



You Can Detect Hot-Spots Before Launching Your Boat

Many fishermen do not realize it's often possible to determine the best spots to catch a fish, even before the boat is launched. by Buck Perry, Education Editor

COMMENT

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 magazine is introduced to new readers. For many of them the words "structure fishing," "structure situations," "break and breaklines," will be totally new. For these readers we will continue to emphasize the basic concepts of structure fishing, fish habits, instincts, etc., etc.

However, in this present series of articles, Buck Perry will be addressing fishermen who have already studied their "basics" and are ready to move on. 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.

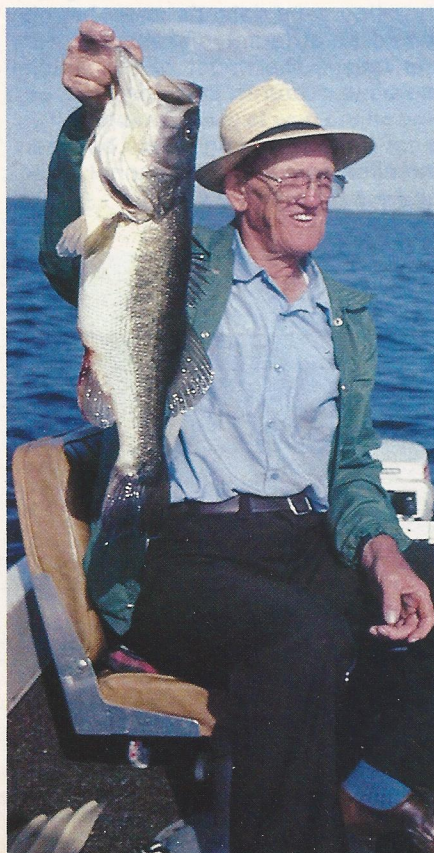
If you are a new reader, may we suggest a step which will allow you to "catch up" or achieve a better understanding of the articles. May we suggest that you study a copy of Buck Perry's outstanding book entitled: **"Spoonplugging; Your Guide To Lunker Catches."** This book contains all the basic facts of fish movements, basic fish attracting structures, basic weather and water conditions, basic presentation of lures, and much more. The 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. Its available for \$9.95 plus \$2.70 for packaging, shipping and insurance, with a 30-day money back guarantee from us, The Northwoods Trading Post, P.O. Box 609, Menomonee Falls, WI 53051.

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, he has consented to share his vast fishing knowledge and experience with Fishing Facts readers.

I was one bass short of a good limit catch when I saw the boat approaching. I figured it contained a game warden, as I had observed the same boat going from one fishing boat to another along the shoreline. Little doubt was left when it got close enough to read the words on the sides and see the uniform of its occupant.

By the time the boat was in hailing distance, I was holding my nonresident fishing license in plain sight. I did this because in many instances this is enough to cause an officer to veer off and continue his inspection someplace else. However, in this case, the warden eased the boat in close and killed the motor. Apparently my waving the license satisfied him in that respect, as he never did make a closer inspection.

He said he had seen my boat out in the lake for quite awhile and was wondering if I was having motor trouble. I told him everything was fine and that I was just out there fishing for bass. He must have seen the out-of-state registration number on my boat, as his



next comment was to ask if I had ever fished the lake before. When I informed him this was the first time I had ever been on the lake, he was gracious enough to begin telling and pointing out some spots along the shoreline where bass had been caught in the past. While he was talking, I was pretty sure he was saying to himself, "If he's fishing for bass, what is this nut doing out here in the middle of the lake?" He finally said my best bet might be to follow the local bass fishermen who knew the best spots and "stick-ups" along the shoreline. But he was quick to add that the bass fishing hadn't been very

continued

Education Editor Buck Perry with a "good one." It took Buck all of 20 minutes to find the "home" of this lunker bass, even though he had never been on the lake before. In the accompanying article Buck discusses some of the things you should consider when going after big bass, as well as other game fish.

Buck Talks Fishing . . .

good the past week or so.

