

OUTDOORSUPDATE

OF THE OUTDOORS:

The Smallmouth Bass Of Mille Lacs

BY GARY HOWEY
Hartington, Neb.

Before heading out onto Mille Lacs, our guide Mike Christensen of Hunter Winfield's Resort (www.hunterwinfields.com) had shown us a spot on his GPS where the LakeMaster chip in the unit indicated an area that smallmouth bass had been feeding.

As we approached the buoy, the huge boulders and rocks deposited there by the glaciers started to appear below the surface.

Many were larger than our boat, extending out from a point into the lake at a depth of 12 foot, giving the smallmouth excellent hiding spots from which to ambush bait fish.

Team member Larry Myhre and I have been frequent visitors to Mille Lacs as it is an excellent fishery with good numbers of trophy size walleye, smallmouth, musky as well as numerous other species of fish.

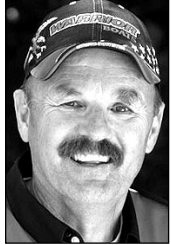
We'd arrived the day before, hoping to have the opportunity to film a couple of our Outdoorsmen Adventures segments, if the weather didn't force us to change our plans.

Mike strategically maneuvered the boat through the shallow water, positioning us within casting distance of many of the larger submerged boulders.

We were on the water early, trying to take advantage of nice weather hoping to beat the many fronts that would be coming through the area during the next couple of days.

Since we weren't sure what the fish would want this morning, all three of us in the boat were rigged with different baits, allowing the fish to tell us which bait they preferred, once they did, we'd all switch to that bait and hammer on them.

As we worked our way around and through the submerged rocks, a small-



Gary Howey



PHOTO: LARRY MYHRE

Smallmouth Bass are one of the toughest game fish you'll find. This 4-pound smallmouth is one of the four fish that were caught and released on Mille Lacs two weeks ago.

mouth smacked something floating on the surface off to our right.

I quickly switched from my crankbait to a surface popper propelling it in the general direction where the fish had risen.

After several cast, I could see a big smallmouth come up from behind one of the hundreds of boulders to take a whack at my lure.

The bass must have been far sighted or

I was a little to anxious to boat a fish as he made a pass at my popper as it neared the boat, hitting ahead of the bait as I reared back on my rod, propelling the bait into the air.

Not to be deterred, I immediately cast right back into the same general area, only to pull the bait away from the bass once again.

This happens a lot in clear water, as the depth the fish is in can be deceiving and

you'll see the fish come up and jump on your bait, which can result in short strikes.

On my fourth cast, I had my hook set down perfectly and a battle ensued.

Smallmouth bass, known as "Bronze Bulldogs" are one of the most powerful fresh water fish you'll find, diving deep, fighting hard and often going airborne or doing a tail walk across the top of the water, testing the gears in your reel as well as the line it's spooled with.

The fish, a nice three pounder, gave me all I wanted, then coming into the boat for a few pictures, before being released back into the water.

Mike was the next to connect as another three pounder inhaled his bait right beside the boat.

Since their mouth is much smaller than that of their cousin the largemouth bass, choose similar bait you'd throw for largemouth only in a more compact size.

Some of the best baits for smallmouth bass would be tube jigs, small crawdad imitating crank baits, smaller worm rigs and livebait.

Smallmouth are an extremely aggressive fish and will attack almost any bait pitched at them, so it's very easy to fish them out of a certain area.

This is one of the reasons that many bodies of water that hold holding these fish have such stringent slot limits on them.

Smallmouth can grow to large size with the Minnesota state record being an 8 pounder, Nebraska's record a 7 pound 4 oz. fish with the South Dakota state record smallmouth coming in at 6 pounds 9 oz.

Our morning excursion for smallmouth was a good one as we landed four nice fish one of which was over 4 pounds.

If you're looking for a great fighting fish, you'd best give smallmouth bass a try as they'll give you all you want and make you come back for more.

Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is a former tournament angler and guide. His Outdoorsmen Adventures television series can be seen in the upper Midwest and on www.MyOutdoorTV.com. For more information on the outdoors check out www.outdoorsmenadventures.com.

Celebrate Fourth Of July With S.D. State Park Events

PIERRE — The Fourth of July lands on a Sunday this year, so state parks across South Dakota are expecting a busy weekend. If you are planning to be at a state park during the holiday period, make plans to attend one of the following events.

