or was it a 7" purple worm? Must I cast the lure within 3 inches of a green stick-up and 4 inches to a dead bush, or was it the reverse? How many fish can I catch if I can't make 6,782 casts in the time allotted?", etc., etc.

When I listen to long fishing talks, or read lengthy articles pertaining to mastering a particular lure, locating the wanted spot, attaining certain skills, working a specific lake type, finding a certain species, etc., I sometimes become quite puzzled (not confused). Instead of going all the way around the world to reach the back door, why wasn't it said just like it is? The speaker or writer merely had to say, "In order to catch fish, you use features found in the lake, pond, river, slough, etc., as your guide, and then control the depth and speed of the thing with the hooks." This was all that was necessary to be said, and *in fact was all that they DID say.*

Fortunately, there are some fishermen who do not let talks or lengthy articles raise questions as to what must be done in a given fishing situation. Many have reduced their thinking down to simple fishing facts. They have concluded that in order to be consistently successful they must know what makes a fish tick, and then they must know what they have to DO to catch him. They may state it in another way, "If I am to be successful, I must be at the right place at the right time, fishing in the right manner." When they get on the water, regardless of the season, type of lake, species of fish, weather or water condition, etc., they will state the simple fishing fact as, "IF I AM TO BE SUCCESSFUL, I MUST USE STRUCTURE (BREAKS, BREAKLINES) AS MY GUIDE. THEN, I MUST USE 'TOOLS' TO CONTROL MY DEPTH AND SPEED."

In the past it has been pointed out that you and I must answer all fishing successes and failures in terms of depth and speed control. We have stated that depth control means we must fish where the fish are. This means that we have to use structure (breaks, breaklines, deep water) as

our guide. This means we must recognize and interpret features and conditions found in the lake which the fish use in their movements and migrations.

Speed control has been explained as moving the lure in such a way as to make the fish take, or to put it in a more accurate way — just how slow or fast we move the bait or lure. We have discussed how these two controls (depth and speed) must be used TOGETHER, and that we cannot sacrifice one in order to attain the other. What this means, if we are checking a particular depth (or spot), we cannot lose or change this depth (or spot) when checking out a different speed.

The control of depth and speed applies to all fishing gear that we might choose; the type of lure presentation (casting or trolling) we might use, and in whatever fishing situation we might find ourselves. Our constant thinking on these controls will determine whether we ADVANCE in our knowledge and skills. To put it bluntly, it will mean whether you and I are consistently at the right place at the right time, fishing in the right manner. There is no doubt in my mind, if you desire to be consistently successful in your fishing (lake, pond, river, slough, etc.), you have no choice but to always use structure (breaks and breaklines) as your guide, and always put forth an effort to control the depth and speed of your lures on, or around, these features.

This particular subject requires a great deal of detailed discussion from several angles before it is clear in many fishermen's minds. It requires a great deal of discussion and emphasis because it is difficult to make fishermen understand the control of depth and speed (on structure, breaks and breaklines). This is *the main consideration in the presentation of lures.* The difficulty in understanding the significance of proper depth and speed control in fishing is due in great part to the fact the average fisherman continually hears or reads something different, or a bunch of words used in order for the writer to have something to say. *There is no doubt in my mind that it is easier to make a good fisherman out of a person who has never been exposed to fishing, than one who has.*

Before we get into specific illustrations or examples of the control of depth and speed, let's talk about

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some of the many things you and I face when trying to determine what to do when we get on the water. Let us talk about some of the things that may be blocking or complicating our thinking in regards to the presentation of lures.

If we listen very long to some who are talking fishing, we would likely begin to think the fish doesn't have very much to worry about (for his survival). To hear one group talk, you would get the impression temperature is the only matter of great importance. From another group, it would appear the only thing a fish has to concern himself with is a certain amount of oxygen. There are other groups who might say, "Find the food, and you find the fish."

