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Club Web site: <http://www.yaharafishingclub.org>

## Trolling for Muskies

*Notes by Stan Nichols*

Do your arms get tired from chucking heavy musky plugs? Does your shoulders or elbows ach after a hard day of fishing? Don Hollatz has the answer for you-trolling. Don is a member of Capitol City Muskies Inc. and one of the more successful members at putting fish in the boat. He is also relatively new to musky angling.

The equipment for trolling doesn't need to be fancy. In fact tough-old fiberglass rods work great. Don uses two types of rods-short rods (6 ½ footers) that he calls down rods that are fished off the back of the boat and outside rods (10 footers) that he fishes off the side of the boat. This combination keeps the lines spread enough so they don't get tangled. He doesn't use planer boards to spread his lines. He fishes all his rods with tips in the water to prevent floating weeds from snagging his lines or lures.

Don uses Scotty type rod holders for his down rods and Down East rod holders for his outside rods. He places the down rods straight down off the back of the boat but the outside rods he just keeps the tips in the water. The down rods are fished with a short line, 10 to 15 feet out so they are fished in the prop wash.

The most important thing for a reel is to have a loud "clicker"-something you can hear when a fish takes out line. Don prefers Daiwa line counter reels. He sets the drag on the reels tight so when a fish takes the lure it gets hooked. It is easy to let off the drag if needed.

Power-pro line in 80-pound test is Dons line of choice. To this he adds an 80 to 100 pound test fluorocarbon leader with big ball-bearing, crosslink swivels. Monofilament line is not good for trolling because it has too much stretch. He makes his own leaders.

For lures Don has one old reliable -a number 700, red and white, Spoon plug (wouldn't Clay Russell be proud). This lure should occasionally "tick" the bottom when fished. He has more luck with the 700 series rather than the larger 800 series. On an outside line he will fish the spoonplug 45-55 feet back from the boat. For other lures, he says the "hot" bait changes

each year. You have to experiment. This year he was having good luck on a Baby Depth Raider. He recommends putting larger hooks on the plugs and keep them sharp. Experiment with different lures when the fish are biting. If they aren't hitting on the tried and true lures, they probably won't hit a new offering even if it has good potential.

When trolling Don sets up his rig in deep water then trolls into shallow water. He seldom trolls in water over 20 feet deep and reminds us to not forget shallow water- 8 to 12 feet deep.

A good depth finder with a GPS is a must. In Lake Waubesa for instance he marks the 13-foot contour line. He can follow it for a trolling pass with out getting in too close and tangling in the weeds. If you catch a fish you can mark it as a waypoint on the GPS and troll right back through that area. Often times there will be more than one musky there. Also look for schools of baitfish on the depth finder and troll through them.

Water temperatures should hit 70° before seriously considering trolling for muskies. As the water warms, Don fishes deeper water and at a faster trolling speed. In cool water he trolls at 3 to 3.5 miles per hour, in warm water he speeds up to 4 to 4.5 miles per hour. He also uses smaller lures in cool water. On clear, calm days Don likes to be on the water to fish at first light. He doesn't pay much attention to moon phases.

I didn't get any contact information for Don, but he did make an offer of anyone wanting to know how to make fluorocarbon leader to come and visit him.

**Note: The December meeting will have a presentation on new ice and spring fishing equipment by Cory from Dorn Hardware.**

Notes From the Prez

It would probably be a stretch to call the fishing at last month's outing at Tenney Park anything but slow slow slow. It was almost too nice of a night, weather-wise. While it's always chilly and damp enough for coveralls or rain gear in November around here, this night was exceptionally easy to be out in for a few hours. And it always makes for tough fishing when there is absolutely no wind at all. Especially on the Tenney Park breakwall where the water is clear and only a few feet deep.

But we are a tough group of fishing folks and we did our best. The most action was reported by one of our youngest (and certainly most energetic) members.....yes, that would be Daniel. He had a nice pike on for a while and saw a few others as well. One of these years we will hit it right out there and some big fish will be caught. The lights, current, and baitfish are a good combination for action.....when everything else lines up right. As usual, the beans and hot dogs were hot and tasty. That's better than a sharp stick in the eye!

