



THE SMALLMOUTH HORIZON

Helping to Protect and Preserve Quality Smallmouth Bass Fishing

May 2011

Neither rain, nor sleet, nor snow, nor...

By Mike Simon

Despite a late spring rain, snow, sleet event that created some hazardous driving conditions, we were still able to hold our annual fundraiser. Thought was given to canceling, but without ways to contact everyone, and varying conditions from the north to south in the state, we forged ahead.

Attendance was about half of past auctions, but the group made up for it in spirit! The trips and fly boxes were very well received, as were the selections of both fly and spinning rods. Items like Dan's hand-made Bass plugs, Kathy's baked goods, and the \$50 per pint bid for the maple syrup, sure added to the totals.

In one and a half hours, the amazing group assembled on this evening had amassed a total of \$4,142 – a most incredible total from only 28 bidders. One of our members commented after the auction, that he attends a number of fundraisers, but no where in the years he's attended has he seen such a generous group of people as those at our auctions. I don't think anyone will disagree.



At the end of the evening, we did have a few boxes of flies, a couple fly lines, and rod and reel combo, as well as a spinning reel remaining. That, coupled with a few people who weren't able to bring their items to the auction, leaves us with a great opportunity for a silent auction to be held in conjunction with our September meeting. Gerry Zingg will be taking pictures of the items for our website and an upcoming newsletter. This event should really spice up the opening night of our meeting season. Any items unsold will be carried over to next year's fundraiser.

As auction chairman and on behalf of the club, many thank-you's are due. On that stormy night, first and foremost to the attendees, without your generosity and support, none of this would have been possible.

To Bob Harrison, our auctioneer who kept things moving and people laughing. To Kathy, for handling all the printed materials and accounting for the auction. To the board members, for their help in organization, solicitation of items, etc.

And finally, to the many donors both members and businesses, and our generous guides, who every year are our biggest donors: **Thank You!** Please take the time to book a trip with these great people and also patronize the many businesses who give us so much support.

Early season bass fishing: A northwoods gem

by Tom Dietz

My favorite bass species is the Smallmouth - hands down! Their fighting ability is outstanding, often highlighted by frequent jumps and powerful downward pulls during the battle.

Let's take a look at location and presentation for May and June Smallies. Our fishing opener here in Northern Wisconsin is always the first weekend in May. Bass season is open at this time, but it is strictly catch and release only until the third week of June.

These regulations are designed to protect the spawning females from over harvest by anglers. We are blessed with an abundance of quality trophy Smallmouth lakes to choose from in a relatively small area. Let's take a look at tactics and location of Smallmouth Bass for the May opener.

When opening day arrives, most lakes are usually in the mid-fifties for water temperature. This is a little cool for the bass to migrate in heavily to shoreline areas yet. My best tactic for these per-spawn fish is to fish just outside known spawning haunts and cast rattle baits such as Rattle Traps, Rattlin' Raps, and other deeper running crankbaits.

I key on depths of six to ten feet of water. These pre-spawn fish often travel in large schools as they stage in these mid-depth areas before the water temps climb to the sixties. Work these deeper hard bottom edge areas with slowly retrieved crankbaits, as you strive to locate the most active fish.

When a school of fish is located and you have caught three or four fish on cranks, switch rods and grab a 3 inch natural colored tube and cast that into



the school for the more neutral bass that passed up the crankbait. This one-two punch is dynamite for pre-spawn bass on opening weekend with a normal ice-out.

As spring progresses, the water temperatures in the shallows begin to heat up with the increased daylight and air temperatures. This solar heating effect draws the bass into the shallows like a magnet. Remember that the mid-day hours are tops this time of year rather than the early and late periods in the day.

Why? Because all fish species are positively affected by solar warmth. Their metabolism is increased, causing them to be a lot more active. This is why, if your schedule permits, you should concentrate on the middle of the day as much as possible. Now, favorite shallow water locations for Smallmouths include sand, gravel, or a mix of both. The key is hard

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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 are most appreciated.

bottom. They prefer to build their nests on these firmer bottom types. If there are any fallen logs or concrete blocks or similar structure mixed in, then you have the ideal habitat to locate these shallow water fish.

I typically scout out these areas with a combination of my polarized sunglasses (which are critical to your success, I might add) and speed lures such as shallow running crank baits or spinner baits.