The fish would have a pretty easy time of it, if all he had to do was find some weed, log, stump, bush, or rock to hide behind.

A fish is a very ADAPTABLE creature. He is adaptable to changes that occur in his environment. If he were not able to adjust to these changes, his species would not have survived to this day. He accomplishes

this in many ways. The thing that you and I notice most in the adjustment process is where he's located, and just how active or dormant he becomes. We note that if conditions are more ideal for his well-being, he is more active, feeds more often, moves faster, moves shallower, strikes better, etc. If conditions are "bad", he becomes more dormant; with little movement, less feeding, depth change, etc. We might say when conditions of weather and water are "good" — that is: good light, good temperature, good oxygen, good pressure, good color, good food supply, good depths, etc., he is quite easy to catch. However, when things are not so good — bad light, bad temperature, bad oxygen, bad depth, bad food supply, etc., then you and I can be in big trouble making a catch. *Who can say what is good and what is bad for a cold-blooded creature such as a fish? Is he even conscious that he is living in a condition that is far from "ideal"? Does he take off for parts unknown where things may be better?*

It appears to me a fisherman should realize there are so many VARIA-

BLES, in so many things, that on any given day (much less over a period of time), any one particular variable would play a very minor role in the overall picture of catching a fish. I can see no way that a particular temperature, oxygen, food, size, color, action, etc., would be of major importance, or could be used in any manner as a GUIDE to where the fish are; or, as to what mood he might be in at the moment; or, how you and I can get him to take the lure consistently. There are a great many things that can go wrong; or, maybe I should say "not ideal". The number of times when all the variables are "near" perfect are few and far between. When things are "near" perfect you and I could say "the fish are biting". During these so-called "ideal conditions", fishermen score. But, if we take time to check the results, we find a small number made a good catch, while most didn't get the first nibble. Probably both groups were using the same lure and the same light meters, and temperature and oxygen monitoring devices. When conditions are "NOT so ideal", a check of the fishermen will show that nobody caught a

fish. I believe this verifies the statement that generally fishing is bad, and then it gets worse.

There is another school of thought among fishermen as to the proper guides for successful fishing. There are those who claim "balanced tackle" is the only way to success. There are those who credit great skill

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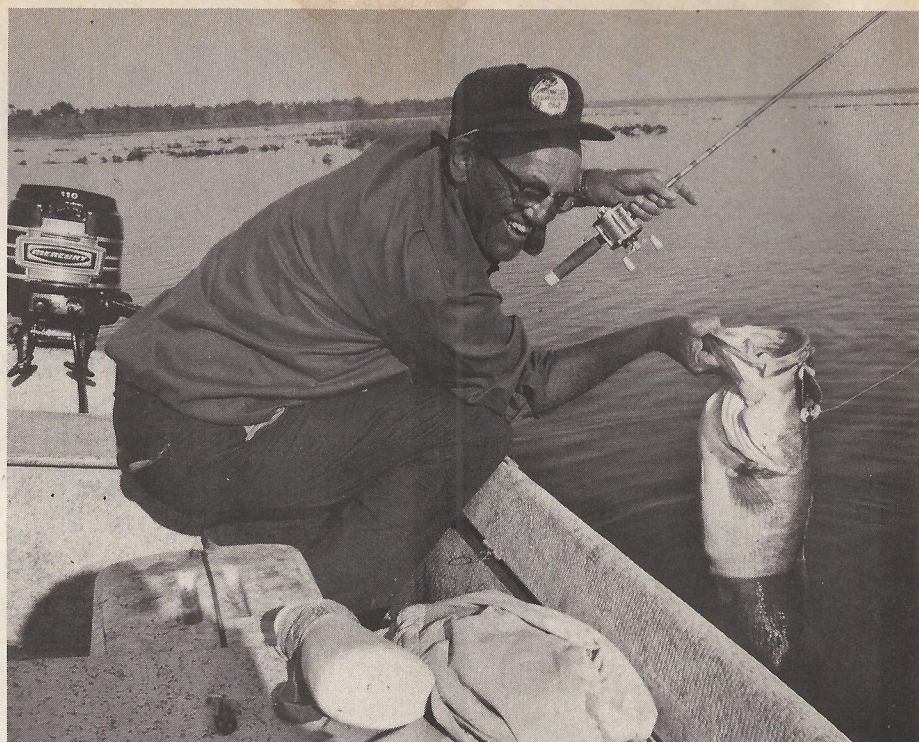
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in casting as being a prerequisite to successful fishing (some day we'll talk about the DISADVANTAGES of accurate casting). There are those who vow the number of casts made on a particular day is the key. There are also those who swear by the effectiveness of certain colors, actions, or sizes of lures. There are those who whisper, "You have to sneak up on a fish." There are even those who spout, "Successful fishing requires years and years of practice and experience." Others insist we must have all the latest electronic gadgets, and the biggest, fastest, and most expensive rigs ever created. To most all of this yakking, you and I should sound off with a loud, "Hogwash!"

