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OUTDOORSMAN

page 4

OUTDOORSMAN



Edwin
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OUTDOORSMAN



Vol. LXXXIV

No. 3

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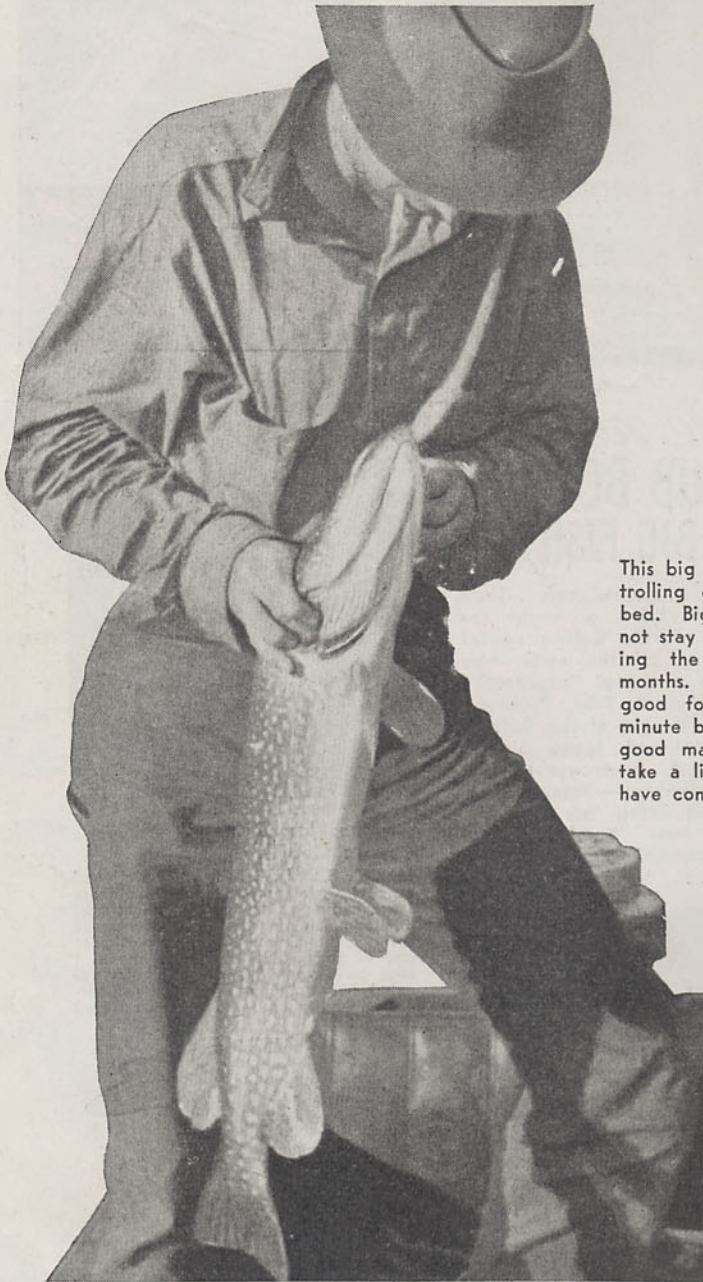
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This big lunker was caught trolling deep off a weed bed. Biggest northern pikes do not stay on the surface during the warmer summer months. Fish like this are good for a five to ten minute battle if you are a good man with rod; may take a little longer if you have considerable line out.

“**H**OOKED!” I yelled enthusiastically, bending back on my tubular steel rod, which arched to almost the shape of a huge fish hook. “He’s on solid!”

I had been casting along a weedbed in a secluded cove of Kakagi Lake, Ontario. It was my first evening on the lake; I had arrived from the States that very day. Take the motor down the lake for an evening fish, suggested a native. Sure thing, and five minutes later my rod was in the boat. Now, a half hour later, some strange cross between a flying fish and a hippopotamus was on my line.

For at least five minutes that marine torpedo tore one way and then the other. Only when he came toward me could I recover line. Three times the great bulk shot clear of the water and twenty pounds of animated dynamite quivered in the air.

Suddenly my rod tip flipped up. My hands felt strangely empty. My heart sank to hit my liver with a dull thump. I swallowed. My fish had escaped.

Slowly I reeled the line in. It was frayed at the break.