- Kids' Bicycle Parade, Saturday, July 3, 7 p.m., Snake Creek Recreation Area near Platte. Kids are invited to decorate their bikes, trikes and scooters and show them off as the parade tours around the campground. Decorating materials are provided, or bring your own for a unique look. Participants should meet behind the entrance booth at 6:30 p.m. CDT to decorate. Info: 605-337-2587

- Race for the Cache GPS Tourney, Saturday, July 3, at 4 p.m. Pierson Ranch Recreation Area near Yankton. Bring the whole family and join the geocaching fun. Info: 605-668-2985

- Firefly Fireworks Hike, Saturday, July 3, 10:30 p.m. CDT, Lewis & Clark Recreation Area near Yankton. Nature provides her own fireworks through the amazing firefly. Join this hike on the Gavin's Point Nature Trail to learn more, and try to spot some of the bright bugs. Info: 605-668-2985

- Patriotic Parade, Sunday, July 4, at 11 a.m. CDT, Roy Lake State Park near Lake City. Celebrate the Fourth with this bike/walking parade through the park. Decorations will be furnished, or bring your own and show off your patriotism! Info: 605-448-5701

- Classic 4th at the Fort, Friday, July 4, from 2 - 8 p.m. CDT, Fort Sisseton State Park near Lake City. Come and enjoy a relaxing day at the fort. Take a tour of the grounds with a horse and buggy, try your hand at making homemade ice cream, or make and take a frontier craft. Info: 605-448-5474

- 3rd Annual Independence Day Parade, Sunday, July 4, at 5 p.m., West Bend Recreation Area southeast of Pierre. Bring your red, white, and blue with you for the weekend! Enter your float or other entry in a parade around the campground. Prizes will be awarded to the campsites showing the most enthusiasm for our beautiful country. Info: 605-773-2885

There is no cost to participate in any of the events, although park entrance licenses are required. Visitors are encouraged to dress according to the weather. All participants in the bike parades are encouraged to wear helmets and appropriate shoes.

For more information on activities in South Dakota state parks, visit www.gfp.sd.gov, contact the park offices, or call 605-773-3391.

Helpful Tips For Getting Kids Hooked On Fishing

BY RAY SASSER

(c) 2010, The Dallas Morning News

According to Ann Miller, Texas Parks and Wildlife's Aquatic Education Coordinator, research has shown that fishing is a key gateway to involving people in a lifetime of outdoors enjoyment.

"We've been getting more and more requests for how-to-fish classes for young parents who want to take their children fishing but don't feel comfortable doing so," said Miller. "These events fulfill that need and, in many cases, introduce families to Texas State Parks that are ideal places to fish."

One reason state parks make an ideal place to fish is no fishing licenses are required as long as the angler is within park boundaries. Youths are not required to buy a fishing license in Texas until they reach 17.

Here are some tips for parents unable to attend one of the TP&W fishing programs:

Do Your Homework

Make fishing an introduction to the outdoors by researching the subject with your child. Look up information on the Internet or your favorite book store. Use the game fish as a lesson in how nature works and the importance of clean water.

Talk to the child about how bag and size limits protect fish from overharvest, assuring plenty of fish for future generations. Look at photos of different game fish, from tiny bluegills to giant marlin. There's an excellent website for beginners at www.takemefishing.com.

Essential Gear

You can catch bluegills with a cane pole or other natural pole rigged with 15 feet of monofilament line. Tie on a light wire hook, size eight or 10. Clamp a BB-sized lead sinker to the line about three or four inches above the hook. The sinker will get the bait down quickly. Clip on a brightly colored fishing bobber (float) that can be adjusted to suit the depth of water.

The bobber dances or plunges under the surface when a fish takes the bait. A pair of needle-nosed pliers is very handy for clamping sinkers, cutting line and unhooking the fish. The gear just listed should cost less than \$20.

You can spend much, much more, but you probably shouldn't invest a bundle until you're certain your child will be interested enough in fishing. Then you should invest in a youth-model spincasting outfit that costs \$40 or less, depending on your budget.

Best Fish For Kids

Bluegills and other sunfish species, channel catfish, crappie and sand bass (white bass).

