

“TAKE A CHANCE---FISH A NEW LAKE!”



4 ½ pound Brown Trout, November 15, 2013

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 on which 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 casting 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 ¼ pound Largemouth Bass