



May

2008

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Catfish for the table and trophies

Notes by Stan Nichols

Fillet a two to three pound channel catfish, sprinkle on some of chef Paul's (I didn't get the last name but I think it is BonHomme) blackened catfish seasoning, heat a cast iron skillet in a hot fire until it turns blue, drop in the fillets, sear on both sides, and enjoy. That is Brad Simm's favorite catfish recipe, and Brad loves catfish both to catch and to eat. Although the two to three pound fish are the eaters, the 40 plus pound flathead catfish are overlooked trophies. On a nationwide basis catfish are the third most popular fish pursued by anglers and by far the most highly exploited fish (i.e. the largest percentage of fish caught that are kept) at 70%.

Brad is an avid catfish angler and a D.N.R. fisheries biologist stationed in Dodgeville. He not only discussed how to catch catfish but also some of the biology and management implications for the state.

The gear for catching catfish is simple. An eight foot, medium heavy, fiberglass rod, a medium sized casting reel with a clicker, and 40 pound monofilament line will do for most conditions. You can go lighter for smaller channel cats or larger if you are targeting trophy flatheads. Fiberglass rods are flexible and durable, a clicker on the reel lets you know when you have a fish on, especially

at night, and monofilament line seems more durable than braided line when fishing for catfish. Fluorescent green line works well for night fishing. Brad says there is no need to use "massive" gear. It takes the fun out of fishing.

For terminal gear he uses 1.5 to 6 ounce, flat, slip sinkers and 8/0 to 10/0 Gamagatsu, octopus hooks. The size of the weight depends on the current and the depth you are fishing. The size of the hook depends on the size of the bait you use. Mustad, extra-fine, circle hooks also work well for channel catfish. String the sinker on the line, then a bead or piece of plastic tubing then a barrel swivel, a leader, and finally the hook when fishing for channel catfish. For flatheads he leaves the barrel swivel off so the weight can go down to the hook with the bead or tubing in between. With fewer knots and hardware on the flathead rig there is less chance for equipment failure. But there are many ways to catch catfish. For Lake Mendota Brad recommends suspending the bait under a float and fish along the weedline.

Catfish are both predators and scavengers so a variety of baits work. In Brad's experience dip-baits catch more fish but they are smaller. Cutbait or minnows catch fewer, but bigger fish. Minnow may be a misnomer because the minnows might be six to eight inch bullheads,

shad, sunfish, mooneyes, white bass, or sucker. The fresher the bait, the better. In some cases you have to match the hatch. Brad has caught catfish in the Pecatonica River that were stuffed with corn or nightcrawlers. He recommends raw, peeled shrimp for fall catfishing in Lake Mendota. V.H.S. regulations could be problematic for cat anglers because the bait has to be caught in the water you are fishing. What if you can't catch any bait?

The best location to fish for flatheads is a deep hole, next to wood. Channel catfish are most often found in deep channels. Deep is a relative term. Deep means it is deeper than surrounding areas. On the Mississippi River fish the wing dams and on Lake Mendota fish the weed edges. In rivers fish in flowing water and water flow is a big determiner of a good catfish bite. They bite best with stable or rising water. For instance sustained flows above 12000 cubic feet per second are good fishing conditions on the Lower Wisconsin River. Brad does much of his fishing at night, but catfish can be caught during the day.

Catfish are migratory. Those found in the Lower Wisconsin River all the way down to Muscoda winter below the Prairie du Sac dam. Those below Muscoda winter in the Mississippi River. Catfish are lethargic during the winter but when water

Continued next page

Catfish, Continued

temperatures reach the lower 50s they start moving back to summer locations. Fish tagged in the Pecatonica River showed up in Illinois.

