



# Buck talks fishing

by BUCK PERRY, Education Editor

## You Can't Fish Correctly Without Proper Control

Scenes such as this are typical of many river systems throughout the nation. A gathering of hopeful anglers await action. But soon each starts to wonder what happened to the fish. Where have they disappeared? Education Editor, Buck Perry, offers a few clues as to how the finny battlers may be located once again.

### 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 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.

multitude of "patterns", "techniques", and "methods"? Must we have years of experience before we are able to find the fish and put them on the stringer?

It was hoped our talks would get us thinking and deciding for ourselves which way we would go in the presentation of lures. Our conclusion should have been, *if we are to be consistently successful we must use features in a body of water (structure, breaks, breaklines, deep water) as our guide as to where the fish will be.* Then, we must control the depth and speed of our lures to catch the fish.

We talked at length as to how our presentation of lures must be conducted in such a way as to keep us "learning" and getting better all the time. Our efforts on the water need not be complicated. It must be easy to learn, require a minimum of gear, and catch fish from the beginning. We must remove all doubts or fears that we are doing it "right", regardless of weather and water conditions, lake types, seasons, species of fish, or the mood fish may be in at the time.

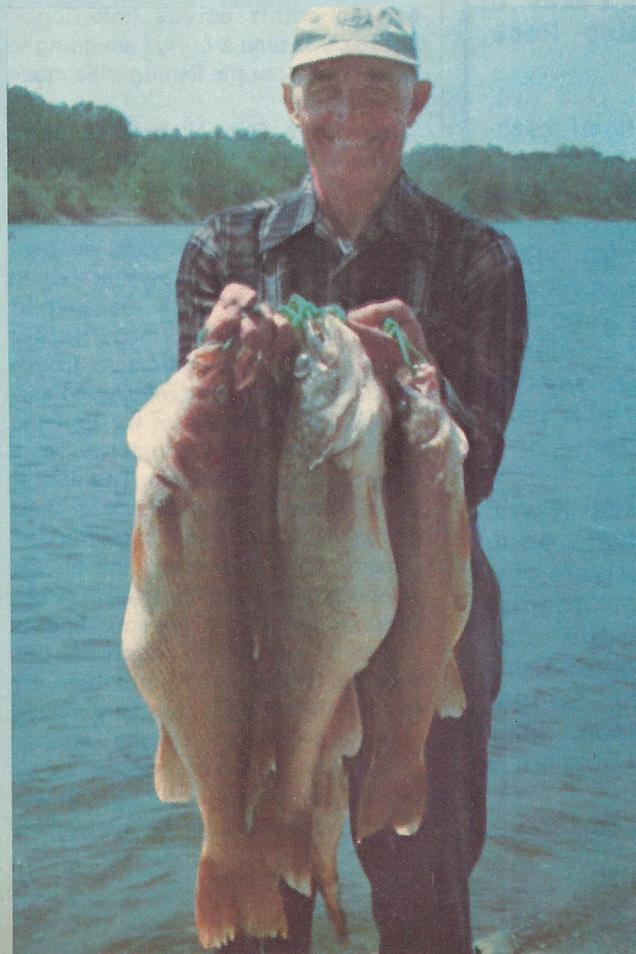
In our discussion we pointed out how you and I can establish our on-the-water procedures in order to tie together such things as the movements of fish, structure, weather and water conditions, mapping, interpretations, depths, speeds, "tools", etc.

We noted it was important that we always look for the "school" of fish and have complete confidence there are no fish there if we fish an area without success. And finally, we gave an example of how to use structure (breaks and breaklines) as our guide, and how to control the depth and speed of our lures to take care of any fishing situation we face. This is the major thought to keep in mind when presenting lures, and is the main theme these articles have preached. Our basic aim is to catch more and bigger fish consistently. The ultimate goal is to enjoy and derive satisfaction from the sport.

