



# THE SMALLMOUTH HORIZON

*Helping to Protect and Preserve Quality Smallmouth Bass Fishing*

February 2011

## Smallmouth Bass Safari: South African Angling Adventure

by Tim Holschlag

*Tim Holschlag, the author of River Smallmouth Fishing, has gone fishing again, this time in South Africa for smallmouth bass! South Africa is about the only place outside of North America that has smallmouth, and Tim will fish wherever smallies swim. He spent three weeks in South Africa during November, on a fishing tour across the country.*

I'll bet you didn't know there were smallies in Africa. I didn't either until a couple of years ago, when two brothers from South Africa started writing to me saying they were also hard-core smallmouth fans. They invited me over to fish with them, and over the next 18 months kept sending me South African photos of big smallies and beautiful streams. Finally, I decided this was just too good to pass up.

So for a little over three weeks this November I fished and travelled across South Africa, where the seasons are reversed, they drive on the wrong side of the road, and smallmouth bass have been established for nearly 70 years. And boy, what a fishing adventure it was. I didn't just limit myself to the local bronzebacks. In fact, I caught 11 different species in all types of terrain, saw some amazing streams and fished with some outstanding anglers. Here are a few highlights of the trip:

### Hunting Desert Bronze

We're blasting a steady 70 miles per hour down a dirt road, and we haven't seen another vehicle for 40 miles. It's the Karo region - absolute desert as far as the eye can see, but the Afrikaans painted on a big truck tire on the side of the road says, "Die Mond" with an arrow pointing into more dessert.

For the next 3 miles we bounce over a rough dirt trail, opening and shutting 4 different gates. Finally, a cluster of small building among a few trees. This is the Die Mond camp and farm, popular with weekenders. It has six spartan cabins on a tiny lake and is our base for the next several days. Exotic bird calls and free-ranging piglets behind the cabin wake me next morning, but my fishing pals are already up.



*Tim holding some High Desert Bronze*

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We quickly dunk “rusks” (sort of rock-hard biscuits) into coffee laden with milk and sugar, and pack our gear for a big day hunting dessert bronzebacks.

Two small rivers, the Groot and Doring, merge a few miles from our camp and they are our destination today. The streams snake through the sparse desert landscape with just 15 foot-wide strips of green foliage along their banks.

Streams are nearly crystal-clear and surprisingly cool, despite the intense desert sun beating down on us. Recent rains up in the mountains have dramatically cooled the water and this doesn't bode well for us. Instead of the smallies fighting for our baits, we have to fight for every strike. Thoroughly working each high-percentage head-of-pool area, we slowly pick off nice fish up to 16 inches.

Then it happens. I can see almost the entire bottom and this head-of-pool appears fishless. But I know how hunkered-down fish can vanish. I'm working my weighted fly against the flow when a strike nearly makes me lose my rod. It doesn't jump, rather races downstream as I worry I can't stop it.

My fishing mates think it's a large species of piscivorous yellowfish, but I'm not sure. Now the fish is heading up river along the far bank and nearly in the overhanging brush. I apply maximum pressure to my 8 lb. test leader and barely keep the fish out of the brush, and now it finally jumps, so we see it - a huge smallie. The hardest-fighting smallmouth bass of my entire year finally comes to hand, and I excitedly lift a fat 20-plus incher above this exotic landscape.

## Canyon Country Day

Now it's the big time. Other days were just warm-ups. Upstream, the Groot River cuts its way through a deep, rocky canyon. Few anglers are hardy or foolish enough to venture far into this remote boulder-strewn gash in the dessert. We slowly pick our way along the top of the canyon then inch our way down a dry wash to the canyon floor and a drinking-water-clear stream.

Very rocky, the stream is an endless series of long pools and short rapids. Smallies aren't huge in this



*A beautiful view from our day in Canyon Country*

environment, where in the dry years the stream quits flowing. Nevertheless, plenty of them manage to survive in this harsh land thousands of miles from their ancestral home. Bizarrely, some other American transplants have also found their way to this remote waterway. We also catch several fat spotted bass and quite a few chunky bluegills.

Before we have to climb out of the canyon ahead of the setting sun, Conrad, Herman and I land over 80 smallies and nearly two dozen bluegills and spotted bass. Most bronze boys were less than 15 inches, but a few were bigger and a couple we lost - well, you know how huge those that get away are.

And yes, we did drink the water (delicious) saw the tracks of wild burros, lots of baboon sign (they like to poop on big boulders) and a strange woodchuck-like critter that jumps through rocks like a mountain goat.

Certainly, there are streams in South Africa with bigger smallmouth bass' and ones with more of them, but canyon country fishing is truly amazing. It's a near-wilderness, starkly beautiful, seldom fished, and an experience I'll remember forever.

*For more about smallmouth fishing and to see a slide show of the trip, visit Tim's website: [smallmouthangler.com](http://smallmouthangler.com)*

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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.

## Citizens asked to help protect Wisconsin River from aquatic invasive species

Asian carp, VHS, and zebra mussels are some of the aquatic invasive species that pose a significant threat to the fisheries of the Lower Wisconsin basin.

Matt Kruger, who heads the River alliance of Wisconsin's River restoration program has announced two meetings to organize user groups and individuals to help in the fight against AIS in this popular fishery.

