



**M a y**  
**2015**

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Club Web site: <http://www.yaharafishingclub.org>

## Great Fishing on the Lower Wisconsin River

One of Wisconsin's most under-fished rivers is the Lower Wisconsin River (LWR), which flows from the cities of Sauk City and Prairie du Sac and runs 90 miles to its convergence with the Mississippi River at Prairie du Chien. The river offers some outstanding fishing and scenery for anyone who takes the time and energy to give it a try!

This is water that isn't made for big V hull walleye boats or even bass boats. The best boat for this river is a flat-bottomed Jon boat, smaller fishing boats, a canoe, or even a kayak. A twenty horsepower motor is more than sufficient for navigating this wide and relatively shallow river. Mercury Marine and most outboard manufactures also make jet engines that are ideal for "running" the river at a higher speed. The jets allow you to spend more time fishing than looking for obstructions to avoid. You'll find little water that is deeper than 10 feet in the LWR. But, water depth is a relative thing in this river. The stained water and constant current flow allow fish to live comfortably in shallower water with the oxygen content being the most important factor.

The Lower Wisconsin River is an anglers dream, but getting at the fish can be a difficult, hence the necessity of using a smaller boat which can handle the numerous obstructions and shallow water. Other necessities for fishing this river include; a bow or transom mounted trolling motor with plenty of thrust for going against the current, a LCD fish locator for depth, and a twenty-pound anchor or two for holding on structure and good fishing locations. The locator is more for seeing depth and underwater structure than seeing fish. Rarely will you mark or see fish on your locator in water this shallow. There is deeper water, over thirty feet deep in the scour hole, below the dam formed when the river is at high spring levels, but I'm concentrating on the many miles of river below the Prairie du Sac Dam.



**Jim S with a Wisconsin River Muskie**

The angler must learn to use their eyes to "read" the river for its breaks, back eddies, rock bars, islands, brush, and wood. This reading the river comes from time spent on the water and experience. Even fishermen who know the river well, bang up props. The water depth is controlled by Alliant Power at the river's last dam at Prairie du Sac. But, don't let me scare from fishing the Lower Wisconsin River because the fishing is well worth it!

The fish species that are present and in good numbers are; walleye, sauger, saugeye, northern pike, muskie, smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, channel catfish, flathead catfish, sturgeon, and all species of panfish. Plus, there's a good population of most species of roughfish, some which most people have never seen. On any given day, you could catch

*Continued next page*

8 to 10 different fish species in a matter of just a few hours. This is what makes fishing the Lower Wisconsin River so much fun because you never know what is pulling on the end of your line. All fish are from natural reproduction with no stocking of any species.

Fishing techniques can be as simple as you choose. Live bait fished off a three-way rig always catches fish as does most live bait rigging. Live bait also seems to catch more roughfish. Nightcrawlers, minnows, and leeches fished on a plain hook, a split shot, and a bead for attraction will catch about anything when floated along the bottom or casted and slowly retrieved.

Trolling with the current and against it will often be successful in the Wisconsin River. Lately, I've been catching my walleyes and saugers trolling against the current in 50 degree water. Try trolling at 1 to 2 miles per hour and going in an S pattern, so that you're crankbaits pick up speed and slow down as you troll and turn. This can often trigger fish into hitting your bait. The key to river trolling is to have your crankbait hit and bounce off the bottom be it sand or rocks and any underwater structure, often causing reaction strikes from the fish. Try using a little heavier line so that you're able to pull out of the numerous fish-holding snags. I've been using 10 pound Trilene in the green color that matches the stained color of the water. Be sure to use monofilament and not the "super lines" because you need some give in your line which a braid doesn't give you. Make sure that your lure is running true and bumping the bottom. Good cranks to use are Shad Raps, Mann's Minus 1's, Wally Divers, and Hot-N-Tots. Good river colors include; black/chrome, blue/chrome, shad, firetiger, perch, shad, and orange.

