

“TAKE A CHANCE---FISH A NEW LAKE!”



4 ¼ pound Brown Trout caught on a jump lure

The **2013 fall fishing** for me so far had been **disappointing**. Although not being able to fish as much as usual, **when I did get out, familiar lakes and known areas of the Grand River were chosen**. The **results** were mixed to **poor**, especially **related to some of my past catches** in these areas (fishing memories). **I was in a rut** and the motivation didn't seem to be there. At one of the recent Lunker Hunter Spoonpluggers' meetings, **Roger Bouwkamp** mentioned a small **121 acre lake north of Grand Rapids** where he has caught some nice fish. It is **Rogers' habit to fish and map as many new lakes as possible** (as recommended by Buck Perry), and his many catches of good fish have proven that it **gets results**. So on Friday **November 15, 2013, I visited that lake**, which I **had never fished before**. One advantage of fishing a new lake is that **your expectations (memories of catches and methods of presentation) are not there**. You **must map the lake first to get information** about its' structure and potential, **then present lures in an orderly manner** to arrive at the fish. **Mr. Perry has given us procedures to follow**, but often **we don't follow them on a lake that we know**. A **new lake forces a Spoonplugger to follow the guideline that "trolling is our teacher"**, and to get out and **learn the lake first**. A lake contour map is only an estimate of what is there as far as structure.

The conditions that day were good for the middle of November: **partly cloudy skies, 39 to 49 degrees air temperature, and a light breeze**. **Water temperatures were in the 40s'** so the turnover was likely finished. The **weeds had mostly died down** and the **bottom was mostly hard marl**, so trolling Spoonplugs was routine. The **major breaklines in this lake were at 6-9 and 12-14 feet**. Because the lake was small, it was decided to **troll around the entire lake to determine the structure outline**. I use a **Garmin GPS Map 172** for fishing and

found that it is **helpful to observe the tracking of the boat path as one follows a breakline**. This shows the points, inside turns, and fingers of the breakline that fish could use in their movements and migrations. **If a prominent feature is noted**, one can **stop and put a waypoint** on it as well as check out how it relates to the deepest water in the area, **then continue to explore the rest of the breakline**. Once this is done, one has a picture of the features that they wish to return to for mapping and fishing more thoroughly. This lake did not show depth contours on the GPS screen, so there was **a clean slate for the unit to draw the boats' path**.

Trolling began with the #250 (6-9 foot) Spoonplug on the first breakline around the entire lake, varying speeds and line lengths. **The same was done with a #100 (12-15 foot) Spoonplug on the second breakline**. If the fish were in the shallows and active enough, **some fish should have been caught, but they weren't**. The **2 tracks showed sharper breaks** where they came closer together and **gave a good outline of the lakes' structure** (where the bottom is different from the surrounding area). This only took **about 1 ½ to 2 hours** and now I had a detailed picture of where to start fishing more thoroughly. **A printed copy of the lakes' contour map from the DNR was compared to the GPS outline**. There were **major differences**, in fact, it **looked like a different lake!** Because trolling had produced no fish, it was decided to **look over each potential spot and then cast a blade bait**, a very versatile jump lure. They can be **cranked over the shallows, jumped at medium speeds**, or **worked quite slowly with short hops** and pauses on the bottom. The better looking structures were cast, **both shallow and deep, from an anchored position**. Speeds were checked. **Only 2 rods were used to present lures on this day: a Buck Perry trolling rod with No-Bo line for trolling Spoonplugs, and a baitcasting rod with 20 pound braid to cast the ½ ounce bladebait**. Because a number of structures needed to be checked in a short period of time, **presentation was kept simple**. The **total picture** of the structures and potential of this lake were **not learned in this one trip**. I am anxious to return there in the future and do more investigation!

5 hours were spent on the lake that day. Satisfaction was derived from the **knowledge gained about the lakes' structures**. More surprising was that **a few decent fish were caught**, including a 4 ¼ pound Brown Trout. This is not a designated trout lake and I had not heard of any trout in it. Also caught were 3 largemouth bass, the largest going 18 inches and 4 pounds and the next about 3 pounds. I was **glad that I had explored and fished around the entire lake**, as **all but 1 small bass came from the same structure**. The fish were in the shallows, but only took a very slow speed on the cast, where they **picked up the lure off the bottom during a pause**.

Fall is a great time to explore and learn new lakes because there is little if any boat traffic. There are other ways to learn structure in a lake than were used here, but the goal is the same: to **be as thorough as possible and efficient with your time**. **A GPS is not essential in mapping a lake---Buck Perry designed the Spoonplug as a tool to do just that**, but the GPS may help you **gain the information in less time or with less effort**. If your goal is to improve your fishing skills so you can catch more and larger fish from all waters, then fishing and mapping more new lakes is the way to obtain that. **It may be that chances of success are better when fishing a new lake because you have no preconceptions of where or how you will catch them**. You will then be **forced to stick closer to Spoonplugging guidelines** to learn the structure and **present lures on purpose**.



4 pound bass caught on jump lure