



# THE SMALLMOUTH HORIZON

*Helping to Protect and Preserve Quality Smallmouth Bass Fishing*

February 2010

May I have your  
attention, please?



Due to a conflict between schedules, this month's Wisconsin Smallmouth Alliance meeting at the Maple Tree in McFarland has been moved to the 3rd Monday instead of our regular Tuesday.

That's Monday, February 15th at the usual 7:00 p.m. Todd Polacek will give us a little different take on smallmouth float trips. Detail are on the last page of the newsletter. I hope to see you all there.

Also note in the calendar section that we are already looking forward to our annual Trash & Treasure night coming up in April. This is not only our most important fund raising event of the year, but it's a heck of a lot of fun too.

## Kip Veith at Orvis

Kip Vieth, a long time trip donor and supporter of WSA, will be at Orvis (also a loyal supporter of our club) at 1700 Deming Way in Middleton on February 5th. Kip will be tying flies at 4:30 P.M. and giving a free seminar on float trips for Wisconsin smallmouth at 5:30 P.M. Stop by and take in Kip's seminar, and even better yet, book a trip in 2010. Bob Harrison and Mike Simon have for several years, and they say that you won't be disappointed!

Kip will also be at the Badger Fly Fishers' Spring Opener on Sat, Feb. 6<sup>th</sup>. For more information on the Orvis event, call Jack Way at (608) 831-3181

## Badger Fly Fishers will host annual Spring Opener

On Saturday, February 6<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 9:00 A.M., the Badger Fly Fishers will put on their annual fly fishing show and expo. This year's event returns to the Radisson hotel on Madison's west side.

Featured speakers are Pat Ehlers and Mike Mercer. There will also be fly tying demonstrations, commercial vendors, raffles, a lively auction and an evening banquet.

For more information visit [badgerflyfishers.org](http://badgerflyfishers.org)

# STICKWORMS

by Andy Davidson

I had left the house on Kawagasua at sunup and headed out to fish one of my favorite small lakes in Oneida County. I fished for three hours and caught seven or eight smallmouth, and then headed back to Mike's house to have a late breakfast. We ate a quick meal, and Mike decided that he wanted to go fishing.

The August day was promising to be hot and sunny with absolutely no clouds, so rather than going to a dark water lake (which would have been the sensible decision), we decided to go to another small, deep, clear water lake in Vilas County where we had success previously.

Knowing that conditions dictated fishing deep, we tied on Texas rigged tubes and started fishing the deep water. After half an hour of fruitless casting to the deep water, Mike saw a swirl near shore, and since we knew that the eight foot contour held numerous cribs, we decided to try fishing around the cribs.

I had another rod that was wacky rigged with a Yum Dinger and a split shot, Mike put on a smaller bullet weight with his tube, and we started fishing shallow over the cribs. As we moved along the north shore of the lake, I immediately started catching smallmouth on the Dinger. They were not huge, but I had never seen or caught a smallie of over 18 inches in this lake.

Soon, the score was four to zero with Mike being the zero, so he asked me where the Yum Dingers were. He couldn't see me smiling about the fact that he was not catching anything, so I ignored him until the score was ten to zero and he was now pretty irate and yelling at me. Finally, I relented and had him



*Andy with a muskie taken on a Yum Dinger*

switch, and second cast, he was into a 15 inch smallmouth.

We fished a total of four hours on that lake, and caught forty-seven smallmouth in locations where the fish should not have been on that sunny, August day.

What is the point of the above story? Simple – if you are not fishing with stickworms, you should give them a try.

The sticks were originally designed and marketed by Gary Yamamoto and sold under his brand name, "Senko". There are now numerous marketers of this type of bait, and some of the other name manufacturers are Yum Dinger, Black Magic (sold only by Gander Mountain), and Tiki Sticks.

The common denominator among all of these baits is that they are soft plastics, heavily impregnated with salt, and they have some type of integrated scent.

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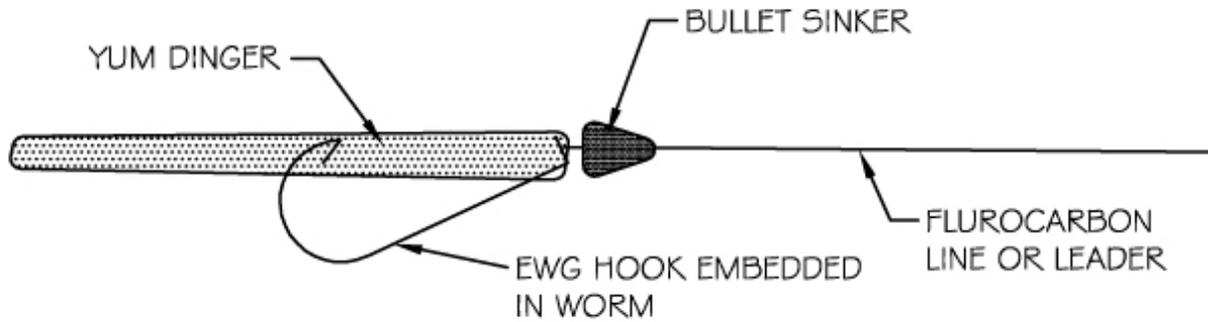
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Articles, photos, information, and calendar events for the newsletter are encouraged and should be submitted by the 1st day of the month to: Dan Johnson, 426 Glenway St. Madison, WI 53711. Word files sent to: [johnson7@tds.net](mailto:johnson7@tds.net) are most appreciated.