“Broke right above the leader,” the native affirmed. “Must have been doing some casting lately.”

“What a fish!” I observed, still filled with awe and ignoring my companion’s words. “Must have been one of those tiger muskies.”

“Musky?” said the native incredulously. “There ain’t a musky in this here lake, mister. That there fish was a big jack.”

“Jack?” I asked, hardly believing my ears. “You mean that fish was a northern pike?”

Right there and then I learned new respect for northern pike. It was early July. I reached my hand down into the water. My hand felt icy cold and I withdrew it quickly. Up in the North where you can still safely walk on the ice during the month of May, the water stays pretty cold all summer.

So that was what these northern pike needed? A little cold water. Northern pike plus chilled water added up to dynamite on a fish plug!

It isn’t an opinion; it’s a fact. If you haven’t angled for northern pike in cold water, you just don’t know the critter’s personality. Forming conclusions about pike in warm water is like judging the Cleveland Indians when they’re sprawled in the shade of an equatorial tree!

Later I learned that these same fighting jacks could be hooked in waters farther south if I waited until the fall frosts had chilled the water. Not that a good-sized pike is a slouch at any time during the summer, either. With the possible exception of the black bass, the northern pike is the nation’s number one fighting fish for plug casters.

The northern pike is to bait casters what the rabbit is to hunters. Days when no other fish seem

Those Fighting JACKS

Belittle Him if You Will, But a Northern Pike Plus Cold Water Adds Up to Real Dynamite on the Fishing Plug

By **ROB F. SANDERSON**

disposed to strike, a bait caster knowing Mr. Pike's loafing habits and diet can usually coax a few on a stringer. I have seen places in Canada where they would simply refuse to stay off the hook. At one spot in Whitefish Bay, Lake-of-the-Woods, I remember catching fourteen pike in twenty casts. One of these I recognized as a re-catch, however.

A northern has the advantage over most fish in size. A black bass will do well to hit the three-pound mark where I fish, and walleyes do but slightly better. But northerns frequently attain sizes several times these proportions. I think the biggest thrill in my life was when as a kid I went fishing with the local fishing veteran, Bill Prehn, and caught a thirteen-pound northern in a shallow slough. The slough was filled with drowned willow branches, and if Bill hadn't made a skilled swipe with the gaff that fish would be there yet for he flopped off the hook as soon as the gaff hit him.

● A MAN who fishes for northerns needs a rod that will take punishment. No light-weight bamboo rods for him; he'd best stick to a strong tubular steel rod in about a five-foot length. Line should test from 8 to 40 pounds, depending upon the size of local fish. Up in Loon Lake, northern Minnesota, where the catching of a thirty-pound

northern was not at all uncommon, we used fifty-pound test. Most of the fish had been caught a number of times, as the lake was full of flooded trees, most convenient snubbing posts when the fish got tired of playing.

Fortunately the northern isn't temperamental about lures. With five lures I can catch these fish anywhere I have ever found them to occur. The five lures are: red and white wobbler, Dardevle, jointed minnow, scale plug, and large bucktail spoon. These are all the lures you need, but you'd better carry spares as you're bound to lose quite a number.

Ordinarily the favorite haunts of the northern are in quiet waters somewhere near a weed bed. It likes to lie along the shore, especially in weedy-bottomed coves or inlets in the shoreline. Where rushes line the shores is an ideal place to cast for pike.

Here the pike will lie close to the bottom in the shade of pads or an underwater snag. Woe betide the minnow, frog, water snake, or small creature that swims past! Large of mouth and well equipped with sharp teeth, the predatory pike can make short meals of its catch. Large members are accused of pirating young ducks.