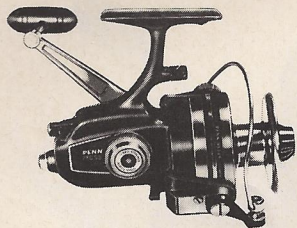
Some of us do our fishing in one type of water, and for one species of fish. Others of us will be fishing for a variety of fish in bodies of water which are entirely different. Some may fish natural lakes exclusively, while others fish reservoirs, ponds, rivers, sloughs, tidal basins, canals, etc. Most of us will have different water conditions, different bottom conditions, different weather, different seasons, etc. And, it is not likely that we will run into the same condition any two times in the same season, or for that matter, any two times in a lifetime of fishing. You and I both know things change in fishing.

What was present or true yesterday, may not be true today or tomorrow. It would appear to me that it would be a sad state of affairs, if you and I had a different set of rules to follow every time we went to a different body of water, under different weather and water conditions, or when seeking a different species of fish.

The whole purpose in discussing the subject of presentation of lures is to be at the right place, at the right time, fishing in the right manner — regardless of the season, the lakes fished, the features present, the weather, water color, temperature, oxygen, species of fish, etc. We must accomplish this mission by casting, or trolling, or a combination of both; and, this must be all there is to it.

In learning proper procedures for the presentation of lures thru our on-the-water experiences, it is necessary that the fisherman not only learns how to properly "strain" the water, so to speak, but the procedure must also be used as a "teaching" process. In so doing, the fisherman will learn to tie all things together; things such as movements of the fish, observations pertaining to weather and water conditions, structure, depths, mapping, interpretation of productive vs. non-productive structure, proper selection of "tools" (lures, rods, lines, reels, boats, motors, etc.). If this part

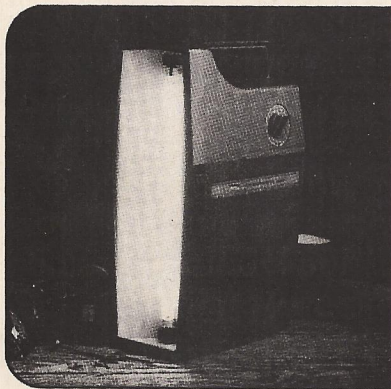
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of the learning process was missed during the on-the-water experience (presentation of lures), it is doubtful if any "method" or "pattern" would be of much value. We should realize that a fish can be caught on most anything with hooks. We should also know that a fish can be caught by most ANY-ONE at one time or another — using most any technique. Our purpose is to become better fishermen, and our goal is to catch fish consistently, regardless of conditions present. We certainly have no desire for a different plan on each fishing trip. Heaven forbid any complicated "method" or "system" that would take the memory of an elephant. Spare the thought of taking years of practice to become a good fisherman, or spending money we may not have for tons of complicated equipment.

