

“ON THE WATER TRAINING, ALLEGAN LAKE”



Allegan Lake Walleye

On October 2, 2005, new **Spoonplugger** Chet Babcock was taken out on **Allegan Lake** for **on-the-water training** by instructor Chase Klinesteker. The weather was favorable with high cirrus clouds, light wind, and stable weather for a couple of days previous. It is a **Flatland Type 1 reservoir** of about 800 acres with **dark water color**. It has **few weeds** and a good population of medium-sized **smallmouth, catfish, and walleye**. The **deepest** water is about **23 feet at the dam** but most of it is quite shallow with **isolated deepwater** (old river channel) **holes** averaging **12 to 14 feet**. The rest of the river channel is silted in. There are some areas of **underwater stumps** so care must be used until one becomes familiar with their location. Allegan Lake is a reservoir on the **Kalamazoo River** and has pollution advisories against eating many of the fish it contains. We released all the fish caught, although they appear very healthy and the water quality seems to be improving. This is probably why there are so few fishermen and boaters on it, even on the weekends. This is an **ideal lake for learning Spoonplugging**.

Training **began** with proper **presentation of lures in the shallows**, starting with trolling the #500 (2-4 ft.), #400 (4-6 ft.), and #250 (6-9 ft.) Spoonplugs down the shoreline. **Observation of terrain** is very **important**. High **banks, slides, points**, and other features were **noticed for potential structure areas**. Trolling the shallows is

the teacher helping us **to learn the lake and find structure**. A bar was selected to **map and fish more thoroughly** (fishing water vs. trolling water). The **deepest water in the area was 15 feet** with the **breakline** running **6-8 feet**. The breakline around the bar was followed with 2 main features being found, and **markers placed** at about 8 feet. A **simple outline** of the bar and some depths were **drawn with paper and pencil at this time**. Buck Perry says: “**Most important of all in the mapping and fishing process is for the Spoonplugger to RECORD what he finds**”. To fish and learn more about this structure, its’ shallows were contour trolled with the #500, 400, and 250 Spoonplugs. Training was rudely interrupted when we **hooked a smallmouth bass** on one side of the bar **with a #250**. A **marker** was immediately **tossed** so we could go back to **anchor and cast the area** thoroughly. Spoonplugs and jump lures (fast and slow speeds) were used to cast the deep water but no more fish were caught. **Some surface** activity was noticed **up on top** of the bar at 6 feet and we **made some casts there** with crankbaits and then jump lures. **2 nice walleye** (20 and 23 inches) as well as an 18 inch channel catfish were caught on ½ ounce jump lures in a short period of time. Chet had **almost given up on baitcasting equipment** after going through a couple spools of line with backlashes earlier on his own. He was encouraged to bring his baitcasting outfit and we would work on technique. **In short order he was casting smoothly**. He didn’t even get a chance to learn how to “pick out” a difficult backlash!

After the action stopped, we finished trolling the shallows of the bar and **then trolled the deeper water** off the 2 features with **straight line passes**. #200 (9-12 ft.) and #100 (12-15 ft.) Spoonplugs were used. The **information gained** using these procedures was instrumental in **catching more fish later that day on the same structure**. John Bales was fishing this lake at the same time but was working a bar down by the dam, about a mile away. He pulled up just as we were finishing this bar and showed us 2 nice walleye (23 and 25 inches) that he had caught about the same time we had caught ours. This was a great example of Buck Perry’s statement: “**When the fish become active and move, ALL the fish move**—some more than others, BUT they ALL move” (“Green Book”, page 21).

Further training consisted of **locating, mapping, and presenting lures on several other structures** in this lake, including humps, bars, and breaklines. Mapping and interpretation is an important key in Spoonplugging training and fishing success. **Each structure is different and there is always more to learn**. Also covered were **how to properly anchor, tying strong knots, tuning lures, taking line sights, measuring water color, straggler fishing and other tips** to help make one a more effective fisherman.

Before we called it a day, we decided to **return to the first structure** and make a few casts. We **knew exactly where to anchor and cast because of the mapping we did earlier**. We **quickly picked up a 20 inch walleye and a 24 inch flathead catfish** on a crankbait and jump lure. Then things seemed to slow down. **John** was anchored about a cast away and began **picking up smallmouth** bass on consecutive casts. He was using a **light jig and twister tail**, a very **slow speed**. We decided to use the crankbait and ½ ounce jump lure for more casts because we had just caught fish on them (**big mistake!**). By the time we switched to slower speed lures, the action had stopped. **John had caught 12 smallmouth bass (6 on consecutive casts), and we had caught none**. This was a **very good lesson on the importance of speed control** and how **short many movements can be!** There were 2 short fish activity periods that day, both less than ½ hour. The entire rest of the day only a few small stragglers were caught.

Chase Klinesteker, Certified Spoonplugging Instructor