## TEXAS RIG

NOTE: THE BULLET SINKER MAY BE OMITTED OR REPLACED WITH A SPLIT SHOT FOR SLOWER SINK RATE

The real magic behind this style of soft plastic is the way that they behave in the water. The heavy amount of salt makes them heavier than most plastic baits, and thus they will slowly sink without added weight, and the undulating motion is something that bass have a difficult time resisting.

### FISHING TECHNIQUES

**Texas rig.** This is the method (along with split shot) that I use most often. Insert the point of an extra wide gap hook (EWG) ¼” into the nose of the worm, bring the hook back out and slide the worm over the eye of the hook. Rotate the hook 180 degrees and insert the point of the hook back into the worm. This method is virtually weedless. Usually, I fish this without any weight. Throw it out and let it hit bottom then retrieve it S L O W L Y.

**Wacky rig.** This is even a simpler method than the T-rig. Just insert the hook into the center of the worm and bring the hook back out. This is *not* a weedless presentation, but it is sometimes the most effective method. Fish the same as above. Because the salt makes these baits relatively fragile, you can slide an “O” ring to the center of the bait and run the hook under the ring and not penetrate the worm to make it last longer.

**Split shot.** Clamp a split shot 8 to 12 inches above methods 1 and 2 for a faster decent in the water column. Although it sinks relatively slowly, I have

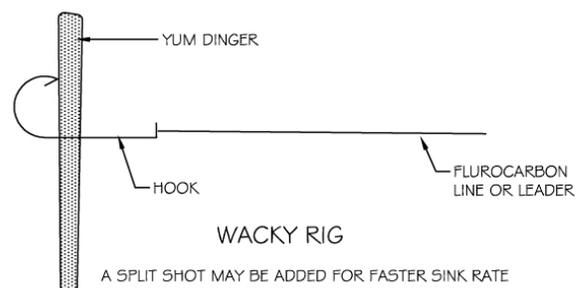
caught smallmouth in fifteen feet of water on Lake Mendota.

**Carolina rig.** Originally a deep water method for covering water quickly, the Carolina Rig can be used both deep and shallow. This method can be used by either nose hooking the bait or wacky rigging. The weights used are usually made of brass, and the glass and brass beads click when you move this combination. It is thought that this sound imitates the noise that crayfish make when they spat their pincers. This is a rather cumbersome combination to throw, and bites can be difficult to detect, but this can be an effective method for covering deep water quickly.

**Drop shot.** This method was originally developed in Japan (where the largemouth that tied the world record was recently caught) to fish the deep, rocky, clear water for pressured fish.

Drop shotting was refined in California where many of the lakes are deep, clear, and rocky. I find that this method is easier to cast and detect strikes, so I use it more than the Carolina Rig. This is usually

*The undulating motion is something that bass have a difficult time resisting*



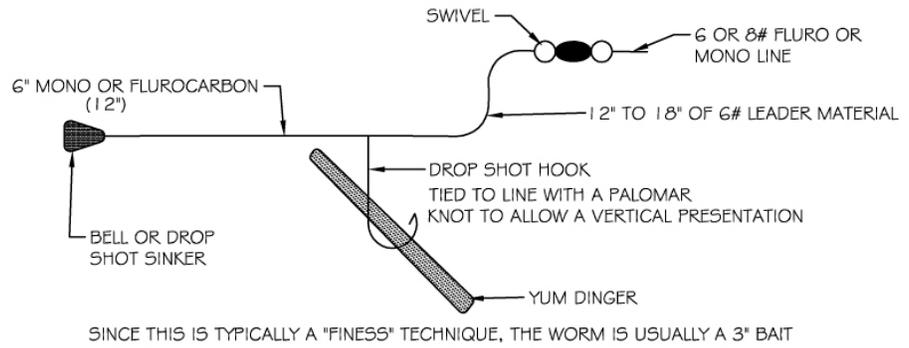
done on a spinning rod with 8 pound main line with the leader being 6 pound test. The Palomar knot is used so that the hook stands straight out from the leader and it is important that the hook point is up.

Because I am not great at tying the Palomar, I tie the hook in first, pull it tight, see which end of the line makes the hook point up and then tie this end to the swivel.

This is considered a finesse method and thus smaller (3") sticks or ribbon tail worms are usually nose hooked or wacky rigged.

Remember that these lures are quite fragile, and if a bass hits them hard, they will tear the lure. You can trim the 5" worm with a pair of scissors to make the torn 5" bait into a 3" bait.

