

The Dogumentary

20th Year

The Waterdogs Fishing Club

February 2002

February Meeting at Crystal Marine

Those members that are interested in dinner should meet after 6 at the Chinese Buffet restaurant located 2 blocks west of 81 on Bass Lake Road behind Subway.

This month, Steve Hirsch with DNR Fisheries will be speaking about the new state fishing regulations. He will explain the new regs for Mille Lacs and border lakes as well as revised limits for perch, crappies, and other rough fish. He hopes that this will be an informal question and answer session. Come prepared to pepper him with questions!

The Waterdog Calendar - 2002

February 7	Monthly Meeting
March 7	Monthly Meeting
March 9-10	Red Lake Outing O-N
April 4	Monthly Meeting
May 2	Monthly Meeting
June 1-2	St Louis Riv, O-Nite
June 6	Monthly Meeting
June 22	Coon Lake MS Tourn
July 11	Monthly Meeting
July 13	Mystery Bass Lake
July 20-27	L.O.W. Musky Tour
August 1	Monthly Meeting
August 9	Musky/Pike – Mtka
September 5	Monthly Meeting
September 7	SM Bass T – Anoka
Sept 21-22	Mille Lacs Walleye O-N

October 3	Monthly Meeting
November 7	Annual Banquet

Schara Update at January Meeting

Ron Schara spoke at the January meeting to thank the club for our help the past year, and to update us on his current projects and fishing ecology ideas. A good turnout of 25 Dogs were on hand to hear from Ron. We also watched the banquet slide show again, but still missing was the star of the show, Bag Balm, who will have more time freed up for the club soon, according to informed sources. Hopefully, he will see the show eventually. Maybe at LOW?

Little Angel was seen aggressively taking photos at the meeting, and as the photo head, encourages others to do the same.

Lake of the Woods Update:

There are currently 19 signed up for Lake of the Woods Trip, including two guests. As of the January meeting, there were also 6 maybes. The deposit is \$50 each, which we have to send in soon. For starters, we are reserving spaces for 24. You will want to be there to see Shorty break in his new boat. Organizing this years trip are returning hosts, Suzy and Kojak. Call them for details.

Tournaments Set for 2002

The tournament Committee has put together a great looking bunch of lakes for the club tournaments this year. Included are some old favorites, along with many new ideas and strategies that will keep us challenged this summer. Griz has sent out an e-mail with more details on the picks, and paper copies of the schedule will also be available at the meeting.

Dues R Due

The 2002 dues are \$75, which includes the insurance fee. An additional \$50 is needed from those making their Lake of the Woods deposits.

Schara Clinic

A large crowd of helpers were on hand for the Ron Schara Kids Fishing Clinic held at the St. Paul Sportshow on Jan 12 and 13. The large number of scouts and other helpers in attendance left just the casting station for the club to operate. It seems that other organizations are treading on Waterdog Special Services turf, but will also be recruited by Ron and the club to help out with the Castaways program, when that heats up again. More participation and cooperation between our club and others continues to help our cause in having more of a positive impact in the community.



Nasty's News - Volume 2.

This month I'll take you on an ice fishing outing that Buick and I went on. One Saturday several weeks ago Buick called me to see if I was interested in ice fishing. It seems that Buick and Roid had a trip planned but Roid came down with the bug. With much arm twisting I was in. Buick had a pass for the day so we were off to Lake Mille Lacs. Here was the plan. We would meet at 6:30 and drive up to the corner bait store by Trophy's to get the scoop on the ice and bite, then decide where to go. Of course the night before, the news was full of reports on trucks and trailers going through up in Detroit Lakes. Lynne told Ron he was nuts but we went anyway. Buick had to promise not to drive on the lake. Turned out to be a smart move!

On the way we saw some of the notable sites. Of particular interest was the McDonalds with the guy sitting in there. He's still there. Kojak you know the one. Up at the bait store, the

owner told us that business was just starting to pick up and that they had shut down for a while because of no ice. The reported that some people were driving on the ice but most were getting out via snowmobile. We said we're walking and asked where we should go where there's good access and close in. The east side near Eddy's was the reply. We bought several types of bait, checked out the revised slot limit and headed on. At this point the wind was howling and it was cold. We weren't even out yet.