This time, let us make the approach slightly different. Besides giving examples of successful control, let us add a couple more points. **FIRST:** Let's discuss WHY WE MUST USE BOTH CASTING AND TROLLING IN MAKING OUR PRESENTATION OF LURES. In our examples we will tend to lean toward trolling, as this seems to be a "no-no" in many fishermen's minds. **SECOND:** Let's discuss how using structure breaks, breaklines as our guide (and controlling the depths and speeds of our lures) will enable us to control WHAT WE DESIRE OR WHERE AND WHEN WE WANT TO FISH. Too often fishermen let the conditions louse up their fishing trips.

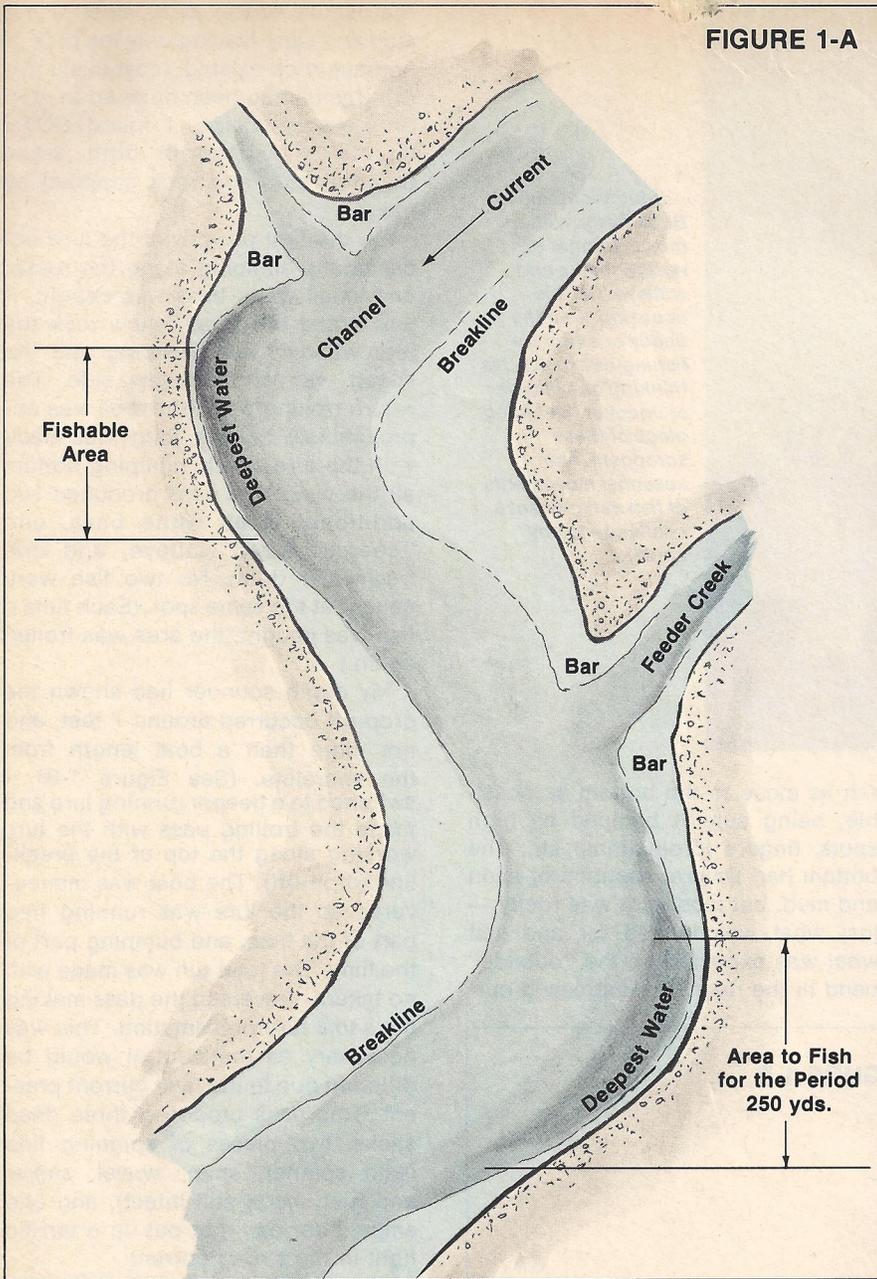
**T**he last time we talked (June '77, Fishing Facts), we ended up with these final words: "Next time we will talk further on how proper presentation of lures is NOT difficult nor complicated, and how the proper presentation of lures will take care of the various fishing situations we may face."