Shortly, accepting my thanks, he cranked up his motor and headed back toward the shoreline a quarter mile away. Before he reached the first fishing boat along the shoreline, I had made a cast to a fairly deep spot on a breakline, and had put my last fish in the livewell. Later (after seeing the limit catch at the dock) the warden seemed to be patting himself on the back for telling a stranger on the reservoir where the best fishing spots were. I never did tell him where I caught the fish or why I was fishing a long distance from the shoreline. I'm sure he would not have understood if I had tried to explain that I had recognized what type reservoir it was before I launched the boat and knew where the best spots to catch a fish would be, although I had never been on the lake before. Neither did I say

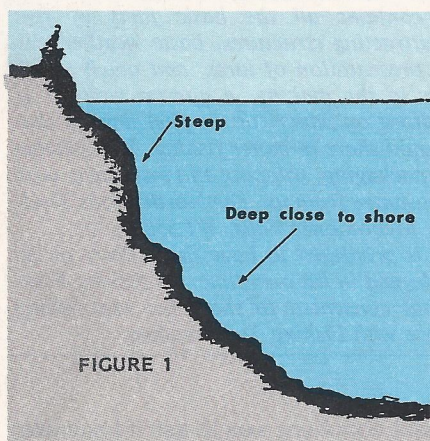


FIGURE 1 – If the man-made lake is narrow and deep, built in mountains or canyons, has steep and deep shorelines with few or no long points or sloping bars, it would be classified as a “Highland” reservoir.

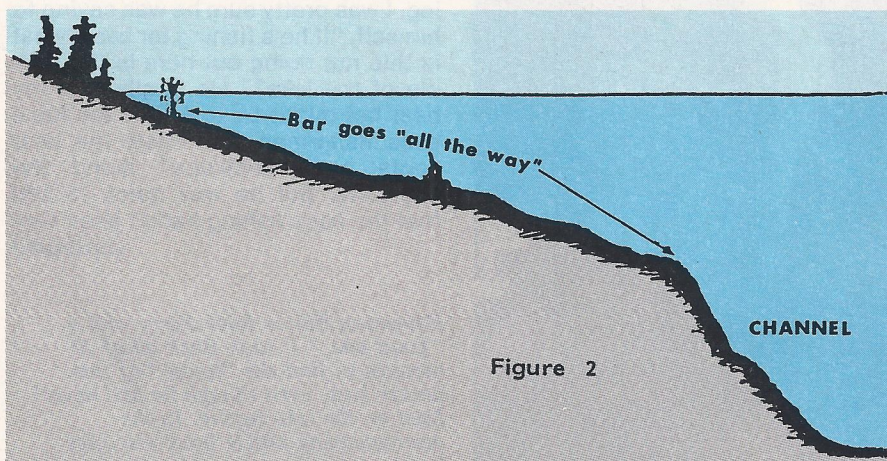


FIGURE 2 – Side view of a typical “Lowland” reservoir. You will find visible longer “points” and flatter bars at different places.

anything about my observations regarding the prevailing weather and water conditions.

Reservoirs (man-made lakes) come in all shapes and sizes. Many are built in different type terrain. Very few of them will look or be alike. However, the TYPE “structure situation” (the features of the bottom the fish use in their movements and migrations — structure, breaks, breaklines, deep water) will be the same in all. Some reservoirs contain only a few different type structure situations, while others contain many.

The structure fisherman (Spoon-plugger) classifies reservoirs into “Highland”, “Lowland”, and “Flatland” types. The purpose of the classification of reservoirs into three categories **is to let the fisherman know what type structure situation is likely to exist in each.** What a sad state of affairs it would be if we did not know what features to expect when we get on a particular body of water.

A contour map of a lake will aid the fisherman in determining what type reservoir exists, but the best way to tell is to look at the terrain and shorelines.

If the lake is narrow and deep, built in mountains or canyons, has steep and deep shorelines with few or no long points or sloping bars, it would be classified as a “Highland” reservoir (See **Figure 1** for side view).

If the reservoir was built in rolling hills where little or no flood plain was present along the river channel, it would be classified as a “Lowland.” This means there are visible longer “points” and flatter “bars” along the shoreline, and islands may be observed at different places. This further means that most of the visible shoreline features such as **bars extend all the way to the channels.** (Little or no flat flood plain exists between shoreline bars and the channel.) (See **Figure 2** for side view.)

If the reservoir was built in rather flat country (terrain) and/or where the original stream had a wide flood plain (big flats) on both sides of the river channel, the lake would be classified as a “Flatland” reservoir. The “Flatlander” is a good “teacher” in the study of the movements of the fish (the reason we use it a lot). (See **Figure 3** for side view.)

To fully understand why I was able to quickly find the best spot to catch a fish in the reservoir (where the game warden was encountered), let us look at a few figures and state some “guidelines” used by the structure fisherman in his search for fish in reservoirs. In our discussion we will talk about “structure situations” and the movements of the fish. We will talk little about “guidelines” for the presentation of lures, weather and water conditions, etc.