At Eddy's we stopped at the bait store to check the bite. They told us that walleyes were being caught by there house. They were right out there and in walking distance. After Bsing for a while they told us they were not allowing any vehicles on the ice from there landing. They reported 6-10 inches of ice. Five bucks later we had use of their access a place to park (on land) and a four wheeler ride out to the houses. We set up a portable next to some of Eddy's. The fishing strategy became very clear and easy. Set the house up fast, get the heater on an sit down. As we were setting up the house only Buick could work. I had to hold the house so it wouldn't blow away. After getting set up we drilled an extra hole put the shovel in the hole and tied the house to the shovel. We were in business and had a warm shelter. After a quick warm up, we were fishing. For me a small ice fly and a small minnow. For Buick a larger jig a minnow. We had fish on the graph so we thought we were in business. Still cold, cloudy, and windy. After about 15 minutes, Buick cut his minnow in half. BANG! A bite. He's got it. Looks pretty nice, almost to the hole.....it's off. Well they're here and biting so all is not bad. I tried several jigs, Swedish pimples with no bites yet. As we were fishing, I said I think I saw something swim by. At the same time Buick was saying that the FL-8 was all lit up at 5 feet. Buick quickly reeled up and BANG! Another bite. Looks like another good one. A Walleye, all the way into the hole. Buick was going for it then held back when all there was in the hole was mouth and teeth. The fish slowly sank back. Might have been over the slot anyway. Nice fish though. Our spirits were high. We could see fish on the graph, fish were swimming by, only thing left was to catch one.

We spent the next hour or two changing bait and presentation. We could draw fish off the bottom but they wouldn't bite. Buick went to try

tip ups but the Auger didn't like the weather either. At about lunch time things cleared up, the wind settled a bit and fishing turned off. We stayed until 4:30 and headed home. Nice day of fishing and our strategy worked. That is we got out, we got the house up with heat and were out of the wind. Any ice fisherman who thinks you should move every half hour if there was no bite wasn't out that day. Maybe next time we'll have the luxury of choosing structure to fish.

As for other Waterdog news, I hope the sport show went well with lots of attendance and photos. I hope to hear about it at the meeting.

Waterdogs Profile, a monthly feature **Hooked and Set: Matt Mueller**



Edited by Suzy

Handle: Fluffy (thank you Teach) or Von Mueller.

Age: 42

Family: Wife -- Marty; kids -- Lauren, 15, Stephen, 13 and Anna, 9; pets -- 2 cats and 2 rats).

Joined the Waterdogs: In 1999.

Favorite all-time fishing memory with the Dogs: My first 40-inch musky on the LOW trip in 1999. It was only the second musky trip I had gone on. And while I had hooked into a smaller musky before, I had never specifically gone for them with commitment. That one fish, which I caught with Dr. Sticky Fingers, put me in the "zone." I raised more muskies in a few days that I had seen in a lifetime. What a blast.

Personal bests: 45.5-inch northern (Innoko River, Alaska); 45-inch musky (Mille Lacs); 25-inch walleye (Missouri River, S.D.); 24-inch brown trout (Whitewater River); 20-inch largemouth (Minnetonka); 18-inch smallmouth (Clearwater Lake).

Favorite fishing rod: I have a couple of favorites, but my top favorite is my St. Croix ultra light (taker of many trout and panfish). There is a new dog in the house that is seeing the top spot, though. Based on its performance on LOW this year, it may get that appointment. I call all of my rods "Stinker" when I fail to set the hook. However, when I set the hook right, I call my rods "Billy Barugh" (a reference that Ted Knight used in the movie Caddyshack) -- as in "ooohhhh Billy, Billy, Billy."

Favorite reel: Penn International 955 Baitcaster. With its low-speed retrieve, it doesn't get as much game time as some of my other reels, but it is flawless. Rare to go overspeed, never a problem with parts, and as durable as a rock and smooth as silk. I need these guys to build a model with a 6.2-to-1 retrieve ratio. Great for jerkbaits though.

Favorite lure: Without a doubt, the Blue Fox Super Vibrax. First model -- Silver #6 with black bucktail. Second model -- brass #6, bare. I've caught over a dozen different varieties of fish on various models of these lures. There's not for every occasion, just most.

Favorite fishing technique: Casting 10-inch jerk baits through a cabbage patch about half the size of a football field in a big bay with 50 feet of water on the deep side and a rocky point on my right. Sun at my back, standing on a platform watching some big girl launch on that piece of wood!!!

