



Hook, Line, and Sinker

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GETTING THE LEAD OUT

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The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) wants to get the lead out of fishing.

Reacting to a lawsuit by the Environmental Protection Defense Fund, the EPA has proposed a ban on certain lead sinkers, and possibly lead jigs, which the agency says "present an unreasonable risk of injury to waterfowl." There is evidence that birds such as common loons and trumpeter swans ingest sinkers, which they mistake for food or gravel for their crops.

Lead sinkers are already banned in Great Britain, and in this country leadhead jigs are illegal in Yellowstone National Park, with split shot and other lead sinkers expected to be banned there next year.

A few companies here and abroad offer non-toxic sinkers for fly fishermen, including one made from a tungsten-based material that hardens when it comes in contact with water. But the jury is still out on how effective they are.

Meanwhile, the EPA is looking at such substitute materials as copper, zinc, and brass, which may prove toxic as well. The fishing tackle industry, which currently produces about 2 million pounds of lead sinkers a year, is also studying lead substitutes including tin, stainless steel, and bismuth, but most are less dense and thus bigger and bulkier, and a lot more costly.

It seems obvious that more scientific research needs to be done by the EPA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to determine if lead sinkers are indeed causing waterfowl deaths. If they are, then a substitute for lead, one that is proven environmentally benign, should be mandated by law.

CAT CHOW

By Bill Volkart

Catfish are some of most fished for types of fish in North America. Over the years many baits have been tried on them, and the rule of thumb has been, "The smellier the better." This has never been good news for anglers with sensitive noses or those who worry about what the fish they catch have been eating. After all, if they eat stuff like that, what will they taste like?

This is where the dough ball comes in—a treat that appeals to catfish and doesn't nauseate the angler. You can buy a premixed formula, but if you make your own, you will not only save money but also have bragging rights when your formula hauls in a 25-pounder!

To make one popular but simple recipe, peel a couple of average sized potatoes and grate them into a large mixing bowl. Stir in about 2 tablespoons of cornmeal, some bits of shredded cotton (for binder), 1/2 teaspoon of salt, and either some grated onion or 2 tablespoons of maple syrup, Karo syrup, or molasses. Mix this into a stiff paste and pinch off

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chunks of about the right size, for later use. Shape the pieces and place the completed dough balls in a plastic bag and refrigerate.

If your taste in dough balls runs in a slightly different direction, you can try a mixture of bread crumbs, oatmeal, corn flakes, and sugar (or just frosted cereal), two egg whites, and enough water to make the dough workable. Cheese may also be grated and mixed in. Form the dough into balls and refrigerate until needed.

These are by no means the only set of ingredients for dough balls. Use your own imagination, plus some trial and error, to come up with additions that make these basic mixtures work in your area. Other possible ingredients include flour, blood, hamburger, finely chopped or pureed liver, commercial scents, ground shrimp, and so on.

Oh, and a word of warning: Make sure you clearly label the dough balls in the refrigerator. Otherwise you might wind up with some very peculiar "meatballs" in a future casserole.

CLEAR LAKE UPDATE

Weeds are starting to take over the lake, making fishing more of a challenge. There have been some reports of walleyes being taken after dark. I think this is probably the best approach for walleyes due to the clarity of the water. During the day they are too spooked to get close to. Some of them supposedly weighed up to three pounds. I don't know if I can swallow that one. One and a half pounds more realistic to me. Also some nice sunfish are being caught along the edge of the weeds. You had to be in the right place at the right time to cash in on them



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though. The lake is in excellent condition, the water level is staying up, thanks to some recent rains. The weed removal that is being done in front of the County Park is about three fourths finished. It has turned into a bigger job than we first expected it would be. We are making steady progress though, and by next summer we should have several nice areas for shore fishing.

MINNECON WETLANDS RESTORATION

Later this summer, if the river ever stays inside it's banks long enough for things to dry up, we will be completing the wetlands restoration that was started two years ago along the Minnesota River. We will be needing some help from you to complete this project. This will be one of the first wetlands along the river to have been put back. It will be something we can be proud to have been a part of. I hope you will keep this in mind when it comes time to put the finishing touch on this project.

EDITORIAL

It's back. The river is back in it's banks. I have been waiting a long time for this. The last two years it seems to take longer to get back after the spring thaw. This year it has been out since the middle of March. I have been held at bay for almost three months. Finally I can sneak down to the river on these beautiful summer evenings. All I want is a couple of hours away from everything. To be able to sit on the bank and toss a line in, and not have to worry about a thing. It matters not one bit whether I catch anything or even get a bite. What counts is being there. The birds and other wildlife around me, at other times it's just the quiet and being alone. I look forward to these times with great anticipation. Will I get a bite, or will I be bitten? It matters not. The past two years this most enjoyable

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activity has been denied me for the better part of the summer. As I write this the river again is starting it's journey out of the banks. Who knows how long it will stay out this time.

I have lived near and fished this river for the better part of my life. There have been years when the river has been higher and wilder, partially due to ice or log jams in the spring. Never, that I can recall, has the river stayed up for such extended periods as the last two years. Is it my imagination, or is it getting worse each year? There have been long periods with little or no rain, yet the river will not come down. Many people claim it is the dam upriver that is causing the problem. They could be right, but I believe there is more to it than that. It seems to come up overnight after a heavy rainfall, which is possible now that most of the wetlands in the watershed have been tiled and channeled straight to the river. Who is at fault? I don't know if we can lay the blame on any one person or group. There has been a combination of many different things that have brought about the problems we now experience. I don't believe it would do any good to point fingers, as this would do nothing to alleviate the constant flooding. It is time to come up with a cure. People have been tossing different ideas around, debating the various good points of each, and beating them into the ground. The time for talk is past, the time for action is now. Every day we are sending more topsoil down the river. The course of the river is being changed, and not for the good. Soon we will lose several large sweeping loops due to cutting caused by high water. The time for studies is past, the time for action is now, before it is too late.

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From The President

Well here it is in the heat of the Summer and fishing is in full swing, I hope all of the membership gets an opportunity to get out and enjoy one of Minnesota's greatest pleasures, fishing. We all get caught up in the day to day business of living and often don't make time for fishing with family and friends. This is something we need to do, make time, in other words take the time, put it aside and don't touch it. If you can't do that, I would say you need to step back and take a look at your situation and see if you are trying to do too much. After all life is to be lived and not endured we as individuals are worthy of such personal time and lets face it that's what makes a great deal of us tick. So get out there and go fishin'.

We recently hosted the Take a Kid Fishing day at Riverside Park on the banks of The Minnesota River. As I talked with member Huon Newberg who attended the event, I shared with him that I felt so positive about seeing young and not so young females enjoying the sport of fishing. We have all heard the saying: "give a man or woman a fish and they will eat for a day, but, teach a man or woman to fish and they will eat for a life-time," I would like to offer another observation, "behind every female that fishes is a family that fishes." Just think of the message a grown woman showing a daughter how to fish and sharing the joys and camaraderie that go with it brings to a situation. Moms influence sons also, and if your mom fishes, I'll bet you do too. In Minnesota 45% of all anglers are Female maybe that's why the sport of fishing is alive and well here.

See you at the next meeting!

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