DO NOT BITE THESE WITH YOUR TEETH, because some (most noticeably Tike Stick) have something that will irritate your mouth - just ask Rick Reese. I have described the above rigging methods for soft sticks, but any can be used with tubes, crayfish imitations, lizards, or worms.

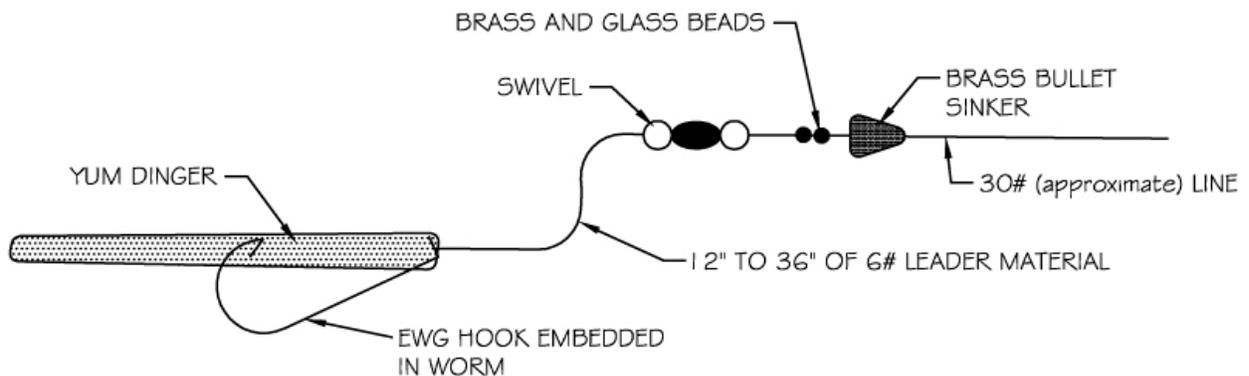


DROP SHOT

**COLORS**

The general rule for any lure is to use natural colors in clear water, and bright or dark colors in stained water. However, I have not found this to be an issue with a soft stick. If you ever make a trip to Florida, the only color that they recommend is junebug. I have had success with both natural colors and dark in any water clarity. Surprisingly, one that I have had very good success is bumblebee (yellow with black stripes). I would definitely start with the natural colors in clear water, and if you do not have success, go with a dark or brightly colored pattern. Starting out, I would have a supply of 5" baits in watermelon/red flake, smoke, bumble bee, and junebug.

Fish them shallow, fish them deep, fish them in weeds, or rocky bottoms. This is without a doubt, one of the most effective lures that I have ever used.



CAROLINA RIG

# Our Next Meeting:

**Note Change!  
Monday,  
February 15<sup>th</sup>**

## Todd Polacek:

**“(Not!) just another  
smallmouth fishing program”**

On **Monday**, February 15th, Todd Polacek will treat us to a different look at floating Wisconsin rivers for smallies.

Todd has been involved in water and fish his whole life both personally and professionally. He has a degree in Limnology & Fisheries from UW-Stevens Point and was a Fisheries Researcher at the USFWS (Fish and Wildlife Service).

Following agency work, he owned and operated a full-service independent fly shop, Madison Outfitters from 1997-2003 where he took the lead role planning, supervising guides and carrying out 100 annual bookings and coordinated and taught fly-casting courses and wing-shooting schools. A licensed and insured WI professional guide since 1996 and an Orvis-endorsed Guide and Outfitter (ELOG Program) from 1998-2001, he has fly fished all over the American West, NZ, Australia, Europe, Mexico, Belize, Costa Rica

Since 2003, he has worked at Applied Ecological Services, a leading ecological design and management firm working on conservation planning, great lakes restoration projects, wetland, prairie restorations and water resources conservation and restoration.

Todd currently guides over 20 trips a year and enjoys fly fishing smallmouth bass “Up North”, steelhead, trout on the spring creeks, and bluegills. He also enjoys saltwater flyfishing tarpon, snook, redfish, bonefish and roosterfish any chance he can get when not wingshooting in the fall.

# Upcoming Events:

**Saturday, February 6<sup>th</sup> 8:00 A.M**  
Radisson Hotel Madison

**BFF Spring Opener**  
Speakers, demonstrations, vendors and more

**Monday, February 15<sup>th</sup> 7:00 P.M**  
Mapletree Restaurant, McFarland

**WSA Monthly Meeting**  
Todd Polacek

**Monday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> 7:00 P.M**  
Mapletree Restaurant, McFarland

**BFF Monthly Meeting**  
Bill Engber and Jim Bartelt: Brule River steelhead

**Tuesday, March 16<sup>th</sup> 7:00 P.M**  
Mapletree Restaurant, McFarland

**WSA Monthly Meeting**  
Ron Barefield “Getting the most from side scan sonar”

**Tuesday, April 20<sup>th</sup> 7:00 P.M**  
Mapletree Restaurant, McFarland

**WSA Monthly Meeting**  
Trash & Treasure night!