

# "USING SPOONPLUGS ON THE GREAT LAKES"



20-25 ft    15-20 ft    12-15 ft    9-12 ft    6-9 ft    4-6 ft    2-4 ft

**Spoonplugs** are **excellent tools** that are **very effective on the Great Lakes**. I have caught **Kings, coho, steelhead, lake trout, brown trout, drum, carp, and perch** on them from Lake Michigan. They are **also** effective on **walleye, northern pike, and musky**. **Depth and speed control** is their biggest **advantage**, with 7 sizes available to **cover depths from 2 to 25 feet**.

The **3 most popular sizes** of Spoonplugs are the **#250** (6 to 9 feet), **#200** (9 to 12 feet), and the **#100** (12 to 15 feet). They **also work** well for deeper depths by using them **on downriggers**, since exact depths below the downrigger ball can be attained by using appropriate size lures and line lengths. These lures are unique in that there is **little if any variance in depth when speeds are changed** from about **1½ to approaching 10 mph**. It seems to me that the stiff, oversized line (No-Bo) may have something to do with that ability, as well as the design of the lure. **Greater depths** (double that of monofilament) can also be achieved **by using a stainless steel monel wire line** of 15 or 20 pound test, but it is more difficult to work with and **not for the average angler**. With wire line and the largest lure (**#800 Spoonplug**) I have caught **king salmon bouncing bottom in 45 feet of water**.

**I prefer** to use Bucks' **17 pound No-Bo line** for most trolling situations. It is **metered with a different color every 30 feet** to determine line length. If one doesn't have No-Bo line, a **25 or 30 pound test low stretch mono would probably suffice** to present these lures trolling. A **strong snap** should be used. **Do not tie the line to the split ring** in order to prevent wear of the metal loop on the lure. For Great Lakes trolling, **a long and as stiff as possible rod** can be used **in a rod holder**. **Too soft a rod will diminish the action and vibration of the lure** and will **not work at higher speeds**. A **level wind trolling reel works best**. For inland lake trolling where we hold the rod for feel of the bottom consistency, we use a shorter stiff rod, which is much less tiring.

**Spoonplugs** are **excellent** to use **with high/flat lines** because they **run true and will not go much deeper than their maximum depth** no matter what the line length or the speed. They are **designed to come up to the surface when fouled**. We have **also used the larger Spoonplugs as diving planers to take other lures deeper** without the use of a downrigger.

**By using a 3-way swivel**, another lure is taken down to the depth of the larger lure. A **small Spoonplug, flutter spoon, fly, plastic grub, or floating minnow lure** can be **used** to offer a different presentation. **Deep crankbaits** or larger lures are **not recommended for this second lure**, as they would affect the expected depth. The **largest fish in a group can swim the fastest and are often the most aggressive**. The **ability to check the faster speeds** when necessary **makes the Spoonplug a valuable tool in ones' arsenal**.

Spoonplugs are **very durable** and **made of solid brass**. Heavy use can sometimes cause them to run to one side or the other. **They can be tuned** by very slightly bending the brass loop (holding the split ring) to the opposite side that the lure is running. This is done **with a sharp pointed object like an icepick** and is performed in the boat so the tune can be tested. For **charterboat work** on Great Lakes salmon, **some prefer to slightly beef up the hooks and split rings on Spoonplugs**. When **letting out Spoonplugs**, keep a slight **tension on the lure** or planerboard **to prevent tumbling** and catching the line in the double hooks.

Spoonplugs can be **purchased by calling Bucks' Baits at: 828-322-2157**, or obtained from the **website: buckperry.com**. Terry Velting sells Bucks' Baits products also (616-249-0744). Mr. Perry has **a section on Lake Michigan fishing in his book "Spoonplugging: Your Guide to Lunker Catches"** that **is very informative (pages 167-175)**.

Chase Klinesteker, Certified Spoonplugging Instructor



Salmon caught on #700 Spoonplug in Lake Michigan at Grand Haven