



THE SMALLMOUTH HORIZON

Helping to Protect and Preserve Quality Smallmouth Bass Fishing

July 2010



Fishing the Tiny Torpedo for smallmouth bass

The Tiny Torpedo is manufactured by Heddon Lures. It is part of the Torpedo family of lures that are available in three other sizes. This Heddon family of baits is shaped like a stubby cigar and has a metal propeller at the tail end that creates bubbles and spits water when retrieved properly. The weight of the Tiny Torpedo is 1/4 ounce which makes it a great bait for spinning tackle and some of the new finesse baitcast reels.

The Tiny Torpedo is also the idea size to entice a wide range of smallmouth bass, from the nice size 15 inch to the much sought after smallies in the 20 inch range. The bait is 1 7/8 inches long and can represent a variety of fish food such as a small frog, cicada, or even a baitfish scurrying across the top of the water. Bottom line: I've found this bait to be extremely versatile.

The color selection is also quite extensive. The Tiny Torpedo comes in 24 color patterns such as bass, frog, perch, and rainbow trout just to name a few. I'm not convinced that color makes a huge difference when using the torpedo but just in case, you'll have a lot of options here

Rods

Medium to medium light power rods are idea for top water baits in general. This is no different with the

When the bite's on top, this angler plays favorites

by Juan Veruete



Tiny Torpedo. The softer rod allows you to work the bait more effectively and helps you keep pressure on the fish once hooked so it will be less likely to throw the bait.

Rod length is critical. I prefer a 6'6" rod for a two reasons. First, it helps me make longer casts which is always a plus when you're pounding the banks with a top water lure, but want to keep your distance. Second, the longer rod helps me pick up more line

quicker on the hook set. When I'm fishing for river smallmouth, the current sometimes puts a little bow in my line and the longer rod and a sweeping hook set helps me get the hook into the fish quicker and more efficiently.

Reels

In general, I'm not hooked on a particular reel for this bait. I prefer a small baitcast reel specifically designed to throw light baits. I feel like a baitcast set up affords me more control over the bait on the retrieve. On the other hand, since the bait is only 1/4 ounce, spinning gear is an excellent choice. The most important thing is to use a rod/reel set up that you can accurately cast. I can't stress this enough. This bait is most effective when you cast it within inches of a rock bluff or bank. Accuracy is critical. Use what you are most comfortable with and can cast accurately. In the end, your success will be driven by bait placement more than any other factor.

Lines

I have to say up front that I'm a mono guy. I like monofilament line for the vast majority of my fishing. If your going to use monofilament line with this bait then I'd recommend 8 lb. test. You are going to hook up with some big smallmouth eventually, and this is a happy medium between lines that will leave you under prepared, and the thick stuff that will make it tougher to throw on your medium size spinning gear.

Braided line is also an option. The no stretch factor plus the incredible diameter to breaking strength can definitely be a plus when you're setting the hook on a fish of a lifetime. My preference would be 6/20 Power Pro braid. It has the diameter of 6 pound monofilament line but 20 lb. breaking strength. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to recognize the advantage you'll gain by using braid. Also, it has virtually no stretch so your hook sets will be more solid. You'd be surprised how much the stretch of monofilament effects your hook sets.

Fishing the Tiny Torpedo

When: Early morning and late afternoon are the best times to fish the bait during the dog days of summer. Of course, when you have overcast skies this can extend the top water bite to the mid-day hours. Fall is the time of year when the top water bite can last virtually all day. Smallmouth are feeding heavily pre-

paring for the long winter. They are voracious feeders in the fall and will readily chase surface baits at almost any time of the day.

Where: Steep rock bluffs that extend into a rivers edge or lake are an ideal spot to fish the Tiny Torpedo. Smallmouth are more willing to move up and down this type of vertical structure regardless of how deep the water is. Underwater drop-offs pressed against the bank, or within a few feet of the bank are ideas spots to toss the Tiny Torpedo. These are ambush points where smallmouth will be holding waiting for baitfish, crayfish, or an unsuspecting terrestrial to swim overhead.

