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Editor

“Why Doesn’t This ‘Fishy-looking’ Spot Produce”

In our past talks we have covered quite a few things. We have discussed the movements of fish, weather and water conditions, features found in lakes and reservoirs, presentation of lures, mapping, interpretation, and other subjects considered necessary for successful fishing. At times I felt the things talked about were understood and accepted. At other times, I wasn’t sure all the thoughts had been “heard” and I knew lots had been taken with a grain of salt.

One thing that may explain why a particular subject is not understood is because a person is unable to recall other information talked about in the past. Quite often when a fisherman gets a fact now, later gets another, still later another; by the time he gets all the

facts, or gets on the water, he has forgotten or cannot “connect” all the material he has read (or heard) over a period of time. However, it would seem most subject matter on fishing is not fully understood simply because the fisherman does not *believe* what is said has anything to do with his style of fishing. Or, he does not regard the subject matter as being important, and never gives a thought that the information could make him a better fisherman no matter how he might go about it.

How to solve these problems is not known. It appears about all we can do is keep talking; try to illustrate and explain more fully and hope for the best.

First let us talk about the “guidelines” (knowledge) a successful structure fisherman uses at all times to work

out or explain the things he runs up against when on the water. Then, let’s look at a fishing situation. I want you to first look at it from the standpoint of the fisherman who has no guidelines for successful fishing, other than those he thinks can be bought in a fancy wrapped package. After that, we will look at the situation from the viewpoint of the knowledgeable structure fisherman and see if any problems actually exist.

The *basic* guideline of a structure fisherman goes something like this. *“The deepest water in the area being fished is the home of fish. Some place in this deepest spot they spend the greater part of their time (sanctuary from a changing environment). When in deep water the fish are normally so inactive (dormant) or so deep they are almost impossible to catch. We are saved due to the fact they do not stay dormant all the time, nor do they stay in deep water all the time. Periodically (once or twice a day) they become active; and, MAY move toward the shallows (less than 8-10 feet). The features of, and on, the bottom the fish use in their movements and migrations are called ‘structure,’ ‘breaks,’ and ‘breaklines,’ and these features must go ‘all the way’ from the deep to the shallows, and vice versa.*

“How active or how far the fish go from the deep water, and how long they stay, is determined by the weather and water conditions at the time of the activity. This, plus the knowledge that conditions are changing all the time, means we can’t predict in advance where the fish are (how deep) or what their mood (active or dormant) may be. This indicates, if I desire to become a better fisherman, and constantly put more fish on the stringer, I must spend the greater part of my time where I have the best chance to catch a fish. Which means I must use the features (structures, breaks, breaklines, deep water, etc.) in a body of water as my guide to where the fish may be found. Then I must control the depth and speed of my lures (or baits) on, and/or around these features to take care of the mood (active or dormant) the fish may be in at the time.”