Fishing is more fun when you're successful. To keep youngsters interested, stack the odds in their favor as much as possible. Most beginners don't care how big the fish is, as long as they're catching something.

Sunfish are near the bank this time of year and are the ideal quarry for a beginning angler. Channel catfish likewise move into shallow water to spawn in early summer. Crappie and sand bass are relatively easy to catch but are in deeper water and usually require a boat.

Worst Fish For Kids

Largemouth bass, striped bass and hybrid stripers, all of which require too much skill for a beginning angler. Once beginners are hooked on fishing, they can step up to more challenging species.

Best Bait

Live or natural bait works best for beginners. For sunfish, it's hard to beat earthworms or live crickets. Catfish will bite worms, chunks of cut shad or commercially made catfish baits. Live minnows are great for tempting crappie, sand bass or largemouth bass. Larger live bait, like threadfin or gizzard shad, works well for stripers and hybrid stripers.

Have A Game Plan

Fish aren't always easy to catch, even for the most skilled angler. Kids have short attention spans. Have a backup plan for what to do if the fishing is a bust. Skip rocks on the water, look for animal tracks in the mud or see how many species of birds you can identify.

Practice Makes Perfect

The best place to practice casting skills is in your backyard or a nearby park. Kids should practice baseball or soccer before they play in a game and the same is true of fishing.

Make a casting game by using hula hoops or pieces of brightly colored rope arranged in various-sized circles to form casting targets at different distances. Practice casting with your child. Use a practice plug (available in most fishing stores) or make your own practice plug by removing the hooks from a lure.

Tie A Good Knot

Most anglers use monofilament fishing line that's made from extruded nylon. An overhand knot tied in monofilament line will slip loose under pressure. Learn to tie, and teach your child to tie a good fishing knot.

The easiest knot to master is the Improved Clinch Knot. You can find illustrations on how to tie it by doing an Internet search. Some spools of fishing line include instructions on how to tie effective knots.

Take A Camera

It's pretty cool having a photo of a child's first fish to serve as a lifetime reminder, even if the child never catches another fish. Who knows? One day in the distant future, an adult may come across that photo, remember a fun day and decide to give fishing another chance.

Where To Fish

Neighborhood fishing lakes are a good choice. Most of these lakes, usually located within a city park, have amenities such as picnic tables and good access for bank fishing. Visit Texas Parks and Wildlife's website, www.tpwd.state.tx.us, for information, including directions, to 16 neighborhood fishing lakes in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

From the state agency home page, click on Fishing and Boating, then Where to Fish. Click on Learn to Fish on the same page, and you'll find fishing tips and how-to videos. If you have a substantial fishing budget and older youth anglers, the best bet for success is to hire a guide who specializes in fishing for sand bass at an area lake. The guide may even have loaner tackle.

The Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center near Athens makes an excellent day trip for aspiring anglers. There's a two-acre fishing pond loaded with fish and an abundance of loaner tackle. There's usually someone around who can give you advice on how to fish. Hundreds of kids catch their first fish here each year.

TFFC has great live fish exhibits in outstanding aquaria. Hours are 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 1-4

p.m. Sunday. Call 903-676-2277 for more details. Fishing at TFFC is catch-and-release only.

Learn Fish Habits

During hot months, fishing is usually best early and late in the day, particularly if you are restricted to fishing from the bank in shallow water. You'll also catch more fish around aquatic structure such as weed beds, lily pads, boat docks, stumps or logs than you typically catch in water with no cover to hide the fish.

Dealing With The Catch

Before heading to a lake, you should have a plan on what to do with the catch. There's a good chance your youth angler will want to keep fish to eat. You should have this discussion before the first fish is caught. Catch and release or catch and eat? If you plan to eat your catch, read up on state fishing regulations for the various species.

Regulations may vary from one water body to another, depending on fish species. If you don't know the basics of fishing, you probably don't know how to clean a fish. Find out how it's done with an Internet search or ask a skilled fisherman to show you. Otherwise, talk your young angler into releasing the fish so they can be hiked again another day.

Youth fishing programs are scheduled in the Dallas area for Tawakoni State Park on Saturday and July 24 and at Cedar Hill SP on Joe Pool Lake on July 10. For information about the Cedar Hill event, call 214-536-8929. Call 903-560-0092 for Tawakoni information.