Some of the local areas Brad recommended for catfish are The Lower Wisconsin River, the Pecatonica River, Yellowstone Lake, and Lake Mendota. The Lower Wisconsin may be the easiest to fish. It isn't as "overwhelming" as the Mississippi River and good locations are easier to find. The Mississippi River has a lot of good areas for catfish, but the area to fish is huge. It is best to select a small area and become real familiar with it. When fishing wing dams on the Mississippi fish both the upstream and downstream sides and from the shore to the tip. It is hard to predict where the fish will be located along the wing dam. Yellowstone Lake was heavily stocked with catfish, but they are about a year away from being a desirable size. Wait until next year to fish Yellowstone. Yellowstone Lake has abundant shore fishing opportunities. Both the east and west branches of the Pecatonica River have a good population of catfish but they can be hard to catch. They seem to have a very selective diet. The north shore of Lake Mendota including the Yahara River and Six Mile Creek inlets are good catfish locations. As mentioned previously, fish the weedlines. Kurt Welke mentioned

the rocky areas off Maple Bluff are a good fall location. Cherokee Marsh is also good. There seems to be fewer, but larger fish in Cherokee Marsh. If you want a different challenge try catfishing through the ice on Swan Lake. Once you get "hooked" on catfishing you can go to Keokuk, Iowa and try for blue catfish or the Winnipeg River in Manitoba for trophy flatheads and channel catfish.

Catfish are top predators and flatheads have the potential of being in the top five largest fish in the state. They can also grow to be very old. So do they need more protection to prevent them from being overexploited? -Probably. The two-three pound fish are the best eating so there is no need to keep a 40-pound fish for the table. Perhaps a maximum size limit on keepable fish is needed with a tag to keep one fish a year if you catch a trophy you want to keep. Presently the bag limit on catfish is ten in total and there is no closed season. Brad is trying to get DNR to form a catfish committee to take a more serious look at management issues related to catfish.

Besides contacting Brad, a few other resources you may want to use before catfishing are the downloadable navigation maps for the Mississippi River (www2.mvr.usace.army.mil/NIC2/mrcharts.cfm). You can also buy the complete book of navigation charts for the Mississippi from the Corps of Engineers. You can get flow data online from the U.S. Geological Survey (water.data.usgs.gov/wi/nwis/current?type=flow). Procats.com is an online subscription magazine.



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June 10th Meeting On the Water Lake Waubesa 6pm

This year I will lead the June outing on Waubesa, again with an emphasis on bass fishing techniques. I will review some of last years topics (flipping, pitching weeds and docks) and also talk about the Carolina Rig. Plan on meeting at the Babcock Launch site with the "seminar" starting at 6 pm at the pier next to the launch. The talk won't be long and then we'll head out on Waubesa. Any questions, email me at esox4me@hotmail.com

Eric Olson

Fishing Has No Boundaries - 2008

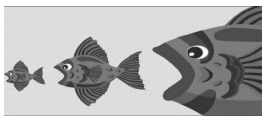
Fishing Has No Boundaries needs volunteers to help with the annual event held at Governor Nelson State Park on Lake Mendota. This year it will be held July 12th and 13th. Boats, especially Pontoon boats that can accommodate wheel chairs, fishing guides, and fishing assistance are needed. To pitch in call Dan Hartwig, 608-846-4098 for more information.



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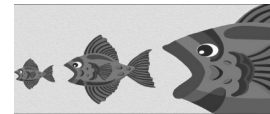


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See Muskies Moving Up Murphy Creek and Lake Wingra

Story and photo by Gary Engberg

Every year about this time or a little earlier some years, muskies will move from Lake Monona, which borders the Wisconsin capital of Madison, and make a mock spawning run up Murphy Creek from Lake Monona. They attempt to jump the waterfall going out of Lake Wingra which is connected to the creek. Though the spawning temperature for muskies is still weeks away, the muskies get active around the beginning of April when the water temperature is in the low 40's. Few fish make it over the waterfall from Lake Wingra, but the muskies will continue to try fueled by warmer temperatures and a shining sun.

The reason why muskies get active at this time is because the creeks and surrounding marsh water is warmer than the water in Lake Monona, according to DNR fisheries Technician, Scott Harpold. A degree or two in warmer water is a "big deal" to fish and that in combination with current flow from melting snow attracts the muskies early in the spring. Though, their spawning temperature is in the mid 50's the muskies are still attracted to the warmer water. This same behavior is shown by many fish in the spring when most species of fish seek out warmer water and if possible water with a flow and some current. Often, spawning by northern pike, walleyes, and muskies can overlap with some fish spawning at the same time.