We should have something simple and easy to learn. We should start catching fish as never before and with the prospect of becoming better at the game. Our on-the-water procedures should at all times make us aware that successful fishing is predicated upon proper depth and speed control on structure (breaks and breaklines). Our efforts on the water must not allow much time to think in terms of size, color, or action as primary means to reach fishing success. In time, our learning process must make us realize the ONLY excuse we have for not catching fish is that we did not know (or learn) enough for a particular occasion or, we are not good enough in our interpretation or our fishing procedures, as yet.

In our books, booklets, lectures, clinics, etc., we spend a great deal of time explaining the movements of the fish, what part structure (breaks, breaklines) play, and how fish react to weather and water changes, etc. Most of the time the reader, listener, or student does not have much trouble understanding what is said about what makes a fish tick. It's when we get into the second phase of what we must DO to catch fish, that we begin to run into problems. It is in this area, fishermen seem to hear less of what was said. This is especially true when we talk about "the presentation of lures".

In our lectures, clinics, and study materials, we briefly, and to the point, explain the BASIC PRESENTATION OF LURES. By using specific lures (tools), we demonstrate how the basic presentation of lures SHOULD be

done both trolling and casting. This basic explanation regarding the presentation of lures (regardless of lure type or make) will provide the control of depth and speed needed for consistent fishing success. It is so simple most people miss the point entirely. Some probably think we are selling tackle, while many complicate the process by bringing in matters of little value. Some wish to change the facts so their hat will fit a little better.

When a Spoonplugger has fished a lake successfully, he is often approached by fishermen desiring to know how he made his catch. He is usually bombarded with questions pertaining to size, color, action, oxygen, temperature, suspended fish, etc. His reply to these comments may be, "Oh, I didn't pay much attention to those things. I just used structure (breaks and breaklines) as my guide, then I made my lure presentation to fully cover various depths and speeds. I did this by utilizing both trolling and casting procedures."

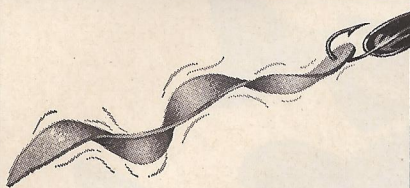
Quite often I receive requests from fishermen who wish to get some "on-the-water instruction" in the presentation of lures. At times I am able to recommend a Spoonplugger in their particular area. In many cases I receive a second letter from the fisherman (the one wishing to receive instruction) telling me that all the fellow showed him was how to cast and troll the shallows and how to cast and troll the deeper structures. It was apparent the writer was greatly disappointed with his on-the-water lesson. He went on to say, it was really a waste of time, as he could have gotten this information out of the books.

My reply to this disappointed fisherman was to ask him what he expected? Was he expecting some "secret weapon," or something very few fishermen knew about? Was he expecting something not revealed in the instructions? Was he expecting some particular "twitch", etc.?

This fisherman had been shown the Basic Presentation of Lures. He had been shown how to use structure as his guide, and how to check out the depths and speeds in the shallows both casting and trolling. He had been shown how to control his depth and speed on the deeper structure (breaks and breaklines), both casting and trolling. The Spoonplugger couldn't show him anything else about the mechanics of presentation of lures, AS THERE WASN'T ANY-

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also your "teacher". It is the thing that will tie all the loose ends together such as structure, movements of fish, weather and water conditions, depth and speed control, mapping, interpretation, etc. The trolling will tell you when, where, what, why and how to cast. If you pass up the trolling process, it is doubtful you will ever become a GREAT fisherman. But, after a couple of years, you may be able to talk for an hour on "How To Fish a Plastic Lizard."

There are four things that we must learn to do on the water if we are to become good fishermen. (1) Learn how to cast the shallows. (2) Learn how to troll the shallows. (3) Learn how to cast the deeper water. (4) Learn how to troll the deeper water. Your reaction to this may be: "How do I learn? How will I know I am doing it right? Is there any procedure that I can use on the water which will teach me the proper control of those four things? What lures do I use, and how do I do it?"

