



Yahara Fishing Club October 2026 Newsletter

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Give the Fish What They Prefer

By John Pribek

“Match the hatch” – we’ve heard that adage our whole fishing lives and with good reason. It makes sense to choose a bait that closely resembles the natural food – such as insects, minnows, or crawfish – that your target fish are actively feeding on at that specific time and place. It’s always a good starting point for deciding what to toss into the water. Our September meeting speaker, however, introduced a twist on the match-the-hatch notion that has produced impressive fishing results for him and inspired one of the more inventive lures presented to the club in a long while.

Max Smith is a 24-year-old fisherman, engineer and owner of Top Frog. He’s already packed a lot of angling experience into his young life, having worked at Dorn Outdoor Pro Shop and guided at Sunrise Resort in Presque Isle, Wisconsin, in addition to starting the Top Frog company with his younger brother Manny. What principle has guided the design of the Top Frog fishing lure? Max is not just matching the hatch – he’s matching the fish’s preference.

The idea is, don’t always seek to match precisely what the target fish is seeing and eating on a regular basis. Match what they most

PREFER to eat. Fish can go after a wide variety of potential prey, but they often choose what they can more easily eat and digest. Crawfish, for example, are a staple for predators, but they come with claws and a tough exoskeleton that can prove challenging for swallowing and digestion.



THE OCTOBER 14th MEETING IS AT BOWL-A-VARD LANES

7:00 PM, 2121 E. Springs Drive, Madison

Instead, a hungry hulk of a predator more likely prefers to munch on a crawfish with underdeveloped or missing claws (which definitely happens in nature), or a gill with minimal spiny fins, or an injured and solitary baitfish, or a misguided frog swimming out in the open. So match those preferences with your baits – then it's game on. That latter example, the confused croaker swimming where it shouldn't and thus presenting a relatively easy and satisfying meal, is the premise for Top Frog.

Max believes this is the most effective example of matching the preference. Frogs ordinarily hide near shore and within dense weeds to avoid being eaten. If you're able to imitate a frog meandering in open water, where it's most exposed and vulnerable, even a fish with a fairly full stomach is going to find that opportunity hard to pass up. Go to www.topfrog.com to see how Max and his brother's patented bait is engineered to swim like an actual frog in open water – their video is worth a thousand words. You can readily recognize how the Top Frog's action tricks the fish into thinking the lure is real and simulates an ambitious amphibian carelessly leaving the cabbage for a fateful swim. And Max had plenty of pictures to show the Top Frog's multispecies appeal; it's a natural for

largemouth bass, sure, but smallies and muskies also go after an enticing set of frog legs.

Matching the preference likewise helps to explain the effectiveness of other lures Max and Manny often turn to. The Ned rig? There's your crawfish with no claws. A Gill Flat Jr. does a good job of resembling a downsized bluegill with underdeveloped fins. For imitating an injured, lonely baitfish, Max likes using a Megabass Spark Shad swimbait with a Screw Head jighead (see photos).

Max added an important caveat: Sometimes you do want to prioritize matching the hatch. Every now and then, fish can get so focused on actively targeting a specific forage species that they might completely ignore a different presentation of forage species, even if the latter matches a customary preference. As usual, it pays to be flexible, and to let the fish decide on your ultimate approach.

Again, Max's www.topfrog.com website does a great job of explaining the rationale and displaying the appeal behind this unique bait, so check it out. And if you have any questions, feel free to reach out to Max at max@topfrog.com.

Crawfish imitation:



Ned Rig

Bluegill imitation:



Gill Flat Jr

Baitfish imitation:



Screwhead x Sparkshad

Frog imitation:



Top Frog

40,000 Lures and Counting

I missed last month's meeting because I was in Branson, Missouri, home of Table Rock Lake and Lake Taneycomo, both storied bass and other fishing locations. Taneycomo also has a trout fishery because it is below the Table Rock Dam, a bottom-draw dam that releases cold water. A federal trout fish hatchery is at the upper end of Taneycomo. However, the weather was brutal, with temperatures in the 90s and 100s, so outdoor activities were limited. John Pribeck did an admirable job summarizing September's speaker.

