



THE SMALLMOUTH HORIZON

Helping to Protect and Preserve Quality Smallmouth Bass Fishing

December 2011

**Join us Monday, December 12th
for our holiday banquet
Details on back page.**

Crankbaits - Top to Bottom

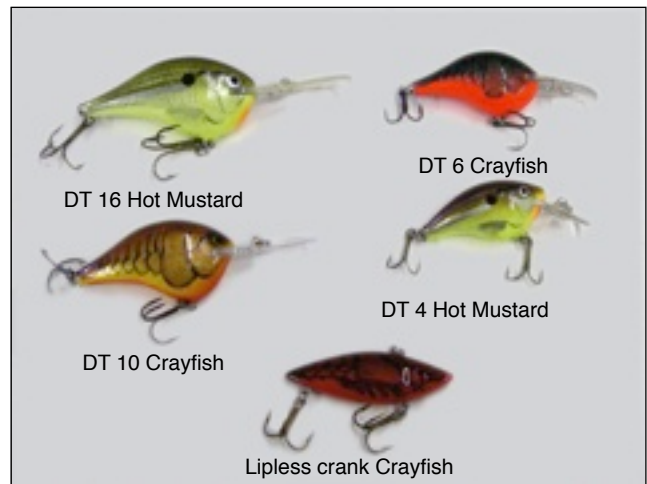
By Andy Davidson

Crankbait fishing can be an extremely effective method for catching all species of fish, especially smallmouth bass. At the season opener, the water is still cold, and fishing slow moving lures (suspending jerkbaits or jig-and-pig) other than cranks is the way to go. The major advantage to fishing cranks is that you can vary the depth of the lure by the lure's design, shape and angle of lip.

During pre-spawn, the fish are shallow, after spawn the fish move out to deeper water of the area where they have spawned. Summer into early fall, the fish will be deep and sometimes just above the thermocline. Again in fall, the predators will move back into shallow water to feed on baitfish and young-of-year fish.

The series of cranks shown in the attached photo are the Rapala DT (Dives To) series. Some of the other major lure manufacturers also have lures which run at different depths, but the DT tells you what depth that they will achieve on a long cast. The different depths allow you to follow the fish as they go from shallow to deep to shallow again throughout the fishing season.,

Just before the spawn begins and when the water starts to warm is crankbait time. Crayfish start to get



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It's Time To Renew Your Membership!

Our membership year runs from January 1 through December 31. We rely on membership dues and our bucket raffles to fund our speakers and our newsletter. Now is the time to renew for the coming year! Please support the Smallmouth Alliance. You can renew at the next meeting, or use the form enclosed in this newsletter. Be sure to include your email address. Thank you for your continued support!

YES, I WANT TO RENEW MY MEMBERSHIP!

Individual \$20 Family \$25

Name _____ Phone _____
Street _____ email _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Make checks payable to: WSA

Mail to: Wisconsin Smallmouth Alliance, Ltd.
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Verona, WI 53593

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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.

active at about 48 degrees F, and this is also the time that baitfish will start to get active in the shallows.

Now, shallow running cranks may be one of the most productive times to fish these lures. In lakes with a crayfish population, I like to use a lipless crankbait or a DT4 in crayfish color. Note: I usually have a crayfish colored DT4 but a musky took my last one when I was on a trip to Oneida County last fall.

These lures and this color are effective over shallow flats all year long. Once the spawn starts, other lures may be more effective, so I put them aside until post spawn. After the spawn, the bass move off the bedding areas to deeper water, usually in the 12 to 15 foot depth, and here a DT10 or 16 will start producing, but remember that fish can be sluggish after the spawn.

Once summer patterns start, a deeper lure such as a DT16 or an even deeper running lure should be used. As waters begin to cool in the fall, ALL the predators will begin to move in shallow to feed on young of the year baitfish. Now as in the spring, use smaller lures shallow. Keep in mind that the young bluegill, perch, and bass are lighter in color than are

the adults of that species. When fishing over weeds and the lure ticks the weeds, RIP THE LURE HARD this will sometimes trigger a response from fish that are not currently in the feeding mode. Another effective method is to fish over a hard bottom (rocks, clay, gravel) consider fishing a lure that will dig into the substrate and kick up clouds of the bottom layer.

COLORS. The rule of thumb is to use natural colored lures in clear water lakes on bright days, brighter colored lures (such as fire tiger) in dark water or dark or overcast conditions. This does not always hold true, because I have caught bass and pike on fire tiger colored lures in bright conditions and in clear water such as the waters around Door County or the clear water lakes of Vilas and Oneida counties.

The colors shown in the attached photo can be very effective, and the HOT MUSTARD color is a good imitation of a smallmouth bass and is one of my favorite colors.. Other good colors are bluegill, perch, or cream bottom with light top to imitate an emerald shiner.

Try them out next season, and I think that you should have some success.

