

“LESSONS LEARNED AT TAWAS BAY” SEPTEMBER, 2003



John Bales and Ted Walter, Pike and bass from Tawas Bay

Every **Spoonplugger Network Outing** provides **learning opportunities** for attendees to improve their fishing. The outing at **Tawas, Michigan on September 7,8,9,and 10, 2003** was no exception. **One situation** in particular stood out. **Don Stephens and I** fished Tawas Bay in **Lake Huron Saturday morning for big northern pike**. The bay contains **heavy weeds to 19 or 20 feet** including **tall rice grass** and shorter weeds that came up 3-4 feet off the bottom. The **deepest water in the area was 22 feet**. The rice grass was up to the surface in patches so that **trolling any size Spoonplug over the weeds was impossible**. Last year there was a distinct edge of shorter weeds in this area at 19 feet and some nice pike were caught trolling it. However, this year there was no distinct short weed edge. The deepest rice grass was in scattered patches and was very difficult to troll. There was **nothing outside these patches for the fish to relate to**. Trolling this outer "edge" as best as possible resulted in only 2 small pike. **Anchoring** at some of these outer patches **and casting** them with jump lures **gave no results**. **After about 4 hours, we gave up and left to fish Van Etten Lake**.

Returning to the campground **in the evening, one of the biggest catches of northern pike I had ever seen was there**. Several were **in the 13 pound range!** Inquiring about where and when these catches were made, we were told that **most were caught in the same weedbed and at about the same time we fished it! (lesson # 1: observe what is going on around you!)**. **John and Debbie Bales** tried to fish the weed edge as we did, but quickly **determined that they needed a different approach (lesson #2--don't stay with something that isn't getting results)**. They deduced that since the deepest water in the area was not much deeper than the weeds,

the **fishes' sanctuary would be in the weeds**. We realized this also, but did not put enough **thought into how lures could be presented in this difficult situation (lesson #3--try to figure out how you CAN present lures**. Don't make excuses why you can't). Next, John and Debbie **drifted with the wind from shallow weeds to deep weeds, casting jump lures into any holes or clearing between the weeds**. By trial and error they **found that a lighter (1/4 to 3/8 ounce) lure would not sink deep into the short weeds and get fouled**. They **made several parallel drifts to cover the weedbed thoroughly (lesson #4--fish thoroughly all of the structure)**. Their **catch was phenomenal**, including **big smallmouth bass and pike**, losing about a **dozen lures to biteoffs** from big pike. The final lesson learned from this experience was that **one needs to become more familiar with Buck Perrys' material**. If I had been, the thought of casting in this manner would have occurred to me ("Green Book"-pages 153-154). Mr Perry states that **good Spoonpluggers will know the material so well that they don't have to think about what to do next**.

The Spoonplugger Network Outings are great learning experiences and are highly recommended.

Chase Klinesteker