Rowing slowly along the shore and casting into the edge of the weeds or shallow water is an effective way to catch pike. Owing to the fact that

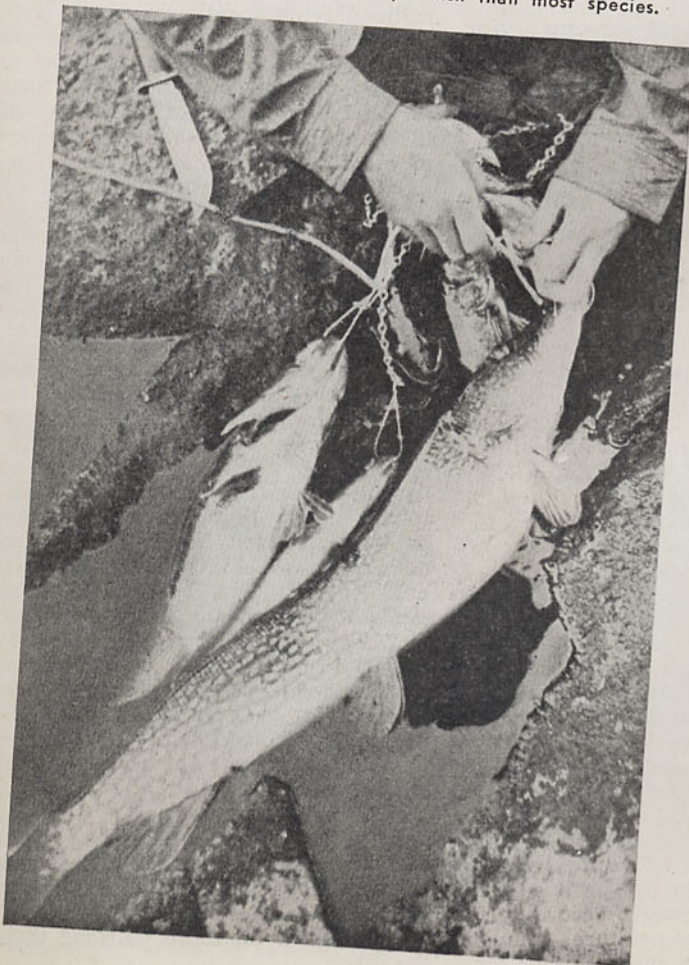
they frequent shallow water there is more danger of line fouling than when fishing for deeper water species, and considerable guile is necessary to play the fish away from the underwater snags for which it instinctively heads.

Several summers ago I was trolling deep for walleyes when my line appeared to have caught on the bottom. At this time my bait was nearly opposite a large floating weed bed which bordered deep water. Attempting to dislodge the hooks, I suddenly discovered in utter astonishment that I was hooked to a fish considerably larger than any walleye known to frequent the lake!

● GLANCING at my reel, I saw half of the hundred-yard spool was out. My work was well cut out. At the end of the first five minutes I had managed to get the fish up to the surface where he indulged in several strenuous rushes. My companion who manned the oars kept the boat moving slowly until the big fish began to roll on the surface about a hundred feet astern. Attempts to bring him in resulted in two rushes less strenuous than the previous displays, and soon I had him alongside the boat and securely gaffed. It was a good-sized northern pike, and once in the boat he came to life. He threshed on

(Continued on page 30)

A big northern makes an average-size walleye look pretty much like a minnow. For this reason northerns have more fight and more meat per fish than most species.



Fishing temperature is more important than most persons realize. This pike fisherman has just snapped a thermometer to a weighted leader and let it down to the level he intends to fish to see if the temperature is right for pike.

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TESTING PLYWOOD

Q. A local lumber dealer has what he says is waterproof plywood, but I am afraid it is not cemented with resin glue. How can I be sure before using it in a boat?—E. H., Ind.

A. Boil it an hour or so. True resin-bound wood will take it. Inferior board will not.

USE GREASE PUMP

Q. How can I get anti-fouling paint into the propeller shaft tunnel through the keel and deadwood of my boat? It is too small to insert a brush of any kind.—M. G., Ill.

A. Use one of the little hand oil or grease pumps that will suck up the paint and squirt it into the tunnel. Place a pan under the opening to catch the waste paint.

WATERJACKET CLEANER

Q. Is there anything available for cleaning scale from the waterjackets of my boat motor?—J. R. S., Ohio.

A. I have had excellent luck with ordinary toilet bowl cleaners, such as Purex Bowl Clean. Make a saturated solution, using boiling water (a pound can makes about two quarts), and let it stand in the jackets for 24 hours or so. Don't let it get in cylinders or on the valves. Cup grease will protect them if you should spill a little in them. Wash the cleaner out thoroughly with fresh water afterwards. Remove the head and let the jackets dry for a few days if possible. Scrape out any scale that is not dissolved and fill the jackets with old oil for a day or so to prevent rust.

