

OF THE OUTDOORS | GARY HOWEY

No Matter What Species You're After Big Bend Dam Has It All

BY GARY HOWEY

Outdoorsmen Productions LLC

If you've fished the Missouri River and it's reservoirs, I don't need to tell you about the unbelievable variety of fish available in these waters.



Gary HOWEY

to finish filming one of our Outdoorsmen Adventures television segments.

I've been a member of South Dakota Walleyes Unlimited for several years and found that it's an excellent conservation group made up of anglers and their families interested in promoting and educating the public on the fishing opportunities in South Dakota while helping to improve fishing and fishing accessibility throughout the state. www.sd-walleyesunlimited.org

Earlier this year, we'd been in the area and had a very good day of fishing, until being chased off the water by high winds and lightning. This trip would give us the opportunity to finish up filming for one of our Outdoorsmen Adventures segments.

As we arrived at the dam, we followed the long winding road down off the dam to the one boat launch open below the dam, it didn't take us long to realize the word was out on the bite as there were a half dozen vehicles in front of us waiting to launch as well as several already on the water.

It didn't take long for all of the boats to launch as we were all anxious to get on the water and as we headed out of the bay, it looked as if there'd been a good bite happening along the point on the flats just outside of the bay as numerous boats were working in that area.

Plan A was to start working along the bluffs using bottom bouncers and single hook worm rigs. As we rigged up, Rocky deployed a boat brake off the front of the boat allowing us to work our rigs vertical as he used his kicker motor to back troll along the depth where the fish were holding.

A couple of weeks ago, Team Outdoorsmen Adventures member Larry Myhre, Sioux City, Iowa, and I joined South Dakota Walleyes Unlimited members Woody Tiggelaar, Sioux Falls, and Rocky Niewenhuis, Corsica,



LEFT: Team Outdoorsmen Adventures member Larry Myhre, Sioux City, Iowa, with one of the many channel catfish taken in the fast water below Big Bend Dam. (Gary Howey Photo)



RIGHT: Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., with one of the many smallmouth bass taken on a recent fishing trip below Big Ben Dam. (Larry Myhre Photo)

No more than had gotten started when I felt a pickup on my rod, the fish was putting up a tremendous fight, almost too much of a fight for a walleye and as I cranked hard on the reel trying to bring the fish my way, a chunky smallmouth came to the surface, did a tail dance across the water and then attempted another run as Rocky slid the net under it. As I was returning the fish to the water, Rocky set the hook on another fish, and after a short battle, he dropped our first fat seventeen-inch walleye into the livewell.

Slow was the name of the game, when it came to caching fish on this trip as by using a boat brake, we were able to bring our troll to a slow crawl, while other boats drifting seemed to be moving just a little too fast with the slower presentation being more productive.

Early, the weather worked in our favor, as the bite continued and we were catching fish, walleyes and white bass along the bluffs, but as the weather started to change with thunder and lightning started building up out west, the bite slowed and we joined a dozen other boats heading back into the bay to wait out the storm, which passed quickly but not before we were forced to pull on rain gear to avoid getting soaked in a downpour.

Once the storm subsided, we were able to get back on the

water and what had been our hot spot earlier along the bluffs slowed and our Plan B was needed, forcing us to give the fast water a try. Earlier this year, when they were putting a lot of water through the powerhouse, fishing had been excellent for walleyes and big white bass, so we needed to give it a try. As we motored over to the fast water, only one boat was fishing the area, with dozens of angler fishing from the rocks on both sides of the fast water.

Approaching the dam, it was obvious the flows had been reduced, with less water coming from the powerhouse.

We still had to contend with some current, with our tackle of choice, in order to stay in contact with the bottom, would be line counter reels rigged with Wolf River/three-way rigs. As the name implies this rig consists of a three-way swivel attached to our main line, attached to another swivel would be a 10-inch Berkley XL dropper line with a three-ounce sinker tied to the bottom. Rigged onto the third swivels would be a 12-15 inch XL leader with a plain worm hook or floating crankbait tied onto the business end.

On our first drift both Larry and I connected with two fat channel cats, shortly thereafter, Rocky's crankbait rig took a nice walleye.

In Woody's boat, our camera-

man Andrew was busy trying to keep up with all the action, jumping back and forth attempting to film Woody's fish while filming the three anglers in our boat all taking at least one and sometimes two fish on every drift.

Walleyes, catfish, smallmouth bass and white bass were stacked up in the high water, pigging out before water temps and weather started to cool.

Between the two boats, in a half-day of fishing, part of which we sat on the bank waiting out a storm, we were able to boat twelve keeper walleyes averaging 17 inches, 25 channel catfish from 3-7 pounds as well as numerous smaller fish.

With water levels starting to stabilize, fishing throughout the river system should begin to normalize, with the new fish that made their way through the dams adding to the already excellent populations downstream and anglers can expect good fishing from now through the end of the year.