Favorite lake to fish: Rainy Lake. Specifically Ash Bay. Not the home of my biggest fish, but the home of so many great fishing memories.

Favorite species: 1. Pike in the cabbage. 2. Muskies off the rocks. 3. Trout in a limestone stream.

Recent fishing experiences that you'd like to share: Alaska was a blast, but enough about that. My most recent experience was two weeks ago with Shorty and Old Fart. We made a play for trout on the Whitewater River in Southeastern Minnesota. It was a gorgeous day, sunny and warm with blue skies. Crappy for fishing. Only two fish came out on our hooks, but they were a lovely 13-inch rainbow and an 11-inch brown. Tough fishing but great scenery and companionship.

Fishing trips, tournaments, etc., that you're looking forward to: The St. Louis River tournament was a hoot last year and I'm looking forward to going back. Still though, it's hard to get LOW out of my mind. It killed me to miss last year's trip.

What you most like about the Waterdogs: Collectively, the Dogs love fish and fishing the way I do. I enjoy the mix of people and their fishing and non-fishing interests. There is something for every angler in the Dogs.

Favorite music artist or band: Mark Knopfler (of Dire Straits fame) and Chet Atkins.

When I'm not fishing, I'm.... Reading about fishing, singing about fishing, calling buddies to talk about fishing and, trying to raise three kids, getting some quality time with my fraulein and keeping a pretty decent job that pays for my Dogs' activities.

Favorite cut of meat: Tie between pork tenderloin and a rack of lamb.

Something the Dogs would never believe about me... Aside from the cross dressing and pyramid schemes, I bet they wouldn't believe that I homebrew. In fact, two of my beers have finished second place in the country at the American Homebrewers Association Competition.

A Tail of Two Fishermen, by The Analyst

The Lake: Located 1,057 miles north of the Twin cities—on the 90th parallel—is 160,000 acres of unspoiled fish-filled waters called Scott Lake. Ed and I (along with temporary waterdog Dave Dalvey, aka “Bubbles”) fished these waters from August 25-30th, 2001. Given the geographic location of the lake our targeted species were northern pike, Lake Trout and Arctic Grayling—no walleyes were present. While Scott lake lodge has maintained a strict policy of catch-and-release (with the exception of smaller fish for shore lunch) and gets minimal fishing pressure (the lodge holds a maximum of 24 fisherman per week, or 12 boats), I was surprised to see a large number of “hook wary” fish. With the exception of our fly-out trip, we saw large numbers of pike resting, cruising and slowly following our lures with little intention of actually biting—the pike on our fly-out trip were all VERY aggressive! While subtle twitches sometimes succeeded in triggering these otherwise neutral fish, more often than not these fish would just slowly disappear. Nonetheless, Ed and I caught a tremendous number of large pike.

Shallow spawning bays held concentrations of pike. Ed and I were designated a guide for the entire week. Given that the lake is very similar to Lake of the Woods, in that there are numerous shallow

underwater reefs, a guide was imperative (the lodge sustained \$25,000 in motor damage in 2000 alone). Despite the lake's large size, it was interesting to note that the pike do not move much throughout the year. In fact, they stay very close their spawning bays. While I had our guide stop on a number of occasions at “fishy-looking” spots (such as wind-swept mid-lake reefs and wind-swept saddles between islands) we only caught 1 fish that I can remember from these locations. We spent the majority of the time fishing the mouths of spawning bays as well as inside these bays. Scott Lake has very little vegetation. We found a number of shallow bays just stacked with big pike. While we didn't catch too many fish out of these bays, they were certainly there. The guides could not explain why they were there. Other than other pike, which I'm sure are a food source for the larger fish, there was no other visible food source.

Mood swings called for frequent change-ups. It was also interesting to note the changes in the fish's mood during our brief trip. On both the first and last days of our trip we had little success on larger baits such as Suicks and large bucktails. On these days we had the best success using a large doctor spoon tipped with a 3” white power grub. A slow retrieve while frequently “dropping” the bait backwards seemed to be required to trigger these otherwise neutral fish. I would usually start out the day with an orange suick and if I was seeing a lot fish, but not catching, I would change to smaller and less-aggressive baits as the morning progressed. The guide's favorite baits were a Manns Minus one (the smaller bass-sized bait), a #5 Mepps or small Vibrax, and Yo-Zuri's (which were very effective in triggering the neutral/negative fish). Our Guide really liked the Vibrax, possibly due to the fact the he had just recently had 2 clients catch 10 trophy pike in one day on this lure with the three largest measuring in at 48”, 49” and 49” x 21”. Eddie caught one trophy pike (defined as fish over 40”) on both a Vibrax and a Minus one.