I am always fishing clear water, which is typical of the best Smallmouth lakes in the area, so I can always tell when the shallow fish are present. I prefer Northland Reed Runner spinner baits, especially with tandem Colorado blades, in colors like chartreuse and white, with gold blades, all chartreuse, or white with silver blades. Preferred cranks include shallow running Shad Raps, or Rattlin' Rogues.

If you pick off some active fish in these areas, then once again come back through with tubes in pumpkin pepper, watermelon, or smoke colors and you will catch a lot more fish. I once again want to stress the importance of using the right size tube here.

I prefer and use a three-inch tube rather than the typical Largemouth tubes that are fatter and usually four inches long. The Smallmouths really show a preference for these smaller, finesse type lures. My favorite tube is made by Joe Bucher Tackle, and is called the Pro Finesse Tube (I helped design it when I worked for Bucher Tackle Co.).

The colors and size of these tubes are simply deadly here in the Eagle River area. Other lures that are good for shallow Smallmouths are three-inch reapers and curly tail grubs on a 1/16th or 1/8th ounce black jig head. Colors for these offerings include chartreuse, smoke with red flake, black, and pumpkin pepper.

These type of lures are more finesse in nature, and work great on pressured fish, during cold fronts, or after you have caught a bunch of aggressive bass on spinner baits or cranks.

Tom Dietz is the Store Manager of the Baxter Minnesota Gander Mountain store, and resides in Baxter, Brainerd, Area Minnesota. He guides for muskies professionally in Minnesota and frequently fishes muskies in the PMTT Tournament Circuit each year. He gives seminars and writes articles on a regular basis. Tom is originally from Wisconsin, a multi species angler since 1988.

Thanks to Tom for his kind permission to reprint this excerpt. You can read the entire article and others on his website: [Tom Dietz Outdoors](#).

The Fly Fishers fly shop makes donation to WSA

The Badger Fly Fishers and Wisconsin Smallmouth Alliance were recently invited by fly shop owner, Pat Ehlers, to exhibit at his fly shop's annual spring open house. The event was held on Saturday, April 9th. Pat has owned and operated [The Fly Fishers](#) fly shop, located at 9617 W. Greenfield Ave, Milwaukee, WI, for over 20 years and offers anglers state of the art equipment as well as numerous opportunities for travel to fly fishing destinations around the world. The local Milwaukee TU chapter was also in attendance at this event as were numerous equipment representatives and fly tiers.

The event gave the three clubs an opportunity to network with each other and with the many anglers in

attendance. We also got to speak with industry reps about our conservation programs and to showcase our clubs to potential members. In addition, we were entertained throughout the day by an excellent blues guitarist and even one of Pat's fly fishing customers playing the bagpipes. You haven't really lived until you've heard, "When the Saints Go Marching In" on blues guitar and bagpipes!

Over the years, Pat has been a good friend to the Badger Fly Fishers and the Wisconsin Smallmouth Alliance and has generously donated to our fund raising events. This event was no exception with Pat selling raffle tickets for equipment his shop provided throughout the day and then donating the entire proceeds (\$870) to be split by the three clubs.

Next time you're in Pat's shop, please take a minute to thank him for his contributions over the years and for the important role he and all our shop owners play in our conservation efforts.

Tight Lines Anniversary and Open House-May 7th.

From Tim Landwehr

Saturday, May 7th, [Tight Lines](#) will be hosting a customer appreciation open house as a "thank you" to all who support our store. This will also be the official celebration of our ten year anniversary.

All things considered, we're pretty excited to hit the decade mark, so we have a bunch of fun things planned for the day. Our Sage and Rio representa-

tives will be joining us for the day to demo equipment and answer any rod or line questions you may have.

We will also be having a cookout and what is amounting to our largest sale EVER! This event will be free to attend and we encourage you to bring your friends. It promises to be a ton of fun, so stop by and help us celebrate ten years.

The shop opens at 9:00 am and we will be closing at 5:00 pm. Fun all day long!

Our Next Meeting:

Regular monthly meetings resume in September.

Upcoming Events:

Monday, May 23rd 7:00 p.m.
Mapletree Restaurant, McFarland

BFF Monthly Meeting
See badgerflyfishers.org

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

Both groups meet at the Mapletree Restaurant on Highway 51, in McFarland, Wisconsin. Programs begin at 7:00 p.m., dinner at 6:00 p.m.

Visitors and guests are always welcome.