Maybe if I can learn to shoot straight one of these years, we could do little venison on the grill too. More on that later, but I will report that I did not get my deer on opening weekend. We're hoping to try again after Turkey Day. I hope everyone had a good Thanksgiving with friends and family. Much more important than catching a fish or shooting a deer!

Well, it probably won't be long until we're sitting on the ice, considering how the

temperatures are dropping overnight lately. I really enjoy first ice, and have already started to get my gear in shape. Take it from me, this yearly task is much easier to accomplish in my Lazy Boy than in the garage (or on the ice). I don't have very many fish in the freezer so a few bluegills could be put to good use. Another reason for my needy situation was a recent late season trip to Clement's barge in Genoa with fellow club members Gerry Paffenroth, Dave Dahl, and Marvin Cuttrel. It was particularly un-productive for yours truly. After putting a few scrawny saugers on the stringer (beggars can't be choosers) I discovered my stringer had been chewed off and my fish were gone! Probably a muskrat, raccoon, otter, or snapping turtle. I hope whoever it was enjoyed their dam lunch. Ouch! This fishing is tough business!

Anyway, as we move into December, we should all plan to attend the meeting on Dec. 14 which will also be our Holiday/Christmas party. Plenty of food and friendship. Please bring a friend or family member and a dish to pass. We have a few business items to take care of first. We'll elect a few new directors, announce the fishing contest winners, and perhaps plan our next outing. This would also be a good opportunity to buy your favorite club president a beer too. If the weather turns sour, please watch your e-mail or phone one of the directors. I'll stay near my cell phone... .220-8934. Hope to see all of you there.


Charlie



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## DNR Reports

Dane County hosts great fishing for cold, cool, and warmwater fishing enthusiasts. With more than 19,000 acres of lakes and 20-plus trout streams, opportunities abound. Survey efforts in 2009 focused on Lake Mendota to provide current population estimates for northern pike and walleye.

Another goal was to gather data to evaluate the longstanding size and bag limits that went into effect in the early 1990s. Fyke net catches were modest due to the on-again, off-again nature of spring weather. Crews captured 300 pike ranging from 10 to 42.5 inches. The average Mendota pike was 25.7 inches and weighed 5.96 pounds. Sixteen percent of pike exceeded 34 inches. Walleye numbers tallied 1,443 fish from 11 to 29.4 inches. The average walleye was 16.9 inches and 3.13 pounds, with 25 percent of all fish exceeding the minimum legal 18-inch size. Population estimates will be completed this spring based on recovery of fin-clipped fish. Crews noted some impressive catches of quality-size bluegill and catfish as well as a possible state record yellow bass, a three-pound, 16.7-inch specimen.

Musky fishing on the Madison chain has never been better, with many substantiated accounts of 50-plus inch fish caught and released. Fall index sampling of other lakes noted a consistently superior largemouth resource on Lake Monona. Lake Waubesa yielded impressive bluegill samples with very strong numbers of fish seven inches and greater. Lake Wingra boasted its best water clarity in memory since the removal of 48,000 pounds of carp in March 2008. Anglers report good musky action.

Trout anglers will enjoy a wide range of trout experiences in Dane County. DNR crews and partners worked extensively in 2009 to add in-stream habitat, remove nuisance vegetation and establish convenient access. Fly fishing anglers will appreciate the tree-free banks of Kittleson Valley Creek, West Branch Sugar River and perennial favorite, Black Earth Creek. Dane County streams generally have a bag limit of three with a nine-inch minimum size limit, that provides spinner and bait anglers lots of choices. Quality, harvest-size fish are abundant in Elvers Creek, Primrose Branch and Story and Garfoot creeks. The opportunity to land a true trophy can be had on the Upper Sugar River and Mt. Vernon Creek.