The BASIC guideline of the structure fisherman says the fish spend the greater part of their time someplace in the deepest water in the area being fished. In the case of reservoirs this means the channels, and in the majority it means the main channel. A structure fisherman’s guideline says the fish will not move across a bottom void of “signposts” to reach some good-looking stick-up that might be present “that-a-way” toward the shoreline. A further guideline says when the fish move toward the shallows, the visible features (structure, breaks, breaklines) they use in their migration must go “all the way” from the deep water to the shallow water. The fish are not likely to go all the way to the shallows every time they become active and moving, but the path they take does. Another guideline says how deep the fish are, and how far they move toward the shallows is determined (or controlled) by the weather and water conditions at the time of the movements. The structure fisherman also knows the weather and water conditions are seldom good enough to get many fish, and especially the larger fish, in the shoreline shallows.

With just these few guidelines we should begin to see or get a good interpretation of most all reservoirs . . . at least one good enough to catch fish consistently in whatever reservoir we find ourselves.

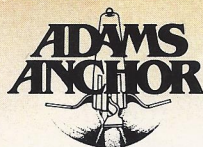
Figure 4 is a top view of a reservoir. What TYPE reservoir it is is not indicated. The figure shows the main channel as well as side feeder stream, “cuts” or channels. An “X” has been placed where two channels meet. **You are looking at the major key for consistent success in ALL reservoirs — the major “structure situation.”**

The area where two channels come
continued

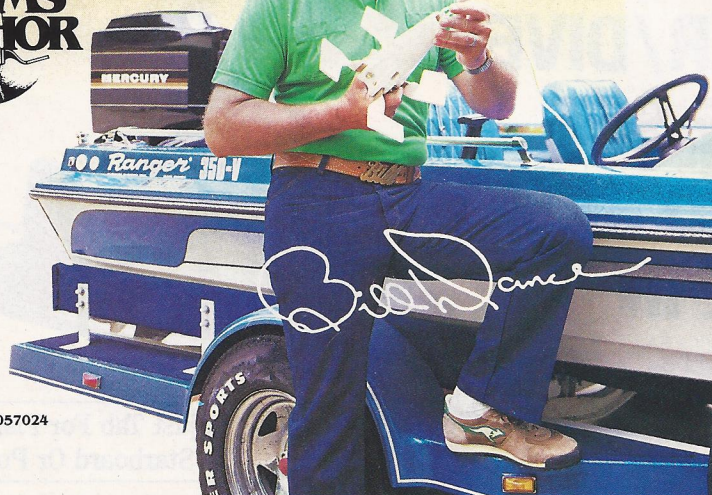
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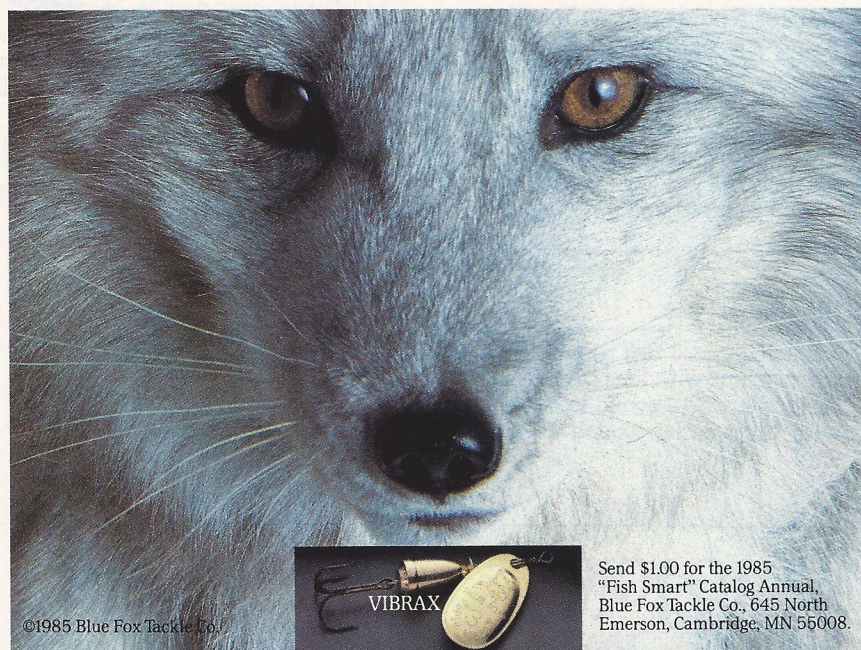
together is very important regardless how deep it occurs in a reservoir. In our INTERPRETATION of ANY type reservoir, whether it be Highland, Lowland, or Flatland, we START our "interpretation" from this point as to where the fish might be. Then we must find the route (structure, breaks, breaklines) the fish use in their movements towards the shallows.