These community meetings will be held on Thursday, March 10 at 6:30 p.m. at the Kratochwill Building in Muscoda, and Monday, March 14 at 6:00 p.m. at the Spring Green Public Library.

Don Golembiewski will be attending the Spring Green meeting on behalf of our club.

Matt will also be the speaker at the Badger Fly Fishers' February meeting.

For more information, contact [mkrueger@wisconsinrivers.org](mailto:mkrueger@wisconsinrivers.org)

## Badger Fly Fishers

An Active Member Club of the Federation of Fly Fishers

### Spring 2011 FLY FISHING OPENER



**RADISSON HOTEL**  
517 GRAND CANYON DRIVE • MADISON, WI  
February 12, 2011

- ◆ Featured Speakers: **Gary Borger** and **Bill Sherer**
- ◆ Fly tying demonstrations
- ◆ Commercial exhibitors
- ◆ Raffles, prizes, and a lively auction

## Dubuque Fly Fishers to host smallmouth programs

On Saturday, March 12. Tim Landwehr, owner of Tight Lines Fly Fishing in DePere will be giving two programs for the Dubuque Fly Fishers. Tim will present "Fly Fishing for Trophy Smallmouth Bass" and "Wonders of Wisconsin Fly Fishing."

He will also show a short film made by Beattie Outdoor Productions on our fisheries. Tim will have his fly boxes along to further discuss his techniques.

Tightline guide Nate Sipple will also participate.

The event begins at 9:30 a.m. and will be held at the Swiss Valley Nature Center, 13606 Swiss Valley Road, Peosta, Iowa. For a map and more information visit [dubuqueflyfishers.org](http://dubuqueflyfishers.org)

If you plan to attend, Don Cox requests an R.S.V.P. at [nodcox@yousq.net](mailto:nodcox@yousq.net)

## 80,000 competed in Wisconsin fishing tournaments

Eighty-thousand anglers competed in 595 fishing tournaments in Wisconsin in 2010 and reeled in \$3.9 million in prize money, according to statistics from the state's fishing tournament permit system.

Of the 595 approved tournaments, 61 percent were so-called traditional tournaments. A traditional fishing tournament is one that was issued permits 4 out of 5 years between 2004 and 2008 for the same water or waters and time period.

61 percent of the tournaments were catch, hold and release.

Fully one-quarter of the tournaments were ice fishing tournaments.

Tournaments took place in 64 counties; Winnebago County was tops with 37, followed by Oneida County with 32 and Waukesha County with 30.

Anglers spent 1.4 million hours fishing in tournaments, down from 1.67 million in 2009.

The number of fish registered in bass and walleye tournaments decreased with the decrease in tournaments from last year, however registered catch of Great Lakes salmon and trout, panfish, and musky all increased.

Bass were the target of 421 of the tournaments in 2010, followed by panfish at 324 tournaments and walleye at 204.

99 percent of the musky caught in tournaments were released and 98 percent of the bass were released.

[DNR fishing tournaments page](#)

# Our Next Meeting:

**Tuesday,  
February 15<sup>th</sup>**

## Ron Barefield on Gadgets and Gear



Photo by [Gary Engberg](#)

*Ron will be showing us the new G Loomis NRX rods and give a powerpoint presentation on Humminbird sidescan sonar.*

*Ron will also discuss the spring bite on Lake Mendota and what to use.*

# Upcoming Events

**Saturday, February 12<sup>th</sup> 8:00 a.m.**  
Radisson Hotel, Madison, Wisconsin

### **BFF Spring Opener**

Gary Borger, Bill Sherer speakers  
Fly tying, exhibits, raffles, auction  
<http://www.badgerflyfishers.org/>

**Tuesday, February 15<sup>th</sup> 7:00 p.m.**  
Mapletree Restaurant, McFarland

### **WSA Monthly Meeting**

Ron Barefield - "Gadgets and Gear"

**Monday, February 28<sup>th</sup> 7:00 p.m.**  
Mapletree Restaurant, McFarland

### **BFF Monthly Meeting**

Matt Krueger of the River Alliance of Wisconsin  
on the Lower Wisconsin River Basin  
Aquatic Invasive Species Project

**March 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> 9:00 a.m.**  
Woodstock, Illinois

### **Great Outdoor Expo**

[greatoutdoorsexpo.net](http://greatoutdoorsexpo.net)

**Saturday, March 12<sup>th</sup> 9:30 a.m.**  
Dubuque, Iowa

### **Dubuque Fly Fishers Smallmouth program**

See announcement in this issue

**Wednesday, March 30<sup>th</sup> 6:30 p.m.**  
Thunder Bay Grille, Waukesha

### **Smallie Night Out**

Contact [wschultz@mcw.edu](mailto:wschultz@mcw.edu)

**Saturday, April 16<sup>th</sup> 10:00 a.m.**  
Grantsburg, Wisconsin

### **Great North Fly Expo**

[45degreesnorth@grantsburgtelcom.net](mailto:45degreesnorth@grantsburgtelcom.net)

**Wisconsin Smallmouth Alliance meetings are normally held on the third Tuesday of each month. The Badger Fly Fishers meet on the fourth Monday.**