– **Kurt Welke, fisheries manager, Fitchburg**

**Crystal Lake** – (border of Dane and Columbia counties) This 500-acre wetland, all of a sudden, became a lake when the underlying hydrology broke loose in the mid 1980s. Now, 20 years later, the fishery has settled down and is starting to experience change. In 1999 a population estimate found the largemouth bass greater than 10 inches to be 37 per acre, a very

high level. The bluegill numbered 185,000 in mid-April 1999, with angler harvest of 85,000 documented by the end of June. Another 5,000 to 15,000 bluegill die annually from the late spring bacterial outbreak of Columnaris and likely another 20,000 are harvested or die from natural mortality the rest of the year. Thus, two-thirds of the harvestable size fish are gone by year's end, only to be replenished by next year's recruitment, due to an outstanding growth rate of 8.2 inches in five years. The huge bass population also plays a role in thinning out numbers of bluegill less than five inches. Another bass population estimate was conducted in 2004. Numbers (greater than 10 inches) had dropped from 37 per acre in 1999 to 22 per acre, still a high level compared to other waters. A largemouth bass virus (not VHS) was not detected in tests during 2001, but was found in 2006 and possibly played a role in the decline. With the declining bass number, the bluegill growth rate dropped to 7.6 inches after five years. An increase in growth of curly leaf pondweed, which grows earlier in the spring has also made it more difficult to harvest bluegill. However, carp presence is becoming more noticeable and yellow bass are now showing up in angler catches, demonstrating change. As lakes age, habitat and the fishery change. Crystal still supports an above average bass population with better than average growth. In 2009, the lake experienced very high lake levels that closed adjoining roads and limited boat access and shoreline access to the lake during May and June, which typically is the heaviest fishing period. It is yet to be seen how this low harvest period during 2009 will affect future fishing success.

**Fish Lake** – The most recent survey in 2003, found a good opportunity to catch and release largemouth bass under the 18-inch size limit. Largemouth bass in Fish Lake have slow growth rates because the predator-prey relationship with panfish is hampered by dense milfoil beds allowing bluegill to escape predation. Thus, they are abundant but don't grow to quality size, though a fair number of seven-inch fish exist. Although the largemouth bass are slow growing, they are long lived and fish up to 16 years old are present. Carp are abundant and nutrient levels from agricultural runoff over the years have decreased water quality. Water levels fluctuate, impacting boat ramp usability.

**Mud Lake**, connected by a road culvert, contained good populations of quality size yellow bullheads and seven- to nine-inch crappie in 2003. Oxygen typically gets very low in Mud Lake during winter.

– **Dan Fuller, fisheries technician, Poynette**

Tom Wilke



Tom Wilke caught this 42 3/4" northern on Lake Mendota on a gator spoon, a personal best. He gave Tom a battle worthy of his size (a thrill he will not soon forget). This fish was caught on an outing with Jeff Western. Fall fishing on Mendota can be very exciting!

North Star Community Award to Jack Hurst



Jack Hurst, center, received the North Star Community Award on November 5th. The award was presented to 10 individuals, organizations, and businesses for their contribution to the north side. The nomination Jack received mentioned his work with the Yahara Fishing Club, the Dane County Conservation League, and conservation efforts at Warner park, plus other community activities.

Only two D&S Bait Speakers left in December

12/09 Jim Kusuda Long Rodding Panfish  
12/16 Randy Evans Mastering Your Vexilar  
These seminars are FREE to all.

Membership dues

As the year 2010 is rapidly coming to an end, it is time to renew your membership in the Yahara Fishing Club. You can pay your dues at the December meeting or by sending your check to the club's post office box: P. O. 3271, Madison 53704. Individual memberships are still \$25.00 and family memberships are \$35.00. The money raised from the annual dues is used to cover the cost of operating the fishing club.

