

"JUMPING PERCH"



Lake Michigan Perch engulfing #4 treble hook

September 30, 2004 was a **bright, sunny, and calm** day. I was fishing at **Grand Haven** and decided to check Lake Michigan for salmon. From the pierhead, no salmon fishing boats were visible. A quick check of some bottom and water color breaklines at the mouth of the Grand River did not show any fish. There were **6 or 7 boats anchored** in an area several hundred yards **northwest of the pierheads** so I went over to check it out. They were catching some **perch in 35 feet** of water vertical fishing with spinning rods, light line, and live bait. I didn't have this equipment in the boat but did have standard Spoonplugging tools, including **stiff baitcasting rods**, various jump lures, and a substantial anchor with over 50 foot of rope. I selected a **¾ ounce blade bait** and 12 pound baitcasting outfit to get down to the bottom faster. A **small** square of white rubber balloon or **piece of cloth** was placed **on each treble** hook to give the perch a target to hit when they reflex strike. The lure was **fancast** around the boat to try and locate active fish. **Short jumps** were used on the retrieve to stay near the bottom. If fish were seen on the graph under the boat, the lure was immediately brought in and vertical jigged under the boat. Perch working the area were in **loosely knit groups**, not balled up, and appeared

right on or very **close to the bottom**. They might remain under the boat for only 30 seconds to 1 minute.

The **structure** the perch were using seemed to be a **base breakline at 35 feet**. A few fish were seen shallower at 31 feet. The school was slowly working north before the action slowed. This area was covered with the stained water from the Grand River, which probably allowed them to have some activity despite the severe cold front conditions. The perch were very cold when they came up, yet the stained **water on top was 61 to 65 degrees**. The surface temperature in the **clear water was 51 degrees**.

From about noon to 2:30 PM the **action was slow but steady**. If the action stopped for 10 or 15 minutes, boats would pull up, circle the area, and re-anchor where they saw fish. I **caught 26 perch** of mixed sizes **averaging about 9 inches** with the largest 11 inches. A number of them had **all 3 points of the treble hook inside their mouth!** From observing the other boats, the **jump lure** presentation seemed **about as effective as the live bait** at this particular time. The only boat I talked to had caught 5 perch after being there 1 hour.

This trip demonstrates well the **beauty of a Spoonplugging approach to fishing**. The simplicity of the tools we use and their **versatility for catching all species of fish** is evident. It also brought back fond **memories** of my youth when my father and I would take **"Caseys" boat out to the Holland pier for perch**. The wonderful memories and delicious taste of fresh Lake Michigan perch were relived again!

Chase Klinesteker