Jumping Muskie

This is a great site and location to see some big muskies up close and personal. The Capital City Chapter of Muskies Inc. has helped make the grate in front of the water more fish friendly, so they don't injure themselves as they try to make the jump. Remember, that this is a fish refuge and fishing is prohibited. The activity continues for up to two weeks and is well worth seeing if in the Madison, Wisconsin area.

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Notes From the Prez

My son and I fished Mendota the day after the opener. The sun was actually out and we caught a few largemouths. My son, as usual, out fished me, but it was great to get out and even greater because I don't get many opportunities to fish with him.

Your Board of Directors is struggling with the club's financial situation. A lot of ideas have been thrown around and we even had a special meeting on this. When these ideas are thrown your way, stay on your toes. We should have a much better idea of the direction we want to go after the Board meeting on May 13.

Our May speaker will be a good one. Carl Kaufmann has a lot of experience and makes a real effort to keep things simple. I really believe you will enjoy what Carl has to say. I spent a considerable amount of time canoeing next to him and I had the opportunity to watch his boys grow up fishing the Boundary Waters and Quetico. I hope as many of you as possible come to the meeting and experience what Carl has to offer.

The outing so far this season are: June – Eric Olson on bass, July – Clay Russell on spoonplugging on Mendota and October – Larry Mothershead will lead for Northerns on Mendota. Anyone want to lead an outing somewhere else? If you do, please let me or one of the Board members know.

Another reminder that our Kids Fishing Day is June 7th. Our May 13 meeting will be the last time I have to remind people how important this event is to our club. There will be poster available for anyone to take and distribute to places in their communities where it will be visible. Everyone is expected to be there. The most help is needed from 7-9am that morning. Let's make this one the best we have ever had. If you need something to do over the Memorial Day weekend, I will be in my garage putting the rods and reels together. 350 combos takes a long time – how about a little help?

Your Board donated 12 rod/reel combinations left over from last year to a program I am helping with this summer to teach fishing to autistic students. Anyone want to help? It will be during the last week in July.

Those of you that have boats or even wade trout streams: It would be great for our sport if you could take someone fishing this summer. Hopefully, that person is someone who has never fished or hasn't fished in a long time. This is one small activity that will go a long way to help ensure that fishing will be around for many generations.

Right now I am limited to short evenings or weekends. Come June, I will be spending a great deal on time on the water in a

variety of places. I am thankful for my present fishing situation and the YFC is a big part of it. Buy a license, read the rule-book and conduct yourself with class when you are on the water.

Fishing Season Never Closes,
Duffy Kopf - Prez

Fish Talk

John Kanvik
Wednesday, April 16, 2008

2 of us fished from shore in the harbor at the fair grounds by the Hoan Bridge Tues. from 7-10 AM. 7 nice silvery browns from 3 to 10 lbs. 4 on plastic and 3 on spoons. Saw another 7 or 8 fish caught either in the harbor or river.

Kevin Tvedten / Mitch
April 16, 2008

Shore fished from 5-7 tonight. Fished the timber with slip bobbers. Caught 5 shorts and lost about 3. Caught a fat(11-12 pound) 28 3/4" walleye on a custom white/pink lindy rig with no blade. CPR'ed. Biggest one I've caught so far. But yes the fish are shallow in the timber.



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May Speaker - Carl Kaufmann

Carl Kaufmann has been fishing Wisconsin waters for the last 35 years and has concentrated most of his time on Lakes Geneva and Delavan plus frequent trips to the Winnebago System and the Mississippi River. Carl is a former President of Walleyes Unlimited, U.S.A., a past Club Champion, and is considered by many as one of the finest multi-species fishermen in the Midwest. Guiding and teaching his clients how to catch more and larger fish is a passion of his and he tries to pass that along to whomever gets into the boat with him.

Barbless rules in effect for catch-and-release bass seasons (WDNR)

Anglers gearing up for the May 3 opener of catch-and-release bass fishing season in the northern zone and on other waters with bass catch-and-release seasons should note a regulation change.