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

Keenan Clinches Second Overall National Guard FLW Walleye Tour Angler Of The Year Title In Career

PIERRE — Pro Tom Keenan of Hatley, Wis., wrapped up his season-long quest for the National Guard FLW Walleye Tour Angler of the Year title Saturday at the FLW Walleye Tour event on Lake Oahe. This is Keenan's second overall title and he received \$10,000 for the honor. Keenan's previous title came in 2006 and in 2010 he claimed Eastern Division FLW Angler of the Year. Along with his previous angler of the year titles, Keenan has logged an additional three top-10 finishes in the FLW Angler of the Year race during his 11-year professional career with FLW Outdoors.

Keenan finished the season with 577 points, 26 points ahead of runner-up pro Chase Parsons of Brillion, Wis. Rounding out the top five were National Guard pro Mark Courts of Harris, Minn., (547), Paul Meleen of Isle, Minn., (515) and Tom Kemos of Oconomowoc, Wis. (505).

Keenan began the season with a 2nd-place finish at the Lake Erie

event. His lowest finish came at the second stop on Leech Lake where he placed 14th. That was fire enough to drive him to a 6th-place finish on Green Bay and 5th-place at the final stop on Oahe where he nailed this third top-10 finish and sealed the deal for angler of the year.

Keenan has won two National Guard FLW Walleye Tour events and has notched 16 top-10 finishes earning over \$650,000 during his career with FLW Outdoors.

The National Guard FLW Walleye Tour Co-angler of the Year presented by the National Guard was determined Saturday by the most points accumulated over the four Walleye Tour events. Boyd Strissel of Billings, Mont., won the title and \$2,500 by 30 points over John Spiegel of Appleton, Wis., who had 497 points. Strissel posted 527 points during the course of the season. Darrell Martin of Forest Lake, Minn., came in third with 493 points.

TROPHY SPOTLIGHT



Joe Johnson caught this eight-pound walleye on Lewis & Clark Lake on Aug. 27. (Captain Norm's photo)

2011 PDR Disabled Youth Deer Hunt To Host A Legally Blind Shooter

Hunting activity may be considered beyond the ability of a sightless person but a Watertown lad sees no problem. Eric is completely blind in one eye and can only distinguish shapes in the other. He overcomes his vision loss with the help of a guardian who quietly helps him line up his shot. "Never" said PDR founder Dean Rasmussen, "have we had a completely sight disadvantaged youth on our hunt. We welcomed Eric and his guardian to our party with eight other hunters because we were intrigued by how he adapts to his special circumstance."

The non-profit PDR organization hosts an annual South Dakota hunting experience for physically challenged youth, including wheel chair enabled adolescents, ages 12-18. Special ground level blinds are erected with hard surface floors that accommodate wheelchairs. "Watching these kids enjoy the outdoors is quite a thing to witness and a stirring example of pride and determination" said Dean Rasmussen.

New this year is the addition of a handicap accessible portable scissor lift. The mobile deer herds are not always where they are expected to be. The scissor blind will give one hunter a second opportunity to move to a more target rich environment quickly helping maximize time in the field. Different from able-bodied hunters disabled youth typically have only the weekend of the PDR hunt to fill their deer tag.

The scissor lift and Tommy lift attachment were acquired through donations and grants received from the SCI organization, Sioux Falls chapter, SD Game Fish and Parks mini-grant, Northern Truck Equipment of Watertown and Clark Sales. Volunteers from Clark Rural Water and Oscar's Machine Shop fabricated the modifications necessary to make this equipment a completely mobile and handicap-accessible

hunting blind.

Participants will experience a guided deer hunting adventure, Sept. 17-18, on private land in prime deer hunting territory near Clark.

There is no cost for eligible participants who will receive:

* A Friday get acquainted meeting with host Dean Rasmussen at the Day Betterment hunting lodge Clark, South Dakota.

* Friday evening target shoot (deer rifles, targets and ammunition provided Friday and Saturday).

* Evening meal at the lodge.

* Overnight accommodations provided by Hi-Way and Pheasant Motels

* Saturday pre-dawn coffee and rolls.

* Each hunter and their guardian (required) are escorted by guides to the field in separate 4x4 vehicles.

* Guides accompany each hunting party to custom ground-level deer blinds and assists as needed in the taking of one antlerless deer.

* Noon lunch break in Clark.

* Return to blinds for after-

noon shoot if necessary.

* Saturday evening meal is also provided (where stories are shared by the hunters).

Participant requirements:

* All hunters must be accompanied by a guardian

* Personal transportation to and from Clark, South Dakota.

* Proof of Youth hunter safety course taken.

* A valid Youth Big Game deer license. Cost \$5.00 (available online www.sdgp.info)

<<http://www.sdgp.info>> .

* An item of orange colored apparel is required by everyone.

* Sign the PDR waiver/release typical of the ones provided at SD game preserves.

Dean Rasmussen with the help of many sponsors and neighbors in Clark, are providing hunting party necessities including access to prime deer hunting land for the PDR Hunt participants at no charge.

Check the web page at: pdr-youthhunt.com or contact Dean Rasmussen in Clark at 605-233-0331 or Mike Costanzo in Sioux Falls at 605-212-7665 for more information about the PDR Disabled Youth Deer Hunt.

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