Let's repeat the four skills that you

and I should be able to perform when we get on the water. But, in this case, let us state it differently so that we can learn the whole ball of wax (speeds, depths, lure types, boat position, structure, fish movements, etc.) in as short a period of time as possible. And, so that we can start catching more fish than usual right off the bat.

First you learn how to troll the shallows (0 to 8-10 ft.) keeping lures in position. You DO NOT cast until you catch a fish, but EVERYTIME you catch a fish you go back and cast. Then you learn how to troll the deeper structure. You DO NOT cast until you catch a fish, but EVERYTIME you catch a fish you go back and cast.

This type of discipline, or procedure, is the "teacher". This is the way to get started. This is the way the finest fishermen I know started their training on the water. In fact, they have never changed their style much, unless they were completely familiar with the fishing conditions AT THAT

Education Editor Buck Perry and Managing Editor Carl Malz team up while mapping portions of two midwest lakes (central Kentucky and southern Illinois). During this four day expedition, large numbers of bass were caught (and released) from areas which — it was reported — held insufficient oxygen to support fish life. Had bottom features (structure, breaks and breaklines) not been checked with lures, these fish plus many others would have been completely overlooked.

THING ELSE TO SHOW.

Proper trolling and casting of the shallows has been discussed many many times, as well as trolling and casting the deeper features in a body of water. We have stressed the point quite often that it makes no matter what the brand name of the "tools" might be — provided they allow us to control the depths and speeds, at the same time, either casting or trolling.

More times than you can imagine, I get letters from fishermen who state: "I have read your material on presentation of lures. I want to become a great fisherman, but I have no desire to learn how to troll. I prefer to do all of my fishing by casting."

My reply to these letters is normally, "We are NOT concerned about something fishermen might prefer. We ARE concerned about your catching fish and becoming a good fisherman. But, you can't have your cake and eat it too. The purpose of trolling is to allow you to reach certain structures (breaks, breaklines) and control your depth and speed correctly, which may not be possible on the cast. The trolling, if done correctly, is



PARTICULAR TIME. Or, they have advanced to the point in their interpretations of weather, water, structure, depths, etc., that they could eliminate some of the steps, and go directly to the most effective step for the time and place. However, if they do not know the situation, or feel insecure in their interpretation of a situation, they waste no time getting back, repeating over and over, the basic presentation of lures as given in these instructions. They know they must ALWAYS be looking for the "school" of big fish regardless how many "stragglers" they might catch. They know this constant search for the "school" plays a major role in the LEARNING process, and in their becoming great fishermen. They learned long ago, these thoughts were in mind when the basic presentation of lures was given. They also realize this sets them apart from the average fisherman, and will result in the complete satisfaction that comes with a limit catch of lunker fish on consecutive casts, and the knowledge that, *"I was responsible for the catch."*

For those who do not understand the significance of the Basic Presentation of Lures, it is suggested they go back and review.

It may appear we have been discussing two subjects: (1) Using structure as our guide and controlling the depth and speed of our lures, and (2) Proper presentation of lures. If we look closely at the remarks, they should show we have been discussing only one. These two things are so closely related, it is impossible to separate the two. It would certainly be a mistake if we tried. Our purpose is to show that successful fishing is not a difficult undertaking, and that it does not require a great many "methods", "techniques", "gimmicks", etc. If you and I are not making progress with greater catches and more satisfaction, then it is time for us to start thinking and take a closer look at the situation.

The next time we talk, we are going to continue along these same lines, and see if we can't more clearly untangle some of the thoughts about successful fishing. We will pursue further how successful fishing is not a difficult thing, and why we must make our presentation of lures as simple and easy as possible, yet catch fish, and reach no learning plateau in the future.

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