

I hate crankbaits

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By JOHN L. SLOAN

We have had several of them, those hot spring days when things are all green and the sun gets hot about 10:30. The bass, you figure, should have moved up from the deep water. So you start in tight with a white fluke and a Pop-R. Not much. The sun is just filtering through the trees in the back of the first creek. Somewhere, a turkey gobbles. Where was he yesterday when we had a gun in hand?

We change to a GitZit on a 1/8 ounce head. Nothing. They do not want the spinner bait or worm.

Frustration is starting to set in and you tell Big Bird maybe we should have gone turkey hunting. Only one option left. I hate it. I hate throwing them and I really hate retrieving one. However, they do catch fish, crankbaits. They catch fish when nothing else works.

I shed my light jacket and tie on a cussed, bream color medium running crankbait. I am even wearing my lucky CU baseball hat. I even give Big Bird one of the secret lures. It will run about six feet deep and bump the bottom and bounce over the logs, it will even catch stripe and walleye if you happen to get into them.

We have the slough to yourselves, not even a houseboat anchored and we start on the long stump row. I see whoever bought that property has mowed all the way down to the water. The Bird is still trying to get the knot right when I sail my six-pound crankbait just past the first stump. I crank it down hard, starting with a hard jerk to get it down.

Then, I slow way down and just bump it along the bottom. I feel it bump the stump and I let it sit for a second, keeping the line tight. Before I can start reeling, I just about get the rod jerked out of my hand. Game on! Bird operates the net. It only took him three minutes to get it out of the storage locker and assembled. No, you figure that out. Anyway, it finally works. Two, maybe

2.5-pounds and fat as a pig. He hit hard and fought like a big fish.

The Bird has his knot tied and is ready to go when I holler what the ----? I am busy fighting one that is just about a twin to the first one when something loads on. Bird grabs the net again. This time it is open and at hand. He starts hollering "Double! Double!" I have two bass on one lure. One is slightly smaller than the other. I hate a dang crankbait but what are you going to do?

I have been keeping Bird busy with the net and the camera. Maybe that is why he did it. He caught a fish and I netted it for him. Then, while I am taking his picture, the fish starts flopping and sissy boy gets afraid he is going to get a hook in finger so he somehow manages to kick the net overboard and it sinks???. Secretly, I smile.

It does not matter that it is his net and I have no money invested in it. The net is not important except for one thing. Losing it means, we now have to lip our fish. That would not be a factor if we were throwing a lure with a single hook. These crankers have nine sharp points they can stick in you. Bird has had hooks cut out so often, his doctor just hands him the happy needle with the feel good in it and Bird injects himself. I myself am somewhat prone to springing leaks. We really should be on Center Hill fishing for smallmouth with normal baits.

I am explaining the true meaning of the net loss when my crankbait stops coming toward me. It had been bumping across a 4-foot hump in 8-feet of water, (maybe you know where it is) and it just stopped moving. I rear back and my lure pulls back. Game on, get the net! Vy-ola! To paraphrase the late Mickey Pope, we ain got no stinkin net. I get down and make the grab. Not a drop of blood.

We spend a few hours injuring our arms and wrists and shoulders dragging those stinking crankbaits over logs and around stumps and along underwater humps and bumps. The fishing is not boiling hot but it is regular enough to keep us busy. I land one more and we call it a day. It is always good to quit on a catch.

Crankbaits are tremendous producers on almost all species of fish. Usually it is a matter of matching the lure to the fish and to the conditions. Most of the time, I cast a shad color CB. But a year or so ago I found that the bream color is sometimes absolutely deadly in stained or dingy water.

But if the fish will cooperate, give me a light jig anytime. I have bad wrists and can't use a casting rod like them sissy boy tournament anglers do.

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