Casting crankbaits and plastic worms (blue, purple, and black) to shore and retrieved while floating or drifting down river can also be very effective. You'll catch everything from smallmouth to walleyes to pike. Also, cast spinner baits and billed crankbaits to shore and around logs, timber, and rocks. Muskies are making a big comeback, so always be ready for a big fish.

Walleyes must be 18 inches to keep, saugers 15 inches, northern pike 26 inches, small and largemouth bass 14 inches, and muskies 40 inches. The daily bag limit for walleyes, saugers, and saugeyes is 3 fish of any combination.

The key for success is fishing near any kind of structure which can break the current, which allows fish to wait while conserving energy, and then dart out and grab the bait or lure. The main kinds of structure to look for again are rocks, wood, sand bars, bridge abutments, humps, and islands. Another good thing about river fishing is that the fish are not affected by cold fronts, since river fish have to eat everyday to just maintain their body weight.

There are many quality boat landings in Sauk City, Arena, and Spring Green which are all along the Lower Wisconsin River. These towns also offer anything that you may need; motels, restaurants, and fishing bait and gear. You can also rent canoes for a combo float and fish trip at many canoe liveries. Most canoe rentals offer 1 day and overnight trips. The one thing that I've failed to mention is the beautiful scenery and abundant wildlife including; eagles, osprey, herons, cranes, beavers, and otters just to name a few of the things you'll see on the Wisconsin. Weekends have more traffic, but rarely will you ever feel crowded. Have fun fishing and floating!

Contacts; Wilderness Fish and Game, Sauk City, (608)-643-2433. They have everything that you'll need including bait.

Black Hawk River Runs, canoe rentals. (608)-643-6724.

Guides;

Wally Banfi, (608)-644-9823,  
Ron Barefield, (608)-838-8756, and  
Gary Engberg, (608)-795-4208.

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Do you have some extra cash lying around this spring from a tax refund? If not too bad. But if so Greg Fitch had some places at the April meeting where you could use it to keep the economy moving. Greg is the local electronics guru and a manufactures representative for Hummingbird, Minnkota, and Interstate Batteries.

First, if you need (or more likely want) a new trolling motor, you might look at the Minnkota Ulterra or Terrova. They have an indestructible composite shaft, a weedless wedge prop, and a digital maxmizer for longer battery life. The Ulterra has an auto stow and deploy and a power trim. Both have the ability for I-pilot or I-pilot links that allow for cruise control, copilot, spot-lock, record-a-track, and GPS technology. For me I might be able to buy a new canoe paddle with my tax refund if I go to Walmart.

For depth finders the latest technology from Hummingbird is 360 degree imaging. It is available on 800 series Hummingbirds and above. If my understanding is correct it images a 360-degree circle under the transducer. With the maximum diameter of the circle it can image a 1.6-acre area. I think this takes imaging one step up from down and side imaging. Its main feature is looking for structure.

The new electronics are Ethernet connected. So depth finder, trolling motors, GPS, and controllers can all be connected with an ethernet cable, the same way office computers can be connected. For instance you can have two depth finders, one in front of the boat and one in the rear, and you only need one transducer to image for both of them. They can communicate. It is very important to get software updates for all these electronics on a six-month basis.

Greg's advice for batteries is getting the best battery you can afford. Many times the difference between the best battery and an also-ran is \$20. For most applications you want a dual-purpose battery- a combination of a deep-cycle and a starting battery. Greg recommends charging all batteries on your boat at the same time. If you have the option, keep your batteries on a charger at all times. As soon as you unhook a charger, the battery is losing power. Make sure the area you are charging a battery is well ventilated. If you can't keep batteries on a charger all the time, put the battery on a 10-amp

charger for 24 hours. If you have a battery tester, a 12-volt reading is considered a dead battery.

Finally what Greg considers his most asked question and the most important part of his talk: How do you clean the screen on your depth finder? First go to Menards and buy a bottle of Windex Multisurface with vinegar- about \$3.00 a bottle. Lay the depth finder on its back and spray the screen with Windex. Lay a paper towel on the screen and spray the paper towel with Windex. Blot upwards; don't scrub with the paper towel. Lift the paper towel, squirt again, and wipe with a microfiber cloth.

