



THE SMALLMOUTH HORIZON

Helping to Protect and Preserve Quality Smallmouth Bass Fishing

July 2012



by Andy Davidson

What are soft baits? These range from stick baits (like the Senko or YumDinger) to flukes, worms, lizards, craws, paddle tails, tubes, frogs, and grubs. These all have their place in the tackle box, and I am going to discuss my favorites and how I fish them.

WORMS: The first soft plastic worm was “invented” by Nick Crème Sr. of Tyler, Texas in 1949. Since that time, plastic worms have probably caught more bass than any other lure made. There are many different styles and colors available and as most of the plastic baits, the Texas Rig is probably the most effective way to fish a worm. While worms have fallen out of favor somewhat due to the invention of other (and possibly more effective) soft baits, but it remains a very versatile lure that will still catch fish. Normally, worms are none hooked with an extra wide gap (EWG) hook with a bullet sinker ahead of the worm.

STICK BAITS: A number of years ago, Gary Yamamoto crafted highly salted and scented stick bait that he called the Senko. I must admit that after the first few times I fished this lure, it totally changed my

approach to bass fishing. The brand of stick that I usually put on now is either a YumDinger (made by Yum Baits) or a Black Magic sold by Gander Mountain. When these are nose hooked (or Texas rigged) the stick sinks slowly with a tail vibrating motion that is a real fish catcher and is virtually weedless. To increase the sink speed a split shot may be added 12” ahead of the hook. Another very effective method is to “wacky rig” the bait where the hook is placed through the center of the stick so that both ends vibrate as the stick descends. Wacky rigging is not nearly as weedless as the nose hook, but still comes through the weeds fairly easily. Fishing with either method is simple – cast it out, let it sink and S L O W L Y

retrieve or twitch it back to the boat. Colors to use are pretty simple – browns, greys, and shades of green are very effective. On occasion, electric blue can be the dynamite color.

This has become one of my favorite baits and is one that I always have rigged and ready on one of my rods. I have also hooked (but not always landed) musky on these lures. Interestingly enough, Joe Bucher wrote an article in the 2011 spring issue of *Musky Hunter Magazine* on fishing these sticks for early season musky. When Texas rigging, an extra wide gap (EWG) or a hook specifically made for plastic worms is used. When wacky rigging, a smaller hook is used and simply run through the center of the stick bait.

FLUKES: I was introduced to these by a friend who had been on a fishing trip to Lake Fork in Texas. He gave me a few flukes, and anxious to try them, I went to Crystal Lake in northwestern Dane County. It didn't take long until I started to catch some large-

Continued on next page

mouth. There were several other boats on the lake who were not having much luck, so one of those boats came over and asked what I was using. I said that normally I would tell him, but I assumed that it was just a fluke.

The one that I prefer is a white Zoom Super Fluke, and it has accounted for many bass and pike and musky love to eat them also. Throw them out, let them sink a bit, and retrieve with short flick of the rod tip and they will dart side to side and up and down. There is a hook slot in the bottom of the Zoom fluke that allows this lure to be fished weedless. Again, an EWG hook is a good choice.

CRAWS: It pays to think about the fact that in waters with crayfish present, craws provide a large percentage of their diet. Crayfish don't emerge from their winter dens until water temperatures reach 48 degrees. Most times, they are nocturnal living in rock crevices or thick weeds. The time that they are most available is shortly after becoming active and getting into their mating ritual. This does not mean that this is the only time to fish craws, because bass look for them all the time. There are several ways to fish this bait, but possibly the best method is to Texas rig the craw behind a slip sinker.

NEXT MONTH: Lizards, paddletails, tubes, grubs and Gulp Alive products.

