

STEEL DETERMINATION, RIVERS, 2006



22 pound Flathead Catfish, Grand River

In **November** of this year, **I had fished the Grand River 3 times without catching a steelhead.** It is not that fish were not caught, since smallmouth bass to 19 inches, flathead catfish to 18 pounds, pike, suckers, and carp were caught which provided lots of fun and action on those trips. It was just that I would like to add steelhead to the mix---and I enjoy eating them! **On November 24, 2006, Tom Cook,** the owner of Al and Bobs' Sports, **joined me** on the Grand River to give it a try. I appreciate Tom carrying Spoonplugs in his store and wanted to give him a sample of what we do as Spoonpluggers. The **water color was good (about 2 feet)** and it was a **cool, but sunny and calm day.** The **water level was down** about 2 feet from last week. We **started out slowly trolling Tadpollys and Hottentots** on the structure below the Rogue River which has produced many steelhead in the past. Fairly soon we had caught an 18 inch **walleye and a small pike, but no steelhead.** **Another boat** in the area using spawn **reported no fish,** so after a couple of hours we decided to move to another structure. **Combining casting and trolling on several other structures, we ended up with some decent fish for the day---including 2 steelhead!** The steelhead were 7 and 10 pounds and put up a great fight. They were beautiful fish, a female that was bright silver and a male that was rainbow colored (steelhead are lake-run Rainbow Trout). The other fish caught included 6 flathead catfish from 4 to 22 pounds, a 28 inch pike, and a 13 inch bass. The **walleye, pike, and steelhead were all caught trolling.** The **catfish and bass were caught casting.**

Some **questions that might be asked** from this experience include:

“WHY WERE SO MANY DIFFERENT SPECIES CAUGHT?”

Thorough fishing (**Spoonplugging**) requires **checking all depths and all speeds** on structure by **both casting and trolling**. We become more effective by **learning where to present lures (structure)**, and by presenting them in the 2 main methods, casting and trolling. **Different species will react to different presentation methods** at different times. There are no absolutes. You **must check it out**.

“WHY DIDN’T WE BEGIN BY TROLLING SPOONPLUGS?”

Although Spoonplugs have the widest range of speed of any lure on the market, they **will not troll slower than about 1½ mph**. In **late fall**, with water **temperatures near 40 degrees** and the fishes’ metabolism slowed way down, **slower speeds would be expected**, so we **checked first with slower crankbaits**. If we had not begun to catch fish, faster (and slower) speeds would have had to be tried. With very slow speeds, **pinpointing the fish is important and casting** is the best presentation.

“HOW CAN YOU SAY YOU WERE SPOONPLUGGING WHEN YOU DID NOT TROLL SPOONPLUGS?”

Spoonplugging is not defined as “trolling Spoonplugs”. This is a big misconception among many fishermen. Spoonplugging is **using the knowledge about fish behavior and structure discovered by Buck Perry** that helps us catch more fish. He has created guidelines to follow that will help us succeed, no matter what lures are used (read the “Green Book”). Spoonplugs are often used because **they are the best tools** to cover a **wide range of depths and speeds** at the same time.

Fish were caught because we had knowledge of the rivers’ structure, checked various depths and speeds, and were willing to present lures both casting and trolling. Landing and photographing a 22 pound catfish proved quite an experience! We also saw a 4 point buck swim across the river. It was a **thoroughly enjoyable and exciting day on the water!**

Chase Klinesteker



10 pound steelhead, Grand River