I found something interesting—the history of fishing museum. It displays more than 40,000 pieces of the collection of Karl and Beverly White. It includes lures, rods and reels, boats, duck decoys, and more. I didn't count them all. Enclosed are a couple of pictures. I took one picture of a lure display because it had spoonplugs. I told the curator I knew a guy that had a much bigger collection of spoonplugs (Clay Russell) and I assured him I had a lot more ice fishing gear than he displayed.

Stan Nichols



Outings

Fall salmon outing: late October- November

We will be chasing salmon in the Milwaukee Harbor, Port Washington, Racine Harbor, and the Lake Michigan tributary rivers. We will try jigging the gaps or throwing cranks or using slip bobbers in the shallows. With medium action rods, hang on for a battle you won't forget! Let's make a first attempt going the weekend of October 17-18 but this will heavily depend on the weather with later options still possible.

Lake Mendota YFC & Edgewood High School Fishing Team Outing

Fall is a great time to target big northerns with bonus catches of walleyes and bass on the right day. Let's try to have one last big on-the-water outing on Sunday, October 25th and take the youth with us!

Continued next page

Tenney Park Breakwall YFC vs Edgewood High School Fishing Team Outing

This shore fishing outing is a Fall Classic targeting walleyes and northerns. We're taking it to the next level with a little friendly competition and hope to "school" the high schoolers! The bite should start in mid-October and November and will last until the lake freezes. Let's plan on having a tournament-style format with all entries photographed between November 6-9th. The week prior we will send out an email for a gathering together, single outing date based off of the weather forecast.

Sign up for these outings through our club email, at a meeting, or by contacting me by phone or text. We're a fishing club; let's go fishing together!

Jim Pankratz [608-709-6442](tel:608-709-6442)

Remembering the life of Marvin J. Kontney

Marv, a longtime member of the Yahara Fishing Club, died September 13. As mentioned in the obituary referenced below, he was an important promoter and organizer of Fishing Has No Boundaries.

It is with a heavy heart that we share the memorial page for Marvin J. Kontney.

We invite you to read their obituary, find details regarding the upcoming services, and share your own cherished memories or photos on the tribute wall.

Thank you for your love and support during this time.

https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/madison/name/marvin-kontney-obituary?id=62614913&utm_source=webshareapi&utm_medium=share_button&utm_campaign=wsa_pimobile_beta

Holiday Nights Setup Wednesday, November 11

Setup starts at 7:30 and goes until about 1:00. We can use as many people as possible. I will have a sign-up sheet at our October meeting.

Gerry King

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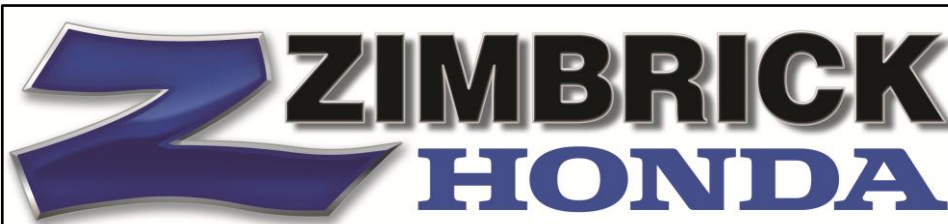


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The October 14th meeting is at Bowl-A-Vard Lanes

**Our speaker will be Keith Reopelle, who will discuss climate change at
*Bowl-A-Vard Lanes (2121 E. Springs Drive, Madison).***

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 7 p.m.: Monthly meeting at Bowl-A-Vard Lanes. Our speaker will be Keith Reopelle, discussing climate change and the impacts on Wisconsin waters

Wednesday, Nov 11, 7 p.m.: Monthly meeting at Bowl-A-Vard Lanes

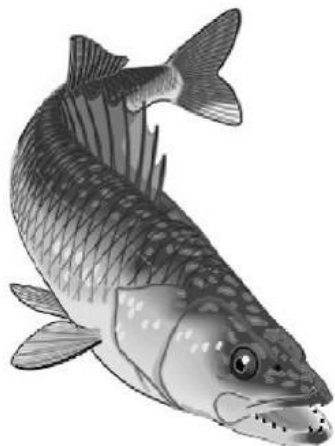
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Yahara Fishing Club
P.O. Box 259803
Madison, Wi 53725



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

Yahara Fishing Club Membership Form
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Annual Dues are from January 1 to December 31. Please print. *** ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

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