Earlier we talked about the many different things you and I face when deciding what to do when we get on the water. Will we be confused and undecided as to what is important, or not important? What are we going to use as GUIDES to locate the fish, and to get him to take the lure? Will our guide be parts of the fish's environment such as: temperature, oxygen, light, pressure, food, etc.? Will it be such things as: skill in casting, size of lures, color, smells, rattles, wounded minnow actions, electronic gadgets, elaborate rigs, etc.? Must we have a



*Don Nichols with a fine catch of river walleyes. Trophies like these are rarely easy to come by. Their elusive nature has earned them the reputation "ghosts of the deep". Yet, even "ghosts" can be uncovered if one knows how to go about searching for their whereabouts.*

FIGURE 1-A



the river. Both spots were only a couple hundred yards long. (See Figure 1-A.)

Now the only thing left was to check out the depths and speeds. The best and fastest way to accomplish this was by motor trolling. This would also quickly tell me about the condition of the bottom. I'd have no trouble or interference as there wasn't a boat within a block of either area. Apparently the fishermen hadn't given any thought about changing their ways, or the area fished, with a changing situation or a changed season. Why change? They had caught fish there earlier in the season with the tactic now being used.

It was apparent most of those in sight were walleye fishermen. They

were slow trolling the flatter bars and breaklines with the majority concentrated on those located out from coves or entrances to "back areas" (feeder creeks, etc.). Not a bad choice — 4 or 5 weeks earlier. (These areas also shown in Figure 1-A.)

With the fishing results being had at the time, plus the knowledge of a post-spawn condition, it was likely the most productive lure (or bait) speed would not be fast, and a bumping lure would likely be better than one just swimming thru the water. Also, a rock bottom would, in all probability, be better than one of sand or mud. Though I couldn't say for sure when and where the fish might be, or what it might take to catch them, my above water interpre-



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*Education Editor, Buck Perry, with a mixed stringer of northern pike and walleye. On this occasion even the daddy of structure fishing had to don his thinking cap in order to uncover the hiding place of these scrappers. The seasonal movements of fish can present a challenge to any angler.*

tation (or those observations made before a hook was wet) was very important. The situation called for a thorough checking.

The first trolling pass was made with a small, free running and bottom-bumping lure that ran 2 to 3 feet deep. The boat was maneuvered so the lure

ran as close to the bottom as possible, being sure it bumped all high spots, fingers (projections) etc. The bottom had several sections of sand and mud, but most of it was rocky — just what was looked for and just what was expected on the “outside” bend in the river. The increased cur-

rent would sweep away most of the mud and sand leaving only the rock. If no base rock existed, most likely rip-rap (rocks) had been dumped to stop or prevent erosion. I found BOTH situations existed in both areas (natural rock, and rock supplied by man).