Let me rephrase a statement just made so there will be no doubt as to what was said. In some type reservoirs the intersection of two channels (or "cuts") may be extremely deep, and probably the fish would never be that deep, but that makes no difference. If we are fishing an area where extreme depths occur where the two come together, this is still where our interpretation begins, and then it moves toward the shallows. In presenting our lures, **we start shallow and work toward the deep**, but the reverse is true when we are trying to figure out where the fish might be. After all, the fish start their movement deep and our interpretation of the route should be just like theirs. If you keep just this thought in mind, you'll be surprised at the "leap forward" in fishing results.

If we observe **Figure 4**, we should see quite quickly where the deepest water in all areas exists (main channel). We should be able to see a route to the shallows clearly marked by features of the feeder "cuts." The "X" is placed where our interpretations must begin. It also means the fish could be here, or some place along the route toward the shallows. In our presentation of lures we must try to reach these depths if the fish have not been found shallower. If we can't present lures correctly at some depths, exercise patience for the fish to move shallower. Our main concern when waiting is to be sure we are at the right place. *(To catch fish consistently we have to control the depth and speed of our lures or bait on or as close as possible to the lake features used by the fish during their movements and migrations.)*

Figure 5 is a top view of a section in a "Lowland" reservoir. Our observation of the terrain (rolling hills, with little or no flood plain along the old river channel, long bars, etc.), told us it was. The questions are: *Do you think this would be a good place to fish? Do you think you could draw in some bottom features in this area?*

YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO VISUALIZE WHAT IS PRESENT. The above-water observations are the real key as to what's UNDER the water. A fisher-



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man could wander around all day and never find a good structure situation without observing what can be seen above the water. A fisherman will never "learn" a lake if he doesn't keep his eyes open and try to interpret what he sees. A contour map and a depth finder may help or aid in our interpretations, but without above-water observations, what they tell us would not amount to very much.

An important thing to keep in mind is that this situation is in a "Lowland" type reservoir. I am going to repeat the figure and draw in what I think is present. Your drawing may not be exactly like mine. This doesn't matter; the important thing is when you see a *shoreline* situation such as this in a "Lowland" type reservoir, you should know what to expect in the way of bottom features in the area.

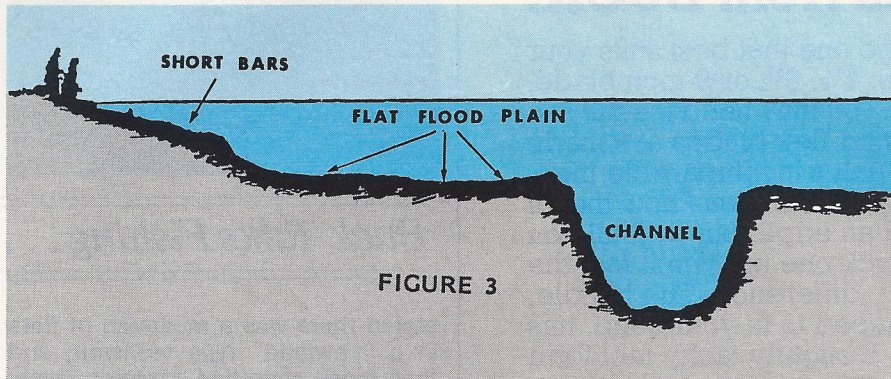


FIGURE 3 - If the lake was built in rather flat terrain and/or where the original stream had a wide flood plain (big flats) on both sides of the river channel, the lake would be classified as a "Flatland" reservoir (one of the best lake types to teach fishermen about the movements of the fish).