continued

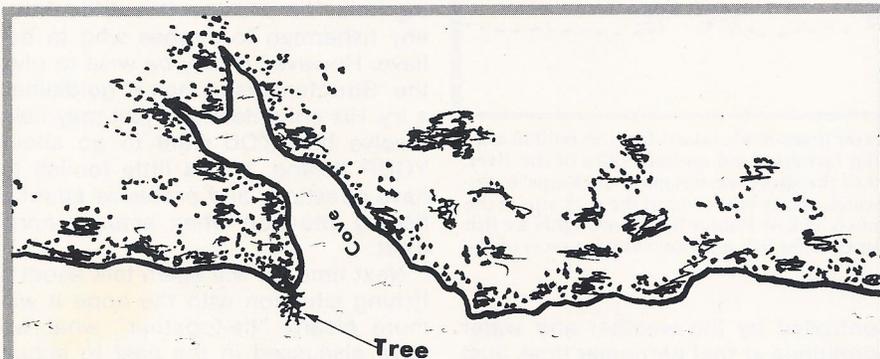


Figure 1

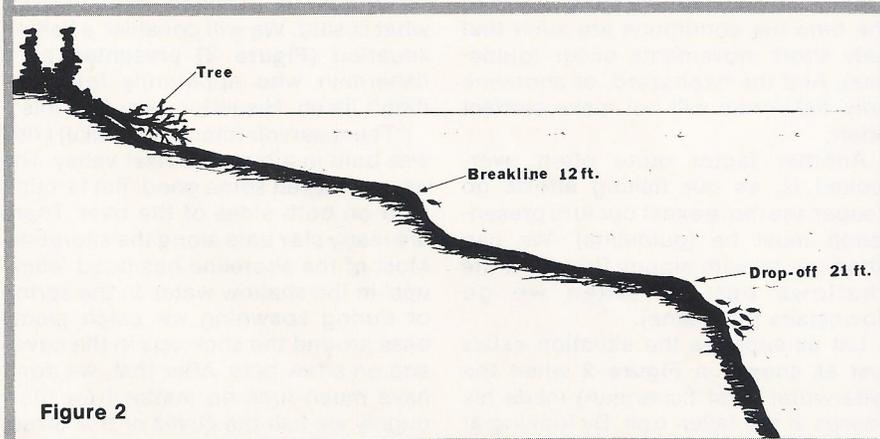


Figure 2

One thing often forgotten by the fisherman is the fact that fish do not move constantly nor consistently. Lucky is the fisherman who makes contact with a fish the first time he makes a stab at a fishing spot.

Buck Talks Fishing, cont.

Let's look at a fishing situation presented in a letter from a fisherman who had been exposed, to some degree, to our talks in the past. In his correspondence he says: "In the past I have caught quite a few good bass around a tree that has fallen into the shallow water on a point at the mouth of a cove. One day I fished it with all my favorite lures, but didn't get a strike. Later, while moving from one area to another, I passed the place again and saw a fisherman hook and land a good fish from the tree. I immediately stopped

on the shoreline, showing the fallen tree in the shallow water. Approximately 50 feet from the tree, and at a depth of 12 feet, a pronounced "breakline" occurs. The ridge-like bar (structure) extends out with the "drop-off" occurring at 21 feet. A lone fish is located at the breakline, but the mass of the fish are located slightly below the drop-off.

One thing quite often forgotten by the fisherman is the fact fish do not move constantly nor consistently (guideline). Lucky is the fisherman who makes contact with a fish the first time he makes a stab at a fishing spot (guideline). Our *basic* guideline states the activity or migration of the fish is

Later, the second fisherman either did something different, or the situation had changed. The second fisherman either put his lure to the fish at the breakline, or the fish had moved to the tree ("break") in the shallow water.

Our guess would be the situation had changed. It could be the second fisherman arrived at the scene before the fish moved to the tree. But, while going through everything in his tackle box to throw at the "sticks" the fish finally moved into range. (Unfortunately, this strengthens his belief that size, color, or action, is the "secret" for success.)

It would appear the second fisherman's knowledge wasn't so great either. If the weather and water conditions were such that a good fish stayed at the 12 foot breakline, or moved slightly beyond, it is likely the mass of the fish moved to the drop-off or slightly beyond. The second fisherman caught only one fish, and if the mass of the fish stayed where they were, or moved slightly beyond, they were ready for plucking also.

It seems logical to me, in whatever endeavor we might find ourselves, some sort of guidelines would be of value in finding the best way to go. Many fishermen do not have any guidelines. Many do not know any exist. What a sad state of affairs it would be if you and I had to find a so-called "secret" to each and every fishing hole. We all know it is difficult for any fisherman to choose who to believe. However, it may be wise to give the "Structure Fisherman's" guidelines a try. His enlightenment just may help resolve how YOU want to go about YOUR fishing. It is a little foolish to have questions and problems about a fishing situation when actually none exist.

