

## JOHN BALES' GRAND RAPIDS SEMINAR, APRIL 21, 2007



John Bales showing structure and areas to fish

**40 attended** this seminar, including 9 Spoonpluggers from the Leoni club. There was a pancake breakfast with eggs and sausage across the hall available for those who came early. The **tables were arranged** so most attendees **could take notes while seeing the presentation** (learned from the Illinois Spoonpluggers!). Apples, donut holes, pastries, coffee, and pop were available. John Bales presented his material in **3 formats: Slide show, dry-erase board, and overhead projector**. It was **given in three 50-minute segments** with breaks in between. Many thanks to all the Lunger Hunter Spoonpluggers who planned, set up, and cleaned up afterward for this seminar. It was a job well done!

The initial question was for a show of hands on who were **beginning or new Spoonpluggers**. **About 1/3** raised their hands so John **began with the introductory Spoonplugging slide show**. This included **Basic Movements of Fish, Structure, Weather and Water, Controls, Tools, and Presentation of Lures**. Some knowledge in all these areas is essential to becoming a Spoonplugger. It was a **good review** for those with experience also. **Next he covered early season casting**. He broke it down into **3 portions: after ice-out, pre-spawn, and just before spawn (during the spawn, he feels we should leave the bass alone)**. Right after ice out and for a few weeks, the **fish** are present in the **deepest hole areas**. He **anchors and fan-casts** them with **blade baits and jigs** of various weights with **baitcasting equipment** to check different speeds. **Smaller isolated holes are much easier** for this. As the water warms up some (**pre-spawn**), he **casts the weedline base**, moving slowly and casting **parallel to it**. If wind or lack of experience compromises boat control, anchor and cast rather than use your electric motor. As the **weeds start to come up**, he will **cast a shallow crankbait** (e.g. Rattletrap) **over the top** of them. **Just before the spawn, the inside weed edge must be checked**. **Spinning equipment and light jigs are best** for this very shallow presentation, but this equipment is replaced with baitcasting and trolling setups for the deeper and faster presentations during the warmer season. In this manner **John has greatly extended the length of his fishing season** and does not have to wait for warm water to begin his Spoonplugging.

John used the **overhead projector** a lot to **demonstrate structure form, breakline, and weedline situations** when casting. Structure form drawings in color were overlaid **with diagrams of trolling passes, casting direction, and boat paths** to accurately demonstrate techniques recommended. For **warm water fishing**, he emphasized that we **must learn to troll the shallows first** before we can troll the deeper water. If we are not catching fish, we must **learn to carry our fishing deeper**. Older, larger fish are more reluctant to come shallow. **In the past, going to 35 feet was usually adequate**, but **now** with zebra mussels and very clear water, **we might have to go to 60 feet to make a catch**. The deeper one goes, the more difficult it is to be accurate. **Practice and the proper tools are needed to develop those skills.**

**While trolling**, John talked about having **several tools within quick easy reach** to take advantage of a school of fish, **including casting rods with baits, markers, and anchor** with available rope. **Continually keeping a linesight as one trolls** allows one to instantly come back to a spot **if a fish is caught**. The **skilled use of wire line will often save the day** with greater depth control. He also mentioned that there are no experts in fishing because **your knowledge and interpretation of structure can always get better**. Near the end of the seminar, John **projected many lake maps and commented on their structure and areas he would fish**. John's vast experience fishing many different lake types and regions was apparent as he did this. The Lunker Hunter Spoonpluggers sincerely thank John Bales for coming up to give this **excellent seminar**.

Chase Klinesteker