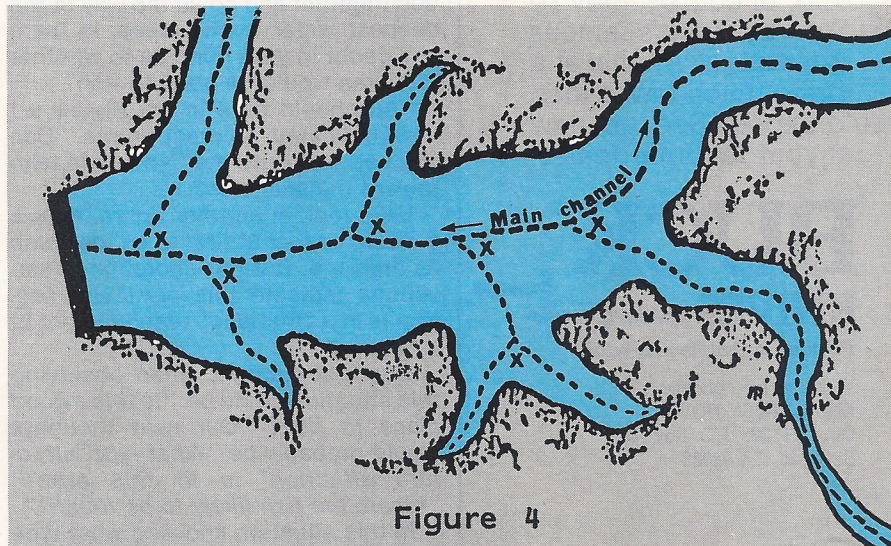


FIGURE 4 - Shown is the major key for consistent fishing success in all man-made lakes (reservoirs).

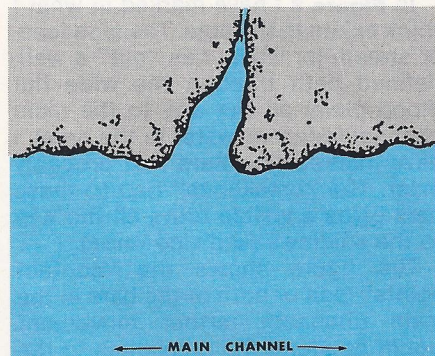


FIGURE 5 - Top view of a section in a Lowland reservoir. Do you think this would be a good place to fish? Why?

If your figure is correct, you should be able to point out the area where the fish first contact the structure situation. As said before, when fish move onto the features used in their movements and migrations, they must pick it up immediately in deep water. They will not take off in just any direction hoping they'll find something "nice" in the shallows.

Lets' look at **Figure 6**. How does my **Figure 6** stack up against your thinking of what existed in this area of the "Lowland" reservoir?

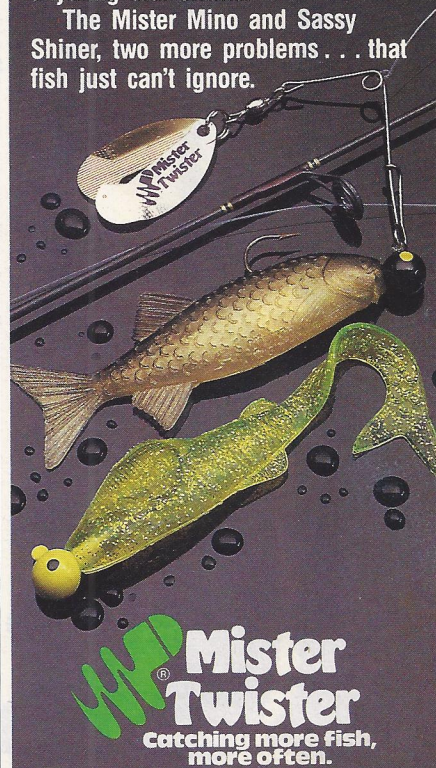
You should have recalled it was *continued*

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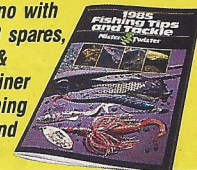
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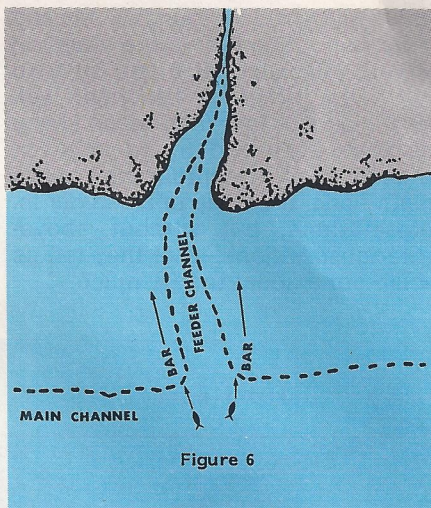
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stated there was a minimum of flats in a "Lowland" type reservoir, and that most shoreline features (bars, etc.) usually "go all the way" (to the channels). Your drawing should show the side feeder stream (or wash) has produced bars and breaklines that are tied together and go all the way to the deepest water in the areas. Is there any doubt in your mind as to whether this area would be good to fish?