REPAIRING SHAFT

Q. My propeller shaft is badly worn at the strut bearing babbitt. Can it be repaired?—H. J., Wisc.

A. Yes, a competent brass worker can build it up with weld and re-turn it to size. However, care must be exercised to temper it properly.

CLOSE AS POSSIBLE

Q. Does it make any difference how far apart the propeller and rudder are spaced?—C. E. S., N. Y.

A. The propeller should be just far enough from the rudder to permit removal of the prop, if necessary. The nearer it is to the rudder, the better control you have because of the increased action of the "slipstream".

KILN DRIED LUMBER

Q. Some one told me not to use kiln dried lumber in the boat I intend to build. Is this correct?—H. W., Del.

A. I believe most boat builders prefer the naturally dried lumber to the kiln dried product, as it is more slowly "cured" and stands up better for this purpose.

SELECTING AN OUTBOARD

Q. I want to get an outboard motor for my 12' rowboat and would like a suggestion as to size. I live on a large river and there are three adults in my family.—H. I., Ohio.

A. If you intend to use the motor for very slow trolling, a 3 or 3 1/2 h. p. motor with a top speed of 6 or 7 m. p. h. would be about right, but if you want to get about quickly a 5 h. p. should give you around 7 to 9 m. h. p., providing your boat is reasonably light and efficient.

BUY DEFENSE BONDS

THOSE FIGHTING JACKS

(Continued from page 5)

the bottom until I thought he would break the false floor out.

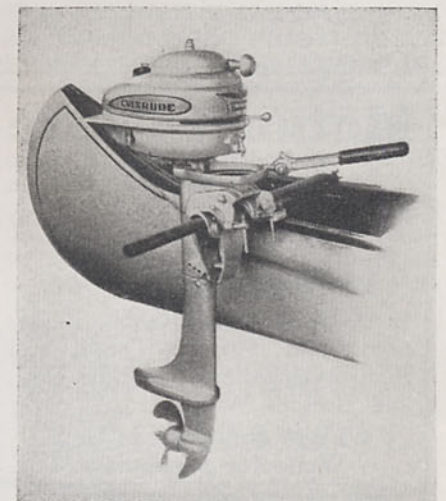
We made several trips over the same area and picked up three more pike between ten and fifteen pounds. The biggest one broke my companion's line and escaped with a big spoon lure. The big bucktail spoon, by the way, works excellently on these oversized northerns. Since this experience I have made a practice of

deep trolling in water of twenty or more feet deep off weedbeds, and have invariably found the largest northerns at the lower depths. During hot weather I have entirely discontinued the practice of surface fishing for the big fish, and even in the cooling waters of autumn have had luck fishing deep for the big boys.

Granddaddy northerns sometimes weigh over forty pounds and measure well over forty inches. The big pike are solitary in habit and are prone to lie near rocky points having a thin fringe of weeds. Oversize lures can be used with good results on these marine giants. The best way to take them is by waiting until the water is choppy and the weather is cloudy. Approach the point cautiously, making only one careful cast every four or five minutes. Once you have located the hide-out of a big pike, you can be pretty sure he will stay put for some time, and you can make repeated trips in an effort to hook the old rascal. Sometimes they are simply indisposed to bite and I knew one old boy to hold out for several weeks against almost daily efforts to catch him, before succumbing to the appeal of a fluttery tidbit that danced through the water above him.

Sometimes novel methods meet with success. About ten years ago we were fishing David Lake, Ontario, working along a rocky bar slightly grown up with weeds. We had five nice northerns ranging from six to twelve pounds when they abruptly stopped biting. For an hour we tried, but they would not strike.

We had just started to troll. The water was somewhat rough and required close attention by the oarsman. I carelessly let my line become entangled in the oar while attempting to unfurl an old backlash well down



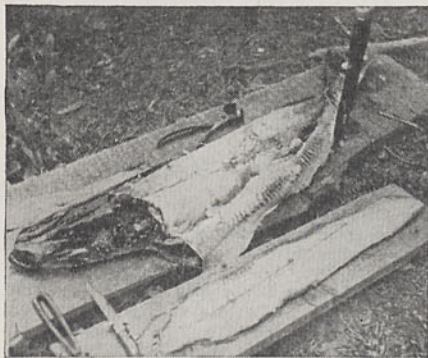
NEW CANOE BRACKET

Recognizing the increased use of small outboards to propel canoes, Evinrude Motors is introducing a new type of canoe bracket on the market. It attaches to the right, rather than left, side of the canoe, and can be fastened to the hull in a few seconds without tools. It is said to provide greater stability than older models.

on the reel spool. Though I discovered the situation immediately there was nothing I could do about it, as the boat was about to be blown against a rocky snag and the oarsman could not pause. Glancing astern, I saw my red and white plug making intermittent dashes across the water with each stroke of the oar, sometimes taking to the air for a foot or two.