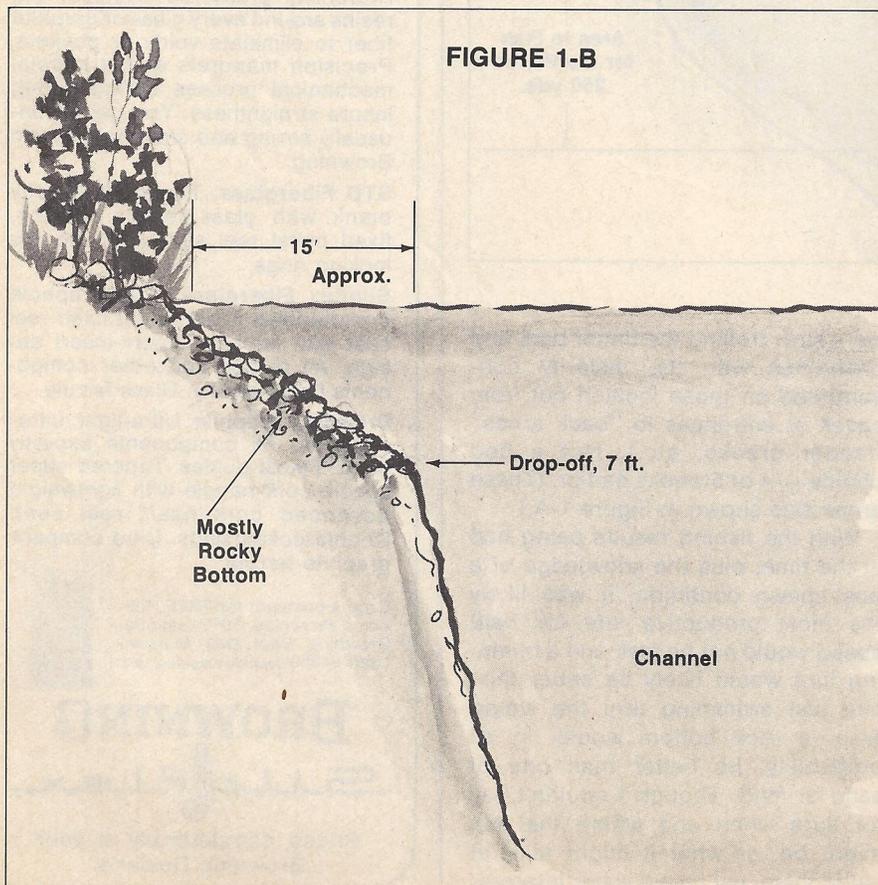
On the first pass, with the lure occasionally bumping along the rocks, one small white bass was caught. It was noted the small fellow took the lure when it was bumping and the speed was on the slow side. The return trolling pass (the area was approximately 250 yds. long) was made with the lure slowly bumping bottom all the way. This pass produced two additional small white bass, one “ceegar”-sized walleye, and one freshwater drum. No two fish were caught at the same spot. (Each time a fish was caught, the area was trolled again.)

My depth sounder had shown the drop-off occurred around 7 feet, and not more than a boat length from the shoreline. (See Figure 1-B). I switched to a deeper running lure and made the trolling pass with the lure working along the top of the break-line (drop-off). The boat was maneuvered so the lure was running free part of the time, and bumping part of the time. The total run was made with no takers. I reversed the pass making the same lure presentation. This was necessary as the control would be different due to the river current present. This pass produced three dead sticks, two pieces of spinning line (with spinner, snap, swivel, sinker and rusty hook still intact), and one empty beer can that put up a terrific fight in the strong current.

After switching lure sizes, and making several additional trolling passes below the drop-off, it became apparent this fisherman was fishing “where they ain’t”. From what I *thought* I knew, this area should have been the right place. The questions were: is it the right time, and is the fishing (control) being done in the right manner?

Getting back to the drawing board, the operation was started all over again. With the small lure slowly bumping along the 2 to 3 foot depths, one small “stripe” and one 6 inch smallmouth brightened my day. But the second pass (downstream) didn’t even catch a stick. It became obvious I could obtain better control working AGAINST the current.

This time, the ole thinking hat was on, and the water *between* the 2 to 3



foot depth and the drop-off at 7 feet was not passed up. The area wasn't too wide, but wide enough to hold straggler, dormant, non-chasing fish. Switching to a bottom bumping lure that ran from 4 to 6 feet, a slow trolling pass was made upstream against the current (so better depth and speed control could be maintained).