A great rule of thumb for finding these two types of spots or situations in rivers, is to focus on the outside bend of a river or stream. You'll notice most often that the inside of the bend tends to be shallow with a gradual slope. The outside bend of a river or stream, on the other hand, tends to be deeper and many times will have cut into the bank materiel or rock formations creating steeper drops.

There are many other places to toss the Tiny Torpedo, like mid river channels, current breaks, and shallow water flats where smallmouth are chasing baitfish. I only mentioned the two above in detail because I see them as high percentage situations. These are where you'll have the best chance at getting bit most of the time.

How: Before we even get into the retrieve lets first talk about bait placement. This is critical. Lets assume that you found one of the two primary target situation I mentioned above. Now we need to make the cast. You basically want to put the bait as close to dry land as you can on the cast without getting snagged. You want to make it your goal to toss that bait right where the water meets the bank. 90 percent of your hits will come three or so feet from the bank. Typically, once my bait gets four or five feet from the bank, I'll reel it in and make another cast.

Now for the retrieve. The most important piece of advise I can give you here is to experiment. There are probably as many ways to retrieve the Tiny Torpedo as there are fisherman who toss it. What works one day or on one body of water may not work the next. For example, just this past week I've had to use three different strategies or retrieves to catch fish on two vary similar streams I fish.

The typical retrieve pattern that works most of the time is to first make a good cast. After the bait hits the water let it rest for several seconds until the rings it created dissipates. Now give the bait a series of 5 or so short pops using only wrist action (not your entire

arm). You want to attempt to pop the bait without having it move forward much. Maybe about a foot or less. Once you've done this, let the bait come to rest again and wait till the disturbance dissipates. Then repeat. The amount of time between resting the bait and moving the bait can vary. This is the trick. Sometimes the fish will hit the bait at rest. Other times they will whack it when it is moving. You just have to feel it out.

Now that I've explained the above lets look at another variation on this. Just the other day the fish would not hit my Torpedo when I did the above.

Through some trial and error, I eventually got the fish to hit. Instead of letting the bait rest immediately after the cast, I quickly started skittering the bait across the water as soon as it touch down. This quick retrieve really trigged some hard hitting strikes. It was what the fish wanted on that particular day.

Juan Veruete is a Pennsylvania angler and author who likes to pursue river smallmouth from a kayak. Visit his blog for more informative articles.

<http://www.centralpafishing.com/>

A response to last month's article on lip-grippers

I just read the newsletter and noticed the article, "Do Lip-Grippers Hurt Fish?" I want to add something to this. The article dealt with damage to the fish's lips and touched on the internal damage done to fish held with these devices.

I just cringe when I see pictures of fish, especially long bodied fish like pike and muskies being held by the lip and supported only by the device. Fish are supported by the water around them. The pressure of the water holds organs in place. As soon as fish are removed from water they weigh more than the fragile tissues holding their organs in place can support. Add the fact that these fish spin and thrash around, and a lot of internal damage is done to fish that are mishandled with these devices.

I have learned of these issues through the Alaska Fish and Game Department. I run fly fishing pike trips to Alaska every year to a lodge where my son Jared has been guiding for the last 5 years. I also carry a guide's license in Alaska and I guide on the trips I do there. In working there I have seen reports from an extremely thorough 5 year pike study that the Alaska Fish and Game has done.

One of the things they found in checking mortality rates from fishing in the study was the harm caused to pike handled with lip gripping devices. The damage came from hoisting fish out of the water by the lip and letting them hang to take pictures. Autopsies confirmed the damage on radio tagged fish that died. These autopsies showed the damage.

Please spread the word that if fish are going to be held with a lip device to at least support the body of the fish to avoid internal damage.

Pat Ehlers, Milwaukee



Ray Mirande with a Clark Lake smallmouth in Michigan's Sylvania Wilderness

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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.

Regular meetings will resume in September

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 pass on the smallmouth fisheries in our neighboring state.



Anyone interested in organizing a summer outing should e-mail Steve Winters, swinters@jvl.net to discuss.