From May 3 through June 20, bass anglers in the northern zone or any other water body that has catch-and-release bass regulations are required to use artificial lures with barbless hooks only. That includes boundary waters and outlying waters and certain lakes in the southern zone.

The Wisconsin Legislature mandated the rule in the 2007-2009 budget bill adopted last fall.

The northern zone is the area north of highways 77, 64 and 29.

The Resurrection of Willie

I apparently haven't tried to buy any Willie Worms lately. It sounds like they were in short supply. Phil Emmling, a long-time YFC member and the purveyor of Willie Worms has brought them back. The main difference is you don't buy them in bulk anymore; they are packaged in plastic packets. A few hints from Phil when using Willie Worms: 1) use a light line, 6 pound monofilament or lighter, 2) when using a Willie under a bobber tie the line to the back of the eye so the bait hangs horizontally, 3) lift and drop the rod tip to increase fish catching appeal, 4) a 1/32 ounce jighead works best for panfish, and 5) contrast the color of the jighead and the Willie Worm.

Although Willies come in a variety of colors, Phil says you only need five colors: purple for bluegills, red for perch, and white, chartreuse or yellow for crappies. Black, pink, and chartreuse jigheads work well. When fishing a Willie under a bobber, place the weight close the bobber so the lure drops slowly. An advantage of using a Willie Worm is they are long enough that if the tail gets ripped, you can turn it around on the jig. If you need more information on Willie Worms you can send Phil an e-mail at littlekillerbaits@charter.net.

WILLY WORM 101

The April 8th meeting included a short infomercial on the history and use of Madison's own Original Willy Worm.

* 4# line works the best. The best jig head is 1/32 oz & #8 hook.

* When using the bait under a bobber, tug the knot to the back of the eye so the bait hangs horizontal.

* When FISHING under a bobber: cast, let ripples go away and jiggle, wait 10 seconds. If no bites, reel 10 feet, repeat sequence.

* When drifting or casting don't worry about the knot, but lift and drop the rod tip during retrieve or drift.

* All colors catch fish but purple=bluegills, red= perch, white or chartreuse= crappies.

* No Luck? Contact littlekillerbaits@charter.net

Phil and Janis Emmling

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05/08 Mike Pecosky Spring & Summer Muskies

05/15 Travis Richardson Cranking Lake Mendota

05/22 Joe Okada Walleye Trolling Tricks

05/29 Dave Berg Summer Panfish

For those of you new to this, we offer these FREE fishing clinics here at our store, given by local area fisherman, about our local waters. We are fortunate to have many local fisherman donate their time and talent to give these seminars, and to share their knowledge of the lakes. So stop by and hear what they have to say!

All Topics and Speakers Subject to change

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Except for special Summer "On the water" dates, meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month at the Lakeside VFW Hall, John Nolan Dr, & Lakeside St. in Madison.

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The next meeting is on **Tuesday, May 13th**, at the Lakeside VFW Hall (John Nolen Rr. & Lakeside St.)
The Board Of Directors meet at 6:15 pm, The **General Membership meeting starts at 7:30 pm.**

Speaker: Carl Kaufmann

May Events

Calendar of Upcoming Events

May 13th Monthly meeting @ 7:30 pm, Lakeside VFW Hall

Speaker: Carl Kaufmann

May 15-16 The Wisconsin Outdoor Education Expo

Dodge County Fairgrounds

June Events

June 7th Kids Fishing Day

June 10th Monthly meeting @ 6:00 PM On the water - Lake Waubesa

Organizer: Eric Olson. See article page 3.

The Yahara Fishing Club's doors are open to **EVERYONE**, so invite a friend to the meeting!

President - Larry Kopf.....849-7245

Vice President - Paul Marunich...219-4449

Secretary - Jim Zegers.....848-6299

Treasurer - Brad Czebotar838-9458

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Director - Jim Pankratz.....288-9789

Director - Bonnie Miller.....824-9792

Director - Jayne Meyer.....662-9374

Director - Rick Seeger.....849-3714

Editor - Tom Raschke.....233-6765

Fishing Expo - Jeff Western.....831-1092

Check out our web page at:
www.yaharafishingclub.org



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