Greg certainly is the person to talk to about electronics and sounds very accommodating. His evening and weekend phone number is (608) 575-7764, e-mail [grer@technologymarine.com](mailto:grer@technologymarine.com), and he has a website-Fishfinder911.

### Kids Fishing Day is Saturday June 6th.



Details to follow, but all YFC members are encouraged to be at Warner Park early to set up for the hundreds of kids that we serve.

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## YFC Outings

May: Big Bay de Noc smallies 5/22-25, 5/29/31

At the time moment we have 1 open spot left for the weekend of 5/22-25. We have plenty of opening for the 5/29-31 weekend and any time during the week. You won't want to miss this great opportunity to catch tons of big smallies. This dual club outing last year caught more than 1000 fish. This year we plan on hunting some walleyes also in the early morning and possible evenings. We currently have 30 club members going on this trip. There is still time to join us!

June/July/August

Would you like to go on a salmon charter fishing trip on Lake Michigan or a Lake Erie walleye charter? If you are interested in going please let me know. The outings will be through Iverson Sport fishing & Captain Hook Fishing Charters

Eagle Lake Canada July 18-25

We have a few club members going on this great Canadian adventure during this time but we have 3 resorts to choose from and you can go ANY time during the summer or fall. Contact me or pick up a brochure at our club meeting. Very affordable trips but they are filling up fast so don't wait!

All outings mentioned above are open to all club members and families. If you don't have a boat we will do everything we can to get you in one with another club member.

Jim Pankratz

Contact me at [jimannepan@aol.com](mailto:jimannepan@aol.com) or 608-709-6442



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## A Fish Story

OK, here's my TRUE fish story for the day. I was fishing off of my sister's dock in Random Lake this morning, casting a swim jig (got a small largemouth on it last night) and just occasionally turning my head to check on a slip bobber with a Berkley Gulp leech below it, on an ultralight, with the bait only a few feet from the neighbor's dock. Looked like little gills had been tugging on that every now and then, but those little gills weren't even big enough to actually get caught (which was fine with me). I noticed the bobber under water. Hmm. Well, this had been happening off and on all morning, and never a real fish to speak of, so who cares. I just continued my retrieve. Hmm -- still don't see that bobber. OK, maybe there really is a gill on there now, or a small bass. Fine, whatever, I'll check. In no particular hurry, I casually put down the casting rod to check and all of a sudden my ultralight goes flying off the pier. Holy s\*\*\*! It's in the water and sinking fast. Somehow I manage to BARELY grab the end of the rod before it gets down too far (good thing I have long arms). Fish still on? No. Heck, the Berkley Gulp 3-inch leech is even still there.

Especially weird, in that I always use circle hooks with rods I am not holding (almost never gut hook a fish that way), and normally with a circle hook, if it's hooked well enough to take the bobber under water and stay there like that, you usually have the fish hooked, and those hooks are hard to throw. But, this time, gone. Got the rod back, though (assuming the rig didn't get pulled out to sea by a big fish, that water was still damn cold, would have been an uncomfortable retrieval). Freaked -- me -- out. For another hour or so, got a few more nothing little nibbles on that rig, but whatever pulled it into the drink was gone.

First time I ever had a rig pulled into the water. Ultralight, granted, but the entire length of that rod was on the pier, and it was kind of up against a post to help secure it. I've caught some decent-sized bass on that rod with it just sitting there like that, and they have never come close to pulling it into the water. Happened in an instant, too. Musky? I don't know, I saw guys out in boats clearly casting for muskies that morning. Just another fishing mystery.