Suick's shine. We spent four days of our trip on Scott Lake. We estimate that on average we caught 50-75 pike per day (between the two of us), most of which were over 30”. We caught 6 pike over 40”, the largest taping out at 44” x 17” (estimated at 25 lbs.). We caught many, many pike in the mid- to high-30” area.

My two favorite lures were an orange Suick (Thriller, with green spots) and a chartreuse/silver big doctor tipped with a curly tail. I was amazed at the number of times I saw a giant pike “chomp” on my suick—the water clarity is about 15’—and immediately let go while I felt nothing at all. It makes me wonder how many fish I missed that I didn’t see? Others in our group (there were six of us on the trip) also had very good success with the Suick. Eddie really liked the #5 Vibrax.

10-trophy day

On day four of our trip we did a fly-out to another lake located approximately 60 miles north of the lodge. This lake, called Labyrinth, is approximately 2,000 acres in size and sees little pressure. Only 2 boats are located on the lake and no one had fished the lake for over 3 weeks. Given the aggressiveness of these pike, you’d swear the fish had never seen a lure—all followers struck! We began catching fish from the first cast and the catching remained steady throughout the day. While we caught fish at a number of different spots (mid-lake cabbage beds, river mouths, and small patches of eelgrass) we located the mother load of big pike at a cabbage bed at the mouth of a river inlet. We caught 5 trophy pike within the first 30 minutes and over the course of 1 ½ hours or so we must have caught upwards of 40 pike between 10-25 lbs. and lost many, many more. Our guide stated he had never witnessed such a large concentration of trophy pike in his life. While I’m sure they would have bit on anything, we caught all our fish on a large yellow spinnerbait (a Hog Dawg from Thorne Bros.), as it was the most effective bait in the heavy cabbage. It was also quite exciting as the baits were only inches below the surface thus the strikes were similar to top water fishing. After giving this spot a several hour rest, we hit the spot again just before the plane was due to arrive. We began catching them from the first cast. In the span of approximately 30 minutes we caught 4 more trophies and lost at least a half-dozen more—most of them lost by me! While Eddie was using his 6 ½ foot bass rod and 20 lb. mono, I was using a 7 ½ foot muskie rod with 50lb tough line with the star drag on my 6500C tightened to the hilt. Given the lip damage I later saw on several large pike that I caught on lighter tackle I think I was over-setting the hook. I would love to know if others have experienced similar difficulty in hook-ups.

Despite Eddy’s mild whining (he didn’t want to leave the hot weed bed), we spent a few minutes fishing for Grayling. I caught 2 small grayling (one on a small spinner and one on a fly); they were all of 6” long. While grayling of 18”-19” are consistently caught in the river we fished, we did not fish the better holes given time restraints. It was fun nonetheless.

The fish Strike back. While they consistently catch GIANT trout—up to 45” this year—out of Scott, we found catching them to be challenging. This was due in large part to the fact the lake had recently turned over (the water temps were in the low-50’s). While the trout are concentrated in the deepest holes during the summer, they migrate into the shallows in the fall to spawn. While late in the trip we began catching (and seeing) a number of smaller trout in several feet of water, locating the larger fish proved challenging. The largest fish we caught during the trip was 32”. The story behind the catch was actually quite interesting. Shortly before catching this fish I had a bump while fishing a 10” Jake on a 3-way rig in approximately 100’ of water. I told my guide that it felt like the fish had hit my sinker. He said that is quite common and told Ed and I to bring our lines in. He then attached a 12” leader to my 10oz bell sinker and put a #5 Mepps (in addition to my Jake). He stated they oftentimes catch more fish off the sinker as opposed to the actual bait. Shortly thereafter I hooked up on a pretty nice fish. As it neared the surface I reeled down to my three-way swivel and hoisted my rod high into the air (towards the guide so he could grab the fish) as my lure was probably 15 feet beyond the swivel. Unbeknownst to me and the guide the Mepps dangling off the sinker had swung around the back side of the guide’s head at the exact moment my fish decided to head back to the bottom of the lake—embedding the Mepps into the back of his head! I was focusing on my fish, but suddenly noticed the guide grabbing at the back of his head (to grab the leader to put some slack between it and the lure in his head) and saw him bow-down towards the water every time the fish dove. After staring in disbelief for all of several seconds (I was trying to figure out what the problem was), he stated “the fish is attached to my head” so I grabbed the line and hoisted in the fish. We quickly unhooked the fish, measured it up (32”), took a picture and released the fish. Removing the hook from our