Trip to the Bittersweet Lakes Natural Area

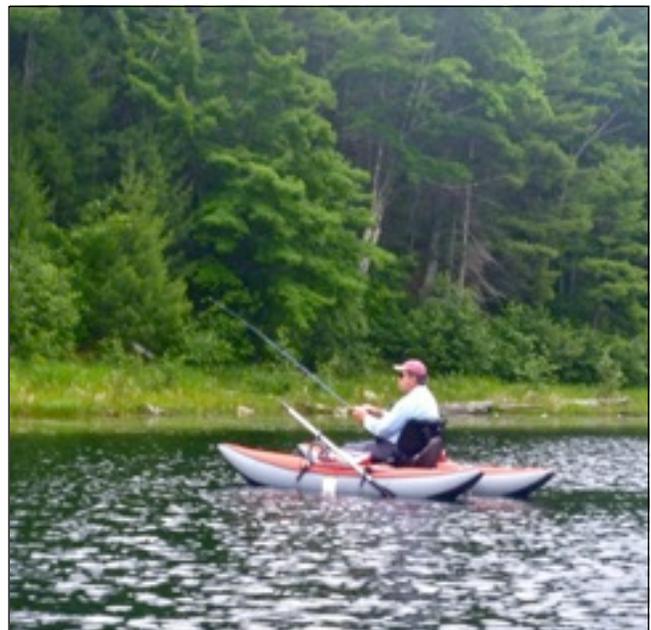
by Andy Davidson

It took a bit of planning, but the WSA Club trip to the Bittersweet Lakes on June 22 and 23 came off pretty well. Friday evening June 22, Jerry Pasdo, Dick Marx, Rick Reese, Bill Flaherty and Andy Davidson met for dinner at Otto's Restaurant in Minocqua, WI. Over beers and some pretty good food, we made plans to meet for breakfast the following morning at Ella's Restaurant located at the intersection of Highways 70 and 51 north of Woodruff, WI and 3.5 miles from the access to Bittersweet Lakes.

Saturday morning came overcast and with a light rain. After breakfast and coffee, we drove en masse to the gravel drive which is access to the lakes. Driving in about one quarter of a mile, we started to unload our watercraft and fishing gear. From where we parked the vehicles, it was still just about another quarter to three eighths of a mile to Prong Lake where we would start fishing.

Taking turns helping each other carry our boats to the lake, we pulled all to the water edge and slowly made our way into the water. The sky was still overcast, but no rain was falling. I think that all of us started out fishing a variety of lures, topwater, flukes, and jigs.

Jerry was the first to catch a bass fishing something near the bottom. Those of us fishing topwater lures struggled until we kept watching our club president landing one after another, finally switching to fishing deeper, but still with a variety of lures in order to catch the plentiful largemouth in the lake.



After about two hours and quite a few fish, the rain started. Unfortunately, some of us had left raincoats in the vehicles, so I headed back to grab raingear. Arriving back at the lake, I distributed the other coat to Rick Reese and began fishing again. The rain held on most of the day, but the resolve of the six bass fishermen seemed undaunted.

Eventually, some ventured across the short isthmus into Bittersweet Lake which is the largest of the four lakes. Starting at about 9:30 a.m. and fishing until about 8 p.m. The crew finally emerged from the woods tired and hungry. We all headed for The Burger Barn on Highway 51 and recounted the day. As close as we could tell, there were between 125 and 150 largemouth caught by the group. Even though everyone was tired, we all decided that we should do this again next year.

Another photo from the trip on next page



Photos by Dick Marx



WSA Friends,

I hope you have been able to get out and enjoy the Spring fishing as I have lately. I have both fished for myself and had a handful of guidetrip bookings. Smallmouth pre-spawn was inconsistent, but I was able to dial in large fish on bigger Enrico Puglisi patterns the past few trips. We did have some popper/diver fish earlier in May as well.

Muskies have been the usual bonus on the Upper Wisconsin, but one of the coolest things I have seen on the river was a massive march of hellgrammites (*Corydalus cornutus*)

on which the smallies were completely gorging themselves.

This phenomena is relatively infrequent, the predatory nymphs live under the rocks for 3-6 years and while doing water quality monitoring for years as a biologist, and during fisheries and limnology courses at UW Stevens Point, I have only seen a handful of them.

Memorial Day weekend there were thousands along the road, on their way to pupate and emerge to renew the cycle. Below is a photo of Mr. Nasty himself, one that drilled me on the end of the finger and drew blood. All for the sake of the photo!

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Articles, photos, 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. Send to: johnson7@tds.net, editor.

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Small mouth caught by Ken Koscik on a deer hair diver in Quetico Provincial Park, mid June, 2012

Our Next Meeting:

**Tuesday
September 18th**

**Send us your fishing
photos and stories!**

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!**