Club trip being planned for next year

A number of years ago our club did a spring trip to the Bittersweet Lakes Natural Area just east of Woodruff, Wisconsin. This area consists of four lakes: Prong (30 acres 50 feet deep), Bittersweet (104 acres 31 feet deep), Smith (43 acres 18 feet deep), and Oberlin (46 acres 25 feet deep). These lakes are primarily largemouth lakes with a catch and release regulation on all four.

Bittersweet also has a decent population of Northern Pike in addition to largemouth bass and all of the lakes have decent (sometimes quite large bluegill). Access to the lakes is by a walk-in trail about 3/8 mile long to the first lake, Prong, and your craft will have to be carried from the parking area to the lake. Six of us went on the trip last time. Mike Simon says he caught over 100 bass, and I was in fourth place with 49 largemouth. Most of the group stayed on Prong, but I did drag my float tube over the hump into Bittersweet where I had the lake totally to myself.

There are no houses or structures on any of these lakes, and the fishing can be terrific. Prong is the deepest and clearest of the lakes followed by Bitter-

sweet. Smith is fairly dark, and I have never made it to Oberlin.

Prior to the club trip, I had taken Steve and Nancy Winter there. Nancy prefers to fish bluegill with a fly rod, and as she cast to a bunch of lily pads, she immediately had on a large bluegill. As she brought the fish from the pads toward their canoe, the gill was slammed by a bass and the bluegill was toast. She tried this two more times with the same result. As soon as the panfish was away from the protective cover of the pads, a largemouth once again ate the bluegill.

I would be remiss if I did not say that there are a few other good lakes in the Oneida/Vilas county area (989 named lakes to be exact) some of which are excellent smallmouth lakes. Most require a boat or canoe to effectively fish them. Some of these excellent smallmouth lakes are Trout Lake, Two Sisters (Black) Lake, the Flambeau chain consisting of Crawling Stone, Little Crawling Stone, Fence, Flambeau, and Pokegama, Escanaba, and Shishebogama.

Accommodations are easily available from camping, to motels, resorts, and B&B's.

For the trip to be viable, I would like to get at least six persons that commit to going. I am fairly

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open to time of year, but I would suggest post spawn (the last week in June) or any time until the end of August. As far as boats, canoes, float tubes, or inflatable pontoons seem to be the most sensible options. If you need one, I do have an extra float tube.

Contact me, Andy Davidson if you are interested. My cell phone is (608)338-2639. I can also give you some information on other lakes in the Oneida/Vilas county area, but don't expect me to tell you my favorite small lakes!

Dear WSA members,

On August 22nd of this year, our club received a request from Steve Mortenson, supposedly a smallmouth guide on Lake Winnebago, to do a presentation to our club as one of our monthly programs. As a result of this request, I contacted Mr. Mortenson and we had a few e-mail exchanges as well as a couple of phone conversations concerning his proposal to speak to our club, and offer a member a free trip on Lake Winnebago, in exchange for a membership to our club.

As a result of that correspondence, we scheduled Mr. Mortenson as the speaker at our November 15 meeting. I called Mr. Mortenson around lunch time to make sure he was ready and would be at our meeting as scheduled. I was assured he would be at the meeting, and in fact planned to have dinner with us. I had, as is my usual habit, given him very specific directions via e-mail to the Maple Tree so that he would not get lost.

He never showed, and never called or e-mailed me an explanation of why he never showed.

We have a CD by Tim Holschlag as a backup program for these events, and we had the projector and program there, but no computer to run it on. For that oversight, I sincerely apologize to all who attended the meeting that evening, as we had no formal program as we had promised.

I especially apologize to those members who drove all the way from Milwaukee in order to get a better idea of the fishing opportunities Lake Winnebago has to offer. We will be making a concerted effort to find a reliable source on the fishing opportunities of Lake Winnebago for a program next year.

We certainly hope the members who took the time & trouble to attend on November 15th for such a program will be kind enough to do so again at that time.

Sincerely,
Steven Winters – President of WSA

Our Next Meeting:

Monday
December 12th

Wisconsin Smallmouth Alliance and Badger Fly Fishers Holiday Party

Please join us for an evening of holiday fun and fellowship at the Mapletree restaurant in McFarland. Bring your spouse or a friend too.

Arrive by 6:00 p.m. for cocktails, dinner will be served at 6:30. After dinner Walt Stevenson will present a slide presentation of Judy's and his safari to Tanzania.

Reservations are not necessary. Please bring cash (exact amount is appreciated) or a check for the club so that we can make a single payment to the Mapletree. Tip is not included.

It promises to be a great time with good cheer and good friends. It will be better, though, with you there too.



Upcoming Events:

Monday, December 12th
Mapletree Restaurant, McFarland

WSA/BFF Holiday Party

Tuesday, January 17th 7:00 p.m.
Mapletree Restaurant, McFarland

WSA Monthly Meeting Scot Stewart-Smallmouth numbers in various fisheries

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

BFF Monthly Meeting

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!