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## Good Numbers for the Club

As I conclude my term as treasurer, I want to share the financial picture of the club in 2010. The financial outlook of the club is healthy, as we will be carrying surpluses in our operations and charities budgets into 2011. This is a result of several successful events held by the club as well as the board of directors minimizing expenses. Some highlights of 2010 include: the club had 124 paid members of whom 36 participated in the fishing contest. We received \$3871.00 in donations in part from the generosity of our friends at Wal-Mart, Rick and Linda Lane, and the Smallmouth Alliance. The Fishing Expo raffle provided a net of \$907.00 to the club. The net proceeds from the fish fries at St. Paul and Lakeview totaled \$2223.00, but together with a grant received from Thrivent Financial of \$933.00, the club profited \$3156.00. The in-house raffles held at most of the monthly meetings netted \$332.00. All and all a very successful financial year for the club.

Brad Czebotar

## Gander Mountain Seminars

Gander Mountain is hosting presentations on Friday, December 10th thru Sunday, December 12th on a variety of fishing topics, including using ice Augers (Duffy Kopf), lures and ice cameras, using Vexilar (Jim Kusuda), and Frabil products.

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**1996 Ranger 461VS Comanche - \$11,000**  
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If interested, talk to Duffy or go to Craigslist: [sale-zh3eh-2032478234@craigslist.org](mailto:sale-zh3eh-2032478234@craigslist.org)  
You can call the owner directly: Doug Gurget 608-963-8660

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## For Sale



AP Lazer Auger Sidekick with universal rack mount. Mounts on any ATV. Used to carry ice fishing auger along with buckets and other ice fishing equipment. Augers mount horizontally and with one touch it pivots ready to punch a hole in the ice like a giant drill press. It has a durable baked on powder coat finish and is made in Schofield, WI. This rack is really well made. Selling price is \$299, but will sell for \$100. Contact Duffy: ljkopf@tds.net or 849-7245 (H), 576-2700 (C). The rack will be on display



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### Madison Area Ice Fishing Events

Dec. 11 and 12 – Gander Mountain “First Ice” Event -- Madison and Barabo

Jan. 8 Lazy Lake Tournament – Fall River

Jan. 15 Yahara Fishing Club’s Kids Ice Fishing Day – Monona

Jan. 29 Crystal Lake Tournament – Schoepps Cottonwood Club fund raiser

Feb. 5 University of Wisconsin-Whitewater Fishing Team’s ICE JAMBO

**If you have any questions on these events, please contact:**

**Duffy Kopf**  
**849-7245**  
**ljkopf@tds.net**

## Yahara Fishing Club Membership Application

P.O. Box 3271  
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### Annual Dues:

Individual.....\$25  
Family.....\$35  
Youth Member.....Free  
(with paid membership)

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Except for special Summer “On the water” dates, meetings are held at 7:00 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month at the Lakeside VFW Hall, John Nolan Dr, & Lakeside St. in Madison.

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The next meeting is on **Tuesday, December 14th**, at the Lakeside VFW Hall (John Nolen Rr. & Lakeside St.)

The Board Of Directors meet at 6:00 pm, The **General Membership meeting starts at 7:00 pm.**

Speaker : Cory from Dorn Hardware

## Calendar of Upcoming Events

### December Events

December 14th - Monthly club meeting at the VFW hall. This will be a pot luck with a presentation from Cory of Dorn Hardware on new ice fishing and spring fishing equipment.

### January 2011 Events

January 11th. Club meeting at the VFW hall. Bill Krieger "The Scuba Guy" will discuss ice fishing clothing and proper ice rescue techniques.

January 15th - Kids Ice Fishing Day.

The Yahara Fishing Club's doors are open to **EVERYONE**, so invite a friend to the meeting!

President - Charlie Grimm ...249-9694	Director - Tom Wilke .....834-9554	Director - Roger Swenson 752-6825
Vice Pres. - Paul Murunich ...219-4449	Director - Jeff Wydeven .848-4542	Director - Jim Kloth .....635-0116
Secretary - Paul Nichols 309-335-6815	Director - Jim Pankratz ...288-9789	Director - Karlette Schoen 242-8803
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Check out our web page at:  
[www.yaharafishingclub.org](http://www.yaharafishingclub.org)



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