

## “A LESSON IN SLOW”



Bullhead

I rarely fish **smaller rivers** that have no boat ramp access, but Saturday, October 30, 2010, I got a call from Rick Awtrey asking me to fish the **Flat River** from a 12 foot john boat with him. Of course I accepted his offer! In some areas of the Flat, **water depths average 1 to 3 feet** with a few spots to 8 or 10 feet. He uses a 6 horsepower motor to navigate up or downstream and an oar to position the boat for casting and drifting, sometimes anchoring to more thoroughly fish an area. Rick puts a 1 inch block of wood on the transom to raise the motor slightly for more **prop clearance** in these shallow waters. We each brought 2 rods for casting, a small tacklebox, and some warm clothes. The weather was sunny but temperatures were only in the high 40s and low 50s and the wind was 10-15mph. As we drove to the river, I noticed high cirrus clouds and several long contrails, so I thought we might have weather stability and some active fish. However, after only an hour or two, the clouds disappeared, and **bright sun and blue sky** prevailed. Unstable weather has been the pattern in West Michigan for much of this past summer, and it has affected the fishing.

**Fishing was very slow.** Rick used a **small jig and twister tail** that caught many fish for him this past summer, but his known spots were not productive. Besides jigs and twister tail grubs, we **tried Rapallas, spinnerbaits, surface lures, and other crankbaits, but nothing seemed to produce.** Finally, a sucker about 14 inches was **caught on a jig and twister tail** that was **slowly dragged** with the current downstream. It is a wide and slightly deeper area of the river where the current is not heavy. This was **the slowest presentation speed** that we had used, **even jumping the jig did not seem to produce.** **Once we determined the speed, a few more fish were caught,** including a 14 inch smallmouth and a 12 inch bullhead. The smallmouth put up a good fight, but the water was too cold for it to jump. I had not caught a bullhead since I was a youth and tried to “lip” him to take the lure out. I quickly realized that they have teeth and a very strong jaw! Slowly dragging the jig and twister tail was the speed, and the depth (on the bottom) was maintained by using a slightly heavier (**1/8 oz**) **jig, 2 inch twister tail grub, 8 pound mono, and spinning rod and reel.** Just before dark as we headed back, we noticed some surface activity, but couldn’t stay to fish it.

This trip was not the most successful fishing trip I have had this past year, but I had a good time. Thanks to Rick, I fished different waters and presentations and learned a lot. This situation called for slower speeds than I normally use, and I was **reminded of the importance of checking all depths and speeds** to arrive at the fish, and to **never assume where the fish will be or how they will take a lure.** That is the essence of Spoonplugging!

Chase Klinesteker