



# THE SMALLMOUTH HORIZON

*Helping to Protect and Preserve Quality Smallmouth Bass Fishing*

June 2010

## Do lip-grippers damage fish?

By Steve Quinn

Anglers sometimes use lip-gripping devices to land fish, particularly those with toothy mouths, spines, or sharp gill flaps. Some models weigh the catch as it's held vertically. But after one study found that grippers caused damage to bonefish, researchers in Australia examined effects on barramundi, a large and popular sportfish with heavy jaw bones and thin tissues, as well as spines on their gill flaps and fins. Moreover, they live in crocodile country where anglers must be cautious about reaching into the water or holding fish boatside.

Fishery researchers in Australia's Northern Territory simulated angling catches using captive barramundi, chasing fish in enclosures before either lip-gripping an, holding them vertically for 20 seconds; placing lip-grippers in the lower jaw and supporting the fish with the other hand in a horizontal hold; or securing it with a flat-bottom net. Fish were then returned to tanks to resume feeding.

They inspected barramundi for jaw damage and some also were X-rayed to check for internal injuries. While lifting fish with lip-grips caused no mortality, external and internal injuries resulted. All fish lifted with the device had holes in the lower jaw and 81 percent of those lifted with horizontal support also had holes.



Fish resumed feeding and wounds generally healed after several weeks, though the researchers noted that feeding by wild fish could be compromised. X-rays showed that vertebrae in the fish's neck were stretched by use of the lip-grip and bones remained out of place for 3 weeks, the duration of, observations. Fish lifted with the grippers only, without additional and support, had more severe damage.

These results, as well as those for bonefish suggest that anglers not use grippers indiscriminately. While other species remain to be tested, similar damage seems likely. Where necessary, supporting a lip-gripped fish reduces injuries.

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# THESE LADIES CAN FISH!

*Left: Nancy Winters shows one of the four big white bass (along with two yellow bass) that she took in just an hour after school in April.*

*Below: Linda Rock lets Michael in the photo with her smallie. They were guided by Ron Barefield on an outing that they bought at our recent Trash & Treasure auction.*



*Gene Knutson, left, and Dan Johnson released over 50 smallies in less that one mile of river on an extremely windy, pre-spawn day in early May. Gene's was one of two 20 inchers he took on a popper. You may notice the tag in Dan's fish. It was too algae-covered to read and was left in the fish.*

## Regular meetings will resume in September

Anyone interested in organizing a summer outing should e-mail Steve Winters, [swinters@jvl.net](mailto:swinters@jvl.net) to discuss.

## The FPR wants to buy you a drink

The Friends of the Platte River will hold their annual meeting at 6:00 p.m. on the 17th of this month at Uno's Loft in Platteville. Drinks and appetizers will be provided.

For more information visit: <http://platteriverfriends.org/spring2010.pdf>

## October speaker set

On our October 19th meeting, Mike Jacobs will present a program titled, "Smallmouth Fishing in Fayette County, Iowa". Mike reports that Fayette County has a large number of rivers and streams full of smallmouth bass. He will show where the best fishing can be found, as well as recommend places to eat and stay.

Mike has given us entertaining and informative programs in the past on the smallmouth fisheries in our neighboring state.

### Wisconsin Smallmouth Alliance Ltd.

2701 Gust Road  
Verona, WI 53593  
(608) 843-3770  
[wisconsin-smallmouth.com](http://wisconsin-smallmouth.com)

Steve Winters President (608) 524-6348 <a href="mailto:swinters@jvl.net">swinters@jvl.net</a>	John Pritchard Vice President (608) 877-0344 <a href="mailto:john_pritchard@sbcglobal.net">john_pritchard@sbcglobal.net</a>	Mike Simon Treas./Membership (608) 848-3770 <a href="mailto:madisonmike@tds.net">madisonmike@tds.net</a>	Gerry Zingg Secretary (608) 233-7348 <a href="mailto:zingger@charter.net">zingger@charter.net</a>	Jerry Pasdo Board (608) 233-7348 <a href="mailto:pasdo@execpc.com">pasdo@execpc.com</a>
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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.