OUTDOOR REPORT

Prairie Dog Control Programs Available

PIERRE — South Dakota ranchers and farmers with prairie dog complaints can contact the Game, Fish and Parks and Agriculture departments.

"With the passage of the state Prairie Dog Management Plan in 2005, control guidelines and annual funds have been made available to landowners who have unwanted prairie dogs," said GFP Wildlife Damage Program Administrator Keith Fisk.

The plan, jointly funded by Agriculture and GFP, is based on the "good neighbor policy" and has a no-tolerance standard for prairie dogs moving onto lands where they are not wanted.

There are three components to the program: (1) control where prairie dogs are coming off private lands, (2) control where prairie dogs are coming off private lands, and (3) incentives where prairie dogs are coming off public or tribal lands.

Landowners with complaints about prairie dogs that are encroaching from public lands may contact GFP at 605-773-5913 to request control. Once encroachment has been verified, GFP field staff or an approved contractor will take steps this fall to control the invading colonies on private lands. Complaints must be received by Aug. 15.

If the colony is encroaching from private land, a signed written complaint must be made.

There are two methods to file a complaint. A landowner may sign a letter of complaint and mail it to the local County Weed and Pest Board, or send a formal complaint to the Agriculture Dept. A copy of the complaint must also be sent to the landowner with the invading colony.

Forms may be obtained by calling 800-228-5254 or online at http://sdda.sd.gov/Ag_Services/

Mail completed forms to the Department of Agriculture, 523 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, SD, 57501. Notices of encroachment may be sent in throughout the year.

Depending on location, two different incentive programs are available to landowners adjacent to public or tribal lands. The programs replace the use of rodenticides, fumigants or other toxicants on encroaching prairie dogs with a per-acre payment for areas where prairie dogs would be allowed to remain. Landowners interested in incentives may contact GFP at 605-773-5913 by Aug. 15 to be considered for those programs.

The South Dakota Prairie Dog Management Plan may be seen online or by calling the GFP Wildlife Damage Program at 605-773-3387.

State Park Visitors Should Leave Fireworks At Home

PIERRE — The upcoming Fourth of July holiday is always a busy time in South Dakota's state parks and recreation areas. As you celebrate, Game, Fish and Parks Department officials ask you to please leave fireworks at home.

According to Doug Hofer, state parks director, campgrounds are traditionally very busy during the Fourth of July holiday period with campers and other visitors enjoying the parks.

"Combining fireworks and large numbers of people creates a dangerous situation," said Hofer. "We appreciate your help to keep the parks safe and fun this Fourth of July."

Discharging fireworks is prohibited on all lands owned or leased by the Department of Game, Fish and Parks. The ban includes state parks, recreation areas, lakeside use areas, game production areas and nature areas. Discharging fireworks is also illegal within the boundaries of the Black Hills Forest Fire Protection District, national forests and national parks in South Dakota.

For more information on the South Dakota State Parks, visit www.gfp.sd.gov or call 605-773-3391.

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STIP Public Meetings

S.D. Dept. of Transportation has developed a Tentative 2011-2015 Five-Year Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The Tentative STIP includes all the state sponsored transportation projects for this time period.

Prior to final approval of the STIP by the Transportation Commission, public meetings will be held on the following dates and locations to receive public comment on the tentative program.

July 15, 2010	Ramkota Hotel	Rapid City	7:00 PM
July 20, 2010	Ramada Inn	Aberdeen	7:00 PM
July 21, 2010	Ramkota Hotel	Sioux Falls	7:00 PM
July 22, 2010	MTI Technology Center (1800 E. Spruce)	Mitchell	7:00 PM
July 27, 2010	Ramkota Hotel	Pierre	7:00 PM

Individuals with disabilities or special needs call 605-773-3340 or 1-800-877-1113 (TDD). For more information please go to www.SDDOT.com

Laura Ingalls Wilder Pageant
De Smet, S.D.

"THE FIRST FOUR YEARS WITH MEMORIES OF SILVER LAKE"
July 9-11 • July 16-18 • July 23-25

Pageant grounds are one mile east of De Smet. Gates open at 7 p.m.; show begins at 9 p.m. No reservations needed.
Call 1-800-880-3383 or 1-800-776-3594 for more information

Photos from LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE: The legacy of Laura Ingalls Wilder ©2010