guide's head proved a little more challenging. While the lodge requires barbless hooks, and the lure came from the guide's tackle box, he had neglected to pinch the barbs. Eddie said it was my lure so I should take it out. I looked at the lure, but the hook was buried into his head. I knew there was some trick to removing the lure (by using a piece of line and putting pressure on the hook while removing it to make room for the barb), but had never performed the maneuver and didn't want to just "rip" the hook out of his head. Eddie promptly stepped up to the plate with pliers in hand. He walked over to the guide, took a look at the lure and immediately yanked the lure out of his head (no string trick, just a good old fashion yank!). You should have seen the look on the guide's face. A combination of excruciating pain and surprise. While the string trick would likely have been less painful, it did the trick and we were back fishing in no time (our guide did hold ice on his head for a while).

Barbless hook saves the day. I neglected to note a similar mishap that occurred during our fly-out. I had caught a relatively small pike (6-7 lbs.) and since the guide was busy taking a fish off of Eddy's line I decided to take it off myself (both Ed and I decided early on in the trip to allow the guide to remove all fish in order to refrain from getting any injuries that would hamper our fishing). As is typical, the fish was thrashing while I was attempted to remove my large spinnerbait. In a split second the lure came flying out of the fish and buried the hook deep into my wrist—just missing a large vein. I thought to myself, I'm Fishdick'ed! To my surprise, however, the hook slipped out of my body as easily as it went in—because I had pinched the barb. Not a single drop of blood came out. Following this incident, and the lake trout incident mentioned earlier, combined with the fact that neither Ed nor I can recall ever losing a single fish due to barbless hooks I will be pinching the barbs on all of my muskie baits. Bubbles has told me he has been totally barbless for last 2 years and has had no problems. Food for thought!

Last day in paradise. The last day of our trip turned out to be the most challenging yet proved to be the most relaxing day. While we eked out another trophy (40 1/2"), the fishing was slow. In fact, our shore lunch appeared in jeopardy until about 11 am. However, it just didn't matter. We had a wonderful shore lunch (teriyaki fire-

roasted pike) at the outlet of the Grease River and while the guide was preparing the meal Eddie and I caught a number of Lakers that had moved in for the impending spawn. It was a fitting end to an incredible week of fishing.

For more information on Scott Lake Lodge, check out their web site at www.scottlakelodge.com.

From Our Roving Correspondent:

Reasons Why Fishing Is Better Than Sex...

- You don't have to hide your Fishing magazines.
- It is perfectly acceptable to pay a professional to Fish with you once in a while.
- The Ten Commandments don't say anything about Fishing.
- If your partner takes pictures or videotapes of you Fishing, you don't have to worry about them showing up on the Internet if you become famous.
- Your Fishing partner doesn't get upset about people you fished with long ago.
- It's perfectly respectable to Fish with a total stranger.
- When you see a really good Fisherpersion, you don't have to feel guilty about imagining the two of you Fishing together.
- If your regular Fishing partner isn't available, he/she won't object if you Fish with someone else.
- Nobody will ever tell you that you will go blind if you Fish by yourself.
- When dealing with a Fishing pro, you never have to wonder if they are really an undercover cop.
- You can have a Fishing calendar on your wall at the office, tell Fishing jokes, and invite coworkers to Fish with you without getting sued for harassment.
- There are no Fishing-transmitted diseases.
- If you want to watch Fishing on television, you don't have to subscribe to the Playboy channel.
- Nobody expects you to Fish with the same partner for the rest of your life.
- Nobody expects you to give up Fishing if your partner loses interest in it.
- Your Fishing partner will never say, "Not again? We just Fished last week! Is Fishing all you ever think about?" Or maybe they will!