

LUNKER HUNTER SPOONPLUGGERS MEETING JANUARY 15, 2009

“MUSKIES: SPRING, SUMMER, AND FALL”



Will Schultz, president of the Michigan Musky Alliance, gave us an excellent program titled: **“Muskie: Spring, Summer, and Fall”**. This was actually a full seminar with **PowerPoint** presentation and handouts. Will mentioned that in the 1990s’, there was no Michigan advocacy group for muskies, and that the **Michigan Musky Alliance was formed in 2001**. Its’ **purpose is to educate fishermen about muskies, promote their conservation, and to assist the DNR in many ways relating to muskies**. This includes educational signs at launch sites, volunteering for DNR musky projects, donating money to help the hatchery, nets to keep the birds out of rearing ponds, and assisting with Project Fish in the schools. It is a statewide organization that meets in Lansing. The Michigan DNR is now planning to have 3 musky brood stock lakes, one in southern Michigan, one in the northern lower peninsula, and one in the upper peninsula because of the VHS disease. This may help control and isolate diseases better. It takes 6 or more years to get brood stock lakes producing. They will stock muskies in a lake to attain a one fish per acre population. In northern clear water (infertile) lakes, they stock to get only 1/10 to ½ musky population per acre. **Northern lakes do not support the musky population that southern Michigan lakes do**. On Lake Skegmog, 29 nets were set out for 3 weeks to determine the musky population and only 1 musky was caught during that time!

Right off the bat, Will mentioned that he has read and studied **Buck Perrys’ book “Spoonplugging-Your Guide To Lunker Catches”**. He tries to follow much of Bucks’ teachings, especially **related to structure and fish movements**. His lure presentation is somewhat different in that he mostly casts large lures and rarely trolls

(trolling is a Spoonpluggers' "teacher"), but depth and speed control is definitely a factor in his fishing. As a musky specialist, **last year he caught around 140 muskies**, with some in the 50 inch plus range. He wishes to further Spoonplugging knowledge for MMA members and has scheduled Chase Klinesteker to give a seminar at their meeting in Lansing on April 9.

Spring---From **45 to 65 degrees** water temperature is the **spawning season for muskies**. They lay non-adhesive eggs on new weed growth **in shallow areas around 2-5 feet deep**. He looks for the best, sharpest breaking **shallow areas adjacent to the deepest water in the area**. **Weeds** are breaks that **help fish hold** longer in an area. Smaller males will arrive first and leave last from the spawning areas. The sanctuary may be shallower than normal in this season. **Crankbaits and jigs** can be good **over the shallows** and **along the weedline base** at this time.

Summer---Water temperatures in this season are **60-80 degrees**. In the summer season, Will finds that the bigger fish **may move horizontally and suspend out over deeper water**. Often this depth relates to the base of the weedline or thermocline. Smaller fish may be caught at the base of the weedline, but he casts and trolls for larger ones suspended. He emphasized that in warmer temperatures, musky must eat more and that **increased speed can be very effective**. **Boat traffic may move the muskies around**. Low light conditions (morning, evening, cloudy) may bring fish to the base of the weedline, so he checks that first. Later he works for suspended fish. In clear water lakes with **fish suspended at 15 feet**, he may **troll a lure down only about 8 feet** and the fish can come up to hit the lure. His second pass may be closer to the fish. In darker water lakes it is more important to put the lure very close to the fish. Will emphasized that this presentation works for him on **muskies only**, and should not be transposed to other species of fish. He did mention that in the summer he found large pike to relate more to deep bottom structure than musky did. **Will stops fishing for musky** in the summer **with water temperatures at 80 degrees or above**. At these temperatures, fish can die of stress and exhaustion even if they are handled and released properly. He **releases all muskies he catches** to preserve the fishery. In the summer, heavy boat traffic may push musky up into the weeds or make them active at night. He likes to use large lures in the summer, some that can be worked very fast.

Fall---With the changing water temperatures, muskies tend to **use the weedline and deeper structures more regularly**. Shallow movements may be longer. The **weedline base is important** at this time, especially if the weeds are alive. In the late fall there are fewer shallow movements, although if ciscoes are present, they spawn in November and will bring muskies shallow. **Deep diving baits, vertical jigging, and live bait** can be effective at this time. **Large lures** should be used in the fall for the biggest fish. **All depths should be checked**. **Fall is the prime time for the biggest muskies**.

This was a very interesting and informative seminar given by Will Schultz. We thank him very much and wish the best to the Michigan Musky Alliance in the future.

Chase Klinesteker