I watched about six of these dashes. Suddenly a long form rose from under the plug. It grabbed the line, shot halfway into the air, and feeling the hooks commenced a terrific lunge.

The line, of course, was fastened tight to the oar by three complete turns and had not a bit of give. Thirty-pound test though it was, with that big pike standing on his tail out there, three lunges were enough to snap the line and free my freak catch. For



How to fillet a northern is shown here. For the comparison of size, the hunting knife stuck in the board has an 8-inch blade. Finished fillet is shown on near board.

the next hour we all used similar tactics and succeeded in adding four more fish of over seven pounds apiece, as well as a number of smaller fish which we threw back.

Although the pike is as consistent a hitter as any game fish, during the dog days of summer no big fish is prone to hit well. At this time there is nothing to pep up a pike's liver like a very green live frog.

● THE inherent trouble with frog harnesses is that if you allow the frog free and natural action, you are apt to have too few hooks available for the pike. While all frog harnesses have their faults, from among the many I have found the U-B frog harness to be one of the best. Its biggest fault is that different size harnesses are required for different size frogs.

Late afternoon or early morning is best when casting frogs. Approach very cautiously, and work along the shore without undue splashing and without any banging on the boat whatsoever. A slight scrape on the boat bottom will carry ten times as far under water as the loudest shout.

Casting frogs requires a different technique from ordinary bait casting. You have to be careful with the frog or he will soon be whacked to a pulp. No less important is the method of laying the frog on the water. Fish

are quick to detect a phony frog "plop". The only successful way is to throw the frog so he alights first on shore, then pull him into the water with a natural jerk-jump. Retrieving must be done with alternate short jerks and rests in quick succession, to simulate a naturally swimming frog. Once you have practiced upon this you can get life-like action from the hind feet of even a dead frog.

● PERHAPS you have heard people remark about the strong fishy taste of warm water pike. This taste comes from the blackish pigment just under the scales and can't possibly be removed by mere scaling. To eliminate this, simply skin your fish. This can be done by two methods. The easiest is to make an incision along the back and peel the skin down both sides, freeing the flesh with a sharp knife as you go along. With the skin removed to the belly, you can cut a fillet off either side, simply by sliding your knife down along the main ribs.

The other method is to run your knife between the double skin, which I didn't know existed until my neighbor down the river demonstrated it to me. There is a skin which holds the scales, and a skin which sticks to the flesh. Starting at the tail and inserting the knife blade to work just so far below the surface, work toward the head with a saw-like motion. You will remove perhaps an inch and a half swath on each trip, and soon you'll be surprised at the short time it requires to finish a fish. After the scales are all removed in this manner, fillet the same as in the above method. The last described procedure leaves a neater job and wastes less meat. Either way, you'll find sweet, firm, meaty fillets.

After the frying pan finishes with these fillets, you'll discover there's not enough fish taste left to identify the species. Ordinary methods of preparing bass and walleyes will produce flesh that tastes far more fishy.

Although muskie and walleye fishermen of the North are still prone to raise their eyebrows at the mention of a fishing trip expressly for northerns, they recognize the admirable fighting qualities big northerns possess, and though they may talk against the flavor of the fish around the hardware store stove, the next summer if you're out in the bush with them you'll find they chew pike meat as assiduously as any other.

Each year as the supply of other fish becomes depleted, the northerns move in a little farther. Some people complain about northerns driving other fish out. This isn't always so. On the contrary, it's often a matter of northerns or nothing. As a Canadian resort man told me this past summer, "Inside twenty years the only fish left in these lakes will be pike."

For all of that, matters could be worse. If you're inclined to doubt, just take that old standby rod of yours and go after a few of those fighting jacks yourself.

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