

SPOONPLUGGING STUDY GROUP MARCH 16, 2006

“GRADUAL SPOONPLUGGING”

8 attended the meeting. The main program was to study an **article written by John Bales** in the February '06 issue of the “**Northern Indiana Spoonplugger**”. This is one of the best articles on how to learn Spoonplugging that I have ever seen, and it should be on the “**must read**” list for all beginning Spoonpluggers, as well as for those with more experience. **All subscribers to “The National Spoonplugger” newsletter can receive the monthly “Northern Indiana Spoonplugger” newsletter online free by contacting Ted Walter at spnplger@gte.net . A better “2 for 1 deal” would be hard to find!**

The article contained **drawings of structures on 4 different waters**. They progressed **from the easiest type to fish** (shallow lakes with dark water color) **to the toughest fishing** situation (deep lakes with clear water). John emphasized that **fishing knowledge must be learned in stages**. **With each type of water, we gain experience and knowledge that will help us with the next**. **New Spoonpluggers will become confused and frustrated if they fish more difficult waters first** before learning how to fish the easier waters because they have not gained the skills and experience needed.

- 1) The **first drawing** showed a **small darkwater reservoir** with the **deepest water at 20 feet** near the dam. Most holes upriver were no more than 12 feet deep. **Trolling the 3 shallowest lures will result in good catches** for most of the season, and if the fish were inactive or dormant, **casting a small 12 foot hole** could be done thoroughly quite **easily**. Lure presentation skills and control of depth and speed are very straightforward and the **fish cannot get away from you**—their home is in 12 feet! In trolling, we **learn to keep each lure in position** and **gain knowledge** on how to **interpret structure**, skills we will take to other waters.
- 2) The **second drawing** is of a **natural lake with good water color**. **2 deeper holes of 12 and 19 feet** exist. This type of lake should be **trolled from the shallows to the deep** in order to map and interpret the structures and find the most productive ones. **Always begin in the shallows**. Fish are more active and **easier to catch there**. If fish are not caught shallow, **casting positions can be established**. John feels that a lot of time should be spent on these first two types of lakes learning how to run the first 3 sized lures. He says that if you **can't successfully map a bar without the depth sounder**, go back and **do more work in the shallows**. **A new Spoonplugger often takes 2 or more years on the first two types of lakes before gaining enough knowledge** to move on. In most cases one is catching more and bigger fish than ever before.
- 3) **Drawing three** is a **natural lake with 3 deeper sections of 38, 49, and 34 feet**. We begin the same way by working the shallows and **finding good structure**. Here we likely **will have to carry our depth control deeper, both casting and trolling**. We don't just fish deep, but **concentrate in the best structure areas (skills learned on lakes 1 and 2)**. We will encounter **softer bottoms** and need to use **longer line lengths**, both more difficult, but our lure presentation experience will help us through. At this point in the article, John wrote about **finer skills** that must be worked on which would take some time to learn such as **skipping above silted bottoms, running the base breakline at 28 feet, using markers and linesights, and keeping trolling passes as straight as possible**. **Mapping and interpretation becomes more difficult with greater depths**, but now we already have some skills to help out. **Much time can be spent learning on this type of water**. Also, many reservoirs with water color fall into this category and are excellent waters to learn because of their varied structure situations.
- 4) **The fourth drawing** depicts a **very large, deep, and clear water lake**. Depths go to **over 100 feet** and **weedlines to 20 feet**. This is **the most difficult type of lake to fish by far**. In clear water, **fish stay much deeper and are dormant longer**. It is wise to **avoid fishing these lakes**. Knowledge, experience, and skill is recommended before trying them, but they **can be a way to gain further knowledge** for Spoonpluggers with good experience. **Deep water means exactness** in both interpretation and presentation, and those **skills can be better honed when challenged**. This includes the use of **wire line and working deep breaklines in 45-55 feet of water**. When **Buck Perry would make outstanding deep catches of big fish** with wire line **on this type of**

water, he would **leave** and **not show** his **catches**. He would explain that non-Spoonpluggers would have little concept of what is required to attain the skills to accomplish these catches, and he **would do more harm than good by telling them** ("There is no magic lure or shortcut to success—Knowledge is the Key").

My comments on John Bales' article do not substitute for reading and studying this **excellent article** thoroughly. Many times **we scare off beginning Spoonpluggers by allowing them to start on deep, clear, or weedy lakes** where they will **become frustrated presenting Spoonplugs**. They **should start on shallow darkwater lakes** where they can **learn and have success early on**, then later progress to more challenging waters. **Spoonpluggers at all levels of skill** occasionally **run across times when fishing success drops** and frustration sets in. Rather than pounding your head against a wall, I would **recommend dropping back to an easier type of fishing water** to quickly **regain your confidence**, and then move on.

Chase Klinesteker