The pass hadn't covered 100 feet before a good sized white bass lapped the slow bumping lure off the rocks. After the boat was positioned (anchored), it was soon noted the current and the length of cast would not allow good control of depth and speed (a slow, steady, bumping lure at 4 to 5 feet). No fish were caught. Several types of "jump type" lures (jigs, etc.) were tried, with the same results — nothing. The fish caught must have been a lone straggler, which isn't unusual during the post-spawn period and in these depths. The return trolling pass (downstream) produced a big fat zero. Just before running out of fishing area on the next pass upstream, a 3 lb. walleye gobbled up the slow, steady, bottom bumping lure. Again, control was tried by casting, but no results were had. Good control could not be maintained regardless of boat position, or lure type used.

Subsequent trolling passes produced a couple white bass and two more nice walleyes. Larger lures were used to check the drop-off and areas below, but all the fish came from the same depths — 4 to 5 ft. The fish were scattered; seldom were two close together, and at times a complete pass would be made without a fish. I'm sure the blank trolling passes were due to a sloppy depth and speed control. At times the wind and current had the boat (and lure) completely out of position while going upstream, and the proper depth control (boat position) was practically impossible while going downstream. In order to maintain position (moving with the current) the speed of the lure was entirely too fast. Most all the fish were caught when working lures against the current.

About the time most questions were answered, Don and Connie were observed coming down the river. They were checking out the sandbars and breaklines shown in Figure 1-A. When they arrived, the "fishable" area was pointed out, and they were told about the depth and speed control that had produced a number of fine fish.

I left then to check the other fishable spot (structure, breaks, breaklines). It was found to be practically a twin of the first as far as structure, length, presentation of lures, and the depth of the scattered fish.

For two and a half days, there was little change in the situation. The stragglers were scattered, but our depth and speed control produced large strings of big white bass, walleyes, northern pike, smallmouth bass, and scads of drum. As far as we could tell, for all that time and for all those fish, not one fish was taken on a free swimming lure (a very unusual thing for the species being caught). Don took a couple nice walleyes (7 & 8 lbs.) casting a slow, bottom bumping jig. Both fish came from the 4 to 5 foot zone. He had to position the boat very carefully in order to control the lure in the strong current.

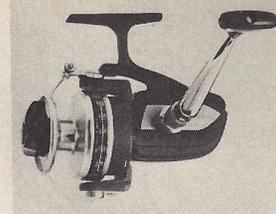
We continually checked various depths using different style lures but if we got away from the slow, bumping lure, and the 4 to 5 ft. depth, it was like fishing in a desert. At no time did we think about the water temperature, oxygen, wiggle, smell, etc. It took all our attention to maintain the proper depth and speed — if we desired to catch a fish. We used both casting and trolling, but better control, and many more fish could be caught while trolling. This came as no surprise. There were periods when more numbers of stragglers were present. In this case, most stragglers appeared in early morning and late afternoon.

The pickings for other visiting fishermen were a few small white bass; no walleyes, no bass, and no northern pike. We had no trouble getting rid of the fish beyond our needs. We had a great fishing trip. I have my doubts about those who caught no fish.

\* \* \* \*

Next time we will talk about another "fishing trip". Again we will try to point out that correct presentation of lures requires (only) using structure (breaks and breaklines) as the guide to where the fish will be, and the control of depth and speed to get the fish to take. We will use another "fish tale" to demonstrate that good control calls for trolling as well as casting; also, that good control (and interpretation of features being fished) will help put an end to remarks such as: "What a terrible trip;" "What a lousy vacation!"

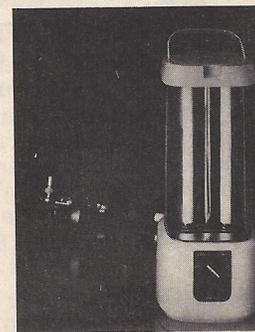
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