Next time we will again talk about a fishing situation with the hope it will more clearly "tie-together" what we have discussed in the past to actual fishing situations we face on the water. This may also create a desire in some fishermen to examine more closely what is said. We will consider a fishing situation (**Figure 3**) presented by a fisherman who apparently forgot or didn't listen. His letter went like this:

"The reservoir (man-made lake) I fish was built in a big wide river valley. The water covered some good, flat farming land on both sides of the river. There are many clay bars along the shoreline. Most of the shoreline has good 'stick-ups' in the shallow water. In the spring or during spawning we catch plenty bass around the stick-ups in the coves and on a few bars. After that, we don't have much luck no matter how thoroughly we fish the coves or the 'structure' along the shoreline. It appears the fish just don't bite for most of the year in this lake."

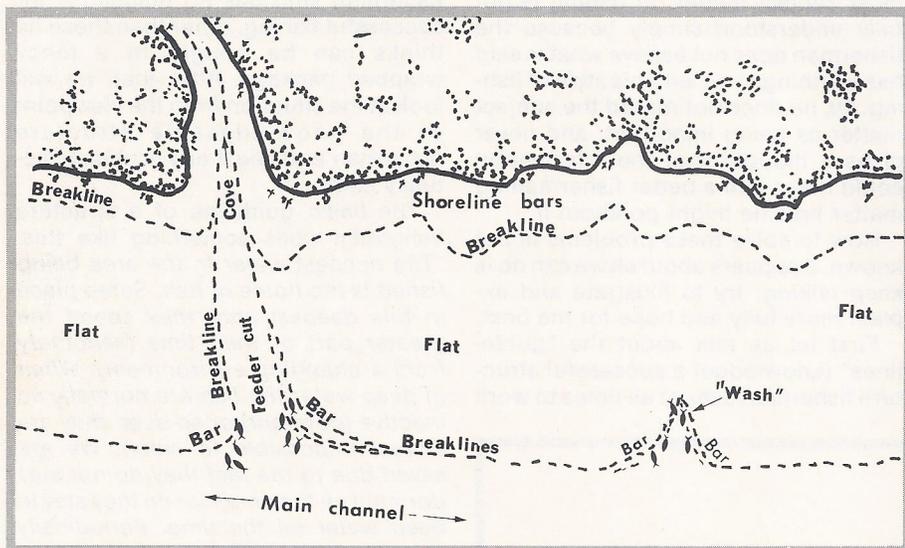


FIGURE 3, A Fishing Facts reader asks: "The reservoir (man-made lake) I fish was built in a big wide river valley. The water covered some good, flat farming land on both sides of the river. There are many clay bars along the shoreline. Most of the shoreline has good 'stick-ups' in the shallow water. In the spring or during spawning we catch plenty bass around the stick-ups in the coves and on a few bars. After that, we don't have much luck no matter how thoroughly we fish the coves or the 'structure' along the shoreline. It appears the fish just don't bite for most of the year in this lake."

and asked him what he had caught the fish on. He held up the fish, and I saw one of my favorite lures hanging from its jaw. Earlier, I had used the exact same lure for quite some time around the tree. What did I do wrong, or what did he do that I didn't do?"

Now let us suppose YOU had never been exposed to the guidelines of a structure fisherman (Spoonplucker). All you know is, there are fish in the lake and here is a "fishy-looking" tree in the water. You cast all of your lures at the tree, but don't get the first nibble. What would your reaction be? Why did you fail? Was your "twitch" wrong? Have you lost your killer lure? Or were the fish just not biting here?

Figure 1 is a top view of the situation. **Figure 2** is a side view we can use to illustrate and talk about his problem (questions).

Figure 2 shows a side view of a bar (structure) coming out from the point

controlled by the weather and water conditions at that particular time. Just how active, how far they go (towards the shallows), and how long they stay is predicated on these two things. Most of the time the conditions are such that only short movements occur (guideline). And the haphazard, or shoreline only, fisherman will not make contact often.

Another factor quite often overlooked is, as our fishing efforts go deeper, the more exact our lure presentation must be (guideline). We can often get by with sloppy fishing in the shallows but not when we go downstairs (guideline).

Let us suppose the situation exists just as shown in **Figure 2** when the letterwriter (first fisherman) made his passes at the fallen tree. By looking at the figure and the position of the fish, we should be able to answer why he failed.