OK, just had to vent. John Pribek

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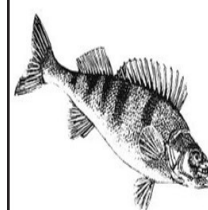
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## Notes from the Prez

Can it already be a month ago that I was vacationing for a couple of weeks in the Florida panhandle? No golf clubs; just my ocean fishing gear, and lots of time to go fishing. And I was lucky enough to cross paths with Tom Raschke and his wife, who happened to be staying for a couple of days at the same quiet old hotel, on the same small barrier island (St. George Island, off the coast from Apalachicola, Florida, the oyster capital of the U.S., believe-it-or-not), where my wife and daughter and I were spending our vacation time. And yes, Tom joined me for some surf fishing, and he caught all the fish.

It's a little cooler in the panhandle than it is along the gulf coast to the southeast, but it's a quieter scene, with a lot fewer people. The fishing was a little slow this year – I was told the water was still a bit too cold -- but at least I was fishing and not working. And I fished every day. Got my Florida saltwater license the day we reached Florida, got some bait, and I went to work. It's a different ball game down there, but I recommend it to anyone and everyone. You can fish in the surf, on the inland side of the island, from a kayak or small boat, or from one of the many fishing piers found along the coast. The bait is different than we are accustomed to using up here in the north. Lots of shrimp and squid, some crabs, some other types of shellfish, and occasionally some artificials. The gear is different – long rods with big reels for fishing, with heavy weights, for surf fishing; slightly smaller rods and reels for pier fishing and fishing on the inland side; special landing nets for getting hooked fish up to the top of the pier, 50 feet or so; artificial baits different from anything you might use fishing for bass or walleyes or panfish. And then there's the need to wash all of your gear nearly every day to rinse off the salt from the ocean. And then there are the fish – ocean fish. So many varieties, mostly unfamiliar, but often so very good to eat! I have lots to learn about how to catch fish in the ocean. I can hardly wait to go back!

Fortunately, like all of our Club members, I now have good reason to stay in Wisconsin and fish. I got my boat out of storage this past weekend, and as soon as I can get all of the life jackets, landing nets, rods and reels, and other gear stowed in the boat for the season, I'll get the thing down to the marina and can start getting out on Lake Mendota in search of some big fish. I've been working for weeks on reorganizing my fishing tackle, and my rods and reels, and everything is pretty much ready to go. The water of Lake Mendota is still murky and cold, but that will start to change soon. The first of the Club's summer on-the-water meetings is only a month away.

Now, my task is to find more time to do more fishing this summer. Let's all work on that!

Gard



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## Minnesota Boat Trailer Change Postponed

Intended to fight the spread of aquatic invasive species, a controversial program to require anyone transporting a boat in Minnesota to pass a test and get a special sticker for your trailer was postponed. The program was to go into effect shortly. Legislators have introduced bills to kill the law requiring the training, and DNR officials don't want boaters to take the course if that happens, or if major changes are made.

## Yahara Fishing Club Membership Form

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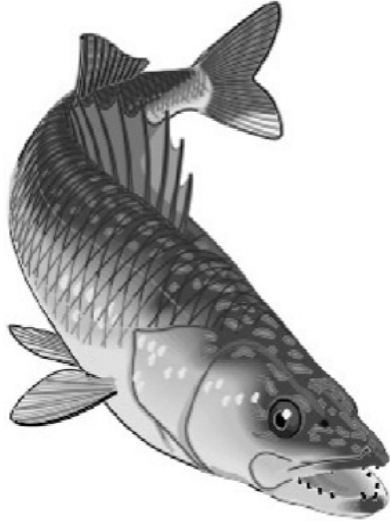
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**The next meeting is on Tuesday, May 12th**  
**The Board Of Directors meet at 6:00 pm, The General Membership meeting starts at 7:00 pm.**

**Speaker - Israel Dunn**

## Calendar of Upcoming Events

### May Events

May 12th, Regular club meeting at the VFW Hall. New member, Israel Dunn is our May speaker. He will talk new concepts in shore fishing.

### June Events

June 6th, Kids Fishing Day at Warner Park. All members are encouraged to be there.

June 9th, On the Water meeting. Details to follow.

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

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