You should note in my **Figure 6** I have indicated "contact points." Can you see the route the fish would take toward the shallows?

Let's look at another figure. **Figure 7** would appear at first to be the same as **Figure 5**. But our shoreline observations indicate this particular section is in a "Flatland" reservoir (not in a "Lowland").

Our first thought when observing this situation could be: "*Is this a good place to fish?*" Our next thoughts would probably be "*What type 'structure situation' is in this area?*" "*Where are fish likely to be found?*"

In this situation knowing what type reservoir is present is of utmost importance. This gives us the key as to what's under the water.

In **Figure 8** I have marked in what I think exists in the area. The side feeder stream (or wash) has "cut" a well-defined path through the wide flat (flood plain) all the way to the main channel (*deepest* water in the area). I have marked four bars that probably exist. The "breaklines" tied to these bars gives a visible route all the way to the shallows (and vice versa).

The figure shows the "contact points" (one or both of the bars at the main channel); farther movement would be along the breaklines to the bars at the shorelines, or into the "cove." This shows what is meant when it is said the fish move on

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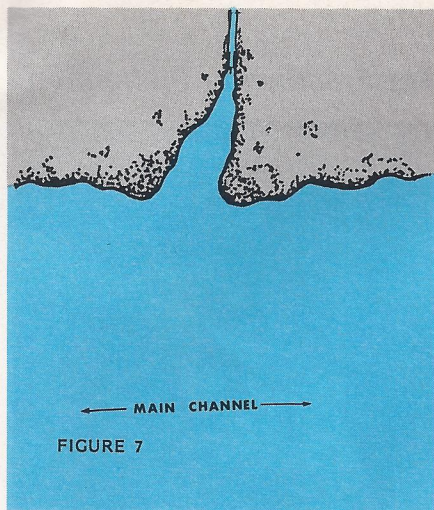


FIGURE 7

FIGURE 7 - At first this figure would appear to be the same as Figure 5. But shoreline observations would indicate this particular section is in a Flatland reservoir (not a Lowland reservoir). What type structure situation would you expect to find here? [For answer, see accompanying article.]

"structure" (a bottom feature such as a bar) and/or on "breaks" or "break-lines" tied in some manner to a "structure." All this "togetherness" represents a "structure situation."

The game warden was probably not aware his lake was a "Flatland" reservoir, or the fact that the weather and water conditions were responsible for the poor fishing conditions that had

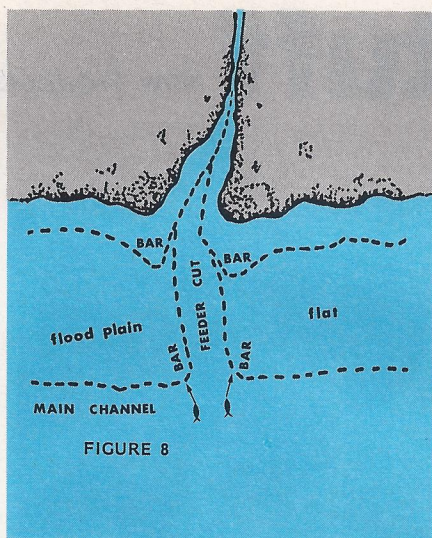



FIGURE 8

existed for a period of time (according to fishermen along the shoreline). He did not know I had spent little time along the shoreline or the relatively shallow flats between it and the main channel. I'm sure he never realized the limit catch had come from one spot on a bar where it broke into the main channel at a feeder cut. He probably still feels good about telling me about the good fishing spots along the shoreline. He'll probably never learn that to consistently catch fish in HIS Flatland reservoir, he will have to spend most of his time where the side feeder streams and the main channel come together. 

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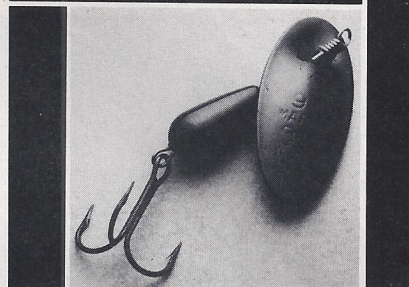


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